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ETHEL CHURCHILL:

OR,

THE TWO BRIDES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“THE IMPROVVISATRICE,” “FRANCESCA CARRARA,”

“TRAITS AND TRIALS OF EARLY LIFE,”

ETC. ETC.

“ Yet knowing something — dimly though it be ;
And, therefore, still more awful — of that strange
And most tumultuous thing, the heart of man.
It chanceth oft that, mix'd with nature's smiles,
My soul beholds a solemn quietness
That almost looks like grief, as if on earth
There were no perfect joy, and happiness
Still trembled on the brink of misery.” — WILSON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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ETHEL CHURCHILL.

CHAPTER I.

THE SEASON.

And yet it is a wasted heart :
It is a wasted mind
That seeks not in the inner world
Its happiness to find ;

For happiness is like the bird
That broods above its nest,
And finds beneath its folded wings,
Life's dearest, and its best.

A little space is all that hope
Or love can ever take ;
The wider that the circle spreads,
The sooner it will break.

ANOTHER season had recently commenced its round of gaiety ; the present was outwardly as glad as if there had been no past ; the sunshine played over the onward current of ex-

istence; and the bubbles, weeds, and flowers, danced on the surface: few cared to look on the rock and the darkness below. Every one appeared to be doing precisely the same things that were doing at that very time the year before. The streets were filled with carriages, the Mall with a gay crowd; the talk was of *fêtes* and visits; and eyes and diamonds seemed equally bright. The spring had come forth in all its beauty, and the flower was in the grass, and the green leaf on the bough. Change is slow and strange in the social and the natural world, it requires some great convulsion to alter the aspect of either; but, in the hidden and inward world,—there it is that change does its work; we marvel to find how ourselves are altered, while every thing seems to have remained the same around us; but decay always begins at the heart.

Mrs. Churchill being settled in London, Ethel had come out as a beauty and an heiress, and was brilliantly successful in both capacities. Sir Robert had remitted the fine; but flatteries, executed with whatever genius,

were quite wasted on the quiet and pensive girl, who

- Listened, and forgot them with a smile.

Youth has one delightful time, when hope walks, like an angel, at its side, and all things have their freshness and their charm. There appears so much to enjoy, that the only question is, what to enjoy first? But this period, brief enough with every one, had been unusually brief with Ethel Churchill. It now was like a dream to her that she had ever looked forward. "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof," is above all the motto of disappointment. At first she was reluctant to visit; she shrank, with morbid weakness, from the idea of meeting Mr. Courtenaye; but this she had hitherto escaped, he having been sent on a confidential mission to Paris. She went out, night after night, because it was less exertion to go out, than to refuse the kindness that forced on her the unwelcome amusement. When a day was over, she was

glad, and yet there was nothing that she anticipated on the morrow. But Ethel's was a nature essentially unfitted to the cold and glittering life of society; gentle, timid, and dependent, her world was in the affections; those blighted and destroyed, existence was a blank, nothing remained wherewith to fill up the weary void.

The intercourse between her and Lady Marchmont was constant and affectionate, yet there was but little confidence. They were too different: Ethel had not Henrietta's information, nor her talents; and Henrietta scarcely comprehended the want of them. Lady Marchmont was now in the most brilliant hour of her life; her reputation for beauty, wit, and fashion, was firmly established. Her very caprices were pronounced charming; her slightest phrase was called a *bon-mot*; wherever she went, she was followed and flattered; and her whole existence seemed made up of praise and pleasure. With all this, there was that perpetual fever of the heart which

broke out sometimes in petulance, sometimes in sarcasm ; all admitted that her ladyship was very unequal, but very brilliant ; and even her rudeness passed only for “ pretty Fanny’s way.”

It is strange what society will endure from its idols. Henrietta had too much vanity not to like the homage that surrounded her ; still she was too shrewd not to see through it, and she pined for something better. Between Lord Marchmont and herself the distance became greater every day ; she despised him, and he disliked her ; ay, *disliked*, for we hate the superiority which we only acknowledge secretly. Henrietta would have loved any man whom she could have admired ; admiration is the divinest privilege of a high and generous nature like hers ; it is the smaller and meaner kind who look down, but in her husband there was not one redeeming point :

“ The head was vacant, and the heart was cold.”

His lovely and neglected wife was in the most

painful and the most dangerous situation for a woman. Only her vanity was cultivated; the mind had no employ, and the affections were left to waste.

CHAPTER II.

RANELAGH.

I did not wish to see his face,
I knew it could not be ;
Though not a look had altered there,
What once it was to me.

Since last we met, a fairy spell
Had been from each removed ;
How strange it is that those can change
Who were so much beloved !

It is a bitter thing to know
The heart's enchantment o'er ;
But 'tis more bitter still to feel
It can be charmed no more !

“ So I hear,” said Lady Mary, “ that, ‘ severe in youthful beauty,’ you have driven another of your lovers to despair ; but it really was too bad to hand over all Lord Portsea’s hearts and darts to Mrs. Fane, persuading her that she was the rightful owner of the scented scroll.”

“ I am sure,” replied Lady Marchmont, “ that she was delighted to receive it. I hate to have things wasted, and it was utterly wasted on me ; but you are wrong as to the hero of the billet ; it was placed in my bouquet by Lord Harvey.”

“ Lord Harvey !” exclaimed the other, with an expression of anger she could not at once disguise. The fact was, that, for some time past, Lady Mary Wortley had considered Lord Harvey as her own especial property. Now, nothing is more provoking to a woman than a lover’s infidelity ; it is a wrong which leaves her without even the satisfaction of revenge. His very infidelity shews that she has lost her power ; and without power, where is revenge ? A sneer is some comfort ; and, fate be praised ! there is always a good-natured friend to repeat it. “ Well,” said she, “ Lord Harvey is doing his best to find if there be a ‘ yes ’ in the world. It would require — what is that rule in arithmetic ? ah ! — long division to reckon up the number of refusals he has had this season ! However, I suppose,

‘ Though I miss the sweet possessing,
’Tis a pleasure to adore ;
Hope, the wretch’s only blessing,
May in time procure me more.’”

“ I cannot,” returned Lady Marchmont,
“ answer by your next verse :—

‘ Constant courtship may obtain her,
When both wit and merit fail ;
And the lucky minute gain her,
Fate and fancy will prevail.’

There is to me that insipidity about Lord Harvey, which always belongs to the forced and artificial. He takes as much pains to make up a character as Lady Clevedon does to make up her face!”

Lady Mary turned pettishly away ; no woman likes anybody but herself to depreciate a lover ; it is personally an ill compliment. But Lady Marchmont had little time to speculate on the causes of Lady Mary’s petulance ; for, at that moment, she felt Miss Churchill’s clasp on her arm tighter, while the slight frame she supported trembled with agitation. Her quick eye detected the cause in a moment ;

Mr. Courtenaye had just entered the room, though he had not as yet perceived them. Indeed, the position in which Ethel stood effectually screened her from observation; and Henrietta thought she could not do better than stand as they were, thus giving her companion time to recover her outward composure.

In the meantime, Mr. Courtenaye had caught sight of the countess, and came eagerly forward to speak. She was delighted to renew the acquaintance; for, in her own mind, she had already arranged to what it was to lead. The crowd, which had been collecting for the last hour, had now become exceedingly dense, and a sudden movement forcing Lady Marchmont forward, separated her from her friend. Norbourne did not see her face, but saw that a young woman was placed in a very embarrassing situation; offered, or rather drew her arm within his own. She was so situated, that it was impossible to refuse; the crowd still pressed upon them; their eyes met, and to both it seemed like a dream. Neither even attempted speaking; but, though Norbourne

felt the arm he held tremble, Ethel was more composed than her once lover. She had pride and indignation to sustain her, while he was divided between embarrassment and an overpowering sensation of delight at meeting again. The face was intentionally averted, but there was the same sweet profile, and the long lash of the downcast eye lay golden on a cheek crimson with emotion. They reached the door before he summoned resolution to speak ; but, just as the words rose from his heart to his lip, Ethel, by a sudden effort, caught Lady Marchmont's arm, and whispered, " For God's sake, let us go home ! " Henrietta saw her uncontrollable emotion, and instantly complied with her wish : Courtenaye handed them to the carriage.

How long, that night, did the light touch of Ethel's little hand linger in his own ! He felt anxious, but happy ; he had seen her, and every thing seemed possible ; she would, she must, forgive him. But Ethel sought her own room with a bitter and burning heart : she gave way to a burst of passionate tears.

“What!” exclaimed she, “am I still so weak? How I despise myself!”

She rose, and paced the room impatiently; pride, love, and the bitter sense of injury, contending together. Again she resumed her seat; again gave way to weeping, that brought no relief.

“Oh that,” cried Ethel, wringing her hands, “I may never, never see him again!”

CHAPTER III.

THE INFLUENCE OF AN INVITATION.

Life is so little in its vanities,
So mean, and looking to such worthless aim,
Truly the dust, of which we are a part,
Predominates amid mortality.
Great crimes have something of nobility ;
Mighty their warning, vast is their remorse :
But these small faults, that make one half of life
Belong to lowest natures, and reduce
To their own wretched level nobler things.

LADY MARCHMONT was listlessly turning over the praises of her beauty, duly set forth by heroic verse in a poem just dedicated to her, when there came one of those solemn raps at the door, which she well knew announced Lord Marchmont. An expression of disgust passed over her features, and a slight elevation of the shoulders accompanied the answer,

“Come in!” His lordship made his appearance; and there was a look as nearly approaching to anxiety as his immovable face could well convey. He inquired after her ladyship’s health with an unusual air of *empressement*.

“But I need not ask,” added he, “for I never saw you looking so lovely. Ah! I see that you are yourself the subject of your studies; you must permit me to read your praises to you.”

He took up the book, and began to read the commonplace compliments it contained with a solemn and emphatic air, which, if possible, added to their absurdity. Lady Marchmont looked what she was — thoroughly bored; fortunately, her husband soon held that he had played the agreeable quite long enough; and, nothing doubting his success, thought it was the very time to introduce what was the real object of his visit.

“I hear,” said he, “that the preparations for the *fête* Sir Robert Walpole is about to give at Chelsea, are on a scale of unusual magnificence!”

“ Are they ? ” replied Lady Marchmont.

“ He intends, ” continued his lordship, “ to give a dinner, a tea-party, a ball, and supper ! ”

“ Does he ? ” replied Henrietta.

“ Why you answer, ” exclaimed her husband, pettishly, “ as if you did not care about the matter ? ”

“ I do not care ! ” was the answer.

“ Now, really, ” returned he, “ that is carrying conjugal obedience too far. I can assure you, that I do not expect a pretty woman like yourself to be indifferent to a ball, though it be given by the minister ! ”

Finding that this compliment was received in silence, he went on :—

“ Now, own the truth, — are you not very sorry that my having been in the opposition precludes your going to the most brilliant *fête* of the season ? ”

“ I cannot be sorry, ” replied she, “ for what I do not care the least about ! ”

“ Ah ! ” returned her husband, “ I know candour is not a feminine accomplishment :

but what would you say if I told you that you might go?"

"Why, I should say," answered Henrietta, "that I shall not be asked!"

"But you can easily procure an invitation," said Lord Marchmont, who now succeeded in making his wife at least look astonished. "In short," continued he, assuming an air of mystery, "many circumstances have occurred lately that give me a very different view of things to what I had formerly. I believe Sir Robert Walpole to have been a most misrepresented man: I owe him some atonement; my sense of justice dictates it: I mean to go to his *fête*!"

"Do you?" was the brief answer.

"Yes, I feel that I ought; and with me, to feel that I ought to do a thing, is to do it!" added he, looking quite Roman with excess of virtue.

He was obliged, however, to be content with his own applause, for his wife remained silent; and, after a pause of conscious self-satisfaction, he continued:—

“ I do not expect you to comprehend my motives.”

“ I am glad,” said Henrietta, quietly, “ that you do not expect impossibilities !”

“ Oh, no !” said he, with a most imperturbable air, “ I always make allowance for feminine weakness ; I do not expect your mind to follow mine !”

“ Now, the Fates forbid that it should !” thought Henrietta.

“ I am aware,” Lord Marchmont proceeded to say, “ of my own political importance, and I have been wrong in allowing my personal feeling to the prince to bias my conduct ; but every day shews more the weakness of Frederick’s character. I cannot serve him and my country ; I shall, therefore, go to Sir Robert’s *fête* !”

“ A most proper and patriotic resolve !” replied the countess : “ I only see one objection ——”

“ Oh, you find some objection to any thing that I propose !” interrupted her husband :

“ why should I not go, if I please, to Sir Robert’s ball ? ”

“ Only,” answered Henrietta, “ that you have not an invitation ! ”

“ It will be very easy,” persisted his lordship, “ to obtain one.”

“ Not so very easy,” replied she: “ why, the invitations are as much canvassed for, as a seat in parliament ! ”

“ The greater the difficulty, the greater the triumph in procuring one: that triumph I reserve for you,” said her husband, bowing with an excess of conjugal gallantry.

“ For me ! ” cried Henrietta, with unqualified surprise.

“ You will readily suppose,” replied Lord Marchmont, resuming all his solemnity, “ that I never propose a plan, without having duly considered the most eligible method of carrying it into execution. I have designed, it remains for you to execute ! ”

Henrietta gave a silent bow of inquiry.

“ I am aware,” continued her husband,

“ what a favourite you are with Lord Norbourne: I am not jealous, as I know it is on his daughter’s account. What a melancholy thing her death was! such a pity she should have died before this *fête!* You can make some little allusion to your friendship for her, and ask Lord Norbourne to procure us tickets.”

“ I do not like to ask him,” said Lady Marchmont.

“ Oh, no! of course, you like nothing that I propose!” interrupted his lordship. “ I request, however, that you will attend to my commands, not to your own capricious likings and dislikings!”

“ I will obey, my lord,” replied Henrietta, with a mock-tragedy air.

Lord Marchmont rose from his seat, saying, “ I hope you fully understand the importance of your mission. It is no trifle to have my political adhesion to give in: you will be a welcome visitor!”

“ I do not doubt it!” said Henrietta.

“ You had better complete your toilette,

for I have ordered the carriage: I never neglect any thing:" and, with these words, his lordship bowed out of the room.

"I know Lord Norbourne's kindness," said Henrietta, "or I would have refused, point blank. I wonder what has occasioned this sudden change: but of what use is it hunting for some motive, too small to discover."

CHAPTER IV.

ASKING FOR AN INVITATION.

This is a weary and a wretched life,
With nothing to redeem it but the heart.
Affection, earth's great purifier, stirs
Our embers into flame, and that ascends.
All finer natures walk this bitter world
But for a while, then Heaven asks its own,
And we can but remember and regret.

LADY MARCHMONT'S name procured her instant admittance; and Lord Norbourne came down to hand her from the carriage, and take her to his own room.

“ I find,” said he, “ that my curiosity, which was up in arms when your card was brought, is quite lost in the pleasure of seeing you. I shall not allow you to tell me your business for a long time.”

“ I am in no hurry,” said Henrietta, smiling; while her eye, glancing round the room, caught sight of Constance’s picture. “ How like, how very like !” exclaimed she, approaching it, partly to conceal her emotion.

“ It is,” said Lord Norbourne, “ such a comfort, and such a companion.”

“ She looks like what she was, an angel !” exclaimed the countess, earnestly. “ I never knew any one who did me so much good. I grew better while she was with me. Oh, Lord Norbourne ! I felt her loss and yours deeply at the time : but I have felt it more bitterly since. My poor uncle —— ;” but she could not finish the sentence ; and the tears she could not restrain, entirely overpowered her. “ I wish,” exclaimed she, in broken sobs, “ that I had died instead of Constance !”

“ My dear child,” said Lord Norbourne, “ you are too young, and should be too happy, for such a wish.”

“ I am not happy,” she replied ; “ in losing my uncle, I lost the only human being who really cared for me. You cannot think how

weariness I am of the heartless, useless life that I lead. I wish I had been your daughter: I should have had some one to look up to, and to love. Ah, the lot of Constance was far happier than we deem!"

"I believe it was," replied Lord Norbourne, kindly taking his companion's hand. "I have learnt to think of my loss with a sadness that soothes me. I turn to her image when overfretted with worldly cares. I hope almost as she hoped for our re-union."

"I cannot tell you," continued Henrietta, "how often I think of her. Perhaps, from being the only objects of my affections that I ever lost, her idea and that of my uncle are singularly blended together. Ah, we never know how dearly we loved our friends until the grave has closed over them."

Lord Norbourne would then fain have said something to comfort her, but even he could think of nothing. All consolations appear commonplace in the presence of a great sorrow. For other griefs there are many pleas to urge for forgetfulness; but to urge upon us

the forgetfulness of the dead, seems like profanation of their sad and sacred memory. Lord Norbourne, too, was touched by the confidence reposed in him. He knew Lord Marchmont, and felt how utterly his wife was thrown away upon him; and yet it was a sort of unhappiness to which it was impossible to allude, and still more impossible to redress.

“ Yet who would believe,” exclaimed he, half thinking, aloud, “ to see you sometimes so brilliant, and, seemingly, so gay, that the envied and flattered Lady Marchmont knew the bitterness of regret, or the darkness of despondency?”

“ Ah,” replied she, “ life is very inconsistent. We contradict each other; still more do we contradict ourselves. It seems to me as if there were a perpetual warfare going on between the outward and the inner world. Nothing is really what it appears to be; and this is what discourages me more than I can express—the not knowing to what I may trust, and my utter inability to discern between that which is, and that which only seems.”

“Half the misery in this life,” returned Lord Norbourne, “originates in its falsehood. We conceal our thoughts and our feelings, till, even to ourselves, they become confused; and half our time is spent in fretting and feverish attempts to disentangle the webs we have woven: and the strange thing is, that all this dissimulation is unnecessary; we should have done far better without it.”

“What a small, worthless thing,” exclaimed Henrietta, “is our existence, filled with mean envyings, paltry hopes! and, if for one instant redeemed by a true affection, or a generous emotion, what wretchedness is sure to follow the indulgence of either!”

“You must not come to me,” answered her listener, “for a defence of society; I have long since loathed its bitterness as much as I despise its baseness. You cannot know the miserably mean motives that actuate the generality; but the trifles so sought give their own narrowness to the mind.”

“And that brings me at once,” interrupted Henrietta, “to the object of my visit; the

motives, however, being supposed to lie too deep for my feminine apprehension. Guess what brings me here."

"Nay," replied her companion, "what have I done for you to presuppose such a want of gallantry, as to imagine that I would attempt to guess a lady's secret before she thought proper to communicate it?"

"It is not interesting enough," answered she, "for me to make a mystery of it: but the fact is, that Lord Marchmont has either caught cold by sitting on the opposition benches, or thinks that nothing but his own personal experience can decide whether Sir Robert's cook exceeds his own—a subject on which I have lately heard him express much anxiety. He has suddenly discovered that England owes every thing to the present administration, which he has henceforth resolved to support with both vote and voice."

"We shall be glad of the vote," replied Lord Norbourne, "though we would dispense with the voice."

"I fear me," answered the countess, "that

you must take your bargain 'for better or worse.' But I have not yet arrived at my business. There is a condition annexed to the proposed alliance."

"Something very unreasonable, I suppose," cried Lord Norbourne. "Is it a marquise, or the next vacant riband?"

"Your conjectures are not what yours generally have the reputation of being; but wide, indeed, of the mark. However, if your penetration be at fault, you will at least have the satisfaction of establishing your theory of small motives."

"Well," said he, "let me hear what bribe (I beg pardon for the word) is to win over our potent ally."

"Only," replied Lady Marchmont, "an invitation to Sir Robert's *fête* at Chelsea."

"An invitation!" exclaimed Lord Norbourne,—“he shall have a dozen if he please. I will take care that the tickets are duly forwarded this afternoon.”

"Many thanks for your kindness," said she, rising from her seat. "Ah, Lord Nor-

bourne! you do not know how to grant favours: you have not made me feel awkward or embarrassed in the least. I really do not hate you for having obliged me."

Lord Norbourne laughed, and took her hand to lead her to the carriage.

"By the way," said he, as they were descending the staircase, "how is your beautiful friend, Miss Churchill? and, speaking of so great an ornament to a ball-room, you must allow me to send her a card together with your own."

"You are too kind," exclaimed Henrietta, delighted.

"Oh, no; I am only selfish," returned Lord Norbourne. "I shall expect a vote of thanks from Sir Robert for my beauties."

"I shall do nothing for the next week but study my costume and complexion," said she. "Ethel and myself will consider our conquests as proper compliments to your kindness."

"Ah! as to your charming self," replied he,

“ ‘ The world is all before you where to choose ;’

but, do you know, I am rather inclined to limit the sphere of Miss Churchill’s fascination. It has already, unless I am greatly mistaken, produced due effect on Norbourne ; and, of course, I am in his interests.”

“ Well, I promise you to circumscribe her conquests as much as possible by extending my own,” returned Henrietta. “ It will be an easy task ; for Miss Churchill does not do ‘ the honours of her eyes.’ I often tell her her beauty is quite wasted upon her.”

“ Not wasted,” said her companion, “ if it do but procure for her the true allegiance of one affectionate heart ; and I know Norbourne too well not to know how safely he may be trusted even with the happiness of another.”

“ This is as much as to say,” thought Lady Marchmont, when seated in the carriage, “ Lord Norbourne is quite prepared to give his consent to his nephew’s marrying again. Well, I hope that Ethel will recover her bloom and spirits : if there is such a

thing as happiness in this wide and weary world, it is before her now. I wish I could anticipate things as eagerly as I used to do; but, alas! scarcely any thing seems worth anticipating; or if some fair hope arise upon the distance, it is too good to be true."

CHAPTER V.

THE FÊTE AT SIR ROBERT WALPOLE'S.

Few, save the poor, feel for the poor :
The rich know not how hard
It is to be of needful food
And needful rest debarred.

Their paths are paths of plenteousness,
They sleep on silk and down ;
And never think how heavily
The weary head lies down.

They know not of the scanty meal,
With small pale faces round ;
No fire upon the cold damp hearth
When snow is on the ground.

They never by the window lean,
And see the gay pass by ;
Then take their weary task again,
But with a sadder eye.

THERE is no denying that there are "royal roads" through existence for the upper classes ;

for them, at least, the highways are macadamised, swept, and watered. They are surrounded not only by luxuries, but by pleasures, which, at all events to the young, must have the zest of novelty. It seems to me the veriest fallacy to say that the lots in life are weighed out in equal balances: the difference is very great — to the examiner, sad; and to the sufferer, bitter! Before we talk of equality of pain, which is, in nine cases out of ten, only a selfish and indolent excuse for neglect, let us contrast a high and a low position together. On one side is protection, instruction, and pleasure; on the other is neglect, ignorance, and hardship. Here, wants are invented to become luxuries; there, “hunger swallows all in one low want.” Among the rich, body and mind are cultivated with equal watchfulness; among the poor, the body is left to disease and to decrepitude, and the mind to void and destruction. I grant that I speak of the two extremes; but it is the worst ill of social existence that there should be such extremes.

The child of the rich man sleeps in the

silken cradle, his little cries are hushed by the nurse, whose only duty is to watch the progress of that tiny frame. The least illness, and the physician bestows on the infant heir the knowledge of a life; for every single patient benefits by all his predecessors. The child becomes a boy: Eton or Westminster, Oxford or Cambridge, have garnered for his sake the wisdom of centuries: he is launched into public life, and there are friends and connexions on either hand, as stepping-stones in his way. He arrives at old age: the arm-chair is ready, and the old port has been long in the cellars of his country-house to share its strength with its master. He dies: his very coffin is comfortable; the very vault of his ancestors is sheltered; a funeral sermon is preached in his honour; and escutcheon and marble tablet do their best to preserve his memory.

Take the reverse of the picture. The infancy of the poor child is one of cries, too often of blows; natural affection has given way before the iron pressure of want. The

old proverb, that, "When poverty comes in at the door, love flies out at the window," is true in a far more general sense than the one in which it is generally applied. They have the floor for a bed; the scant and mouldering remnant of food for dinner; the cold hearth, where the wind blows in the snow;—these physical sufferings re-act on the moral world, they deaden and embitter the sweetest of our feelings. The parent half loves, half loathes, the child that takes the bread from his own mouth; and the child looks on that as tyranny, which is only misery. It learns to fear before it learns to love.

Suppose such a childhood past: it has escaped disease; no chance chill has distorted the youthful limbs, they have, at least, health to begin life. The poor man has nothing more than his strength. God's best gifts lie dormant within him: the chances are that he cannot read even the holy page, that, at least, holds out the hope of a less miserable world. He has not that mental cultivation which alone teaches us what are

our resources, and how to husband or to exert them. He knows only how to labour, and that not in the most serviceable manner to himself. He does not, even when he can, which is rare enough, lay by for the future, because he has never been accustomed to reflect. Life has for him no future. Perhaps he takes to drinking; and it is easy, with half-a-dozen different kinds of French wines on the table, the claret purple beside the golden sherry, to say a thousand true and excellent things on the crime of excess. If the gentleman refrains, it is from a moral restraint the poor man has never been taught to exercise; and what does the poor man drink to avoid—cold, hunger, perhaps bodily pain—always bodily weariness?

Old age comes on feeble, and often premature, when his place of refuge is a straw pallet, where, if his family keep him, it is an act of Roman virtue, the very devotion of duty and affection; for even the old man's morsel must be taken from their own. But the workhouse is the ordinary resting-place

before the grave; and there human selfishness takes its most revolting aspect; there life has not left one illusion, one affection: all is harsh, cold, revolting, and unnatural. The difference that began in the cradle continues to the tomb. The bare coffin, a few boards hastily nailed together, is flung into the earth; the service is hurried over, the ground trodden down, and the next day the children are playing upon the new grave, whose tenant is already forgotten. So much for the equality of human existence.

But the *fête* of to-day belonged to a different order of things. Luxury, aided by refinement, gave every grace to the external world, at least. Villas are, I believe, a delightful invention of the Romans, who set very seriously about enjoying the world they had conquered. Sir Robert's villa would have done honour to Lucullus, who has always appeared to me the most thorough-bred gentleman of antiquity. Alcibiades was a happy union of coxcomb and conqueror; but there was in him a want of that repose, and of that superb

self-reliance, which characterises the Roman. The climate and the scenery of England are admirably adapted to the perfection of a villa. The great charm of our landscapes is their colouring — so quiet, yet so refreshing. The fine old trees, and the fine old tree standing by itself, are peculiar to our fields; the rich sweep of grass so vividly green, the prodigality of garden flowers, and a sky whose intense blue owes the depth of its purple to the white clouds which float above in broken masses,— all these belong to a style of natural beauty which is entirely English. It is connected only with enjoyment; nothing startles as in the vast precipices of Switzerland; nothing brings the past too vividly to mind as in the sad, though lovely ruins of Greece: all is tranquil, and redolent of summer. It is the cultivated, rather than the artificial; just enough of nature for all the purposes of art.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FÊTE AT SIR ROBERT WALPOLE'S
CONTINUED.

Ladye, thy white brow is fair,
Beauty's morning light is there ;
And thine eye is like a star,
Dark as those of midnight are :
Round thee satin robe is flung ;
Pearls upon thy neck are hung :
Yet thou wearest silk and gem,
As thou hadst forgotten them.
Lovelier is the ray that lies
On thy lip, and in thine eyes.

Nothing more strongly marks the insufficiency of luxuries than the ease with which people grow accustomed to them ; they are rather known by their want than by their presence. The word "*blasé*" has been coined expressly for the use of the upper classes.

Lady Marchmont had acquired much of that languid indifference, the most foreign to

her temperament, by the want of something really to interest her. She had grown careless to observe, yet even she was quite animated into admiration by the beauty of the garden as she entered. The turf short, but not too short, fresh without being damp, sloped down to the river; sometimes golden green in the sunshine, at others darkly green in the shade. The beds were filled with flowers of every kind, and stands were scattered around of rare and costly plants. Groups of the young and beautiful were mingled among them, and the rich colouring of the period's costume was relieved by the verdant foliage. It was a pretty contrast between nature and art.

“ Well, ” exclaimed Lady Marchmont, breathing the perfume with which a honeysuckle, wound around an old ash, filled the air, “ I do confess that I like common flowers better than any. The hot-house plant has no associations.”

“ And I, ” interrupted Lord Marchmont, “ infinitely prefer exotics: they shew that some trouble has been taken on our account.

But, talking of trouble, I wish, instead of loitering here, you would come and pay your respects to Sir Robert."

Sir Robert stood to receive his guests on the portico, which gave a pleasant shelter and coolness to the front of the house. A large hall, filled with odoriferous shrubs, opened behind, and gave a fine view of the river and the opposite bank. Sir Robert was now at the very summit of worldly prosperity. He stood fast in the king's favour; and what, under the rose, was of far more consequence, in the queen's. There was peace abroad, and a ministerial majority in the house at home. In short, the old Scotch secretary, Johnstone, might well put the question to his master, which he had asked that very morning,—“ Oh, sir, what have you done to God Almighty, to make him so much your friend ?”

Henrietta could not help shivering at the air of solemn submission that Lord Marchmont assumed as he ascended the steps of the terrace. In any body else she would have smiled; but the absurdity of your husband

comes too close for laughter, it may reflect a little on yourself—at all events on your taste for choosing him.

“Ah, my fair petitioners,” said Sir Robert, with great good humour, as they approached; “I see that you are resolved on being revenged by looking too killing. Lord Marchmont, how do you justify to your conscience having married such universal destruction?” Lord Marchmont began a long speech, of which honour, and conviction, and his country’s good, were the only words audible; for a fresh party distracted Sir Robert’s attention, and Lord Norbourne came to the rescue, and, offering Lady Marchmont his arm, proposed a walk through the grounds. Now this was an agreeable arrangement to all. Miss Churchill cared little who her companion was; and Lord Marchmont’s small vanity was flattered by being escort to a beauty, who, moreover, was a silent, if not an attentive listener; while his wife, besides preferring any company to that of her husband, really liked Lord Norbourne. The last two, however, had each a little motive

of their own. Lord Norbourne wished to stay with the party till his nephew arrived, fully intending then to monopolise Lord Marchmont, and thus leave Ethel to Courtenaye. Lady Marchmont wished to have a nearer view of a singularly handsome young man, who seemed perfectly lost in the admiration she inspired. His appearance was very distinguished, and yet she did not know him : he must be new to society, to give way to any feeling so openly and so naively. The crowd had carried him forcibly with them ; and Henrietta found that she had a sudden curiosity to inspect a gum cistus which was blowing at the end of the walk. The result of her inspection was not quite satisfactory, for the stranger had disappeared. But the next crowded walk turned out better : again she beheld those dark and eloquent eyes fixed upon herself, as if unconscious of any thing else in the world. A knot of acquaintances shut him out from sight, and Henrietta had never before thought it so tiresome to listen to news and flattery. Lord Norbourne was the next person detained ; but

his companion found the delay more agreeable, though, perhaps, to the full as dangerous as delays proverbially are.

“Do not,” exclaimed a voice, whose deep melody was remarkable, “ask me about Versailles, every thing was tiresome there, even the love-making; but I remember nothing about it. I can think only of that divine face.”

What instinct told Lady Marchmont that the speaker meant her own? Some reply was made, and the voice continued :

“My whole existence is passed into my eyes; and here I am wasting my time in talking to you, when I might be looking at her.”

The laurel-branches were put aside, and the handsome stranger stepped from the shade. His eyes met those of Lady Marchmont, who felt herself colour, and then, angry at having done so, began talking hastily to the first person near. She talked without waiting for an answer, startling the elderly gentleman she addressed by the suddenness of her questions; and then half affronting him by not listening to

above one quarter of his reply. But she was the fashion, and the first privilege of fashion is impertinence. Her companion, on second thoughts, only felt flattered by her speaking to him at all. When her party next moved, half unconsciously she looked towards the laurel, but the place was vacant.

CHAPTER VII.

It matters not its history — Love has wings,
Like lightning, swift and fatal ; and it springs,
Like a wild flower, where it is least expected ;
Existing, whether cherished or rejected.

A mystery art thou ! — thou mighty one !
We speak thy name in beauty ; yet we shun
To say thou art our guest ; for who will own
His life thy empire, and his heart thy throne ?

THERE was an absolute mixture of pique and disappointment as Lady Marchmont passed on ; but they had scarcely reached the open lawn before she saw the stranger talking to Lady Mary Wortley Montague, who was smiling her very sweetest, and, worse, looking her very best. An ill-defined dislike, a little like jealousy, arose in Henrietta's mind ; a little, however, mitigated by observing that the gentleman in-

stantly caught sight of herself; and that, when not absolutely forced to look at his companion, he looked towards her. Suddenly the two approached, and Lady Mary said, with a forced smile,—

“ Will you allow me to present Sir George Evelyn to you?—the most accomplished coquet that ever

‘ Dealt destruction round the land
On all he judged a foe ;’

under which denomination he ranks all women.”

“ Poets excel in fiction,” said Sir George, with a quiet, almost timid, manner, “ and Lady Mary is a poet : but, as we never forgive being bored, let me entreat her to talk to Lady Marchmont of some more amusing subject than myself.”

“ I can assure you,” continued Lady Mary, “ you meet on equal terms ; you cannot be worse than Lady Marchmont ;—

‘ Her eyes, like suns, the rash beholders strike ;
But, like the sun, they shine on all alike,’

excepting her husband, of course.”

Henrietta looked more vexed than the commonplace sneer needed, and which Sir George did not appear to hear. He was surrounded by some friends, all of whom seemed delighted to see him once more in England. A turn in the walk shut him out; and Henrietta began to think what a tiresome thing a *fête* is, and to wonder that people ever gave them. She also began to enumerate the number of hours she should have to stay; and to think that it was very unreasonable, even in a prime minister, to give a breakfast, dinner, and tea-party, all in one day, to say nothing of the night itself being trenched upon by a ball. Lord Norbourn's attention, too, was more taken up than it ought to have been with the beauty of the *fête* on his arm; but, alas! he knew every body, and every body knew him: public characters must pay the penalty of greatness.

Henrietta was now all but surrounded by a mob of elderly gentlemen, ribanded and starred; and on the other side was the trunk of a huge cedar-tree. Her prospects might have been more agreeable. However, the very cedar,

which, in the first instance, she had ungraciously denominated "odious," improved upon acquaintance.

Not exactly like a hamadryad emerging from the trunk, but stepping very gracefully from behind it, Sir George Kingston made his appearance. "Desperate circumstances," exclaimed he, "justify desperate conduct. Poets lay it down as a rule, that deities are not to extricate a hero from his embarrassment unless there remain no human method of extricating him. Now, nothing short of a divinity can aid me. May I appeal to her aid?"

"At all events," replied Lady Marchmont, "my curiosity is engaged on your side; and if only one half of what is said of women be true, that is quite enough to decide in your favour."

"I take you for my confident at once," replied Sir George; "but, do you know that it will entail upon you, at least, ten minutes' patient listening?"

"I feel equal to the exertion," said Henrietta.

"Will you then allow me to offer you my arm?"

for, I frankly confess that my disclosure is meant for your ear alone.”

Henrietta took his arm, but coloured as she did so; why she coloured, she could not have told herself. They turned into the next walk; and, in spite of both curiosity and confidence, they proceeded, for some distance, in perfect silence. It was very pleasant, however; and not the less so for a little touch of awkwardness. At last, Lady Marchmont arrived at the conclusion that something ought to be said; and, turning to her companion, exclaimed,—

“Let no one ever again talk of feminine impatience; but I really can be an angel no longer, so let me have the full benefit of all the ideas I have given you such ample time to collect.”

He started as if from a reverie. “Lady Marchmont must be so much accustomed to have every thing forgotten when she is by, that she will pardon it quite as matter of habit,” was the answer: “but I must not trespass

too far on your forbearance. Miss Churchill is very intimate with you, is she not?"

Henrietta felt disappointed, though she could have given as little cause for her disappointment as for her previous blush.

"Miss Churchill is," replied she, "my most intimate friend."

"Perhaps, then," exclaimed Sir George, "you will save me a task to which my courage is not equal. Will you allow me to communicate to you the disagreeable mission which I have incautiously undertaken?"

"What is the matter?—yes; pray, tell me first," interrupted Henrietta, now all anxiety on Ethel's account.

"Miss Churchill is very beautiful?" asked he.

"The loveliest creature on which the sun ever shone!"

Sir George Kingston looked at his companion as if he did not quite agree with her; and, though he only looked his doubt, Henrietta felt the full compliment of the look;

again she coloured, and said hastily,—“ But do tell me. Ethel is as dear to me as a sister.”

“ Do not laugh at me,” said her companion, in a low, earnest tone, “ if I confess I cannot understand inconstancy in love. I told Trevanion I was the worst person in the world that he could employ : from me he must expect no defence of his conduct.”

“ Mr. Trevanion !” cried Lady Marchmont ; “ do only tell me that he is married, and I shall be eternally grateful to you.”

“ It is precisely,” replied the other, “ the fact of his marriage that I was about to communicate.”

“ You are the most charming person in the world. You are invested with a perfect halo of delight,” exclaimed Henrietta. “ Miss Churchill has some chimerical notion of honour in her head, but that is over now ; your information does not leave a single obstacle in the way of the most perfect happiness that ever wound up a fairy tale. We must find

Miss Churchill, and tell her; but I claim the privilege of being told all about it as we go."

"I may as well use Trevanion's own words," replied Sir George. "'I have no choice,' said he, gazing, despairingly, in the glass: 'one heart I must break. Now that of Miss Churchill being at a distance, and that of Mademoiselle de Nargis being at my side, the last is most important—I married this morning. Let my lovely Ethel know the fact as gently as possible: lay the blame on Fate, not on my falsehood. Tell her, if she die, her memory will be enshrined in my heart.'"

"That certainly was a consolation," said Lady Marchmont. "The fact is, that the marriage between Mr. Trevanion and Miss Churchill was a family affair, arranged without the slightest regard to the young lady's feelings, which Mr. Trevanion well knew were interested by another."

A sudden turn in the walk brought them face to face with Lord Marchmont and Ethel, to whom the countess whispered a few words

in a low voice. A flush of pleasure came over the listener's face.

“Trevanion,” exclaimed Sir George, “might have spared all his anxiety on Miss Churchill's account. She looks as if the news were only too good to be true.”

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FÊTE.

Not to the present is our hour confined,
The great and shadowy future is assigned
To be the glorious empire of the mind.

The past was once the future, and it wrought
In the high presence of on-looking thought ;
All that we have, was by its efforts brought.

To-day creates to-morrow, and the tree
Of good or ill grows in past hours, what we
Make for the future — certain is to be.

THE superb banquet that had been laid out for the queen, was over. For once opinion had been unanimous even about an act of Sir Robert's. The royal party had dined in the greenhouse, the *coup d'œil* of which was as striking as it was new. Vast stands of

the most costly exotics reached to the glass roof, which was partly covered by a luxuriant vine, or by a small scarlet creeper. Set in arches of the most beautiful flowers, but with colours that bore comparison even with those of nature, were hung pictures of the old masters. Sir Robert Walpole was, like Cardinal Mazarin, a great collector of paintings. In both, the love of art was the only glimpse of the ideal, the one single touch of the imaginative.

There never was a nature less allied to the poetical or to the picturesque than Sir Robert's. It never could have entered his head to clothe

“ The palpable and the familiar
With golden exhalations from the dawn.”

His highest idea of inspiration was that —

“ ————— Pegase est un cheval,
Qui mène les grands hommes à l'hôpital.”

His perceptions were cold, clear, and defined; he never went beyond the actual, though that he took in at a glance. His contempt for mankind grew out of never looking beyond

what he saw: now the smallest of human motives are what lie on the surface. It encourages us to be thought a little better than what we are; but Sir Robert's system made no allowances,—it took a low view of the intellectual world, but a still lower of the moral. There was no excitement, no belief, no generous impulse about it. He would have erected no glorious monument to the past, to serve as oracle and incentive to the future. We can imagine his enjoying the pointed and polished satire of Pope; though we can also imagine him saying, “Of what use is it to tell men of their faults, they never mend them?” But how impossible it would be to suppose him entering, for one instant, into the wide and benevolent philosophy of Wordsworth, a philosophy founded on belief in good.

Yet the actual never quite suffices to the mind; and even with the shrewd, the practical Sir Robert, the imagination opened one sunny vista, in which he saw visions and dreamed dreams. To know what passed through his mind, what train of thoughts were conjured up

while watching the quiet loveliness of a Claude, or the spiritual beauty of a Raphael, would be a curious study : but the guests he had now assembled were intent on no such curious speculation ; they were quite content with the external, without examining into the interior, world.

It would have been difficult to have imagined a scene more like one in fairy land, than the scene as the guests again dispersed through the grounds. The sunset had been magnificent, and the Thames was floating in dark radiance ; the waves wearing that transparent clearness, which gives more the idea of melted beryl, than aught else : every little circle in the water had that trembling light which characterises precious stones. The atmosphere was unusually clear, as if loath to part with the daylight ; but the moon, like a round of lucid snow, had risen on the sky ; and a pale, soft gleam, came from the lamps amid the foliage.

One device obtained great admiration : small lights were scattered on the ground, in some of the winding paths of turf, to emulate

glow-worms. The principal band was placed in the great hall; which, splendidly lighted up, and hung with blue damask, whose festoons were fastened back with wreaths of flowers, was thrown open for the dancers. But strains of music came from every part of the grounds; and on the river was a boat, filled with wind instruments, whose soft aerial melody floated in at every pause.

The beauty of the evening had little attraction to Lord Marchmont, who was in the card-room, devoting all his energies to the whist-table. Lady Marchmont was wandering about the gardens with Sir George Kingston, and Lord Norbourne had taken charge of Miss Churchill.

Ethel was more than usually depressed; the gaiety around made her shrink into herself; she had no sympathy with it; it only made her think, more and more, how the spring of happiness was dead within her: she had no real enjoyment in any thing. The forced gaiety which society exacts as its false and weary tribute, only fatigued, without exciting

her. She went out, in the vain hope that, leaving behind the solitude of home, she could leave, too, the perpetual presence which there haunted her. Ethel soon found that change of place was not change of thought, and the very effort fretted her with a feverish discontent. It was a constant labour to keep her attention to what was said; however, Lord Norbourne set down her silence to a graceful timidity, and only waited an opportunity to effect a change he had meditated from the first. It soon came: as they were on their way to a transparency of their majesties, not a little larger than life—with Bellona, in a very handsome helmet, on one side, and Peace, with a cornucopia and a full-blown wreath of roses, on the other—the path was interrupted by a little knot of gentlemen.

“How very fortunate!” exclaimed Lord Norbourne. “Townshend, I have been wanting, all day, to say a few words to you! Miss Churchill, can you forgive my want of gallantry, if I transfer you to the charge of my

nephew? Will you allow him to shew you the transparency?"

Mr. Courtenaye stepped forward eagerly; and, before she had time to think, Ethel found herself arm-in-arm, and walking on quietly with her former lover.

CHAPTER IX.

A SCENE BY MOONLIGHT.

Thou canst not restore me
The depth and the truth
Of the love that came o'er me
In earliest youth.

Their gloss is departed,
Their magic is flown ;
And sad, and faint-hearted,
I wander alone.

ETHEL and Mr. Courtenaye both walked on in silence, both careless of what direction they took, and solitary, even in that glittering crowd, each alive only to the other's presence. At length each stopped, as if moved by a sudden and mutual feeling; perhaps Ethel, unconsciously, obeyed the movement of Norbourne, to whom the quick, silent walk, had become intolerable. On his part, there might,

also, have been a little intention ; for nothing could be more lonely than the nook where they paused. On one side was a thicket of gum cistus, then in the height of its fragile bloom ; a shower of white leaves lay on the turf below, one half had fallen since morning ; a willow drooped over the marble balustrade, the long green branches dipping into the stream, and breaking, with their tremulous shadow, the silvery column that the moonlight traced on the water.

Ethel leaned on the balustrade, and gazed down on the river, chiefly to have an excuse for withdrawing her arm from Norbourne's, for she saw nothing of the scene before her. She started, as if from a fiend, at the sense of enjoyment which stole over her at his side ; it recalled all her former happiness, but it also recalled how bitterly it had been purchased. The moonlight fell full on her face ; and the delicate profile was outlined on the dark clear air like a statue's,—as colourless,—and, Norbourne felt, as cold. For a few minutes he stood, struck less with her perfect

beauty, than with the change that had passed over it during the last year. The mouth no longer trembled with sweet half smiles, born of no cause but the very buoyancy of inward gladness; no blushes came, fast thronging to the cheek; blushes without a cause, save delicious consciousness. True, the eyes were downcast, as of old, but they strove not to look up, and when scarce raised, sinking again with sudden shame; now, they were only fixed on the objects below.

Norbourne felt, keenly felt, how much their relative position was altered; even now he could not explain his seeming inconstancy. Could she forgive him? An age of anxious thought passed in those few moments; but there was something that encouraged him in the soothing influences of the calm and lovely hour; despair seemed impossible; and time, so precious, was passing rapidly: the suspense grew intolerable.

“Miss Churchill!” exclaimed he: “dearest Ethel!”

She turned, startled by his sudden ad-

dress, and the deep flush encouraged him to go on.

“Dearest — sweetest!” continued he, passionately, “tell me that we may yet be happy; that the devotion of my whole life will atone.”

“Mr. Courtenaye,” returned Ethel, endeavouring to move away, “you will pardon me if I decline listening to protestations, of whose value I am now fully aware!”

“Listen, my more than beloved, my idolised Ethel!” exclaimed he, snatching her hands, and detaining her; “do not rashly throw from you a heart so utterly your own: my only hope of happiness in this world depends upon you: you know not how I love you!”

“This is not the first time that I have heard a similar assertion from Mr. Courtenaye,” replied Ethel, with whom indignation was rapidly mastering every other feeling. It was impossible for her to listen to words of love from Norbourne, and not recollect how undoubting had been her early confidence, and how cruelly it had been betrayed.

“Dearest, sweetest Ethel!” cried he, “forgive me; you know not the circumstances in which I was placed!”

To Ethel, this speech bore only one interpretation; she thought it referred to what Lady Marchmont had suggested,—to pecuniary embarrassments: for these she was too young, too ignorant of their effect in the world, to have the slightest sympathy: however, she mastered the bitter anger that gave her momentary and forced composure, while she said,—

“Perhaps I may be permitted to ask what those circumstances were?”

“Impossible!” cried Courtenaye: “dearest Ethel, let me owe my forgiveness only to the kind and gentle heart which once I hoped was mine!”

This appeal to the past was most unfortunate for his cause; his allusion to her feelings seemed to Ethel a positive insult.

“Mr. Courtenaye,” said she, coldly and haughtily, “might have spared any mention of affection so ill bestowed—of confidence so

misplaced. He will allow me to tell him, that whatever my former weakness may have been, not a trace remains of it now !”

“ Ethel ! my own, my only love !” exclaimed he, in a broken voice, “ do not leave me thus ; tell me that time may yet soften your too just indignation ; give me hope.”

“ Never !” said she : “ nay, Mr. Courtenay, I insist upon hearing no more : I only marvel at your dreaming I could ever believe you again !”

Even while she spoke, she turned away so rapidly, that she was gone before Norbourne recovered the shock of her last words. He felt that his case was hopeless, and he could not blame her ; but the spot was hateful to him ; he hurried from the shade, and met his uncle. Lord Norbourne had just seen Miss Churchill alone ; and, under the excuse of having missed her own party, join that of Lady Mary Wortley’s, just then passing.

“ Ah !” said Lady Mary, “ I thought that Lady Marchmont was too well amused to take care of you ; so, come, and I will help you to

find her ; or, rather, let us look for Sir George Kingston !”

Lord Norbourne had watched them pass, and now he met his nephew, pale and agitated. He asked no questions, but drew his nephew's arm within his own ; and, complaining of fatigue, proposed going home.

CHAPTER X.

A LATE BREAKFAST.

Why did I love him ? I looked up to him
With earnest admiration, and sweet faith.
I could forgive the miserable hours
His falsehood, and his only, taught my heart ;
But I cannot forgive that for his sake.
My faith in good is shaken, and my hopes
Are pale and cold, for they have looked on death.
Why should I love him ? he no longer is
That which I loved.

SIR GEORGE KINGSTON had just wrapped her cloak round the graceful figure of Lady Marchmont, and was going to hand her into the carriage, when her attention was asked for a moment by Lord Norbourne. Drawing her within the shadow of a column, he said, in an earnest whisper,—

“ Dearest Lady Marchmont, something has gone wrong between Norbourne and Miss Churchill: I suspect that, from most mistaken pique, she has refused him; may I rely on your influence to set it right?”

“ You may, at all events,” replied she, “ rely on my utmost endeavours.”

“ They cannot fail!” said he: “ do justify Norbourne; tell her how wrong I was to strain my influence to the utmost, as I frankly confess I did: but I must not now detain you. Good night. I leave our cause in your hands.”

So saying, he resigned her to Sir George Kingston’s care, who said, as he placed her in the carriage:—

“ Henceforth I shall need a new calendar; the shortest day of the year is, I have just found out, in July!”

Lady Marchmont found her companions in no mood for discourse. Her husband was asleep, and Ethel’s languid voice was scarcely audible when she forced a reply to some trifling question; and Henrietta could perceive, from the convulsive movement, and from the short

suppressed sob, that she was weeping. When they arrived at home, the light shewed Ethel so pale, so worn out, that she thought all attempt at any intercession were best deferred to the morrow. It must, also, be confessed, that she felt too weary for much eloquence as a pleader.

The golden sunshine of noon, as it fell slanting over the windows of Lady Marchmont's dressing-closet the following morning, lighted up as pretty a piece of artificial life, as could ever have furnished painter with an interior. Fantastic figures, and bright birds and flowers on the paper, recalled nothing that had ever been seen before — the fantastic reigned predominant; so it did in the china scattered profusely round. I never could enter into the passion for china; it is an affection born of ostentation. Those stiff shepherdesses; those ill-shaped tea-pots; those monsters, which take every shape but a graceful one; those little round cups make no appeal to my imagination; they suggest nothing but ideas of trade; they are redolent of the auction-

room. Moreover, I detest bargains ; the bargain can only be one, because either the first purchaser is dead, or ruined. He has left either heirs or creditors, each equally greedy, careless, and impatient ; or, if these toys be disposed of during a lifetime, such sale only tells a common tale of, first extravagance, then want ; fancies indulged thoughtlessly, to end miserably. A bargain is a social evil ; one man's loss, tempting another man's cupidity. But, " it were too curious to examine thus," is the motto of daily existence ; and, in the meantime, the sunshine fell carelessly over a careless world.

The soft west wind waved the curtains to and fro, letting in golden glimpses, now shedding new lustre over the frosted silver, and polished glass, of the mirror ; then, by the change of shadow, giving what seemed almost motion to the quaint figures on the Indian paper, or kindling, with clearer colour, the roses that were crowding the flower-stands. The breath of the roses, mingled with the

fragrant bohea, which stood just made on the little breakfast-table.

Ensconced, each in a large fauteuil, wrapped in loose white dressing-gowns, the hair only gathered with a single riband, sat the two friends. The excitement of yesterday's triumphs had not yet left Lady Marchmont's lip and eye. She was in the gayest spirits; a mood, the inevitable augury of ill; it is like the very bright sunshine which is sure to precede rain. "When the pavement dries so quickly, we may be sure of another shower," is a common saying, and it may serve as a type. Alas! this careless gaiety seems like tempting Fate.

Ethel was the very reverse: the mouth was pale, the eyes were heavy; during the preceding night they had closed with the weight of tears, but not with sleep; she looked what she felt, very wretched. The habit of endurance, almost mistaken for composure, had been broken in upon; she had been forced to remember her past happiness; again to shrink

from the future. It was as if the gates of life had been twice closed upon her; not that, for a moment, she regretted her refusal; never again could Norbourne Courtenaye be what he had been to her; but never could she feel for another what she had felt for him; so young, and yet with all the sweetest hopes of life a blank: she hoped, she feared, she wished for nothing. It was in vain that she made an effort to talk; her companion's gaiety only oppressed her. Henrietta saw that any attempt to lead the conversation to the point she wished, would be in vain; she was, therefore, obliged to do what, to a woman, is especially disagreeable, to begin upon her subject at once. She hesitated; for her own heart told her, that where the lover fails, no third party ever succeeds.

“ My dear Ethel,” said she, “ tell me the truth; what did Mr. Courtenaye say to you last night? Moonlight and sentiment always go together.”

“ Don't be witty now,” exclaimed Ethel, “ I cannot bear it; be serious, and I will not

have a reserve from a friend so kind and so true as yourself. Mr. Courtenaye renewed his offer last night ——”

“ And you accepted him !” replied Henrietta, purposely.

“ Accepted him !” returned Ethel : “ never !”

CHAPTER XI.

CONVERSATION AFTER BREAKFAST.

False look, false hope, and falsest love,
All meteors sent to me,
To shew how they the heart could move,
And how deceiving be :
They left me darkened, crushed, alone ;
My spirit's household gods o'erthrown.

The world itself is changed, and all
That was beloved before
Is vanished, and beyond recall,
For I can hope no more :
The sear of fire, the dint of steel,
Are easier than such wounds to heal.

“ ETHEL,” said Lady Marchmont, earnestly,
“ you are wrong : I will not talk to you, be-
cause I know it would be in vain, of the
advantages of the connexion ; for I believe

too late, that nothing in marriage can supply the want of affection : but, Ethel, you love him !”

“ I did !” replied the other, coldly.

“ Nay, you do !” continued the countess. “ Forgive me, dearest, if I seem to say more than even our old friendship would warrant ; but do let me implore you, not from any mistaken pride — nay,” seeing Ethel about to speak, “ I will not be interrupted — do not, from mistaken pride, throw your happiness away from you. Think what it is to go through life loving, and beloved ; to be understood, appreciated, cared for ; the thousand slight things of daily life made delicious by a quiet, yet well understood sympathy ; your thoughts shared, your sorrows soothed ; a motive for every action, for you know that their object is the happiness of another.”

“ Mr. Courtenaye has already shewed how much he cared for that happiness,” returned Ethel, bitterly.

“ Yet you love him !” said Henrietta. “ True, his name passes your lips ; if you

thought that you were to meet him any where, you would not go; yet, not the less is his image perpetually before you. We drive out together; half the time you do not hear a word that I say; lost in your own thoughts—thoughts which, many slight things betray, are fixed on one object. If you rouse from your reverie, you are restless and agitated; your eye wanders round in one perpetual search; and if, perchance, as has happened once or twice, he has only passed in the distance, your eye brightens, your cheek flushes crimson, and your whole frame quivers with uncontrollable emotion!”

“I did not think,” whispered Ethel, “that I could have shewn such weakness: you know not how I have struggled with—how I despise it!”

“Nay,” replied Henrietta, “why should you struggle with a feeling which, in you, is both natural and excusable? Come, be generous, and forgive Mr. Courtenaye; it is of no use expecting romantic constancy in the present day. You do not know, and, therefore,

can make no allowance for embarrassments of a pecuniary nature; but involved estates are very troublesome things."

"Oh, Henrietta!" exclaimed her listener, "what must that love be which worldly circumstances could, in a moment, suffice to change? Ah, what is there in the wide world that I could not have endured for his sake?"

"Well, then," interrupted Lady Marchmont, "endure a little wrong on his part: I have no doubt his uncle exercised great influence over him. Now, Lord Norbourne, who, I can tell you, is one of your greatest admirers, consents, and there is not an obstacle to your happiness."

"Yes," said Ethel, "there is one not to be got over—the past! Henrietta, I could forgive the misery that I have suffered, though even you know not what it has been. My God, forgive me murmurs wrung from me by wretchedness too great to be endured! Night after night, I have laid my head on the pillow, and prayed that I might never raise it again;

day after day, I have turned away loathing from the morning light! How could I bear to think on the many miserable hours before me! With what heart-sickness I waited for the letter that never came! I have felt my temper grown irritable, my spirits broken, all my former enjoyments grown distasteful, my very nature changed — all this I could forgive, but I cannot forgive his own unworthiness! He whom I thought so high-minded, so generous; to whom I looked up, and on whom I relied with such fearless confidence; for him to prove so cruel, so false! In what can I ever believe again? It is not for his loss that I grieve, but I grieve over my own wasted affections; for all, that I cannot again even dream! No; let Mr. Courtenaye restore me my belief in his own high excellence, let him give me back my hope, my confidence, and then let him ask me to love him once more, — but not till then!”

She bowed her face in her hands, and the large tears trickled slowly through.

“ Yet,” said Lady Marchmont, seating

herself by Ethel, "this very grief shews you regret him."

"It does!" exclaimed Ethel, suddenly raising her face, and dashing the tears aside. "I loved him — utterly, tenderly, as I shall never love again; but I will not trust my happiness a second time with one who wrecked it so entirely: I have not courage to risk such suffering again. He sacrificed me first for interest; I should next be flung aside for some newer fancy. There is no faith to be placed, where faith has been once broken: and now, let this subject be dropped for ever between us. I will not, I could not, marry Mr. Courtenaye!"

"It is of no use," exclaimed Lady Marchmont, as her companion left the room, "and I know not what to say. She convinces my reason, and yet I see she is wretched; she will neither be happy with him, nor without him. Love is a fearful risk; and, I believe, of all the ingenious inventions for multiplying and varying misery, it is one of the most ingenious."

“ One word more,” said Ethel, returning for a moment: “ I must entreat, as a personal favour, that this subject be never renewed between us. It can only serve to keep alive feelings that I owe it to myself to subdue. Henceforth I shall consider forgetfulness a duty.”

Poor Ethel! of all duties, forgetfulness is the hardest to fulfil. The very effort to forget teaches us to remember.

CHAPTER XII.

LADY MARCHMONT'S JOURNAL.

'Tis strange to think, if we could fling aside
The mask and mantle many wear from pride,
How much would be, we now so little guess,
Deep in each heart's undreamed, unsought recess!

The careless smile, like a bright banner borne ;
The laughlike merriment ; the lip of scorn ;
And for a cloak, what is there that can be
So difficult to pierce as gaiety ?

Too dazzling to be scanned, the gloomy brow
Seems to hide something it would not avow ;
But mocking words, light laugh, and ready jest,
These are the bars, the curtains to the breast.

OF all habits, that of writing down your thoughts and feelings, is one of the most difficult to abandon. Henrietta soon found a terrible vacuum left, by the letters in which she used to pour forth every feeling and thought

to her uncle. Often of an evening, when she came home too feverishly restless for sleep, and yet too indolent for defined occupation, a letter had been a resource; now she took to keeping a journal. Sometimes it was burnt the next day, sometimes kept; but the habit formed itself, and her journal soon grew into a familiar friend. A few extracts will shew its spirit.

EXTRACTS FROM LADY MARCHMONT'S
JOURNAL.

WHAT an odd thing it is, the trouble one takes to collect and to amuse people who are rarely amused, and who do not thank us if they are! What do I recollect of the evening? Little, but that I was rather more bored than usual. I should so like to have talked more to Sir George Kingston. I cannot understand how it is that I, who have lived all my life among strangers, should ever feel shy; and yet I very often do. He had singularly encouraging manners, and talked easily. I think of a thousand answers I might have made, now that it is too late. It was positively rude

to talk to another, as I did, while I danced with him ; but I could not help it. “ Could not help it ” — is not that the reason given for nine out of ten of our actions ? He talked to no one but myself : I wish he had spoken to some one else. I should like to hear what he talked about. The other men did not like him ; they called him a coxcomb. Peculiarity in dress is never popular with your own sex ; if possible, you will be called vulgar : if that be quite out of the question, there is the resource of calling you affected. Ethel thinks him handsome ; but she is so taken up with her own thoughts that she has not much attention for any thing else.

Really, being in love appears a pleasant state of existence ; it is always agreeable to know that there is another thinking of you, whether you think of them or not. I like the idea of there being one individual leaving your room who will bear away every look you have given, every word you have said, — it gives importance to them in your own eyes ; and yet I have often marvelled what

people see in each other. Even as a book is read through, people are talked through. One needs change of acquaintance; it is to the mind what change of air is to the body. As Hortense says of the gilded knicknackery of her saloon,—

“ Est-ce utile ?

C'est plus, c'est nécessaire.”

I have never yet been able to steer my lovers through the Scylla of presence, or the Charybdis of absence. If I see much of them I get tired; if I do not see them, I utterly forget them. I hear a great deal of the necessity of loving: I better understand the difficulty of doing it. I wonder whether Sir George Kingston has ever been in love. Does any body ever go through life without feeling it? yet the generality of what are called love affairs appear to me the most insipid things in the world. They put me in mind of the Frenchwoman, who, at a masquerade, was tormented by a full-grown Cupid exclaiming,

“ *Mais regardez-moi, je suis l'Amour.*”

“ Yes,” cried the lady, “ *l’amour propre.*”

After all, a story I have heard my grandmother tell of the last but half-a-dozen Lord and Lady Pomfret’s courtship, is not so far removed from the ordinary course either.

“ Do you love buttered toast ?” was the gentleman’s question.

“ Yes, I do,” was the lady’s reply.

“ Buttered on both sides ?”

“ Oh, dear, yes !”

“ Well, then, we will be married.”

“ How very nice ! Yes.”

Now half what are called love affairs have no higher ground of sympathy than the poor mutual liking for buttered toast.

There are some people who ought never to dream of commonplacing the ideal with themselves. The world of the heart is essentially ideal: it collects all poetry,—innate and acquired; it is fastidious, dreaming, and delicate; and is a question of taste as well as of feeling; and it is to this world that love belongs. It should be kept as far apart from lower life as that mysterious world of stars and

clouds on which I am now gazing. I do like this last hour of the four and twenty that we snatch from sleep. It is so pleasant to feel the excitement of an amusing evening fade away, by degrees, into a mood half thoughtful, half pensive, like the rich colours in the west, melting into the saddened softness of twilight.

What made me say I was bored to-night?—it is an affectation of to-day. It is worse than a sin to be pleased : it is a shame. What has poor, dear Truth done now-a-days, that every body blushes to own her? I ought to be satisfied with the last few hours, if it were only for making me enjoy the stillness ; and there is nothing like the stillness of London—it is intense. The very wind has not a voice, and what a depth of purple is in the sky, broken by a few small bright stars! It was a beautiful belief that sought to read the future in their light. We read nothing there now. My spirit denies my words ; they yet shine down upon us with influence ; they give us dreams, fantasies, and associations : we feel the divinity of our better nature in their

presence. If I ever loved, I would almost wish to be forgotten during the hurry of business and the cares of day ; but let the beloved think of me in the soft and dark silence of a starry midnight : if he have one spiritual or tender thought in his nature, it will be all love's and mine. Mine ! ah, ought I to wish it mine ? But I hate the word " ought " — it always implies something dull, cold, and commonplace. The " ought not " of life are its pleasantest things.

Alas ! for Lady Marchmont, when principle became matter of persiflage, and the heart turned away from its own truth.

CHAPTER XIII.

A DECLARATION.

I cannot choose, but marvel at the way
In which we pass our lives from day to day ;
Learning strange lessons in the human heart ;
And yet, like shadows, letting them depart.
Is misery so familiar, that we bring
Ourselves to view it as " a usual thing ?"
We do too little feel each other's pain ;
We do too much relax the social chain
That binds us to each other ; slight the care
There is for grief, in which we have no share.

AMID the many contrasts produced by our forced unions of nature and art, there is no contrast so strange as that between the exterior and the internal world of society. It would seem as if the one existed only to give the lie to the other. The one—so dark, so deep, so difficult of access ; the other—so covered with glittering falsehoods, and all

seeming so smooth and so easy. Only an occasional sarcasm reveals the unquiet of the subdued, but feverish heart. Nothing could be gayer in appearance than the little circle assembled at Lady Harvey's villa. It was a very warm evening; and the moonlight turned the Thames to an unbroken mirror of silver, and gave to the soft shadows of the shrubs, and the creepers that wound among the trellises, an appearance almost Italian. Watteau might have painted the group on the lawn; and, assuredly, Lady Marchmont, Lady Mary Wortley, and Miss Churchill, were each exquisite specimens of different styles of beauty.

“I am not sure,” exclaimed Lady Mary, “that I like moonlight; it makes one look so pale.”

“Well, if it does,” returned Sir George Kingston, glancing at Lady Marchmont, whose regular features seemed outlined on the air like those of a statue,—

“ ‘*Paleur qui marque une ame tendre
A bien son prix.*’ ”

Lady Mary observed the look, and it put

her in what is best expressed by an ill-humour. Her liking for Henrietta had long since passed away; jealousy had, as usual, been followed by envy, whose companion is sure to be dislike. She had not yet forgiven her for Lord Harvey; and now there was Sir George Kingston, whose homage she had quite resolved on making her own.

“ *Une ame tendre,*” said she; which, being translated into plain English, means ‘ a tender heart.’ “ Why, instead of coming from Paris, I shall believe that you come from Utopia. There are no hearts in our world.”

“ For ‘ ours,’ say ‘ yours,’ ” replied Sir George.

“ No; I mean what I say,” interrupted Lady Mary.

“ An unusual concurrence,” muttered Lord Harvey.

Without attending to the remark, Lady Mary went on.

“ We might have had hearts in our cradles; but, as I don’t pretend to remember mine, I cannot say. Perhaps at sixteen, too, there is

a sort of imagination of one; but it is a phantom which flits at the cockcrowing of reality. We soon learn,

‘ That the worth of any thing
Is just as much as it will bring :’

and we value a lover by the estimate of others, not by our own. Our own suffrage is nothing.”

“ This is making love a mere question of vanity,” said Henrietta.

“ A question, my dear, I should have thought you could have answered as well as any one,” returned Lady Mary. “ Love is society’s Alexander the Great, only intent on making conquests; and we care for no captives but those who follow the track of our triumphs in chains.”

“ I utterly disagree with you,” exclaimed Henrietta; “ I have always thought mystery the very atmosphere of love ! ”

“ Oh! you would like a cavalier, with the dramatic accompaniments of moonlight and mask. Well, the two first are quite ready;

and," added she, with her peculiar sneer, "I dare say Lady Harvey could furnish a mask."

"I think," retorted her ladyship, who cared little what she said, "a muzzle seems more necessary."

"But to resume a subject," said Sir George, "which, whether it be felt or not, is universally interesting. Why, if there be no such thing as love, do we all affect to believe in it?"

"Pray, replied Lady Mary, "don't ask me to account for human inconsistency. Why do people, who would never look at a picture by themselves, pretend to a taste for art?"

"But," interrupted Lady Marchmont, "because some affect a taste, that is no reason that there should not be many who really have it. I, for one, believe both in love, and the love of art."

"Charming credulity!" exclaimed the other;

"Catch, ere she change, the Cynthia of the minute!"
but we all know that you are

'Every thing by fits, and nothing long.'

“It is quite curious to observe,” said Lady Harvey, “how accurately you remember all Pope’s lines. I do believe that he was your *grande passion*; and that you only gave him up for the sake of appearances, which, I admit were not in his favour.”

This was a disagreeable subject — one woman always knows how to plague another; but it had the desired effect: the conversation languished, and the party began to disperse about the garden.

“How very lovely the river is just now, with its dark ripples growing so silvery wherever the moonlight touches them!” exclaimed Lady Marchmont.

“Lovely, indeed!” said her companion; but she saw that her companion’s gaze was fixed upon herself. “Perhaps, from having always staid so quietly in England,” said she, at last, to break a silence, growing every moment more embarrassing,—“I may exaggerate its delight; but I have the greatest wish to see foreign countries. Did you enjoy travelling much?”

“ I never,” whispered Sir George, “ knew what enjoyment was till this moment.”

“ A very pretty piece of flattery,” replied Henrietta, trying to laugh it off; “ but not true.”

“ You feel it to be true,” replied he: “ I cannot talk to you as I do to other women.”

Ah, how subtle is the flattery which at once separates you from the rest of your sex!

“ Do you know,” continued he, “ I sometimes think I fear you?”

“ Fear me!” exclaimed Lady Marchmont.

“ Yes,” returned he, in a low, earnest tone: “ or, rather, I should fear you, did I not see how different you are to the gay, the careless triflers around you. Do you think that I could talk to Lady Mary as I talk to you?—she would not understand me.”

“ Yet, how clever she is!” replied Lady Marchmont.

“ And so are you,” continued her companion; “ but you have, what she has not, a heart—a heart full of all high and kindly qualities.”

“ Oh, pray, go on ! it is,” said she, smiling, “ so pleasant to hear one’s own praises.”

“ Ah !” exclaimed Sir George, “ do not, even for a moment, imitate her, in laughing at all that is serious and true.”

It was not pleasant to be supposed imitating Lady Mary, so Henrietta was silent ; and her companion continued :—

“ I said that I feared you — ah, beautiful, beloved, as you are ! — and you know it !” exclaimed he, passionately, interrupting the words he saw trembling on her lip. “ It is no light thing to know that all control over my own happiness is gone from me for ever ; that my very life depends upon your will.”

And what did Henrietta say ? Nothing ; but she listened.

They were soon rejoined by the society ; and Lady Marchmont strove to still the reproach, which would make itself heard, by forcing the gayest spirits : affection became suddenly matter of the lightest raillery.

It is said that ridicule is the test of truth : it is never applied, but when we wish to

deceive ourselves ; when, if we cannot exclude the light, we are fain to draw a curtain before it. The sneer springs out of the wish to deny ; and wretched must be the state of that mind which desires to take refuge in doubt ! But the instinct of right and wrong is immutable ; all other voices may be silenced, but not that in ourselves.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE AUTHOR AND THE ACTRESS.

I cannot count the changes of my heart,
So often has it turned away from things
Once idols of its being. They depart —
Hopes, fancies, joys, illusions, as if wings
Sprang suddenly from all old ties, to start ;
Or, if they linger longer, life but brings
Weariness, hollowness, canker, soil, and stain,
Till the heart saith of pleasure, it is pain.

“ How beautiful she looked ! but how pale ! ”
exclaimed Walter Maynard, who had seen
Miss Churchill, the night before, at the thea-
tre ; “ and she is not married yet ! Is it
possible that she can know what it is to
have the heart feed upon itself ? — to dream,

but not to hope? Has she found out the bitter mockery of this weary life, whose craving for happiness is only given that it may end in disappointment? But what is this to me? I must be gay—be witty: the points are not yet thrown into the dialogue in the second act. I wish I could remember some of the things I said last night; but, alas! the epigrams uttered over champagne are like the wreaths the Egyptians flung on the Nile, they float away, the gods alone know whither. Nevertheless, I must be very brilliant this morning—brilliant! with this pain in my head, and this weight at my heart,” and he drew a sheet of paper towards him.

At first, he wrote slowly and languidly; but what had been a passion was now a power, and he soon obtained mastery over his subject. The light flashed in his eyes, the crimson deepened in his cheek; and, tearing the first page, he now began to write rapidly and earnestly. Strange the contrast between the writer's actual situation, and that which he creates! I have been writing all my life, and

even now I do not understand the faculty of composition; but this I do know, that the history of the circumstances under which most books are written would be a frightful picture of human suffering. How often is the pen taken up when the hand is unsteady with recent sickness, and bodily pain is struggled against, and sometimes in vain! How often is the page written hurriedly and anxiously,—the mind fevered the while by the consciousness that it is not doing justice to its powers! and yet a certain quantity of work must be completed, to meet the exigences of that poverty which has no other resource. But there is an evil beyond all this. When the iron of some settled sorrow has entered into the soul,—when some actual image is predominant even in the world of imagination, and the thoughts, do what you will, run in one only channel,—composition is then a perpetual struggle, broken by the one recurring cry, “Hast thou found me, oh! mine enemy?” Something or other is for ever bringing up the one idea: it colours every day more and more the creations

which were conjured up in the vain hope to escape from it.

“I cannot write to-day,” becomes more and more the frequent exclamation. It is, I believe, one of those shadows which deepen on the mind as it approaches to its close. It is a new and a dreadful sensation to the poet when he first finds, that “his spirits do not come when he does call to them;” or that they will only come in one which makes him cry, “take any shape but that.” It is a new sensation to be glad of any little return of power, and a most painful one.

Walter now rejoiced whenever he did a morning’s work. Alas! the real was struggling with the ideal. After writing a few pages, he suddenly paused; and, pushing the papers aside, exclaimed, “What a mockery this is! I do not know myself what I write for. Money!—why should I make more than will hold this miserable alliance firm—just keep body and soul together? and sometimes I ask, is it worth even doing that? Fame!—alas! what would I now give to hope, to be-

lieve in it, as I used to do ! but it is far off and cold : it lies beyond the grave. And love — it is a bitter thing to love in vain ! — to feel that none will ever know the deep tenderness, the desire for sympathy, the sweet wealth of thought that is garnered in your heart. How passionately I wish to be beloved again ! to pour out my whole soul, were it but for a day, and then die ! ”

The emotion exhausted him ; for Walter had tried a frame, naturally delicate, too severely. The vigil and the revel, the hour of social excitement and that of solitary suffering, were alike doing their work. Bodily weakness mastered for a time the mind. The tears filled his eyes, and he closed them ; a few moments more, and he was asleep. He had slept for about half an hour when there came a low rap at the door ; this did not disturb him : and the applicant, who had a key that fitted the lock, opened, and came in without further ceremony. It was Lavinia Fenton, gaily but richly dressed ; the world had gone well with her. She took off her mask and laid it on the

table, together with a small basket ; and, looking around, saw Walter asleep on the sofa. She bent over him for a few minutes with an expression of anxiety and tenderness, which, for the time, quite subdued the expression of her bold, though fine features. Sleep shewed the change that a few months had wrought. The soft brown hair was damp, and the dew stood on the white forehead, where the blue veins were azure as a woman's. You saw the pulses beat in the clear temples, and the chest heaved with the quick throbbing of the heart. The cheek was flushed with rich unnatural crimson ; but both around the mouth and eyes hung a faint dark shadow, the surest herald of disease. The hand, too, how white and emaciated it was ! yet with a feverish pink inside.

The girl leaned over him — vain, coquetish, selfish ; the degradation inevitable from her position lowering even more a nature not originally of fine material ; yet one spot in her heart was generous, and even pure. She loved him. Had she been beloved again, her whole

being would have changed ; for his sake she would have done any thing, and could have become any thing. Lavinia was clever ; a coarse, shrewd kind of cleverness, quick to perceive its own interest, and unscrupulous in pursuing it. She had no delicacy, no keen feelings that got in her way. She had made great progress on the stage, was a favourite with the public, and, if not happy, was, at all events, often very well amused. Still her heart clung to Walter : she knew that he loved another, that the connexion between themselves was rather endured than solicited on his part ; still she had for him a careful and disinterested tenderness, that half redeemed her faults — at least, it shewed that all of good and feminine kindness was not quite extinct within her. She leaned over him, while her eyes filled with tears.

“ He is dying,” muttered she, in a low whisper ; “ he has too little of this world in him to last long in it,” and she buried her face in her hands.

But it was no part of Lavinia's system to fret long over any thing: she was too selfish, perhaps we should say, too thoughtless, for prolonged sorrow. Life appeared to her too short to be wasted in unavailing regret. It is the creed of many beside our young actress. She rose softly from her knee, flung back the hair that had fallen over her face, dashed aside the tears, and muttered, "It is that he has not been in bed all night." She then began to make preparations for breakfast, took the fruit and cream from her basket; and it was the fragrant smoke of the coffee that roused Walter from his sleep.

It was curious to note the difference between the two whom circumstances had so thrown together; those circumstances, all that was in common to them. Lavinia — shrewd, careless, clever; ready to meet any difficulty, however humiliating, that might occur; utterly without principle; confident in that good fortune, which she scrupled at no means of attaining — was the very type of the real.

Walter was the ideal—generous, high-minded, clear in perception; but sensitive, even weak, in action; or, rather, too apt to imagine a world full of lofty aims and noble impulses, and then fancying that was the world in which he had to live.

CHAPTER XV.

DIFFERENT VIEWS OF LIFE.

And thus it is with all that made life fair,
Gone with the freshness that it used to wear.
'Tis sad to mark the ravage that the heart
Makes of itself; how one by one depart
The colours that made hope. We seek, we find;
And find, too, charm has, with the change, declined.
Many things have I loved, that now to me
Are as a marvel how they loved could be;
Yet, on we go, desiring to the last
Illusions vain, as any in the past.

“ So, all my improvement in your heroine was thrown away upon you. I thought how it would be when I saw Miss Churchill in the stage-box.”

It was long since Walter had heard her name, and the sound jarred upon his ear; it brought the real too harshly amid the delusions with which he delighted to surround her image.

“ Well,” continued Lavinia, “ life is just like a comedy, only it does not end so pleasantly; but it has just as many cross purposes. Here I am in love with you, who care only for Miss Churchill; she, again, loves Mr. Courtenaye, and he loves only himself, as far as I can make out.”

“ Do choose some pleasanter subject,” exclaimed Maynard.

“ Oh, then I must talk of myself: I cannot think of a pleasanter one,” said she. “ Do you know that I have made a brilliant conquest? — one that half the fine ladies in London are dying for.”

“ I congratulate you,” replied her companion.

At that moment a slow, heavy step was heard on the stairs. Walter caught the sound before his companion heard it.

“ For Heaven’s sake ! ” whispered he, “ be silent. There is that eternal dun again. I shall pay him next week, when that cursed pamphlet is done. But the door is closed, so are the windows ; if he hears nothing, he will think I am not at home.”

The actress put her finger upon her lip ; and so susceptible is an imaginative temperament of outward impression, that, for a moment, Walter forgot every thing but how well the pretty attitude and the arch look would have told on the stage. But a loud single knock at the door recalled him to the full humiliation of his position. The colour rushed to his face, and then left him deadly pale, while he held his breath lest it should betray him. The young actress was at first inclined to laugh ; but there was a wretchedness in the expression of Maynard’s countenance which subdued even her reckless gaiety ; knock after knock sounded heavily upon the door, still heavier did they sink on his spirit who sat crouching and miserable within. A probation of long and shameful years must be

gone through ; each one with endurance more bitter, suffering yet more intolerable, before the debtor can arrive at that system of reckless evasion which is the last stage of poverty. Hope and honesty must long have been left behind, one finer feeling must have been crushed after another, and hunger been predominant, before debt can be held as other than the most intolerable shame, the most oppressive misery. Walter was yet young in his career, and he felt it bitterly.

At length, the creditor, tired of knocking to no purpose, and convinced that Maynard was not within, thrust a letter under the door, and his steps were heard slowly descending the oaken staircase. Walter could not breathe even when the echo of the last died into utter silence. He dreaded lest he should return. Lavinia sprang up; even her light feet jarred upon his ear: it seemed as if the least movement must recall the man again.

“ Hush !” exclaimed he, in a broken voice.

“ Nonsense !” replied the girl ; “ he won’t come again to-day. Why, it is not much,”

added she, opening the bill: "I will pay it for you."

"Give it me!" exclaimed Walter, angrily, colouring even a deeper red. "I wish you would not open my letters."

"I am so rich to-day," said she, laughing; "and what makes me in a good humour, puts you in a bad one. Come, come, be a good child; leave the affair in my hands, and you shall be plagued no more about the matter."

"Lavinia," replied he, taking the bill from her, "there are obligations which it is an affront to offer."

He was right in his refusal. Sooner or later a woman must inevitably despise the man who takes money from her. Before a man can do this, there must be those radical defects of character to which even kindness cannot always be blind. He must be a moral coward, because he exposes her to those annoyances which he has not courage enough to face himself; he must be mean, because he submits to an obligation from the inferior and

the weak ; and he must be ungrateful, because ingratitude is the necessary consequence of receiving favours of which we are ashamed. Money is the great breaker-up of love and friendship ; and this is, I believe, the reason of the common saying, that " large families get on best in the world," because they can receive from each other assistance without degradation. The affection of family ties has the character on it of childhood in which it was formed ; it is free, open, confiding ; it has none of the delicacy of friendship, or the romance of sentiment : you know that success ought to be in common, and that you have but one interest.

" You must not look angry," said Walter, whose heart smote him for his petulant refusal. " My difficulties only need a week's hard work ; but, I do not know how it is, I am not so industrious as I used to be. A little thing takes off my attention, and I am feverish and restless."

" It is," replied the other, " that you work too much."

" No," returned he, " it is that I do not

work enough; that I allow my mind to be fretted and distracted with other things. I am never so well, or in such good spirits, as when I shut myself up, and do nothing but write. I wish I could always keep inventing instead of thinking. But we have forgotten your brilliant conquest. What is the name of your new *adornateur*?"

"Who should it be," replied the actress, with an air of triumph, "but the handsomest and the most fashionable man in London — Sir George Kingston?"

"Sir George Kingston!" cried Walter; "why you say, truly enough, that he has turned the prettiest heads in London! I cannot understand the luck that attends on some, from the very cradle. There are men, who seem only sent into the world to shew how much fortune can do for a favourite! And so you are to be

'Orsini's mistress, and his fancy's queen!'"

"You need not look so surprised," exclaimed Lavinia, with a slight air of pique.

“ It was at Sir George Kingston’s good fortune, then,” interrupted Maynard : “ I congratulate you on having taken possession of a heart that so many are trying for !”

“ I am sure,” cried the young actress, “ I never said any thing about a heart ; I very much doubt whether a man like Sir George Kingston has one. He is excessively vain ; and, having lived all his life in society, to society he looks for the gratification of his vanity. He has one object in existence -- to be talked about ; for this he devotes himself to the reigning beauty ; for this he rides the finest horses, and gives the best dinners ; for this he has furnished his house in Spring Gardens in the most splendid manner ; and for this he will take me to be the prettiest piece of furniture, there !”

“ I have heard he is very clever,” said Walter.

“ He is no such thing,” replied Lavinia ; “ but he desires to be thought so. I believe, what first made him talk to me was, that he might say my good things somewhere else.

As for liking me, he cares no more for me than I do for these currants!" scattering a bunch over her plate as she spoke; "and yet you will see what influence I shall exercise over him. A man who leads his sort of life, must be subject to *ennui*; he will require to be amused, and I am amusing; it is my business. Moreover, he is vain, and I shall flatter him — the more coarsely the better."

"I begin to believe," muttered her companion, "that what is called delicate flattery, is an absurdity."

"You should lay it on," resumed she, "as we do paint on the stage; it is quantity that tells. But I have, also, another hold on Sir George; I shall do all sorts of absurd and outrageous things, and they will gratify his darling propensity—they will make him talked of!"

"Lavinia!" exclaimed Maynard, suddenly and earnestly, "have you a grain of feeling?"

"It is well for you, Walter, to ask that," answered the girl, her whole face changing, and her words half choked by strong emotion.

“ I was wrong,” cried he ; “ to me you have always been kind and enduring : but forgive me, I am not well, and am grown sadly irritable.”

“ For one word, one look of yours,” continued she, “ you know well I would give up every thing else in the world. Oh ! that you would let me stay beside you, to watch you, to nurse you : but this is folly—” for her quick eye caught the coldness on her companion’s face ; “ I know you do not love me, that you never could love me now. Well, I have chosen my own path ; but oh, Walter ! there are times when, in the silence of the night, I sit at my window and see the stars shining down so coldly and so sadly, that my thoughts go back upon other years, and a sort of dream comes over me of a far different happiness ; I see you, Walter, when but a boy, with your soft, serious eyes, sitting at the feet of my old grandmother, and reading aloud to her : I have not profited much by those words—” and the girl paused, pale and tearful ; but, before Maynard had time to answer, she had started up : “ but I

shall be too late for rehearsal, and Sir George will be there; he intends giving the gayest suppers after the play; I shall take care that you are asked;" and, without waiting for a reply, or bidding further farewell, she left the room so suddenly, that Walter had no time to have prevented her departure, even if he had wished it.

The sound of the door, as it closed after her, sank heavily upon his heart; let her faults be what they might, she was the only human being who cared for him.

CHAPTER XVI.

LADY MARCHMONT'S JOURNAL.

Deep in the heart is an avenging power,
Conscious of right and wrong. There is no shape
Reproach can take, one half so terrible
As when that shape is given by ourselves.
Justice hath needful punishments, and crime
Is a predestined thing to punishment.
Or soon, or late, there will be no escape
From the stern consequence of its own act.
But in ourself is Fate's worst minister:
There is no wretchedness like self-reproach.

HE did not call yesterday at the usual hour.
How intolerably long the morning seemed;
and yet I owed it a new pleasure, it brought
my first note from him. I now know his
hand-writing; it is graceful, almost, as a
woman's. I shall not see him till to-morrow.
Ah! is it true that I, and I only, shall be

present to his thoughts? that life is only life when passed at my side? How intensely I feel the happiness of being loved! I am so grateful for it! Till now I have been so unappreciated, so uncared for; no one, since my dearest uncle's death, has desired to read my thoughts, or to look beyond the surface, and find what deep and passionate affections lay below.

I am the better for being beloved; I desire to be kinder to others; I would fain share my utter content; a deeper pity crosses me when I see sorrow. I was growing selfish, cold, careless; I am so no longer. I listen patiently, a sweet and ready sympathy seems to knit me closer to my kind. Life had grown so wearisome, I hoped for nothing, cared for nothing; now, a new delight mingles with all things: a look, a word of his, makes my heart beat with tumultuous pleasure.

The other night, he came sooner to Lady Townshend's than was expected, and for my sake. I knew he was there before I saw him. How different he is to every body else! Per-

haps this is the real mystery of love. I remember reading, long ago, an Eastern story of a dervise, who had a mystic ointment, with which, when the eyes were touched, all the hidden precious things of earth were given to view. The gold and silver shone within the mountain, and the diamonds glistened within the secret mines: so it is with love, who is the fine magician, shewing all the veiled treasures of the heart. How much has love taught me, that is true and beautiful! What a mistake to build our hopes on the external vanities of life! circumstance is nothing. How worthless, now appears to me, all that once seemed the chief objects of existence! our happiness lies within. To love, says all that can be said of intense and engrossing delight; even when away from him, the sunshine of his presence lingers behind. He gathered from the old garden-wall a branch of those fragile roses, which, frail as they are, linger on to the last: I have kept them, and those few withered leaves have a charm I never yet found in a flower;

“ They breathe
Not of themselves, but thee !”

Strange, too, how all old enjoyments revive : things that I had thought gone by for ever, I read with almost my former eagerness ; but I apply all I read to him. Ah ! no moment is languid now ; I have so much to remember ; I retrace all he said, all he did ; I imagine a thousand scenes in which we both take part.

Why is it that, in dreaming of an ideal future, I never lay the scene in London ? I fancy to myself a lone and lovely island, far away in the southern seas, where never another step entered but our own ; such an island as lives in Pope’s delicious verse. How happy I could be in Calypso’s cave, where

“ Cedar and frankincense, an odorous pile,
Flamed on the hearth, and wide perfumed the isle.
Without the grot, a various sylvan scene
Appeared around, and grotts of living green ;
Poplars and alders ever quivering played,
And nodding cypress formed a fragrant shade,
On whose high branches, waving with the storm,
The birds of broadest wing their mansions form ;
The chough, the sea-mew, and loquacious crow,
And scream aloft, and skim the deep below.

Depending vines the shelving caverns screen,
And purple clusters blushing through the green ;
Four limpid fountains from the clefts distil,
And every fountain pours a several rill
In mazy windings, wandering down the hill,
Where blooming meads with verdant greens were crowned,
And glowing violets throw odours round."

I did not feel the full charm of these lines when I first read them, but I do now. It is with such scenes as these—lovely, lonely, and distant—that I connect his image, not with the false and glittering passages of our daily intercourse. The feverish and tumultuous capital is only the "*place où l'on se passe le mieux du bonheur.*" Will he always love me as he seems to love me now? Why do I say *seems*? out on such cold suspicion! In the truth of my own heart, I read that of his; and yet there are moments when I doubt even to despair; when the terrible truth of my position forces itself upon the memory, which would fain shut it out for ever.

What right have I to rely on the constancy of another, who am false myself? I tremble at the future; what can I, what dare

I, hope for? Oh, that we had met earlier! how happy we might have been! Yet, what do I take from Lord Marchmont, but that which he cares not for,—my dreams, my thoughts, my feelings? Alas, I cannot deceive myself! I am wrong, very wrong; I could not have written to my uncle what I have written here! I can write no longer, it only makes me wretched!

And Henrietta turned away to be more wretched still. She felt what she did not own even to herself—the humiliation, the degradation, of her position. It is love's most dreadful penalty to fear, lest that very love lower you in the eyes of even him who inspires it; and yet this was the inevitable result of such an attachment. But Henrietta's first step in life had been a false one: she had married a man whom she did not love; and she had learned, too late, that in marriage nothing can supply the place of affection.

And she had a yet harder lesson to learn—that nothing can supply the place of strong,

undeviating principle. There is but one wrong, and one right; but, alas! Henrietta was beginning to make those palliations and excuses for her own conduct, which should be reserved rigidly for questions in which we are not personally concerned. We may, we ought, to be merciful to others; to ourselves, we should be only just.

CHAPTER XVII.

A SECRETARYSHIP.

Alas! and must this be the fate
That all too often will await
The gifted hand, which shall awake
The poet's lute? and, for its sake,
All but its own sweet self resign,
Thou loved lute, to be only thine!
For what is genius, but deep feeling,
Wakening to glorious revealing?
And what is feeling, but to be
Alive to every misery?

“I FEAR,” said Mr. Courtenaye, as he entered Walter Maynard's room, “that you must almost have forgotten me; but I have not been well, indeed: to-morrow, I am going down to the country; but I could not leave London without coming to see you, and I have something, I hope agreeable, to say.”

Walter received his visitor with obvious pleasure. He had, for some time, been fancying that Mr. Courtenaye neglected him; he was shy, sensitive, and had of late been suffering under those tortures

“ The poor alone can know,
The proud alone can feel ;”

and at such a time how we exaggerate any slight! and neglect, that, by the gay and prosperous, is not even noticed, appears a grievous wrong to poverty and depression.

Norbourne just glanced round the room; but that single glance took in a whole history of privation and discomfort. The windows were dark with dust; and rain, scarce dried on the seat of one, shewed that it had been inadvertently left open. The lamp, on the table, had burnt into the socket: Walter had been writing all night, and the daylight had stolen on him so gradually, that he had neglected to extinguish the companion of his task. It was now noon, and a cup of half-drunk coffee stood beside him; but it was cold, the remains of the evening before. There were no books,—he

had parted with the few that he had, but a quantity of papers were scattered about. The slanting sunbeams kindled the thick air; long lines of dusky and tremulous golden atoms mocked the gloom which surrounded them; and Norbourne, as he breathed the thick atmosphere, did not wonder that Walter even coughed with difficulty.

“As busy,” said he, “and are you as enthusiastic, as ever?”

“Ah, no!” exclaimed Walter; “I no longer believe in

‘Wonders wrought by single hand!’”

“And yet,” replied Norbourne, “all great discoveries have been the result of single endeavour. We owe the Iliad, America, and the Protestant faith, to individual effort!”

“The instances you have quoted,” replied the other, “are certainly very encouraging! Homer past a life in blindness and beggary; Columbus, in vain solicitation and feverish disappointment; and Luther’s was spent in struggle, imprisonment, and danger. The

benefactors of mankind are so at their own expense !”

“ This is very different,” cried Courtenaye, “ from your early creed ; then you held the onward-looking hope, and the internal consciousness, to be the noblest incentives, and the best rewards, of high endeavour.”

“ Then,” replied the other, “ I believed and hoped ; now, alas ! there are times when I do neither. I would give worlds to recall my early eagerness of composition, and my reliance on the mind’s influence.”

“ You cannot doubt that influence,” interrupted Norbourne : “ from our veriest infancy we feed upon the thoughts of the dead ; even your own strong and original mind has been cultivated by others. I never enter a library without being grateful to those whose moral existence has formed my own. Our sages, our poets, have left a world behind, formed of all that is good, beautiful, and true in our own. Not a life but owes to them some of its happiest hours ; they are our favourites, our old, familiar friends.”

“How happy,” said Maynard, “would one half the praise and honour lavished on an author after his death have made him during his lifetime! Let the grave close over the hand that has laboured through feverish midnights,—over the warm heart that beat so painfully; let the ear be closed to that applause which was its sweetest music;—and then how lavish we grow of all that was before so harshly denied! Then the marble is carved with eulogium; then the life is written; and thousands are lavish of pity and sympathy: everything is given when it is too late to give anything!”

“But you, my dear Walter,” interrupted his friend, “are a successful writer;

‘Your works are charming, for they sell;’

and you are yourself a welcome guest, flattered!”

“You have used the right word,” interrupted the young poet, colouring; “I am flattered, because flattery is a sort of com-

merce, and I give more than I get. My works sell; but look at the amount of labour, and calculate how poor is the recompense! half that toil, half that talent, given to any other pursuit, would have ensured wealth. Then, as to society, what do I gain by my admission there? First, my spirits, which I need for my own pursuits, are exhausted in the effort to amuse; and, secondly, I have the opportunity of contrasting idleness and luxury with the toil and privation of my own lot."

"Then, dear Walter," said Courtenaye, "why not accept my uncle's offer?"

"Nay," exclaimed the other, "to sell my mind, appears to me only renewing the old bargain with the devil, and selling your soul!"

"I never did, and never shall, urge the subject upon you," answered his companion; "but I have another proposal to make to you, which involves no sacrifice of political opinion. Sir George Kingston is in want of a secretary, and caught eagerly at my mention of you.

Between ourselves, I suspect the office will be a sinecure ; but Sir George affects literature, and will prove a most liberal patron, were it only for the air of the thing."

"And you have been thinking of me, and planning for my benefit ; while, shall I confess, that I have been reproaching you in my secret heart with having forgotten me !" exclaimed Walter, to whose impetuous feelings confession was a relief.

"If you knew," resumed the other, "how my last few weeks have been spent, you would not blame, but pity me. My dear Walter, there is a wretchedness that shuns even its nearest friend : but let us talk of yourself. I have made your going to Sir George a sufficient favour, and taken upon myself all the needful arrangements. Your salary is high ; you are to have apartments in the house ; and to be the autocrat of the library, where, I shrewdly suspect, your reign will be undisturbed."

"How kind you are !" whispered his listener.

“ And now, will you dress ? ” said Courtenaye ; “ for I have promised to take you to breakfast with Sir George. He is impatient to secure you, and we are to be in Spring Gardens by two o’clock. He will expect us ; for I am, what he calls, ‘ disgracefully punctual ! ’ ”

CHAPTER XVIII.

INTRODUCTION.

In the ancestral presence of the dead
Sits a lone power ; a veil upon the head,
Stern with the terror of an unseen dread.

It sitteth cold, immutable, and still,
Girt with eternal consciousness of ill,
And strong and silent as its own dark will.

We are the victims of its iron rule,
The warm and beating human heart its tool,
And man immortal, god-like, but its fool.

THE church clock struck two, an example followed, during the next quarter of an hour, by half a dozen timepieces, as Courtenaye and his companion entered the room where Sir George Kingston, half dressed, half lounged, the morning away. The walls were hung with

damask, of a rich Indian red ; he used to contend, that pale colours were a mistake in a sombre atmosphere like that of England.

“ Very well to subdue the glowing noon of Italy with your cold sea-green, but here we need a little interior crimson, to remind us that there is such a thing as warmth in the world.”

Several pictures, all representing human and beautiful life, hung round ; and china and toys, that a lady might have envied, were scattered about. The windows looked over the park, and were filled with exotics ; while panes of coloured glass threw rainbow gleams of coloured light over the alabaster vases, and one or two exquisite statues. The breakfast-table was drawn to the open casement ; and, in the large arm-chair beside was Lavinia, dressed fancifully, somewhat over richly for the morning, but looking both picturesque and handsome. Sir George was thrown, at full length, on the sofa ; a small table, covered with books, drawn close towards him ; among which, the plays, poems, and pamphlets of Maynard were conspicuous.

“Punctual to the moment!” exclaimed he: “what a bad heart, Courtenaye, you must have! I can understand no other motive for a man’s being punctual, but a desire of putting all the rest of the world to shame.”

“I had no such magnificent motive,” replied Norbourne, smiling; “my only one was to introduce Mr. Maynard to you.”

“I can forgive punctuality in such a cause,” said Sir George, with his most courteous manner; “but I rather feel,” glancing at the table, “as if I were renewing my acquaintance with an old friend, than making a new one.”

Walter could not but feel gratified by such a reception.

“I need not,” continued his host, “present you to the Lavinia, she being your own especial creation. Pray, did you make your ‘Coquette’ for her?”

“Say, rather,” interrupted the actress, “that I made it for him. But that reminds me that our parts are to be cast in the new opera to-day: mine is to be all sweetness and simplicity!”

“Nay,” said Mr. Courtenaye, “do not leave us so soon!”

“I cannot afford,” said she, laughing, “to lose a single air or grace on your account. What is the homage of three cavaliers, compared with that of half the town?” and, rising from her seat, she left the room, humming one of those delicious airs, which afterwards made the *Beggars’ Opera* so popular.

“That last speech,” exclaimed Sir George,

‘Might serve as motto to all womankind;’

it is the much and the many for which they care!”

“I am amazed,” interrupted Norbourne, “to hear you say so; you, who have so many devoted to you, and you only!”

“That is the very reason they are devoted; if I had only myself to offer, who would care for that? but when the triumph is over half a dozen rivals, even my unworthy self becomes an object of consideration! It is not,” continued Kingston, “that they wish so much to have me themselves, as to take me away from others!”

“ Do you never,” asked Walter, “ fear the fate of Orpheus ? ”

“ Oh ! that,” replied Sir George, languidly, “ was merely an allegory of my actual existence. I, literally, am torn to pieces ; I shall be obliged to marry some day, by way of protection !

‘ Ay, there are moments when my thoughts disclose
A dreadful moment, dark with future woes ! ’

at present, however, I have no intention of allowing any woman to carry so selfish a design into execution ! ”

“ ‘ Bold were her deed who sought in chains to bind
The great destroyer of half womankind ! ’ ”

replied Courtenaye.

“ Really we ought not to broach such melancholy subjects,” exclaimed Sir George, “ my spirits are not equal to them of a morning. Here, La Fleu ! bring some champagne, and do let us talk of something less alarming ! Have you read Pope’s last three books of the ‘ Odyssey ? ’ ”

“ Yes,” answered Maynard, to whom the

question was addressed ; “ Pope reverses the former system of writing : the ancients traced their characters in wax, but his are transcribed in honey ! ”

“ What diverts me the most, ” continued Sir George, “ is, Ulysses being always called ‘ the much enduring man. ’ After all his ten years of wandering are past, pleasantly enough, the greater portion of them being spent with Circe and Calypso — to be sure, it was rather tiresome staying so long with the last — how he must have enjoyed his flirtation with the Phœnician princess ! ”

“ Certainly, this is a new view to take of Ulysses ! ” replied Courtenaye.

“ The truth is always a novelty, ” returned Kingston ; “ but I have always considered the patient Ulysses, the model of a classical coquette : you may get many useful hints from his career. ”

“ I shall go home at once, ” said Norbourne, rising, “ and begin to study the ‘ Odyssey ’ on new principles ! ”

“ The blue-eyed goddess forbid that I should

interfere with any such laudable intention! but you must return to dinner," said Sir George, "and then Mr. Maynard and I will tell you how we like each other; not but what I have quite made up my mind on the subject."

The next hour was devoted to making a favourable impression on his secretary during their *tête-à-tête*, and in this he completely succeeded. Walter could scarcely help being pleased with the graceful flattery of his host, which, to him, seemed to be so wholly without motive; but, to be popular, was Sir George's passion; moreover, he fully intended to use Maynard's talents to the utmost, and he knew enough of human nature to know, that when we serve those we like, the service is well performed. He shewed the stranger to his rooms, attended to several minute arrangements for his comfort, and ended by shewing him into the library, where every luxury of literature was lavished.

"And now," said he, balancing himself on one of the tables, "as I intend we are to

be friends, I must tell you my faults ; or, rather, my fault. Do you remember what some one wrote over the grave of Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans? '*Ci-gît l'oïveté,*' idleness being the mother of all the vices, these said vices being all very accurately represented by her daughters. I do not know whether idleness has been quite so productive with me, but I know that it is my besetting sin ; I hate being obliged to do any thing ; I want you to do every thing that I ought ; to write for me, think for me, feel for me !”

“ I perceive,” exclaimed Maynard, laughing, “ that mine is not to be a sinecure office !”

“ Oh,” returned the other, “ you may always leave, at least, half undone of whatever I ask you to do ; I only make an exception in favour of my love-letters, there you may do a little more : in those sort of affairs, it is always safe to exaggerate !”

“ You do not mean to say,” exclaimed the secretary, looking the surprise he felt, “ that I am to write your love-letters !”

“ Indeed I do ! ” answered Sir George :
“ you will find it a great deal more amusing,
than if I wanted you to write either pamphlets
or speeches. The fact is, that I am too good
an actor, to succeed as an author. I do assure
you, that when *en scene*, I am often surprised
at my own readiness of resource, but I need
stimulus. I cannot sit down by myself, and
fill four sides of paper, which said time might
be so much more amusingly employed ; no,
life is not long enough to write letters ! ”

“ But how,” cried Walter, “ can I possibly
know what to say ? ”

“ You must invent ! ” replied the other :
“ fancy that you are in love with the lady
yourself ! ”

“ But what I might like to say, may or
may not suit the circumstances. ”

“ Oh,” said Sir George, “ I shall give you
the outline, but the filling up must rest with
yourself. There, sit down in that arm-chair ;
love-letters should always be written in a com-
fortable position ! ”

Walter obeyed ; and, drawing towards him

the mother-of-pearl inkstand, prepared to begin.

“I have only three affairs,” continued Kingston, “on my hands at present, of sufficient importance to warrant my committing pen, ink, and paper, which always appears to me an expedient to be reserved for the last extremity of *une grande passion*. To one only of these do I propose drawing your attention this morning.”

He opened an embroidered portfolio; and, from its perfumed depths, took out a letter, which he began to read aloud. Involuntarily, Walter became interested; there was an earnest sadness, and a poetry about it, which spoke no common writer.

“You see,” said Sir George, throwing it down on the table for Walter to see if he liked it, though it never even entered into Maynard’s head to look at it, “there is scope for your genius. She is romantic — clever — needs excitement; and, therefore, flavours her affection with a handsome seasoning of remorse. I shall expect a master-piece from you to-night;

till then adieu, and pray feel as much at home with me, as I do with you. By the by," added he, turning back from the door, "be sure you fill the paper; women judge of the strength of your attachment by the length of your letters!"

Walter drew the papers towards him; at first he hesitated, but the pride of art gradually arose. The letter soon became mere matter of composition; it was written, the writer fully satisfied with his own impassioned eloquence, and then put aside for Sir George's approval. This completed, Walter leant back in his chair, and gave way to a pleasant wonder at the change in his own situation. In the morning he had scarcely known which way to turn;—poor, harassed, overworked. Now, he had a luxurious home, a certain salary, and might work little or much, as he pleased.

"What a folly," exclaimed he, "are our own exertions; every thing depends upon a lucky chance in this world!"

Walter was wrong; but I own I tremble at the fatality which sometimes seems to hang

over our slightest actions. How often do we find ourselves involved in sudden misery and unhappiness, by circumstances over which we have no control! and we ask bitterly, "What have I done to deserve this?" Not in this world will be the answer!

CHAPTER XIX.

RETURN TO COURTENAYE HALL.

Ah! never another dream can be
Like that early dream of ours,
When Hope, like a child, lay down to sleep
Amid the folded flowers.

But Hope has wakened since, and wept
Itself, like a rainbow, away ;
And the flowers have faded, and fallen around,
We have none for a wreath to-day.

Now, Truth has taken the place of Hope,
And our hearts are like winter hours ;
Little has after life been worth
That early dream of ours.

CHANGE is the universal prescription for a wounded spirit. "It will do you so much good," is the constant remark. Perhaps it may; but how reluctant is any one who is

suffering mentally, to try it! There is an irritation about secret and subdued sorrow, which peculiarly unfits you for exertion; you are discontented with all that is around you, and yet you shrink from alteration; it is too much trouble; you do not feel in yourself even energy enough for the ordinary demands of life.

This was the case of Norbourne Courtenaye. The morning after her conversation with Miss Churchill, Lady Marchmont had written a note, stating its result, to Lord Norbourne, who had placed the note in his nephew's hands. Norbourne, for his uncle's sake, made a strong effort to appear indifferent; and, by a tacit consent, the plan was never made a subject of discourse between them again. But he suffered keenly and deeply; the more so, because it was no longer a duty to subdue his regrets. He had, and did, love Ethel, wholly and fondly; he felt that he could never love another, and he shrunk from the solitude of his own heart.

It had been, for some time, necessary for

him to visit the Hall, and yet he had delayed his going. He shrunk from all that it would recall; he shrunk from change, because he felt that monotony was a resource. On his arrival, his mother was startled to see how ill he looked; but people who reside entirely in the country, are apt to lay a great deal to London, of which that poor dear, ill-used city, is completely innocent. She never doubted that a little fresh country air would quite restore him; and when she saw him, as usual, pass the great part of every day out of doors, she was, for the time, quite satisfied.

Time was to work wonders; and, at least, it accustomed her to the change that had at first appeared so startling in his appearance. But could she have seen the listless manner in which he wandered through the woods, the carelessness with which he would fling himself on the damp grass, her natural anxiety would have been alive even to agony. I believe that one great reason why the suffering of the mind is so often followed by suffering of the body is, that we are so indifferent about

it, that we do not care to take even those ordinary precautions which are taken almost unconsciously in general. There is nothing in life worth attention, not even ourselves.

One evening, lost in one of those melancholy reveries which had become his chief occupation, Norbourne lingered too late on the banks of his favourite lake. The twilight had been one of unusual beauty; the rich crimson, which had kindled the waters with transitory radiance, died gradually into faint violet, and the whispering of the leaves had sank into a deep silence, unbroken even by the distant sheep-bell, which had been one of the latest sounds. It was the dark quarter of the moon; but the stars came out, one after another, upon the cloudless heaven; those stars, sad and soft, which have so much fanciful, and so little real, sympathy with earth: not in their pure, calm light, can the destinies of life be written. Never had Norbourne felt more lonely; there were a thousand thoughts and fancies gushing at his heart, which he longed to share, but which must now remain for ever unshared.

He looked back to his hurried and feverish life in London, and felt how much happier was the one that he had formerly planned to himself. With Ethel for his companion, he would have desired no happiness beyond his own hearth, no sphere of utility beyond his native hills.

The evening wore away, and the long grass was silvery with dew; the consequence was what might have been expected, — next day, he was laid up with a violent cold; and the fever soon ran so high, that delirium came on; and before three days were past, his life hung upon a thread.

Mrs. Courtenaye hung over him in silent despair; and despair increased by all that escaped from his lips during the delirium of fever. Till the present moment, Mrs. Courtenaye had believed that her son's attachment had been merely a boyish passion; eager and romantic at the time, but leaving no after-trace on the character. The delicate silence that he had observed on the subject, tended

to confirm this impression ; but now that the heart was on the lips, uncurbed, and unconscious, the secret of that heart became her own. He spoke of Ethel continually ; entreated her to forgive him ; deprecated her coldness ; and implored her to retract her refusal.

In putting aside the various papers that were about him when taken ill, Lady Marchmont's note fell into her hands. She read it, among others, requiring immediate answer, little, till then, supposing that it had been kept, with all the bitterness of memory, for months. Its contents were as follow :—

“ DEAR LORD NORBOURNE, — I regret having to communicate what has been the result of my conversation with Miss Churchill ; I am afraid that all women are a little unforgiving, when the inconstancy of a lover is to be pardoned. I see clearly that nothing will induce her to listen to Mr. Courtenaye. Ethel is gentle and timid, but there is, also, a degree of firmness, for which I did not give her credit.

The sooner the matter is put an end to, the better. Life presents too brilliant an aspect to Mr. Courtenaye, not to console him for a single disappointment; that it may be his last, is the sincere wish of one who is,

“ Most sincerely,

“ Your obliged

“ HENRIETTA.”

The note dropped from Mrs. Courtenaye's hand. What! then her son had still cherished his old attachment! He had offered, and been refused! There was that in her own nature, which sympathised with the pride, for such she held to be the motive, dictating the refusal. Then, resentment for her son's suffering became the predominant feeling. This could not last; and, for the first time, she thought what Ethel's sorrow might have been — sorrow that might well turn to after bitterness.

To find that you have been deceived, where you trusted so entirely; trifled with, where all your deepest and sweetest emotions had been

called into life, is the most acute—the most enduring sorrow of which that life is capable. Mrs. Courtenaye started to think that she had never considered the matter in this light before.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SICK-ROOM.

'Tis midnight, and a starry shower
Weeps its bright tears o'er life and flower ;
Sweet, silent, beautiful the night,
Sufficing for her own delight.
But other lights than sky and star,
From yonder casement gleam afar ;
The lamp subdued to the heart's gloom
Of suffering, and of sorrow's room.

SINCE the commencement of her son's illness, Mrs. Courtenaye had never quitted his bedside, but when exhausted nature forced her to take that repose from which she shrunk. To-night she took her accustomed place ; for, during the night, no vigilance could satisfy

her but her own: any eye but hers might close in momentary forgetfulness.

Down she sat, the lamp lighted, but its flame carefully screened from the sick man's face. The little table beside, supplied with all that could be needed, was at her side; her rosary in her hand, and again she began another vigil. Norbourne had at length fallen into a heavy sleep, and every hope hung on the state in which he might awaken from it. Mrs. Courtenaye could scarcely restrain herself from starting up in an agony, when she thought on what the morrow might bring forth. The room was dark, but she was accustomed to its dim light, and there was not a feature in that white face — white as the pillow on which it rested — in which the slightest change was not distinctly visible to her. She rose, and bent over the sleeper: there was something in the utter helplessness of sickness that reminded her of infancy. A lapse of years went by, and she did not see the young man laid before her, but the little child, that loved no one but herself, whose whole world was fashioned by

herself; she felt that her whole life had been devoted to him; and yet, had her object been accomplished? was he happy? and the answer seemed to come, cold and distinct on her ear—No!

Mrs. Courtenaye had never forgiven her husband the deception, or rather the thoughtlessness, that had marked his conduct towards her. From the moment that she became aware of her real position, a feeling of mingled dislike and coldness arose, which no kindness, not even submission, on his part, ever softened again. She was at once humiliated and embittered; but the warm heart, and the strong mind, must have an object; and her energies, equally with her affections, had concentrated themselves on her son.

In urging his marriage with Constance, she had been actuated, quite as much by consideration for him, as for herself; but now it appeared to her only selfishness; she had urged him on her own account. Of an unyielding and severe nature herself, she had exaggerated Lord Norbourne's determination,

who certainly would never have acted upon the knowledge he possessed ; but now she only thought of how her entreaties had wrought with her son. She cleared the mist that had gathered before her sight, and looked long and earnestly on the face of the patient. There were symptoms of recovery not to be mistaken ; the feverish flush had died away, and the breathing was regular ; she ventured to touch the forehead with her lips, it was cool, and the pulse was subdued. Again she resumed her seat, but the expression of her countenance was changed ; the working of some strong emotion was in the troubled lines of her mouth. Gradually, the fine features settled into a lofty and resolute composure ; the eyes, large and dark, filled with a light, spiritual and calm. She rested the crucifix on the table ; and, kneeling before it, was, for some moments, absorbed in earnest prayer. She clasped her hands, and raised them towards heaven, when her devotion was disturbed by the faint movements of the invalid. She sprung to the bedside in a moment ; Nor-

bourne was just awaking. His eyes slowly unclosed; and, for the first time for many days, he was sensible he saw her bending over him; and the first faint words of returning consciousness were,—

“ My mother! my dear mother!”

CHAPTER XXI.

LADY MARCHMONT'S JOURNAL.

We might have been !— these are but common words,
And yet they make the sum of life's bewailing ;
They are the echo of those finer chords,
Whose music life deplores when unavailing. —
We might have been !

Alas ! how different from what we are,
Had we but known the bitter path before us !
But feelings, hopes, and fancies, left afar,
What in the wide, bleak world can e'er restore us !—
We might have been !

IT is now a fortnight since I have seen him !
How often have I wished that he had been
of our party here ; and yet but for this ab-
sence, I should never have had his letters ;
I should never have known him as I now do.
What a world of thought and of feeling have

they not revealed! Till now, I never did him justice. I have sometimes thought him, in conversation, too merely amusing; too ready to laugh at enthusiasm,—at what is most true and generous in our nature. How wrong I was! wit, with him, was only the sparkle of the waters which hide precious things in the depths below. I can enter into the sensitiveness which is fain to keep that which it prizes most dearly, hidden from a cold and mocking world. I enter completely into his scorn of our present state of society, so false, so mean; and yet I was scarcely prepared for this dark misanthropy, which dissects so unsparingly, and throws its cold, searching light, into all the miserable retreats of our small vanities and absurd pretensions.

How false we are, how unkind! I do not find that I can quite force myself to follow in the track of his glorious aspirations for the future, but how I respect him for the belief! Will the time ever come, when men will feel that the mind and the heart must work in concert, and that we must look around and afar for our

happiness; that our great mistake has been, the narrow circle to which we are content to limit good? Alas! there is a weight upon my spirits; my wings are of wax, they melt in the effort that would seek the heavens. But much of this originates in my own peculiar position: it is a hard one, and a false one!

I love Sir George Kingston; love him with all that is most tender in my feelings, most generous in my thoughts. I could be happy only to know his happiness. Had we met in earlier years, my existence would at once have found its object; there would not have been this perpetual struggle between myself and my circumstances. Too late do I find that affection is woman's only element; to love, to look up, is her destiny; and, if unfulfilled, nothing can supply its place. Life has no real business for her beyond the sweet beating of her own heart dwelling in the shadow of another's. She may crowd her days with gaiety, variety, and what are called amusements; she will do so only to find their insufficiency. She needs the strength of duty,

and the interest of affection. But I—I tremble at my happiness! my life is a struggle with my feelings and my circumstances! Sometimes I wish that I had never seen him, and then I have not courage to deny myself what has been such an unutterable source of enjoyment.

It is strange, but I love him best in his absence! then my imagination creates all that it wishes; all that I admire in him grows the richer for memory's setting: then I can imagine an existence that enables me to shew my utter devotion without a fault. I start back with sudden horror, when I remember what even he may think of me. The love which should be my pride, the dearest hope which earth can raise to heaven, to me is degradation and misery. The deceit that I practise towards Lord Marchmont sinks me to his own level. I despise him: alas! I should rather despise myself.

She flung the pen down, and began to pace the room with those hurried steps which

so often indicate the troubled mind, the inward suffering—fear, mingled with remorse: there was, unconfessed even to herself, a still and hushed dread that the worst was yet to come. Lady Marchmont already began to shrink from the future.

CHAPTER XXII.

DISCOVERY.

Who, that had looked on her that morn,
Could dream of all her heart had borne?
Her cheek was red, but who could know
’T was flushing with the strife below?
Her eye was bright, but who could tell
It shone with tears she strove to quell?
Her voice was gay, her step was light,
And beaming, beautiful, and bright:
It was as if life could confer
Nothing but happiness on her.
Ah! who could think that all so fair
Was semblance, and but misery there!

“ I CANNOT understand the cause of Sir George Kingston’s not calling this morning; he knows that I am returned to town:” and a flush of haughty anger coloured Lady Marchmont’s brow; but the colour deepened when she looked at the time-piece, and had been

expecting him for hours. How many changes had passed over her mind during that time! At first, there had been only that intense and passionate delight which fills the very soul at the thought of seeing a beloved object. Gradually came on the wonder of the loving heart, that any thing in the world could induce him to delay such happiness. Then thoughts, less entirely of eager and uncalculating affection, intervened:—the flattered and spoiled beauty was surprised that she could be kept waiting. But mortification was of short endurance. Henrietta felt too deeply for small vanity, she soon grew anxious; and if there be one torture which the demons, who delight in human misery, might rejoice to inflict, it is the anxious suspense of love acting upon an imaginative temperament. It is extraordinary the power of creation with which the mind seems suddenly endowed, and only to suppose the worst. Death, sickness, crime, misfortune,—these are the images which start upon the solitude made fearful with their presence. But there mingled among them, for Lady March-

mont, a spectre darker than the rest—remorse. Whatever sorrow might be hanging over her head, and her punishment might be greater than she could bear, she bitterly acknowledged that it would be just.

At this moment a note was brought in, its perfume reached her before itself. She knew it was from Sir George.

“ Any answer ? ” asked she, with a careless coldness, belied by her flushed cheek and trembling hand.

“ None, ” replied the servant ; and Lady Marchmont was left alone ; only then had she courage to open it. It contained a few hasty lines :—

“ How have I offended you ? Twice have I called this morning, and each time you have been peremptorily denied. What unknown crime, Henrietta—if I dare still call you so—have I committed ? Shall you be at Lady Townshend’s masked ball to-night ? In the course of the evening I shall send you some flowers ; I implore you to wear them. Not but

what I should know you under any disguise ;
still wear them as a sign, that I may hear my
fate from your lips. Till then, as through life,
Your devoted Servant,

GEORGE KINGSTON."

Lady Marchmont read the note in mute astonishment. She clasped her hands for a moment tightly together, and the blood sprang from the bitten lip ; she then slowly, but calmly, approached the table, and rang the hand bell. The servant immediately appeared.

" Did you misunderstand my orders ?" said she. " I desired Mademoiselle Cecile to say, that I should be at home this morning."

The man appeared a little embarrassed, and replied with some hesitation : — " Lord Marchmont has, perhaps, forgotten to tell your ladyship that he gave the porter a list of names, including all those who were henceforth never to be admitted ; and it so happens, your ladyship, that the list includes almost all who have called to-day."

" If such were Lord Marchmont's orders,

of course they are also mine," replied Henrietta, with desperate calmness.

The man left the room, and she sank back, pale and cold, on the sofa ; but her agony was too great for fainting. There could be but one motive for Lord Marchmont's conduct ; and yet she felt almost grateful to him. He had not exposed her to general comment : Sir George Kingston was only excluded among others. She had not given him credit for so much delicacy ; it touched her to the heart : she felt capable of any sacrifice to repay it.

At that moment she heard Lord Marchmont's step upon the stairs. A world of agony was in the next few moments ; every slow and heavy step of her husband fell, like a death blow, upon Henrietta's ear. The door opened, and she cowered among the cushions of the couch. She had resolved to confess all, to implore his pardon, to submit never to see Sir George again ; but now the words died upon her lips, and there she leant, pale and breathless, with what just seemed to herself

strength to hear the worst, and then die upon the spot. She had not courage to look up. Lord Marchmont approached in his usual deliberate manner, seated himself in an arm-chair opposite, and said,—

“ I have some more than usually pleasant intelligence this morning—intelligence I was not authorised to communicate till within the last hour.”

Henrietta could scarcely believe her ears : there was any thing but anger or jealousy in the tones of his voice ; and when, at last, she ventured to catch his eye, there was only his usual calm expression of self-complacency.

“ I have just seen,” continued he, “ Sir Robert Walpole, who has honoured me with a long and confidential conversation. I now completely comprehend his views.”

Bewildered as Henrietta felt, the quotation from the old ballad rose to her memory when she heard Lord Marchmont talk of comprehending Sir Robert’s views,—

“ But what’s impossible cannot be,
And never, never comes to pass ;”

but she preserved a discreet silence, and his lordship continued :—

“ Our admirable and patriotic minister has agreed with me in the necessity of drawing our party as much together as possible. An immense deal may be done by conciliation ; and I have promised Sir Robert to give a series of splendid entertainments.”

The fact was, that Walpole had been in utter despair what to do with their new acquisition, he was so useless in every way. At length Lord Norbourn started the brilliant idea of making him dinner-giver to their party. People forgive their host being a bore, when the fact is all but concealed by champagne and venison.

“ It is fortunate,” added Lord Marchmont, “ that I am not jealous, or I should have been quite alarmed at Sir Robert’s eulogiums on your beauty.”

“ I am much obliged,” said the countess, coldly, who was turning in her mind the best way of introducing the interdicted list.

Lord Marchmont saved her the trouble. "I quite forgot to see you this morning before I went out. Let me tell you now, while I think of it, that I gave the porter a list, this morning, of every one of our acquaintance who had the least leaning to the other side, that, in future, they might not obtain admittance;" so saying, he gave his wife also a list of names. "I copied them out for you, that you might avoid them in public."

"Why," exclaimed Henrietta, "you have included all the pleasantest people that we know; many, too, of your own oldest acquaintances."

"I cannot," said his lordship, with a solemn air, "allow my own feelings to interfere with my duty to my country: but I know that you do not understand these things. You must," said he, pausing on the threshold of the door, "be content to obey."

"Obey!" muttered Henrietta, with a scornful sneer, as she sank back on the sofa. Still she felt too sad for scorn long to be the

predominant emotion ; and she yielded to the sadness—it was an atonement. That night she resolved to see Sir George Kingston, and bid him farewell for ever.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MASKED BALL.

Life is made up of vanities — so small,
So mean, the common history of the day,—
That mockery seems the sole philosophy.
Then some stern truth starts up — cold, sudden, strange;
And we are taught what life is by despair:—
The toys, the trifles, and the petty cares,
Melt into nothingness — we know their worth;
The heart avenges every careless thought,
And makes us feel that fate is terrible.

AMID the many mirrors called into requisition by Lady Townshend's *fête*, not one gave back a lovelier likeness than that which reflected the face and form of Lady Marchmont. She was dressed after a picture which had impressed

her imagination from a child, in her uncle's collection. It was called "The Enchantress;" but the real name, for it was obviously a portrait, and that of the artist, had long since been forgotten. The style of costume was peculiar and striking; but it suited the present as much as it had done the former wearer. The robe was of black velvet, fitting tight to the shape, with large, loose, hanging sleeves, lined with scarlet silk. Round the waist was a rope of pearls, from which hung large tassels; and the deep border was of various colours, forming an Etruscan pattern of small strange characters.

There were no ornaments on the neck and arms; indeed, Lady Marchmont had used up the principal of hers to form the curious head-dress of the picture. The hair was formed into one thick braid, which went round and round the head: amid the folds of this was wound a serpent of precious stones, whose head, formed of rubies and diamonds, rose out of the knot behind, and made a sort of crest. Two little wings, about the size of a butterfly's,

were on either side of the serpent's head; and the brilliants, of which they were composed, caught every ray of passing light.

At her side was a bouquet of red and white roses, they had been sent that evening, with one single line,—“ I hope and I fear!”

The poet who first likened his mistress' eyes to the midnight, must have gazed on such orbs as those of that young and lovely countess. There was the moonlight—clear, melancholy, and spiritual; but there was also the shadow of the coming storm—the radiance that is of the meteor, and the darkness that is of the cloud. There was a troubled and unquiet brightness in those dark black eyes, which revealed the passionate workings of the fevered spirit and the beating heart. The cheek was flushed to the richest crimson; and there was that quiver about the muscles of the mouth which betrays, more than any other external sign, the subdued emotion.

Henrietta was under the influence of strong excitement; every nerve had been overstrained during the day, and they were now braced with

the forced composure of a desperate resolve. She was too agitated to rest : more than once she opened a volume, but only to close it hastily again without reading a single line ; and then, starting from her seat, she resumed her hasty walk up and down the room.

The chair being announced, she fastened on her mask, and drew her domino round her, it not being her intention to display her splendid and fantastic costume till supper, when all the guests were expected to unmask. On her entrance into the ball-room, she drew her dark envelope more closely round ; but in her hand there were the red and white roses.

“ Ah, I needed not those signal flowers,” said a low, sweet voice ; and, garbed as a Spaniard, which suited well with his stately figure, Sir George Kingston came to her side. She took his arm in silence ; all she had intended to say seemed like the words of a dream ; for a few, a very few, moments she could be alive to nothing but the happiness of his presence.

Love has to every one its separate emo-

tions; but there is one sensation common to all—the hurried, confused pleasure, which puts every thing else aside, of meeting.

Lady Marchmont heard none of the voices around her, saw nothing of the glittering crowd; her eyes were fixed on the ground. She did not venture to look at her companion; and yet her whole being was absorbed in his. While away from him she had framed her discourse, she had arranged the many reasons of farewell, she had convinced with argument, she had subdued him with entreaty; and now that she was at his side, what did she say? — nothing! and is not this a common case? Who ever said one half of all that seemed in absence so easy to say?

The rooms at Lady Townshend's were much crowded, and there was something very odd in the quaint and strange looking figures that were assembled. Princesses, nuns, knights, pilgrims, bandits, and monks, mixed together with a superb defiance of the historical truths of costume that would have driven an antiquary mad.

But there always is in my mind something at once ludicrous and mournful in a crowd congregated for the purpose of amusement. What discontent, what vanity, move the complicated wheels of the social machine! There are many pleasures that one can comprehend, and even go the length of admitting, that they are worth some trouble in endeavouring to obtain; but the mania of filling your house with guests of whom you know little, and for whom you care nothing, is only less incomprehensible than why they should be at the trouble of coming to you.

The Arabs of the desert, who gather beneath the shadow of the palm-tree to listen to some tale of wild enchantment, have an actual pleasure. The moonlight shews their dark eyes kindling with eager enjoyment, as they hear how the warrior gained his beautiful maiden at last. But this is not the case with our modern assemblings; no one can accuse them of wearing faces of eager enjoyment. They are *blasé* and languid :

to-morrow they will admit how tired they were of the party of the previous night; but the admission is made on their way to another.

Lady Townshend's *fête* was no exception to the general rule, excepting, perhaps, that a masquerade, by having a character for wit to support, is a little more wearisome, by being more forced than any thing else.

Lady Mary Wortley, who was there in her pretty oriental dress, accurate from the gold embroidered slippers to the sprig of jessamine in her plaited hair, thought it rather more tiresome than usual; for, by ill luck, Lord Marchmont had stationed himself at her side; and for a dull man to attempt persiflage, is more than mortal patience can endure. Glancing round, she saw Lady Marchmont and Sir George Kingston, whom her quick eye had recognised at once, enter a balcony which looked towards the garden.

“I tell you, *beau masque*,” said her ladyship, “you are wasting time upon me that

might be much better bestowed. There is Sir George Kingston busy making love to your wife. Don't you think that you had better look a little after her?"

"Oh, I am not at all alarmed," replied Lord Marchmont.

"Well," replied Lady Mary, "there is some Christian charity left in this wicked world. It is quite charming of you to devote yourself to the amusement of the town as you do. Why, every body is laughing at your blindness."

"How very ridiculous!" exclaimed he.

"Is Lord Marchmont talking of himself?" asked a mask behind: but while his lordship turned round to discover who was his new tormentor, Lady Mary effected her escape; and Lord Marchmont, finding himself near no one that he knew, began to consider whether he might not as well follow her advice.

Lady Mary's had been just a random assertion, only thrown out to get rid of a wear-

some companion ; and yet to what important consequences it led ! But it is the inevitable consequence of guilt, it places its punishment on a chance ; and that chance is sure to occur.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A SCENE AT THE MASQUERADE.

I do not say, bequeath unto my soul
Thy memory, I rather ask forgetting ;
Withdraw, I pray, from me thy strong control ;
Though, that withdrawn, what has life worth regretting ?
Alas ! this is a miserable earth !
Too late, or else too soon, the heart-beat quickens :
Hope finds too late its light was nothing worth,
And round a dark and final vapour thickens.

THE silken folds of the crimson curtain which hung over the window, and a stand of odorous plants, almost concealed the balcony where Henrietta and Sir George were standing. Behind them were the illuminated rooms, from

whence came gleams of light as the curtains waved to and fro; and the sound of voices, lost in the music, swept but softened towards them.

Below was the garden, a scene of complete tranquillity; the trees were old and thickly grown, the lights from the windows seemed to play over their dense foliage, but not to penetrate it.

The air rose fresh and sweet, and Henrietta had taken off her mask. The face was pale as the moonlight which fell over it, and her large sad eyes were raised towards Sir George, with an expression so hopeless, so deprecating, that even he shrank from meeting them.

“ You know that I love you,” said she, in a low, faint whisper,—“ love you as those love who have but a single object on which the affections can fix. I love you miserably, desperately !”

“ But you love your own pride better,” exclaimed her companion.

“ Pride !—ah, no !” returned Henrietta. “ I have no pride but in you. I could be content

to be a slave, a beggar, for your sake. All that I ever read of my sex's devotion seems possible — nay, natural, when I think of what I feel for you. I should hold my life as nothing could it purchase your happiness.”

“ And yet,” interrupted Sir George, “ you can calmly, coldly condemn me to the most insupportable misery.”

“ I am very wretched,” muttered she, rather to herself than to him.

“ Rather say capricious and inconstant,” replied her companion.

“ Alas !” replied she, “ I deserve these reproaches for having ever listened to you. Sir George, I have done wrong, inexcusably wrong ; but the hopeless, the dreary future that lies before me, might atone for my fault.”

“ And so you will,” exclaimed he, “ sacrifice me for Lord Marchmont, whom you both despise and hate ?”

“ I do despise, I do hate him !” returned Henrietta, bitterly ; “ but, not the less, I am his wife. Listen to me, Sir George. I cannot endure the humiliation of my own reproaches ;

to-morrow I will return your letters. I will, at least, try to avoid seeing you ; — but, surely, that was a step.”

“ It was only the wind in the curtain,” said Sir George, who, like herself, had started at some slight noise.

“ Alas !” exclaimed she, “ is not this very fear degrading ? Why should I care that my words may be overheard ? Why should I shrink from discovery ?”

“ Ah,” exclaimed her companion, “ if you loved me with but a shadow of the love that I bear towards you, you would not dread a little risk — it is but a little — for my sake.”

“ Ah,” cried Henrietta, “ do you think it is merely the consequence from which I shrink ? Ah, if my own heart did but tell me that I was right, how little I should care for anything else !”

“ I care for nothing but yourself,” interrupted her companion.

“ Have you no pity for the misery that you will inflict upon me ?”

Henrietta’s voice failed her, she could only wring her hands with a passionate gesture of

entreaty. Sir George saw his advantage, and continued:—

“ I know that it is selfish to urge my happiness ; but, dearest ! sweetest ! it is so wholly in your hands. But, you are pale, my beloved ; come in from the damp air.”

“ You shall find my chair,” said Henrietta, faintly ; for the emotion with which she had contended was becoming too much for her. “ I must go home.”

“ You have scarcely been here half-an-hour ; but,” said he, making a merit of obedience, “ I will not urge your stay, I see that you are not equal to it. If you did but know how I hang on your least look, you would not dream of depriving me even of but one of them.”

The chair was soon found ; and, as Sir George turned away, he drew a deep breath. “ On my honour ! a grand passion is very fatiguing. I have half a mind to take her at her word—have one last scene of repentance, be converted, and there let the matter end. But—no : an unfinished conquest is almost a defeat. I cannot allow remorse to

master love — love of which I am the object : it is not being properly appreciated : I must throw in more despair. ‘ This do I, oh, Athenians ! for your applause, ’ ” exclaimed he, as he turned into his club to see if he could find one or two pleasant friends for supper.

CHAPTER XXV.

LORD MARCHMONT'S JEALOUSY.

You never loved me! never cared for me!
Had I been taken kindly to your heart,
This present misery were all unknown:
But I have been neglected and repelled;
My best affections chilled, or left to feed
Upon themselves. I have so needed love,
I should have loved you but from gratitude,
If you had let me.

HENRIETTA felt quite overcome with bodily indisposition as she proceeded homewards. Her hands were feverish, her temples throbbed with acute pain; she was wretched, but there was confusion in her thoughts; she seemed as if it were impossible to dwell on any one

subject for even a moment. A dead weight was upon her spirits, they had been strained to the utmost. Intending to lie down at once, she began unfastening the glittering bands of her hair even while going up stairs; but her hands sank down, and she stood fixed on the threshold as she entered.

There sat Lord Marchmont; having broken open her writing-desk, he was looking over the letters; too well did his wife know what he would discover. The very epistle that he was reading she recognised at once. The contents ran thus:—

“ You say that you despise your husband, that but for dislike you would forget his very existence: your high and generous nature avenges itself. It could have no sympathy with the true or the noble if it sympathised with him. The great fault of his character must be its extreme littleness. There is not room for the warm blood to circulate, for the loftier emotion to expand. You — so sensitive, so high minded! — what can you have in common with him?”

The rustle of Henrietta's dress drew his attention ; he looked up, and saw her standing, pale and motionless, on the threshold.

“ You are earlier than I expected, madam,” exclaimed he, starting up, and leading, or rather dragging, her forward, “ considering in what agreeable society I left you ! I am sure my house is much honoured by your return ; but you do not stay here long : I have a great mind to turn you into the streets to-night.”

Henrietta felt sinking, but she did not faint ; the worst was come, and there was that in herself which seemed to rise to meet it. In a better cause, what fortitude, what endurance, would have belonged to her nature ! even humiliated, self-convicted as she felt, her native pride could not quite desert her. Still, the blood curdled at her heart, the lip trembled ; but it could not yet force itself to speak.

“ And so these pretty letters are addressed to my wife,” continued Lord Marchmont ; “ a fine return for all my kindness ! and to see, too, what you say of me ! I always knew I was a great deal too good for you. But I'll

tell you what, madam, all the town shall know of your infamous conduct; and you shall pass the rest of your life in a farm-house in the country."

"Ah! any miserable place," murmured Henrietta, "so that it be but solitude."

"Where you could receive Sir George Kingston: but I will take care to prevent that," interrupted he. "I overheard all your conversation to-night."

"If you overheard our conversation," exclaimed Lady Marchmont, "you overheard also my remorse. You know that, though imprudent, I am not guilty; and that I was myself about to break off a correspondence, whose fault, whose folly, none could feel more bitterly than I did myself."

"I heard all you said about me," interrupted Lord Marchmont, not the least attending to what she was saying. "I never knew such ingratitude! Look at your house, at your carriage; there was nothing in the world that you wanted."

"Yes," said Henrietta, "what you never

gave me—a heart. Lord Marchmont, I have done wrong, very wrong; but you have been wrong also.”

“ Oh, yes! of course,” cried he, “ lay the blame upon me. It is a lucky thing that your uncle is dead, he would not like having you sent back disgraced on his hands.”

“ Thank God that he cannot know my shame and misery!” exclaimed the countess, while the mention of her uncle brought the tears to her eyes; but they were not allowed to fall, they only glistened on the eye-lash. “ Lord Marchmont,” continued she, “ you yourself know that I am what is called innocent; but I do not for a moment extenuate the error I have committed. But I have some claims on your forbearance. Ask your own heart if it has ever shewn to me that affection which is woman’s best safety.”

“ How am I to be made answerable for the romantic nonsense which Sir George Kingston has put into your head?” asked he, angrily.

“ Ah!” exclaimed she, “ what I now urge

I have felt ever since I arrived in London. You have never cared for me, or cautioned me against the many dangers which surrounded my vain and heedless career."

"How could I tell that you would turn out so badly?" again he asked.

"Lord Marchmont," cried Henrietta, "there is yet time to save me from utter wretchedness and crime. I am young, very young — forgive me, and my whole life shall be devoted to atone for the past, and to shew my gratitude."

"And," answered he, with a sneer, "you will take care not to be found out next time."

"I do not deserve this," said she. "Lord Marchmont, at your feet, I implore your pardon!" and she knelt as she spoke: "give me but one proof of your confidence, and my whole life shall shew it has not been given in vain."

"Madam," said he, throwing her from him, "you forget how glad I shall be to get rid of you." So saying, he left the room, and she heard him order supper as he went down stairs.

The fact was, that Lord Marchmont had long disliked his wife : he did not understand her wit, and he feared it. The very admiration she inspired, displeased him : it gave him an uncomfortable feeling as to her superiority.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE LETTERS.

It is a weary and a bitter hour
When first the real disturbs the poet's world,
And he distrusts the future. Not for that
Should cold despondency weigh down the soul :
It is a glorious gift, bright poetry,
And should be thankfully and nobly used.
Let it look up to heaven !

“ It is earlier than I thought,” said Walter Maynard, as the sound of one of the French clocks disturbed the gloomy reverie in which he had been plunged ; “ but I have not spirits to go out. Every day I feel more and more disinclined to the least exertion ; and yet I never was in a position that demanded it

more. Debts, difficulties, surround me on every side; and yet I cannot force myself to that employment which would soon release me from them.

“The iron has entered into my soul, and it weighs me down to earth. I cannot bear staying here, the office of Sir George’s secretary is too degrading. To what use am I turning the talents once destined to achieve such lofty purpose! I am applying them to the meanest deceits,—to gratify the miserable vanity of a man, as much my inferior by nature as he is my superior by fortune. I cannot continue to live with Sir George: I despise him too thoroughly. Every day I decide on leaving him. I act against every sense I have of right in staying; and yet I lack the resolution to leave.”

Walter leant his head upon his arm, and remained lost in thought. He did not take into consideration his shattered health; consumption had already begun its work, and he drooped beneath its fever—that fever whose re-action is languor. But he referred his dis-

taste only to the mind, which he felt was exhausted and depressed within.

Few know the demands made by the imagination on those who are once its masters and its victims. Its exercise is so feverish, and so exciting; the cheek burns, the pulse beats aloud, the whole frame trembles with eagerness during the progress of composition. For the time you are what you create. The exhaustion of this process is not felt till some other species of exertion makes its demand on the already overwrought frame, the overstrained nerves begin to discover that they have been wound to the utmost. There is no strength left to bear life's other emotions.

Poverty, the effort made in society; love, fretted out of "the lovely land of dreams," by being often in the presence, and perpetually hearing of the object whose possession is hopeless;—all these combined to wear out Maynard's sensitive and shrinking frame. Moreover, there is a time when every writer asks himself, has he not followed the shadow, not the substance? that his noblest hopes, his most

earnest aspirations, have been given those who know not what the gift has cost.

Fame seems afar off, and cold sunshine ; and that eager readiness of thought, which found in the slightest thing matter for some graceful fancy, which at once sprang into music, seems cold and dead within us.

There are times when the poet marvels how he ever wrote, and feels as if he never could write again. Alas ! it is this world's worst curse, that the body predominates over the mind ; and this was just now the case with Walter Maynard.

He was roused from his meditation by a light touch on the shoulder : it was Lavinia Fenton, of whom he had lately seen but little. The fact was, he had carefully avoided her society ; but to-night he felt glad of any one who broke in upon the gloomy shadow of his own thoughts.

“ My cold is so bad to-night,” said she, “ that I cannot venture out ; and, not knowing what to do with myself, came to see if I could

find amusement here. I have found you, and that is better than nothing."

"I was just thinking," replied Walter, "that I was worse than nothing."

"Well, it is not every one," answered she, laughing, "who forms such a just estimate of themselves. I do not think that modesty is a virtue very often rewarded in this world; however, I shall take upon myself to reward it to-night by drinking tea with you."

"And I will tell you an idea that has struck me," replied he, "as a good groundwork for a drama. I do not know how it is, but I need more encouragement than I used to do, to begin any thing new. Now, talking over a plan, is a sort of beginning; and, careless as you are, you have an intuitive judgment."

"Because," interrupted the actress, "I see things exactly as they are. I calculate my effects, but they do not deceive myself; you, on the contrary, live in a world of illusions, where every thing is called by such an ex-

ceedingly fine name, that it seems a downright impertinence to ascertain what it really is."

"Why, as you say," exclaimed Walter, "an epithet does go a great way. It is not so much what a thing is, as what it is called."

Lavinia's only reply was, to hum a stanza from the opera, then in its earliest popularity:—

"' Since laws were made for every degree,
For others, as well as for you and for me;
I wonder we have not better company
On Tyburn tree.'

I am as hoarse as a raven, begging my own pardon for the comparison. Now, what has led to my train of thoughts to-night is, looking over Sir George Kingston's love-letters."

"Does he shew them to you?" asked Walter, with uncontrollable surprise.

"Why, what do you think he keeps them for, but to shew? They are really quite encouraging to me: there is not so much difference between the green-room and the drawing-room; only, to be sure, my coquetry is paid for!"

“How little real love,” said Maynard, “there is in the world!—how many other baser feelings usurp its name!”

“They may,” cried Lavinia, “be generally classed under two heads,—idleness and vanity. There are more love affairs originating in the want of something to do, than from any other motive. The lover and the physician are each popular from the same cause—we talk to them of nothing but ourselves; I dare say that was the origin of confession—egotism, under the fine name of religion.”

“Sir George Kingston is very egotistical,” said Walter; “I observe that, let the topic be what it will, it winds round to himself!”

“You would not wonder,” returned Lavinia, “if you could but know the world of flattery which he contrives to obtain. Believe me, that a very vain man cannot do better than devote himself to our sex; no where else will he have his vanity so soothed, and so fed.”

“But,” interrupted Walter, “it is man’s part to flatter women!”

“ Not half so much as women flatter men,” cried the actress. “ We are more ingenious, more refined and ready, than you are. Besides, we imply, where you express; and flattery, by implication, is the most subtle and penetrating of all. And, lastly, there is more of the heart in what we utter; we do feel a little of what we say.”

“ And you mean to imply,” exclaimed her companion, “ that we do not!”

“ Yes,” answered she. “ I lay it down as a rule, the truth of which all experience confirms, that every man behaves as ill as he possibly can to every woman, under every possible circumstance!”

“ A sweeping censure!” cried Walter.

“ And, like all sweeping censures,” said she, “ if not true of, perhaps, one or two wonderful exceptions, it applies strictly to the generality. What man has the slightest scruple as to gaining the confidence; making himself not only necessary to her happiness, but that very happiness itself; and then sacrificing her to vanity, caprice, or any slight

motive, that would not be held valid for one moment in any other matter!"

"And yet," exclaimed Walter, "what a delicious and a precious trust is that affection which yields its sweetest hopes to your keeping! you are in the place of destiny, to the woman who loves you."

"Do you know, Walter, that, though I know what you are saying is great nonsense," interrupted Lavinia, "I cannot help liking you for the deep, true feeling, you carry into every thing. Still, even you only confirm me in my creed; the warm emotion, the generous faith, only place you in the power of others, and power is what we all abuse. You, with your kind heart, your lofty talents, are you happy?"

"Oh, you know I am not!" exclaimed Walter. "I feel that I shall never be what I have powers to become: I cannot make the future my home, as I used to do."

"A most unsubstantial one!" cried the actress: "give me the praise that rings upon the ear; the applause that comes over the

foot-lights! But I am still hoarser with talking, and here comes the tea; and, to console you for my interruption, I will quote your own lines:—

The fairer flowers are those which yield not fruit;
Our highest thoughts grow never into acts."

CHAPTER XXVII.

A DISCOVERY.

It is a fearful trust, the trust of love.
In fear, not hope, should woman's heart receive
A guest so terrible. Ah! never more
Will the young spirit know its joyous hours
Of quiet hopes and innocent delights;
Its childhood is departed.

“THE more I see of the world,” continued Lavinia, sipping her bohea from a little china cup, that might have served Titania, “the more I am convinced that the principles with which I set out in life are the only ones to get on with. You ought to refer every thing to your-

self—be your own idol. If a lover ruins himself for your amusement, you ask, what better could he have done with his fortune? If, by any odd chance, he was to do—what they all talk of doing—die for your sake! well, it is quite charming to be paid such an unusual compliment. It is curious to note, after all, that people take you very much on your own estimate! Modesty is only a proof of merit in ‘Gay’s Fables;’ generally, it is taken as a tacit acknowledgment that you have nothing of which to be proud. My motto of ‘*je m’adore,*’ is only what I expect!”

“Well, the exaggeration is pleasant enough,” answered Maynard, smiling.

“It is truer than you like to admit. What makes Sir George Kingston—so false, so insolent, to others—a complete slave to my caprices? Only because I do not care for him! He knows I should only laugh at his desertion; and he would not like to be the one who was left, which he knows I should do for the first thwarted whim.”

“And yet this man,” muttered Walter,

“ can inspire deep and devoted attachments!”

“ Not he! of all the letters in my possession, only one set convey to me the idea of real affection; and, odd enough, it is you who have inspired it! You know the correspondence you have been carrying on for Sir George.”

“ I do,” said Walter, colouring; “ and heartily am I ashamed of it! Now, I know him: I must and will put an end to it!”

“ She says,” continued Lavinia, “ ‘ but for your letters, I should never have known you; therefore, never have loved you as I do!’ but read for yourself,” tossing one to him; “ if Lady Marchmont’s letters have touched even me, what effect will they take upon you!”

“ Lady Marchmont!” cried Walter, in the most utter astonishment; “ is it to Lady Marchmont that I have been writing?”

“ To be sure it is!” replied the other: “ did you not know it?”

“ Sir George,” said he, “ never mentioned the name.”

“ It was sheer carelessness on his part, then,” continued Lavinia, “ for I am sure that he has no delicacy in the matter. I remember Lady Marchmont as if it were but yesterday — so beautiful, so proud ! where would her pride be, if she could know that her letters were in my hands ? And yet they might be in worse ; for I, at least, pity her ! ”

“ Good God ! ” exclaimed Walter, rising, and pacing the room, after reading a few passages from the letter he held in his hand, “ never can I forgive myself ! every regret she expresses cuts me to the heart ! ”

“ You do, indeed, seem to take it to heart ! ” exclaimed the actress, an expression of jealous anger crossing her features ; “ why, it is quite a God-send for you ! many a heart is caught in the rebound. Tell her you wrote the letters ; explain Sir George’s treachery ; and, my life upon it, but you will

‘ Bear off the honours of the well-fought day ! ’ ”

“ And how,” continued Walter, “ not at-

tending to his companion — “ how bitterly she reproaches herself! and to think that this earnest, this sorrowful love, has been a toy— an amusement — the result of such heartless treachery! I never can tell her — but I ought — I must!”

“ Why, it is the very thing that I am advising you to do,” cried Lavinia: “ the game is in your own hands!”

“ How little,” said he, still rather thinking aloud, than talking, “ did I think, while writing these letters, proud of their composition, what misery I was inflicting on another, and storing up for myself!”

“ And little did I think,” muttered Lavinia, “ that I could have been so mistaken. I have always fancied that it was Miss Churchill who inspired you with all these fine verses; instead of that, it was Lady Marchmont!”

And a bitter jealousy took possession of her mind. She had grown accustomed to look upon Ethel as Walter’s passion and inspiration: it was something far off and distant,

which even she felt was sacred ; but Lady Marchmont was a new rival, and come too actual, and too near.

“ I will tell you what, Lavinia,” said Maynard, stopping short in his hurried walk, “ you must give me those letters ; and, painful as it is, I will at once take them to her, and make the disclosure ! ”

“ Indeed I will do no such thing ! ” replied Lavinia, pettishly ; “ if Lady Marchmont likes to be made a fool of, what business is it of mine ? ”

Walter, who had been engrossed in his own thoughts, had not observed what was passing in his companion’s mind, and stood amazed at what appeared to him such an unaccountable change.

“ My dear Lavinia,” exclaimed he, earnestly, “ you wrong yourself ; you are far too kind-hearted to have any satisfaction in the shame and misery to which keeping back those letters will inevitably expose Lady Marchmont ! ”

“What would she care for mine?” was the reply. “Besides, I really must look to myself: what will Sir George say?”

“Nothing to you,” answered Maynard, “for I will take the whole upon myself!”

“It is of no use talking to me, for I will not do it!” cried Lavinia, passionately: “I see that you are in love with Lady Marchmont, and it is not me that you must expect to help you!”

A sudden light broke in upon Walter; and, for a moment, he felt awkward and embarrassed: but he was too deeply penetrated with the fault he had committed, too much touched with pity for its victim, to give up his point; besides, she had a claim upon him for her uncle's sake, — that uncle who had been his kindest and his first protector!

“I am quite tired,” said the actress, rising, “and shall go to my own room. Good evening!”

“You shall not go,” replied Walter, gently detaining her, “till your better self comes

back; I thought you were above any such petty triumph over another!”

“ You know I am not thinking of any such thing,” answered she, sullenly: “ but have the goodness to tell me, why I should help you to make love to Lady Marchmont ?”

“ I am sure,” cried Walter, “ I want your help in nothing of the kind. I do not, I never could, love Lady Marchmont: you know,” added he, in a faltering voice, “ that I love another !”

It was with bitter reluctance that he said this; he could not bear even an allusion to Ethel's name; but it was the penalty of his own conduct: he could not allow Lavinia's most unfounded jealousy to interfere with the only reparation in his power. The actress felt that he spoke the truth; and, ashamed of the petulance that she had displayed, now sought to bring the subject round a little.

“ But why should you interfere in the matter? It will ruin you with Sir George!— you will lose your situation !”

“ Do you think,” cried Walter, “ that I could keep it, after to-night? I would not, for twice his wealth, live with a man I so utterly scorn !”

“ But you lose,” said she, “ his interest ; and he has it in his power to do so much for you !”

“ I could not submit to an obligation from Sir George Kingston !”

“ I admit that you are right,” replied Lavinia, slowly ; “ but I feel an unaccountable reluctance that you should interfere in this matter.”

“ Listen to me for a moment,” said Walter, “ and seriously. Sir Jasper Meredith was my first and my best friend. If I possess the talents that have placed me in the very situation that I hold, I owe their cultivation to him. To what use have I turned them ? to destroy the happiness of the being dearest to him upon earth ! For his sake alone, I would lay down my life to restore those letters !”

“ Poor, kind old man that he was,” said

the actress, "how he would have grieved over this! Well, the grave often saves us a world of trouble!"

"I stand amazed now," continued Walter, "at my own recklessness in writing them; but I am so accustomed to invent an existence, that I forget the consequence in the interest of the composition. Ah, I see that there is no wickedness so desperate as deception: we can never foresee its consequences!"

"You shall have the letters," said Lavinia, beginning to put them together: "I shall tell Sir George that I sent them to their right owner in a fit of jealousy, and he will only be flattered!"

"My dear Lavinia," said Walter, "I thank you most cordially; you know not the weight you have taken off my conscience; as to Sir George, I shall see him myself when I return from Lady Marchmont's."

So saying, he took the letters; and, again thanking her, hurried away.

"I do pity her!" exclaimed Lavinia, as

she went slowly up stairs ; “ the very humiliation of the letters being restored, is quite punishment enough, even for loving Sir George Kingston. It is the idol of her own fancy that she loves, not him ! ”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE LETTERS RESTORED.

Alas! he brings me back my early years,
And seems to tell me what I should have been.
How have I wasted God's best gifts, and turned
Their use against myself! It is too late!
Remorse and shame are crushing me to earth,
And I am desperate with my misery!

A GOLDEN bribe won at least attention from the porter; and Walter knew that Lady Marchmont had returned, for her chair was being carried away from the door as he got up to it. Still the difficulty of obtaining admittance was great, and Maynard was vainly urging the importance of his business, when

an old domestic, who had formerly lived with Sir Jasper Meredith, entered the hall. He knew Maynard at once; but he, too, demurred about the lateness of the hour.

“ I know you love your mistress,” said Walter, drawing the old man aside; “ it is of vital consequence to herself that I should see her alone for a very few moments !”

The old man looked at him with a sort of startled surprise; but Walter was too pale and too agitated not to be in earnest.

“ Come,” said he, “ to my room, I will take care that you see her ladyship.”

Walter followed him into one of those small dark rooms, which so forcibly contrast the general magnificence of London, marking the social distinctions which exist under the same roof. The servant lighted a dull lamp, and left his visitor for a space that, to his impatience, seemed endless.

“ I have been waiting,” said the old man, “ till I heard Lord Marchmont go down to supper: my lady is now alone in the dressing-

closet. You see, Mr. Maynard, that I do not, for a moment, doubt but that your business justifies this unseasonable visit."

"It does, indeed!" exclaimed Walter, as he followed his guide.

"My lady is alone, for she has come in unusually early, so that Madame Cecile will not be returned these two hours, but I will wait in the antechamber."

They knocked at the door.

"Come in!" said a voice, strange and hollow.

"Madam," said the old man, "Mr. Walter Maynard says that he must see you for a moment on the most pressing business."

Lady Marchmont was still in the same attitude as when her husband left the room — half knelt, half crouched, on the floor. The mechanical restraint that we exercise over ourselves in the presence of our inferiors, made her start from her knee, and say, even calmly, "Oh, very well! shew him in." But she did not know what she was saying; and when Walter, a moment after, entered, it took her

quite by surprise. He had often seen her in public places, but she had never seen him since the last evening passed beside the little fountain; he seemed like the ghost of her youth, suddenly risen up to reproach her. Both stood silent, gazing on each other; Walter was actually lost in admiration of Lady Marchmont's transcendent beauty. The black velvet robe, with its strange embroidery, suited so well her superb figure, and threw into such strong relief the dead fairness of her neck and arms. Her face was without a vestige of colour, but it only shewed more strongly the perfect outline of her features. Pale she was, but not like a statue; it was a human paleness — passionate and painful. Masses of her rich black hair fell over her shoulders, giving that wildness to the look which the dishevelled hair always does; but the glittering snake was yet wound round the head, and the ruby crest and diamond eye of the reptile had a strange likeness to life.

Lady Marchmont's eyes were unusually large; but to-night the face itself seemed half

eyes, so dark and dilated were the shadowy pupils. But it was the expression of misery in her countenance, that riveted the attention; rarely before had so much anguish and beauty been combined in the same face. Some instinct told Walter that she was suffering, and he was come to add to it; still, the sooner what he had to say was said, the better, and he was the first to break silence.

“Lady Marchmont,” said he, “will pardon an intrusion dictated by anxiety on her account. Will she permit me to place these letters in her own keeping?”

Henrietta looked at them with a bewildered air; she knew them at once, for they were only kept together by a riband. A terrible fear rushed across her mind; was Sir George ill? — was he engaged in a duel? The idea of some danger to him was the only one that presented itself.

“Did he — did Sir George Kingston,” asked she, faintly, “send no message, when he sent these letters?”

“ He did not send them ! ” replied her visitor.

A deep flush, for one moment, suffused her neck, arms, face — even to the very temples — as she exclaimed, “ How did they come into your possession ? ”

“ Lady Marchmont, ” returned Maynard, “ do sit down, and listen patiently, if you can, to me for five minutes ! ”

Henrietta obeyed like a child, indeed she could now scarcely stand ; still, there was that consciousness about her, which made her turn her face a little aside. Walter hesitated, when she turned suddenly round : —

“ For mercy’s sake, tell me the worst ; I can bear it better than suspense ! What has happened to Sir George Kingston ? ”

“ Do not give yourself any uneasiness about one so utterly unworthy of a thought ! Sir George Kingston is without one grain of either honour or real feeling ! The fact is, I have, for some months past, been his secretary, and wrote for him the letters which were sent you ! ”

“ You wrote them ! ” cried Henrietta.

“ I had not the least idea to whom they were addressed. I wrote, as I do the pages of a romance ; and the Henrietta to whom they were addressed, was an ideal heroine ! ”

“ Sir George did not write them himself ! ”

“ He rarely read them, only just taking, ” replied the secretary, “ a brief outline, lest he should betray himself in speaking ! ”

“ My God ! ” murmured Henrietta, “ how I have been deceived ! ”

“ I do not ask, I dare not hope, for your forgiveness, ” continued Walter ; “ but let me atone, as far as I can, by warning you against Sir George Kingston : he gave these very letters of yours to amuse the idle hours of his mistress ! ”

Henrietta gasped for breath ; but she swallowed down the hysterical emotion, and signed with her hand for Walter to go on.

“ I have little more to say ; your secret is safe. I will answer for the young actress’s

silence; it were an impertinence to assure you of my own!"

Henrietta gazed upon him steadfastly; his presence brought back the first, the sweetest dream of her life. Her love for Sir George Kingston seemed to vanish like a shadow; deep in her heart she felt that it was a poor fanciful emotion, born of vanity, and that craving for excitement, the inevitable result of her artificial state of existence. No; he whom she had really loved, stood there before her—pale, earnest—with the same dark and eloquent eyes, as when they used to kindle with light over the fine creations of the olden poets. Loving and beloved by him, how different would her destiny have been! An utter sense of desolation came over her; a terror of the future, an overwhelming agony in the present. That he, of all others, should be the one to witness her humiliation!

"I will trespass no longer," said Walter, after a moment's pause. "Let me hope that the bitterness of this moment will be forgotten

in scorn. Good night, dear Lady Marchmont. God bless you!" And he pressed the hand that she extended toward him.

He started at the touch, for it burned like fire; and, even in that momentary pressure, he could feel the pulse's beat!

CHAPTER XXIX.

MIDNIGHT.

Where is the heart that has not bowed
A slave, eternal Love, to thee?
Look on the cold, the gay, the proud,
And is there one among them free?

And what must love be in a heart
All passion's fiery depths concealing,
Which has in its minutest part
More than another's whole of feeling!

HENRIETTA pressed her temples on the cushion, but it did not still their tumultuous pain. The door closed after Walter Maynard, and it sank like a knell upon her ear. She listened to his receding footsteps, and when they died away, she still held her breath to listen; there was a deep silence, and she felt

utterly alone in the world. Strange how vividly her youth seemed to rise before her! she sat again beside her uncle, while Walter Maynard read aloud his boyish translation of the Prometheus bound ; her uncle's words rang in her ear.

“ So does destiny bind us on the rock of life, so does the vulture, Sorrow, prey on the core of every human heart ! ” Then she joined the little group that had gathered beside the fountain — so gay, so hopeful ; what had they not, all of them, suffered since ! She had witnessed the silent wasting of the heart which had banished the rose and the smile from the sweet face of Ethel Churchill ; she knew that Norbourne Courtenaye was suffering all the bitterness of unavailing regret ; and had she not just looked on Walter Maynard — pale, emaciated — with death in his face !

Slowly her thoughts reverted to herself ; the blood rushed to her brow. What would she be to-morrow ? the mark for obloquy and ridicule ! disgraced, and for what ? to minister to the wretched vanity of one whom she loathed even

more than she scorned. She sprang to her feet; the crimson flood went back upon her heart; a strange light flashed from her eyes; her white lips were firmly compressed; and she clasped her hands so tightly, that the blood slightly tinged the ends of her fingers.

If ever an evil spirit be allowed to enter our frail human tenement, such spirit would have seemed to enter into Henrietta Marchmont. A strange tranquillity passed over her; she rose from her seat, and wrote a note; there was a key, which she took from the table, enclosed in it. After carefully sealing the parcel, she rang; and when the servant came in, she said,—

“ Let this parcel, late as it is, be taken immediately—I forgot it; and you may tell Madame Cecile, that I am so tired, I shall not wait for her: she may go to bed, without disturbing me. Is Lord Marchmont come up from supper yet ?”

“ No, my lady. To-night, M. Chloe tries the new receipt for stewed mushrooms, that Sir Robert Walpole’s cook gave him, and they are

only this moment serving up, for my lord was home sooner than he was expected."

"And he can sit down quietly to decide on the merits of stewed mushrooms," muttered Lady Marchmont, as the servant closed the door, "while I—but no matter, I hope he will enjoy his supper!"

Her eyes flashed, and she laughed aloud; but she started herself at the strange, harsh sound of her own laugh.

"Ah, here it is!" exclaimed she, unfastening a small key, which hung to the chain that she always wore; she then opened a small casket that stood where few would have noticed it; but, nevertheless, fastened for security to its stand. From thence she took two small phials, each of a different shape, but each containing some clear liquid: one she hastily concealed in the folds of her dress; the other she kept in her hand: then, taking a lamp from the table, she left the room. Shading the light with the sleeve of her dress, she proceeded along the corridor, and, with a noiseless step, gained a large bed-room on

the left. She listened for a moment, but all was quiet; and she glided in, pale and noiseless as a ghost.

It was Lord Marchmont's chamber, fitted up with all that luxury which marked how precious its master was in his own eyes at least. Within the purple hangings of the bed stood a table, where the night lamp was already burning; and, also, a draught, carefully labelled.

Lord Marchmont was fond of small complaints, and his physician's ingenuity was often taxed to find a remedy where there was no disease.

Henrietta took the bottle, and swallowed part of the contents; and then filled it up from the phial she held in her hand — that hand never trembled. Again she withdrew, cautiously and quietly as she came; and returned to her own room undisturbed.

She had scarcely reached it before she heard her husband pass by, on his way to bed. She sprang to the door, and her heart beat loudly: he might yet come in, and relent in

her favour. Not so; the heavy step passed heavily onward; and again she sank amid the cushions of the chair. There she sat, wan as a statue, and motionless, save when a quick convulsive shudder, as if of pain, ran through her frame.

It was awful to watch the change one single evening had wrought in that beautiful face. The eyes were hollow; the features thin, as if suddenly contracted; and her brow had a slight frown, knit either with suffering, or rigid determination.

A clock, striking two in the distance, startled her; and, rising, she approached the window. The dew had risen heavily on the plants in the balcony; and the moonlight turned the park below into one sheet of tremulous silver. All was silent as the grave, excepting that hollow murmur, which never, even in its stillest hour, quite forsakes a great city. The trees stood dark, and not a leaf stirred on the heavy branches; but amidst them rose the stately abbey, the Gothic architecture gleaming, "like ebon and ivory," in the clear

radiance of the moon. There was not a cloud on the deep blue sky : but the countess did not look forth to gaze on the eternal beauty of the night ; she saw nothing but the little garden immediately below the window of her room ; and she muttered, in a hoarse whisper—
“ Will he come ? ”

CHAPTER XXX.

THE CHALLENGE.

'Tis a strange mystery, the power of words !
Life is in them, and death. A word can send
The crimson colour hurrying to the cheek,
Hurrying with many meanings ; or can turn
The current cold and deadly to the heart.
Anger and fear are in them ; grief and joy
Are on their sound ; yet slight, impalpable :—
A word is but a breath of passing air.

MAYNARD returned home direct from Lady Marchmont. To his surprise he learnt that Sir George was at home : such an early return was a very unusual thing with him. Walter was glad of it ; he could not have borne to

have passed the night without explanation ; and hearing that Kingston was in the library, he at once hurried there, and found him, seemingly, alone and unoccupied.

“ Maynard,” exclaimed he, as his secretary entered, “ do find something to say—I am dying of *ennui*.”

“ I have much to say,” replied the other : “ whether you may like to hear it, is another question.”

The tone of his voice arrested Sir George’s attention ; a thing not easily done when the matter did not concern himself.

“ Why,” exclaimed he, “ you look as pale as if you intended acting a tragedy instead of writing one ! Where do you come from ?”

“ From Lady Marchmont, to whom I have restored all her letters,” replied Maynard.

“ Are you knave or fool, or both ?” cried Sir George, starting from his seat. “ What devil could tempt you to do any thing so absurd ?”

“ So right, you mean,” replied Walter.

“ And did you, as I suppose you did,”

asked Sir George, "make the most of your writing them for me?"

"I told her I wrote them every line."

"The devil you did!" exclaimed the other.

"And I told her, moreover, that if there was a man in the world devoid of one spark of honour, or one touch of feeling, that man was yourself."

"Mr. Maynard, this insolence is past bearing: leave the room this moment, meddling fool that you are!" cried Sir George, whose surprise had now become rage. "To-morrow you shall leave this house for ever!"

"I shall not," replied the other, "wait your orders, or to-morrow either: I leave it for ever to-night!"

"The sooner the better!" exclaimed Sir George, "impertinent and ungrateful as you are!"

"I am not aware," answered Walter, "that there is any impertinence in expressing my opinion of your most dishonourable conduct; and I am not aware that I owe you any

gratitude: will you permit me to ask you on what account?"

"This is past bearing," interrupted Kingston; "will you, sir, leave the room?"

"Not, sir, till you tell me when you will give me satisfaction for having made me the tool of your heartless designs."

Sir George burst into a loud fit of contemptuous laughter.

"Why, do you mean that for a challenge? Really it is too good your supposing that I should meet you. I thank you; but, really, must beg to decline the honour."

"You dare not," replied Walter; "you would shrink from the shame of refusing to meet me!"

"The shame of refusing to meet you!—from the shame of meeting an equal I might," said Kingston, tauntingly; "but it is absurd to be challenged by my hired servant—a low-born nobody!"

Walter set his teeth. "You know that I am as much a gentleman as yourself!"

"In your own opinion," sneered the other.

“ Really, it is very unpleasant to be interrupted in one’s first sleep,” said a young man, rising from the sofa where he had been lying ; “ what are you quarrelling about ? I meant to have slept till supper. Come, let me be peace-maker.”

“ Never,” said Walter ; “ but, perhaps, Lord Alfred, you will explain to Sir George, that his refusing to meet to-night will not tell to his credit to-morrow.”

“ Lord Alfred,” replied Sir George, “ will also have the goodness to state by whom the challenge was given — by my secretary, my hireling, my dependant.”

“ Not the last,” interrupted Maynard ; “ I scorn you too much to depend upon you.”

“ Really,” replied Sir George, “ this farce grows tiresome. Mr. Maynard, I order you to leave the room.”

“ You have no right to order me. Give me the satisfaction to which I am so justly entitled, or I will force you to it.”

“ I defy you,” replied the other, with a sneer.

“ Liar and coward !” said Walter, striking him on the face.

“ Mr. Maynard, you are too intemperate,” cried Lord Alfred, snatching his arm ; “ what can justify such provocation ?”

“ Before I ring for my servants to shew you to the door,” said Sir George, “ you will allow me to tell you, that I can only be insulted by my equal : I cannot go out with any but a gentleman !”

“ I wonder,” said Lord Alfred, interfering, “ that you can dream of disputing Mr. Maynard’s claim to be considered one. I can only say, so much do I value him, that, let him satisfy me as to the quarrel, and I will attend him as second myself.”

Walter gave him one eloquent look of gratitude, and Sir George turned livid with rage.

“ But little explanation will suffice,” said Maynard. Sir George has, by he knows what false representations, induced me to write letters — love-letters for him. I believed that I only gave expression to real feeling — a feeling that

I at once regretted and pitied. Instead of that, the passion which he feigned to me, as well as to its object, was a mere deceit, a matter of miserable and vain-glorious boasting. He could place the touching and beautiful letters, full of the most confiding love and the bitterest self-reproaches, in the hands of his mistress, to be tossed about for any chance eye! I have restored the letters to one who was the beloved child of my oldest and kindest friend!"

"Mr. Maynard, I shall be happy to accompany you," said Lord Alfred. "Sir George, what friend shall I communicate with?"

"With none: I will not," said Kingston, doggedly, "meet a moon-struck maniac! — a nobody! — a low-born beggar!"

"Leave out the epithet," returned Maynard, "and I am not ashamed of being the last. Sir George Kingston, my father served with yours, and he was the superior officer. His death-wound was received while defending his friend, Sir Edmund Kingston."

"I see I must give you the lesson myself that I meant you should have received from

my servants," replied Sir George, with an insolent laugh. "There is no time like the present for these sort of things: Shelburne," said he to a gentleman, who entered at that moment, "you must take a little exercise before supper. Mr. Maynard has suddenly set up for a squire of dames. His romances have got up into his head, and he needs bleeding, so come with me. The park is lonely enough just now, and we can return to supper."

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE DUEL.

The moonlight falleth lovely over earth ;
And strange, indeed, must be the mind of man
That can resist its beautiful reproach.
How can hate work like fever in the soul
With such entire tranquillity around ?
Evil must be our nature to refuse
Such gentle intercession.

THE garden of Sir George Kingston communicated with the park ; and through it the four gentleman passed, brushing the dew from the drooping roses as they went. The night was singularly lovely :

“ Such and so beautiful was that fair night,
It might have calmed the gay amid their mirth,
And given the wretched a delight in tears ;”

but it had no soothing influence over human

anger. Not an eye rested on the moon, whose sad, spiritual light has so little in common with the world on which it looks.

None listened to the low, soft music in the trees, every leaf of which, instinct with separate harmony, was like a soft note on a mysterious lyre. None of the four spoke till they arrived at a space open to the moonlight, but yet sheltered by the elms. There was little chance of being overlooked or interrupted. The park was locked; there was no entrance unless from the gardens of the houses; and from the houses themselves they were at a distance, besides having the elms between them.

“ I will allow you to beg pardon even now,” said Sir George, insolently.

Walter made no reply but by withdrawing his sword from the sheath; and in a few moments the seconds had placed them, and stood to see fair-play.

I can understand the feeling of the duellist when really fierce and bitter — there are injuries only to be washed out in blood; but I have always thought, that the seconds must,

or ought, to feel very uncomfortable. They stand by in cold blood to watch the glittering steel, whose shimmer may every moment be quenched in blood. If the eye be dropped for an instant, the next it may look on death, and death in its most fearful shape — one human being dying by the rage, the evil passion, or the unforgivable fault of another.

The suspense in the present instance was of short duration. Maynard was no match for Sir George. The clicking of the swords smote on the silent night, the moonlight glanced from the blade ere it reached the dewy grass ; but, ere a bird disturbed from its roost was out of sight in the air, Walter had fallen ; and the grass, silvery with dew and moonlight, ran red with human blood.

“ Will you beg my pardon ? ” said Sir George, setting his foot on the body of his prostrate enemy.

Walter could only look denial and defiance ; and Sir George had raised his arm to plunge his sword again through the enemy at his feet,

when a female figure darted from behind one of the trees, and arrested his arm.

The surprise gave Walter time to spring up ; he did so, but staggered with weakness, and leant for support against one of the elms. Still Kingston called upon him to take up his sword ; but Lord Alfred interfered.

“ It would be murder in cold blood : I will not stand by and witness it. One of you, at all events, has had enough :” and he went to Maynard, who leant, pale and faint, with the blood slowly welling from his side. “ It is not much, however,” said the kind-hearted young nobleman, as he stanchd the wound with his handkerchief.

Lavinia, for she was the intruder, had watched the whole proceeding ; her keen eye was for an instant softened with anxiety ; but whatever might be the feelings which were passing through her mind, she shewed no outward sign. If she was pale, it was hidden by her rouge ; and her lip curled with its usual careless smile.

“ And what the devil brought you here ?” cried Sir George Kingston.

“ What the devil brought you ?” replied she, mimicking his manner.

“ Well,” said he, “ I suppose I must excuse it, on account of the devotion it shews to myself.”

“ It shews no such thing,” answered she, with the most provoking carelessness. “ It was sheer curiosity brought me here — a few hints from actual life are always useful in my profession ; and I wanted to see a real duel.”

“ I hope you are satisfied,” said Sir George ; “ and now, I suppose, you will return with myself and Mr. Shelburne to supper.”

“ You are wrong in all your suppositions to-night,” replied she : “ I am going away at once ; the coach is waiting for me now. I was coming down stairs to get into it, when I saw you all hurrying off — I guessed the cause, and thought I might as well see you fight.”

“ Who has a coach waiting ?” asked Alfred, this being the only part of the dialogue which

had caught his attention. "Will they let it set down Mr. Maynard at the inn where he tells me he was to sleep?"

"Oh, certainly," replied the actress, "provided he will promise not to die on the way."

"Madam!" exclaimed Sir George, almost breathless with anger, "I insist upon knowing the cause of your extraordinary conduct!"

"Extraordinary, do you call it?" returned she, with a look of comic surprise; "there is nothing extraordinary in any one's getting tired of you; and I am very tired indeed."

"Impertinent fool!" muttered Kingston, between his clenched teeth, feeling the more enraged because he saw Shelburne could scarcely repress his laughing.

"Lord, Sir George!" continued she, taking an air of arch simplicity, and looking very pretty, "one would think no one had ever tired of you before; and yet you must have found it a very common occurrence. You are neither amusing nor interesting: how can you wonder that women find you very tiresome?"

Lavinia knew the object of her sarcasm well,—

“ ——— She was wreaking
More revenge in bitter speaking ”

than any thing else could have done. A woman's tears would have been to him a triumph ; her reproaches would, at the very worst, only have bored him ; but a sneer touched Achilles on the heel. He shrank from being ridiculed ; he knew he had no ready wit to turn it.

“ Do let us go home,” exclaimed he, turning emphatically to his companion.

“ It is so late that I must wish you ‘ good night ! ’ ” replied Mr. Shelburne, who, late as it was, secretly did not despair of finding some one to whom he could tell the adventure in which he had so suddenly found himself engaged. Why, it was worth while sitting up all night, if it were only to narrate Sir George's unceremonious dismissal by the pretty actress.

“ Surely,” said Lavinia, extending her hand, “ you have too much gallantry, Mr. Shelburne, not to put me into the coach.”

Lord Alfred and Maynard were already nearly out of sight; of course, Mr. Shelburne could only take the hand offered, and not sorry so to do, as he hoped to hear a little more.

“ Oh,” said Sir George, “ I see that I am to congratulate Mr. Shelburne on being my successor.”

“ No such thing,” replied Lavinia; “ I never allow my peace of mind to run any risk, which it would do with Mr. Shelburne after yourself—the contrast would be too dangerous.”

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE ASSIGNATION.

God, in thy mercy, keep us with thy hand !
Dark are the thoughts that strive within the heart,
When evil passions rise like sudden storms,
Fearful and fierce ! Let us not act those thoughts ;
Leave not our course to our unguided will.
Left to ourselves, all crime is possible,
And those who seemed the most removed from guilt,
Have sunk the deepest !

SIR GEORGE bore the annoyances of the night as a very vain man does totally unaccustomed to mortification. He was frantic with passion ; he longed to kill somebody, but he did not know who. He took a common resource in

such cases — he stormed at his servants ; but, on entering the house, consolation awaited him. A parcel was placed in his hands, which had been left with most particular directions that it should be given to him immediately. He was half-inclined, from pettish obstinacy, not to open it ; but curiosity pervaded : and curiosity, like virtue, was its own reward.

It contained a key, and a note from Lady Marchmont, entreating him to forgive what she called her petulance that evening at the *fête* ; and bidding him come to tell her that she was still loved. He was to enter through the little garden gate, and, ascending by the balcony steps, would, in five moments, reach the dressing-room, where he would find her alone.

There was a postscript—“ By the by, a secretary of yours has made a great merit of giving me the letters I wrote to you : of course he stole them : we must concert some means of securing his silence.”

“ So I owe her submission half to fear — a useful lesson as regards women in future. I

believe there is nothing like making them afraid of you ; but," continued he, his handsome face darkening with every evil passion, "it adds to my triumph to think that I owe it to the very means that fool took to prevent it! I will take care that he knows it."

Sir George could understand no other motive for Maynard's conduct than his liking Lady Marchmont himself—a higher or more generous cause never even suggested itself.

"I must attend to my toilet a little ; but, no," added he, "the very carelessness will be a proof of haste ; and, now I think of it, I am very late:" so saying, he threw his cloak round him, and hurried across the park.

Lady Marchmont had passed another hour of miserable suspense. The moonlight was waxing cold and faint, and the chill air of the morning began to rustle among the trees ; and the mist, which rose from the dewy grass, spread like a thin veil, rendering all distant objects confused. A streak of wan and sickly light began to glimmer in the east ; and again

Lady Marchmont clenched her hands together, and asked,—“ Will he come ?”

The cold wind lifted her long hair from her neck ; but she felt it not. Suddenly she started ; she pressed her hands to her burning eye-lids to clear their sight : but — no ; she was not deceived : a figure, as yet indistinct as a shadow, was hurrying across the park. The colour deepened on her cheek, the light flashed from her eyes ; but neither colour nor light were such as are wont to welcome the expected lover’s arrival.

“ He must not find me waiting on the balcony,” whispered she, with a mechanical consciousness of feminine pride ; “ yet, what does it matter ?” added she, with a bitter laugh.

However, she again resumed her seat in the arm-chair, and busied herself about a lamp, over which some coffee was boiling. She looked very different now to what she had done while seated on that very chair when Maynard came.

She had taken off her velvet robe, and was

carelessly wrapped in a white silk night-gown, fastened with violet ribands. It was one she had worn in half-mourning, and had all the coquetish elegance of *demie parure*. The serpent was unbound from her hair, which was partly gathered up with a violet band — part left loose on her shoulders, as if she had stopped in the middle of her graceful task. She was pale no longer, her cheek burned with the clear feverish red of the pomegranate, and gave that peculiar light to the eyes, which is only given by the contrast of the crimson. Deep as it was, it grew yet deeper; for Sir George Kingston entered the room.

“ Thus, let me thank you! thus, pour out my happiness!” exclaimed he, throwing himself at her feet.

She averted her face, but that was only natural timidity.

“ Ah!” cried she, suddenly, “ your cloak is quite wet with morning dew: you are a laggard, Sir George!”

“ I have not had your note half-an-hour,”

replied he: "I flew to you the moment I received it."

"I fancy," said she, with a smile, "that we are both a little tired: you must have a cup of coffee with me before we begin to talk."

Sir George saw that she was embarrassed, and secretly enjoyed it.

"You will not let me pour out the coffee," said she, withdrawing her hand; "there, tell me if my picture is like me."

He rose, and the instant his back turned, she emptied into his cup the contents of a little phial, that she took, with the rapidity of thought, from the folds of her dress.

"I cannot look at a picture," exclaimed he, "while I can gaze on the original."

"Well," replied she, "your coffee is now ready."

He took the cup and drank it down — glad of it; for having to play the part of an ardent lover, he felt more sleepy than was quite suiting to the character. The coffee revived him;

and snatching Lady Marchmont's beautiful hand, he pressed it to his lips. "How can I ever," whispered he, drawing nearer towards her, "ever thank you enough?"

"I do not know," said Henrietta, starting from her seat, and drawing herself to her full height, "that you have much to thank me for; but, follow me softly."

She took the lamp, and led the way through a suite of apartments, till she stopped in a large bed-room, dimly lighted by a night-lamp, and the one she carried.

"This is the third time that I have been here to-night," muttered she; and, hastily withdrawing the heavy curtain, exclaimed,—
"Look there!"

Sir George did look, and saw the face of Lord Marchmont; and saw too that it was the face of a corpse.

"We cannot stay here," continued she, in the same hollow whisper, and led the way back again to the dressing-room.

Sir George followed her mechanically; one

look at the bed of death was enough ; the pale, rigid countenance, startled him like a spectre.

“ I would not have come,” was the first thought that rose in his mind, “ if I had had the least idea of such a scene. How unlucky Lord Marchmont should have died to-night !”

The countess led the way through the noiseless rooms with a step so cautious, that it did not waken the slightest echo, and her companion was as careful as herself. They regained the apartment without interruption ; and, after closing the door quietly, Lady Marchmont set the lamp down on the table. Its faint gleam, almost quenched by the daylight, fell upon her face, and her companion started at its strange and fearful expression !

“ Lord Marchmont,” said Henrietta, “ overheard our conversation this evening. To-morrow he would have denounced and degraded me ; to-night he has died, and by my hand !”

Sir George made an involuntary step nearer to the window — the selfish ever the predominant feeling.

“ You cannot suppose,” exclaimed he, “ that I would marry his widow!—his murderer!”

Henrietta gazed upon him, with the fire flashing from her large black eyes.

“ And what do you suppose I sent to you for?”

Sir George stood silent, and she rapidly continued :—

“ I sent for you that I might know the sweetness of revenge ; that I might tell you how I scorned, how I loathed you! Do you think that I am not perfectly aware of the mean treachery of your conduct?”

“ Maynard is”—faltered Sir George Kingston.

“ What you are not—a person in whom belief may be placed. Now I understand the contrast between yourself and your letters. But it is of no use talking now ; the servants will soon be stirring, and it would be rather awkward to be found here.”

“ For you, perhaps, madam,” sneered Sir George.

“Rather for yourself,” replied she, with the greatest composure; “you might be implicated in the charge of murder.”

Sir George hastily approached the balcony; and Lady Marchmont said, “while in her eye the gladiator broke,” so fierce even was the expression of her beautiful face,—“I do not think that Sir George Kingston will boast to-morrow of his interview with me to-night!”

He hurried down the steps, and a wild hysterical laugh rang after him. There was something in the sound that startled even the careless and hardened Sir George Kingston. Still, before he got half way across the park, vanity again floated on the surface.

“What a pity,” muttered he, “that I shall not be able to tell to-night’s *tête-à-tête*! She has taken good care to prevent it.”

She had taken more care than he suspected. Even while he spoke a fiery pain darted, like a bird of prey, on his heart; he gasped for breath; and when the agony was over, felt utterly exhausted. He staggered for support against a tree near. By a strange coincidence, it was

the very one against which Walter Maynard had leant not above an hour or so before. The blood was yet red on the grass ; and Sir George Kingston felt a sickness seize upon him as he caught sight of it.

Again his whole frame was wrung with convulsive pain ; this time the spasm was instantly followed by another. He strove to call for aid ; and he heard his voice die away on the silent night. He was alone — helpless ; a few acres of green grass made a solitude, vast as a desert, around him. Every moment he grew more incapable of moving ; yet he knew he might cry aloud for assistance in vain. He gazed around — strange shapes seemed to flit by, then grow into gigantic shadows ; a sound of rushing waters was in his ears, and he gasped with a burning thirst.

Suddenly a terrible fear flashed across him, and as it flashed, he felt that it was the truth. The cup of coffee that he had drunk at Lady Marchmont's, had she drugged that too ? Lord Marchmont's white, rigid face seemed to be painted distinctly on the air ; and then en-

dowed with a strange consciousness, opened its dull eyes; and Sir George felt that his doom was sealed in that look. The suffering grew more acute; his knees failed under him, and he sank heavily on the ground.

Still, life was strong within him; he struggled with his agony; he thought if he could but reach home he might have aid, and live: but, even while he struggled, there was that within which told him his struggles were vain. He was growing delirious with the internal torture, with the intolerable burning thirst; yet his delirium turned upon real objects; the pleasures of existence crowded upon his imagination — he saw his youth, as it were, distinct before him; he thought of his wealth, it could not now buy him even a cup of cold water; then beautiful forms, but all with fiendish eyes, gathered round him: some offered him golden fruits; others, purple wine: he stretched his parched mouth towards them, and they melted into the wan air with a mocking laugh.

Consciousness returned again; he saw the first red of the morning beginning to colour the

clouds ; a sort of stupid wonder passed through him, that he had never thought them so lovely before. He strove to keep his heavy eye-lids open, to fix them on the blue sky ; he felt that if once they closed, never would they open again.

At that moment, a bird fluttered from the bough overhead, and sprang, with a song, into the air. A gleam of sunshine broke forth, as if to light its early path. Sir George moaned aloud in envy ; he would have been thankful to be that poor bird. That song was the signal for a thousand others ; every bough grew in a moment alive ; the sunshine became more golden, and a rich purple flushed deepening every instant in the east.

Again a fierce spasm shook Sir George's now weakened frame ; it forced from him a womanish shriek ; he was glad to hear it : a wild hope came, that it might bring some chance wanderer to his help ; and, in that hope, he filled the air with frantic cries.

He cried in vain ; he was dying in the midst of that crowded city, helpless, and alone.

Oh, for a human face to have bent over his own! He ceased his shrieks suddenly, he found that he exhausted his strength; the morning had now broken, and if he could but live a little longer, some one must pass; and, so strong was the craving for humanity, that it was as if, let any one come near, and he must be saved. But the cold dews rose heavily on his forehead, a feeling of suffocation was in his throat, while his eyes swam, and the objects near began to whirl round with frightful velocity.

He raised his hand to clear the mists from his sight, but his strength failed in the effort, and his hand dropped heavily to the ground with a noise that, to his own ear, sounded like thunder! Painfully, he forced his hot eyelids to unclose, and his distended orbs sought for some object whereon to fix; they met the patch of grass, yet red with the blood of Walter Maynard. It seemed to rise in judgment against him; he could not take his eyes away from the guilty colour which began to spread; it rose, colouring the heavens with its fearful

hue, till the very azure was died with scarlet. Then it grew dark ; a darkness filled with shadows — shadows from other years.

Every evil thought that had ever arisen within him, now assumed some palpable form. Pale faces looked upon him with sad reproaches ; wasted hours, misused gifts, stood around like spectres. For the first time in his indulged and evil life, he thought of judgment and of an hereafter. He remembered his God, but only to fear him. He started ! that awful terror mastered even the extremity of pain ; the drops poured down his face ; his eyes glared fearfully round, seeking shelter, and finding none. The effort was too much ; he sank back with one last cry of despair, and in that despair he died !

The birds sang gaily over head ; the morning sun dried up even the tears that night had left on the leaves. The clouds first reddened, and then wandered, white and pure, over the sky ; voices rose from the wilderness of streets around, and another day came, busy and anxious, to awakening humanity. The cheer-

fulness of the morning brought its own glad tone to the spirits of the early walkers in the park. The first that entered were going on their way with a song, when the singing voice suddenly changed to a cry of horror, for the dead lay before their feet. His eyes, wild and staring—there had been no friendly hand to close them; his features convulsed with fearful agony. Sir George Kingston was stretched a corpse! He—the rich, the luxurious, the flattered—had died by the common pathway like a dog!

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE CHAMBER OF DEATH.

Ah! sad it is to see the deck
Dismasted of some noble wreck ;
And sad to see the marble stone
Defaced, and with gray moss o'ergrown ;
And sad to see the broken lute
For ever to its music mute.
But what is lute, or fallen tower,
Or ship sunk in its proudest hour,
To awe and majesty combined
In their worst shape — the ruined mind ?

THE morning air waved to and fro the chintz curtains of a large and, for a London one, a very cheerful-looking room, whose windows opened to the Thames. It was high tide, and every wave seemed freighted with a separate sunbeam ; the sails of the small boats, as they

darted rapidly along, shone with the purest white; and those that rowed past, flung up a shower of glittering sparkles at every stroke of the oar. On the sill of each window were placed pots, full of roses; and their sweet breath floated into the room.

In a large arm-chair, so placed as to command every thing that went by, the view only broken by the waving leaves of the rose-trees, sat Mrs. Churchill. On one side was an embroidery-frame, which, from the delicate finish of the wreath, indicated that younger eyes occasionally aided the old lady. On the other was a small table, with an exquisite breakfast-service of Dresden china, from which she was sipping her chocolate. Placed opposite, on a low seat, was her granddaughter, a huge book propped on her knee, from which she was reading aloud. Perhaps there was a charm in that sweet voice, which gave its own unconscious fascination to the long-drawn pages; but there was, also, the still stronger charm of habit.

Mrs. Churchill liked the interminable laby-

riths of the Cyrus and the Cassandra, because she had liked them in the days of her girlhood. Youth identifies itself with the romance; it is the heroic knight, or the lovely lady, of which it reads; it lives amid those fine creations; its sweetest hours are given to dreams which soon

“ Fade into the light of common day.”

It would have seemed ludicrous to a common observer to mark the aged woman listening by the hour to these high-flown gallantries; but it was not them that she heard, it was the remembrances that they brought. The old live more with memory than the young. Every page in that ponderous tome had some association with life's brightest hours: she lived them over again, while the murmur of that fair girl's soft tones fell sweet upon her ear. Ethel's graceful figure, seated at her grandmother's feet, completed the picture; and any one who had looked casually into that cool and cheerful chamber, would have thought it a very shrine of household happiness. And

Ethel, if not happy, was calm — almost content ; every day brought its duties, sweetened by affection ; and, in her grandmother's comfort she found her own.

Mrs. Churchill had given up urging Ethel into a round of gaiety, which suited neither her health nor her spirits. She could not but feel the tender care that watched her least look, yet was always as submissive as it was anxious. She had been a long time in discovering that Ethel was no longer a child ; but she now softened down a thousand prejudices by daily counsel with one who was a gentle and intelligent companion. Ethel resolutely turned her thoughts from the past ; and, if she could not look to the future, at least she forced them to occupy themselves with the present. The bitterness of a first great despair had passed ; but the traces would linger, despite every effort. Her step was no longer buoyant, and her laugh was no longer heard rising suddenly, like the notes of a bird ; she had a look of weariness when she tried any of her old amusements. Unless at her grand-

mother's request, she never went near the spinnet; she nursed no flowers for her own room; and when she read, it was slowly; she could not keep her attention to the page. You gazed on her, and saw

“ ’Twas a pale face that seemed undoubtedly
As if a blooming face it ought to be !”

But the bloom and the gaiety had gone together: there was sweetness and endurance; but they are sad, when the only expression worn by youth.

She was just pausing for breath after a longer speech, even than usual, of the heroine's, when the door opened, and Madame Cecile, Lady's Marchmont's maid, rushed into the room!

“ Oh, my lady !” exclaimed she; “ for pity's sake come to her, Miss Churchill !” and, sinking into a chair, gave way to a violent burst of hysterics.

It was long before Ethel's soothing or questions could extract any thing like an answer, till Mrs. Churchill took the matter into her

own hands, and tried the effect of a little judicious scolding. The effect was most salutary; and, amid starts and screams — for the poor girl was fairly frightened out of the small portion of sense that, at any time, belonged to her — they learned that Lord Marchmont had been found dead in his bed; and that Lady Marchmont was, with the shock, in a state of almost insanity!

“We can do nothing with her! she won’t even let me put up her hair under a cap!” said Madame Cecile.

Ethel wrung her hands in dismay; but instantly recovering, exclaimed, “Oh, let me go to her at once! may I not, dear madam?”

Mrs. Churchill gave consent without hesitation; and a chair being sent for immediately, Ethel hurried as fast as she could to Marchmont House. All was in that confusion which follows any sudden calamity: the servants were hurrying in all directions, apparently for no other purpose than that of getting in each other’s way. As she went up stairs, a succession of frightful screams made her hurry

breathlessly to the room from whence they came. It was Lady Marchmont's dressing-room; and there she found her surrounded by physicians, two of whom held her, while the surgeon made a vain attempt to bleed her: it was impossible in her present state.

Ethel stood—pity, anxiety—alike merged in astonishment at the change which a single night had wrought. Henrietta's long hair flowed unbound, but it was white as the shoulders over which it swept. Age and youth seemed to have met together: there was the skin, fair and smooth, but the mouth was fallen, and the features thin and contracted. The large black eyes seemed to have gone back into the head, and a dark hollow circle was round them; while the change in the colour of the hair, once so glossily black, now turned to silver, gave her countenance something that seemed to Ethel almost supernatural. As soon as Henrietta saw her, with a sudden spring she released herself from restraint; and, flinging her arms round her

friend, though it was obvious she did not know her, exclaimed,—

“ Ah! you look gentle, I will go with you; save me from these horrible men, who want to drag me to prison!”

But while speaking, her hands relaxed their passionate clinging; the wild black eyes closed heavily, and she sank fainting on the floor!

“ It is a merciful insensibility,” said the eldest physician; “ but, if she revive, I fear the awakening — it will be terrible!”

“ I will watch by her,” cried Ethel; and, for many, many long and dreadful nights did she watch by her bed-side: even to herself she would not guess what might be the import of those frightful ravings!

Fearful were the lessons that the young and gentle Ethel learnt in the house of mourning. She saw Lord Marchmont borne away to his grave, unfollowed by a single regret, and forgotten as soon as the coffin was closed. The selfish man left behind him neither sorrow

nor affection ; he was summoned away, and his place knew him no more. But the bedside of Lady Marchmont had a darker lesson than the grave, the ravings of insanity revealed the fiery world of that beating and passionate heart. Ethel could only feel too fearful, too humbled, for judgment ; but she wept, even while she prayed, beside her early friend.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

POVERTY.

It is an awful thing how we forget
The sacred ties that bind us each to each.
Our pleasures might admonish us, and say,
Tremble at that delight which is unshared ;
Its selfishness must be its punishment.
All have their sorrows, and how strange it seems
They do not soften more the general heart :
Sorrows should be those universal links
That draw all life together.

“ IT is of no use asking me to stay,” said Lavinia to the manager : “ you know that I never do any thing but what I choose !”

“ You need not tell me that,” interrupted the other ; “ but, if you had any sense, you would choose to do what I ask. I have pro-

mised the Duke of Bolton that you should sup with us to-night."

"I would not come," replied the actress, "if it were only to teach you not to make promises for me; but I cannot waste any more time talking to you!"

"His grace will go frantic with disappointment!" continued the manager; "that last ballad of yours completely turned his head! Indeed, if you would but play your cards properly, there is no saying what might happen!"

"Well," cried she, "since you have so brilliant an idea of my future prospects, perhaps you will, on the strength of them, advance me another week's salary!"

"Indeed I will not!" replied her companion; "you are already more in advance than I ever before allowed any of my company to be; and, as to your prospects, why you are throwing them away!"

"Well, well, it does not matter, and I won't keep you from supper. You may tell the duke, that we value things in proportion to

the trouble that they give us, and that is the reason why I always give as much as I can!"

So saying, she hurried off; but the tears were in her eyes, and her hand trembled as it drew her cloak round her. She was soon in the dimly-lighted streets, made more dreary by a small heavy rain that was falling. Life is full of strange contrasts; and who that could have seen — weary, yet walking as fast as she could, for she had a long way to go; faint, for of late she had debarred herself common necessities; cold, for the rain soon pierced her thin cloak — who would have believed that she was the brilliant actress who, not an hour since, was the gaze of every eye, while the whole house rang with applause?"

"Ah, there is still light!" muttered she, as she stopped before a shop, whose shutters were, however, closed, but through which came the glimmer from within. She paused for a moment on the threshold, as if reluctant to enter.

"The only memorial I shall soon have of

him — his gift!” said she, in a low sad whisper; and then, with the haste of one who makes a sudden resolution, with which they are almost afraid to trust themselves, she rapped loudly at the door. There was a moment’s silence, then whispering within, and a voice asked,—

“ Who’s there ? ”

“ Oh ! ” replied Lavinia, “ you know me very well ; let me in, I have a locket you must take to-night, or you shall not have it to-morrow ! ”

It was a locket that Walter Maynard had given her immediately after her appearance in his comedy ; one of the incidents turned upon a locket, and she had made, what is theatrically called, a hit in the scene. A heavy step approached the door ; a sound was heard, as of a falling chain ; then bolt after bolt was withdrawn, and at last the actress was admitted, and the door was instantly closed after her. It was a pawnbroker’s shop, that last receptacle of human wretchedness — wretchedness that takes the most squalid and

degrading form ; over the door might be written Dante's " *Lasciate Speranza !*" for, truly, hope never enters there.

The various articles exhibited in the windows during the day, had been removed for greater security, and there only remained a blank. But the glass cases on the counter still sent forth a sort of dull glitter ; they were filled with various ornaments, some pretty, though mostly tarnished by time, but each telling some little history of a happier hour. Still this was the least oppressive portion of the establishment : ornaments, even though hallowed by affection, are vanities ; and, though even vanity be reluctantly parted with, it is but a brief pang. I believe there is not a woman in the world that would hesitate to part with the most costly toy in her possession, to save but an annoyance from the object she loved : but there were, collected together, evidence of far heavier sacrifices. There were cords passed along the ceiling, from whence hung articles of wearing apparel of the most common description, things that spoke of

every-day use, and there was one whole line of little children's frocks; moreover, in one corner appeared, piled up, a large heap of blankets.

There is something fearfully wrong in what we call our highly civilized state of society, when poverty can be permitted to take the ghastly shapes of suffering that it does. It is enough, if we did but think, to make the heart sick, when we know the misery, the abject misery, which surrounds us in this vast city; and we might tremble to consider how much might be prevented—prevented both by individual and by general exertion. We are seated, perhaps leaning, in an easy chair, our feet on the fender, doing nothing or some light work, which is only an amusement; our meals have gratified not only hunger, but taste; we are under the pressure of not one single want; and yet, within an hundred yards from our door, there is a wretch dying of cold and hunger!

No one can deny the wide and ready benevolence which prevails in our country; but

while the misery exists, that no one can deny does exist, there must be some want of either will or judgment. Too many people confound charity with donation; they are satisfied with having given the most ready vent to the generous impulse; they have gratified at once a high and a low feeling — the kindness and, I fear, also the ostentation. That is not charity which goes about with a white pocket handkerchief in the hand, and is followed by a flourish of trumpets! No, charity is a calm, severe duty; it must be intellectual, to be advantageous. It is a strange mistake that it should ever be considered a merit; its fulfilment is only what we owe to each other, and is a debt never paid to its full extent.

It is a most difficult art to give; for if, in giving, we also give the habit of dependence, our gift has been that of an evil spirit, which always proves fatal. What we should seek to give are, habits, not only of industry, but of prudence: to look forward, is the first great lesson of human improvement. In the assistance hitherto offered to those in need, the

self-respect of the obliged has been too much forgotten : we have degraded, where we should have encouraged. The remedy lies with time, and with knowledge ; but there must be much to redress in the social system, which has luxury at one extreme, and starvation at the other.

Lavinia approached the counter with her usual careless air ; and, laying down the locket, named its price. There were two men in the shop—brothers, from their obvious likeness—sallow, with sharp features, to which no possible change could bring any other expression than a sort of dull cunning. The eyes were small, and of a dead filmy black ; they said nothing, even when fixed upon you. One of the brothers never moved from the high desk at which he was seated. He gave one cautious glance at the visitor ; and, after that, never looked from his paper. The other took the locket, examined it carefully, and laid it down, saying, in a voice that closely resembled the hissing of a snake,—

“ You ask too much ! ”

“Nay,” replied the actress, “it is worth far more!”

“We may keep it by us,” replied the pawnbroker, “for months; there is no demand for such articles.”

“But,” exclaimed she, eagerly, “I shall soon redeem it!”

“So you all say,” returned the man, with imperturbable coolness.

“Ah!” cried Lavinia, “I will answer for redeeming it in a month!”

“We hear the same story every day,” was the answer.

“But I shall have plenty of money in a few weeks!” interrupted Lavinia.

“Then you will not care for your old ornaments: you will go and buy new!” replied the man.

The actress laughed out, with something of the recklessness that was part of her nature. The man looked up in dismay from his desk, the one behind the counter opened his small black eyes with a gaze of stupid wonder — laughter was there such an unfamiliar sound.

“ Well,” continued she, “ there is a good deal of truth in what you say ; so, what will you give me ? ”

The man named about a tithe of the value of the article ; her countenance fell as she said, in a hollow whisper, “ I suppose I must take it ! ”

The pawnbroker took the locket, carefully put it aside, slowly counted out the money, still more slowly filled up the small printed ticket, and then passed money and card into Lavinia’s hand, to whose impatient temper the delay had seemed interminable. She hurried off, and the door was closed ; and, bolt after bolt, drawn after her. The rain poured in torrents, and she was wet through before she arrived at the door of the small inn in the city, which was her destination.

“ I must dry myself,” said she, approaching the kitchen fire, “ before I go into his room.”

She took off her cloak, wrung the rain from her long and dripping hair ; and, while doing so, caught sight of herself in the small piece

of glass which, put like a slate into a wooden frame, hung on a nail.

“ I have forgotten to wipe off my rouge,” muttered she; “ a pretty figure I look, with these red streaks !” she took her handkerchief and removed the stains, then you saw that the cheek was pale and hollow. She stood before the fire for some time, though every gesture betrayed her impatience. When the landlady came in, she called her, and placed in her hands a small sum of money. “ This is last week’s bill !”

The woman half hesitated to take it, but she was very poor herself; as she took it she said, with great kindness, “ I have been sitting with him, but he is very bad to-night !”

Lavinia started! “ I am quite dry, the damp can do him no harm now ;” so saying, she hurried up the narrow staircase to a small room, where, on a wretched bed, lay Walter Maynard !

There was the end of all his glorious fancies — of all his lofty aspirations. The poetry, which had so often made real life seem like a

dream, had now reached its last dark close.
Never more would the voice of the charmer,
Hope, reach his ear, charm she never so wisely.
Poor, neglected, and broken-hearted, Walter
Maynard was dying.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE USUAL DESTINY OF THE IMAGINATION.

Remembrance makes the poet: 'tis the past
Lingering within him, with a keener sense
Than is upon the thoughts of common men,
Of what has been, that fills the actual world
With unreal likenesses of lovely shapes
That were, and are not; and the fairer they,
The more their contrast with existing things;
The more his power, the greater is his grief.
Are we then fallen from some noble star,
Whose consciousness is as an unknown curse;
And we feel capable of happiness
Only to know it is not of our sphere?

THE first sickly gleam of daylight came in through the uncurtained window, deadening the dull yellow glare of the candle that, having burned through the night, was fast sinking in the socket. The chill and uncomfortable light shewed the full wretchedness of the scene

over which it fell; the walls were only white-washed, the whiteness long since obscured by dust and smoke, and broken away in many places. The bare boards looked as if they had not been scoured for months; and a deal table, and two rickety chairs, were all the furniture, except the miserable pallet on which Walter Maynard lay dying; and this was the end of his impassioned hopes, and of his early and glorious dreams!

The change that a few weeks had wrought in him was awful: the features were almost transparent, and with a strange beauty, like a spirit's; and yet with that look which belongs to death, and death only. He was awake, feverish, and restless; and the clear, shining eyes had that sort of fixed brilliancy, which life, even in its brightest moments, never gave. The door opened so softly, that even he did not hear it. Lavinia looked in; and, seeing that he was already roused, entered with his coffee; it was the only thing for which he retained the slightest liking: perhaps there was some lingering association with the pur-

suits once so precious; the haunted midnights, when he had been accustomed to drink it.

“How have you slept?” said she.

Walter smiled faintly, but his reply was interrupted by coughing; he signed to the window, which she opened, and then turned hastily away, for she could not bear the sight of the churchyard below. Maynard was now in the same house where he had come by chance on his first arrival in London; he was now occupying the room above the very one where he then slept. Remembering it as a cheap, out-of-the-way place, he had come thither the day after the duel to die, uncared for and unknown. But Lavinia had found him out; and, for weeks, had been his devoted nurse, though even she was startled at the extreme destitution of their situation; but, for his sake only, not for her own.

“Oh, Walter!” exclaimed she, after a long silence, during which she had either watched his difficult breathing, or turned aside to dash away the tears that, in spite of herself, would fill her eyes. There is an awe about

death, even in the face the most familiar to us ; it has already taken its likeness from the hereafter, so dreadful and so dark. " I cannot bear to see you perishing thus ; you have many friends, do let me apply to them ? "

" Friends ! " answered Walter, bitterly, " I have no friends. While I could work for them, or amuse them, they were glad enough to flatter and caress me ; now that I am broken in health and spirits, that my soul has worn itself out in their service, who of all that have owed pleasant hours to my pages will care that the hand which wrote now lies languid, scarcely able to trace its own name ! "

" Do not talk thus, " said she.

" Why not ? " interrupted Walter, " it is the truth. I loathe, I despise my kind ; I grieve over the labour that I have wasted on them. I should regret every generous hope, every lofty emotion, did I not think they must rise up in bitter mockery against them. "

Lavinia looked bewildered ; she could as little understand this outburst of impassioned anger, as she understood his former bursts of

hopeful enthusiasm. She knew nothing of the irritability inseparable from an imaginative temperament ; feeling every thing with the keenest susceptibility, and exaggerating every thing. The excitement of even those few words was too much, he sank back, fainting, on his pillow. It soon, however, passed away, and he roused again.

“ Lavinia !” exclaimed he, hastily, “ there are some people sent into the world to be miserable ; and miserably do they fulfil their fate. If you see one eager, hopeful, and believing, who holds the suffering of his kind his noblest reward—over whom even the words of those whom he despises have influence — be assured that you see one predestined to the most utter wretchedness.”

“ I am sure,” returned Lavinia, not knowing very well what to say, “ it is never worth while caring much about other people.”

“ How wretched,” continued Walter, “ has my whole life been ! I look back upon my sad and unloved childhood, when I felt the unkind and cold word with a sorrow beyond my years.

Then came a youth of incessant labour—labour whose exhaustion none can tell but those engaged in it. How often has the pen dropped from my hand for very weariness, and the characters swam before my aching sight! How often have I written when heart-sick, forcing my imagination, till the re-action was terrible!”

“ Dearest Walter, do not talk, you are not equal to it,” interrupted his companion.

“ Oh, no; it does me good. I cannot bear,” returned he, “ to be here thinking over thoughts that fret my very life away. Alas! how I grieve over all that was yet stored in my mind! Do you know, Lavinia,” continued he, with all the eagerness of a slight delirium, “ I am far cleverer than I was; I have felt, have thought so much! Talk of the mind exhausting itself!—never! Think of the mass of material which every day accumulates! Then experience, with its calm, clear light, corrects so many youthful fallacies; every day we feel our higher moral responsibility, and our greater power. What beautiful

creations even now rush over me!—but, no, no! — I am dying! — I shall write no more!” and his voice sunk, as he gasped for breath: “and she,” murmured he, after a long pause, “whom I have so idolised—a thousand hearts beat at the tender sorrow of which she was the inspiration! yet she will never know how utterly she has been beloved. Even now her sweet face swims before me; methinks that I would give worlds to gaze upon it once again; to carry the image into eternity with me!”

A very peculiar expression crossed Lavinia’s face, and she rose from her seat; her movement recalled Walter from his temporary abstraction.

“You are not going yet?” asked he; for now he clung, like a sick child, to the presence of his kind attendant.

“I am going,” replied she, “earlier to-day, that I may come back the sooner; the rehearsal will be very short; and now, dear Walter, try and compose yourself.”

“You are very, very kind,” said he, in

broken accents; and, after placing water and a restorative medicine near him, the actress left the room. She left the chamber of death and of desolation, to rehearse the jests of a comedy.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A REQUEST.

Trace the young poet's fate
Fresh from his solitude — the child of dreams,
His heart upon his lip, he seeks the world
To find him fame and fortune, as if life
Were like a fairy tale. His song has led
The way before him; flatteries fill his ear,
And he seems happy in so many friends.
What marvel if he somewhat overrate
His talents and his state !

“ SHE sleeps now heavily, nor will she waken for some hours ; every thing depends upon that awakening,” said the physician.

“ You have, then, hopes ?” asked Ethel.

“ That the body,” replied the other, “ may recover ; but not the mind. Young lady, it

would be wrong to deceive you ; Lady Marchmont is, I fear, irrecoverably insane."

She leant against the bed, pale, sick with the shock of his words ; yet mingled with a strange and fearful relief. Insanity, with no further cause, would account for Henrietta's frantic ravings ; and when she thought how gifted, how clever she was, it seemed impossible that such a mind could pass away in a single night. She hoped ; she could not help hoping.

When the physician went away, she approached the bed, and gazed upon Henrietta sleeping. How wan, and how attenuated was that beautiful face ! the cheek fell in, with a complete hollow ; and the black eye-lashes, as they rested upon it, only served to shew still more forcibly its deadly whiteness.

She had been restless at first ; and some of the silvery gray hair fell over the forehead. Ethel put it softly back, and started to feel how the hot pulses throbbed beneath her touch. She carefully drew the curtains ; and, leaving

orders to be sent for should there be the slightest change, returned home.

It was a great relief to her oppressed spirits to find that her grandmother had an old friend come to pass the day with her, so the Cassandra was left in repose for that morning at least. She sought the little chamber peculiarly appropriated to her own use; and, seating herself by the window, sank into a sad and listless reverie.

It is a mood whose "profitless dejection" there are few among us but what have known. It is the result of the overstrained nerves, the worn-out frame—something of bodily weakness must mingle with it. We turn away from the future, we are too desponding to look forward. Every sorrow of the past seems to rise up, not only as a recollection of suffering, but as if each were an omen of what is to come. We feel as if even to wish were a folly; or, worse, a tempting of fate. We have no confidence in our own good fortune; it seems as if the mere fact of wishing were enough to have that wish

denied. A fretful discontent gnaws at the heart, the worse for being ashamed to confess it.

But Ethel soon felt the error of giving way to this utter discouragement: she made it a duty to struggle against it. She rose from her seat; and, flinging open the casement, strove to divert her attention by looking out upon the river. She turned hastily away; she had no sympathy with the sunshine—the movement—the seeming cheerfulness of the world below. She took up her work, but that was no mental stimulus; she laid it down, and, going to her little bookcase, took down the first book that came to hand.

It was a favourite volume which she opened — “Fugitive Poems, by Walter Maynard.” She had always taken an interest in one whom she had known from earliest childhood; and of late the melancholy in herself had harmonised with that which was the chief characteristic of his writings. She soon became interested: her sadness took a softer tone; for now it seemed understood, and met with

tender pity. And this is the dearest privilege of the poet—to soothe the sorrowing, and to excite the languid hour; to renovate exhausted nature, by awakening it with the spiritual and the elevated; and bringing around our common hours shadows from those more divine.

Ethel was, however, interrupted by the appearance of her maid bringing her chocolate, and a message, that a young person below was very anxious to see her.

“Shew her up immediately,” was Miss Churchill’s reply, who was, however, a little startled when she found that her visitor was her former attendant, Lavinia Fenton. But her first glance at the young actress was enough: she was pale, thin, and the trace of tears were yet recent on her cheeks. She had been very wrong to leave her mistress as she had done; and to Ethel’s quiet and secluded habits her having gone on the stage seemed absolutely awful; but she was obviously suffering; and the only question was, how that suffering could be assisted?

Ethel approached her kindly, and made her

sit down and take some refreshment, before she would even ask her what was her present business.

“ I do not come on my own account,” exclaimed Lavinia, eagerly : “ believe me, Miss Churchill, I remember all your former kindness, and know too well the difference between us, not to know the best way I can mark my sense of it is never to come near you.”

“ Oh, Lavinia !” exclaimed her young mistress ; “ how could you leave us ? we used to be so fond of each other ! surely I shall be able to prevail upon you to leave your present mode of life. Tell me, what can we do for you ?”

“ Nothing,” said the girl, touched to the very heart by Ethel’s kindness ; “ I could not come to you if I had been starving in the streets. Now I do not come for myself.”

“ On whose account, then ?” exclaimed her listener.

Lavinia hesitated, she had persuaded herself into her visit ; the whole way she had invented speeches, she had quite settled how to meet any possible objection ; but now her voice

failed her, her frame shook with strong emotion, and it was some moments before she could reply.

“ Ah, madam ! I wish you could have witnessed the scene which I have just left. I am come from the death-bed, in hopes that you will grant the last earthly wish which seems to haunt it.”

“ Could you doubt one moment that I should ?” interrupted Ethel : “ only tell me what it is ?”

“ Do you remember,” asked the actress, “ Walter Maynard ?”

“ Do I remember him !” exclaimed Ethel, her eye unconsciously falling on the volume which she had just been reading, and which still lay open on the table,—“ it would, indeed, be difficult to forget him.”

The quick glance of the actress followed her look. “ Ah !” said she, “ you have been reading his works : he will write no more beautiful verses to you ; for he is dying — dying, too, in miserable want !”

“ My God !” cried Ethel, springing from

her seat, "let us go to him! — what can we do? Let me find my grandmother!"

Lavinia gently detained her. "Walter Maynard," continued she, "is far beyond all human help; his days — ay, his very hours — are numbered: but you may fling over them one last gleam of human happiness."

"I!" cried Ethel.

"You — you whom he has loved so long, so truly! You saw it not, you thought only of another; but Walter Maynard loved your very shadow; and such have you been to him through life."

Ethel stood breathless with surprise; she looked back to Walter with the affectionate regard which lingers around one whom we have known in early life, and have never seen since. Of late, her imagination had dwelt upon him with that picturesque interest with which we are apt to invest the writer whose pages appeal to our feelings.

Lavinia saw her emotion, and added, "Not that your name ever passed his lips; save in the muttered wish of this morning, he never spoke

of you. If you could see him now—so changed, so pale—you would pity him.”

“Pity him!” exclaimed Ethel, no longer able to suppress her tears.

“You will come, then?” asked the actress.

“Yes, the instant I have spoken to my grandmother;” and, ringing the bell, desired that her chair might be sent round immediately.

“It is a long way off,” said Lavinia, “and I must hurry away. I always dread what may have happened during my absence.”

“Is he so very ill?” interrupted Ethel.

“Lady, he is dying,” replied the other. Then, laying the address, with written directions, on the table, she hurried away, leaving her young mistress in a state of the most painful agitation.

Ethel could scarcely believe, after the actress had left her, but what she had been in a dream. “Good heavens!” exclaimed she, “what a precious thing love is! what a gift of all hope, all happiness, into the power of another!—and

yet, how often is it bestowed in vain! wasted, utterly and cruelly wasted! Well, if he loved me, there has been a sad and bitter sympathy between us. Can he have been more wretched than I have been?" and, covering her face with her hands, she gave way to a passionate burst of weeping.

It was so long before she recovered, that her chair was ready first: and, startled at the announcement, she hastened to ask her grandmother's permission for her visit. It was instantly granted; for Mrs. Churchill had always liked Walter, and had taken a personal satisfaction in his literary success. It was a compliment to her discernment. If ever we forgive another's celebrity, it is when it fulfils our own prophecy. But to have him, who had been a little child playing at her feet, dying in desolation and misery, roused every kindly feeling.

She hurried Ethel to put on her cloak, and saw herself to the packing up a basket; containing wine, one or two medicines in which she placed implicit faith, and a note from

herself, begging him to come at once to her house to be nursed.

The bustle over, a glow of self-satisfaction, in spite of her sorrow, diffusing itself; and, taking one of his volumes, she went to her own chair, and soon found herself shedding tears over the strange mixture of real and ideal misery.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE DISCLOSURE.

Young, loving, and beloved — these are brief words ;
And yet they touch on all the finer chords,
Whose music is our happiness ; the tone
May die away, and be no longer known,
In the sad changes brought by darker years,
When the heart has to treasure up its tears,
And life looks mournful on an altered scene —
Still it is much to think that it has been.

ETHEL was yet bathing her eyes with elderflowers, preparatory to going, when her departure was again delayed by another visitor.

“ Tell her,” exclaimed she, “ that I am just going to a dying friend — ask if she will see my grandmother.”

The servant obeyed, but returned almost instantly, saying, "that the lady said, she must entreat Miss Churchill to see her for ten minutes, she would not detain her longer. Indeed, madam," continued the maid, "I think you had better go down, for she is quite the lady, and seems so miserable at the idea of your not seeing her."

"Perhaps," said Ethel, "I had better see her, a few minutes cannot much matter. I know by myself," added she, in a lower tone, "that sorrow is impatient."

On entering the parlour into which the visitor had been shewn, she saw a tall figure, wrapped in a dark mantle, with her back towards her, in one of the recesses of the windows. The noise of her steps, light as they were, attracted the stranger's notice, who, turning round and letting her mantle fall as she did so, shewed a tall and stately figure, dressed in what appeared to be some conventual costume. Her face, though thin and pale, bore the traces of great former beauty; and, although Ethel was sure that she had

never seen the lady before, yet there was something in her features strangely familiar.

The colour came rapidly into her cheek ; her heart told her the face now before her brought the memory of one still too dearly remembered — it was Norbourne Courtenaye that it recalled ; the likeness was, despite the difference of sex and age, singularly striking.

What a vain thing is forced forgetfulness ! For months Ethel had sedulously banished one image from her thoughts, and she fancied that she had succeeded : alas ! even a chance and casual resemblance sufficed to make her tremble with emotion. To such emotion she had long made it a rule not to give way. She steadied her voice ; though, with all her resolution, it was a little tremulous ; and, entreating her visitor to be seated, asked what were her commands.

The stranger appeared almost to forget that it was her business to speak : she fixed her dark, penetrating eyes on the beautiful girl, who stood, blushing and confused, at the scrutiny.

“ Perhaps,” said Ethel, a little apprehensively—for the garb of her companion made her think that, perhaps, she was some Jacobite emissary — “ it was my grandmother whom you wished to see ?”

“ No, no, it was yourself !” exclaimed the stranger, eagerly, as if startled by Ethel’s voice. “ Pardon me, young lady, but I am not well ; and to myself my errand is a painful one.”

“ Pray do not stand,” said Ethel ; and, drawing a large arm-chair, took the stranger’s hand, and gently forced her to be seated.

“ Pray sit by me,” continued the lady ; and Ethel placed herself in the window-seat, wondering at her singular visitor, in whom, however, she could not help feeling interested. “ I ought to tell you my name,” exclaimed the stranger, breaking silence by an obvious effort, “ I am Mrs. Courtenaye.”

Ethel started to her feet, turning deadly pale, and sank again on her seat ; and her visitor seemed almost startled at the effect which her words had produced. Miss Church-

ill had, however, for months subjected her feelings to a discipline too severe to be wholly overcome by them now. Her features became cold and calm; and there was a slight touch of haughtiness in her manner, as she said,—

“ May I be permitted to ask the cause why Mrs. Courtenaye honours me with a visit?”

“ Because the happiness of my only child is in your hands — because,” exclaimed she, “ I have recently stood by the bed that was every hour expected to be that of death, and, during the delirium of fever, yours was the only name upon Norbourne’s lips.”

“ Mrs. Courtenaye,” replied Ethel, rising, “ it is useless to prolong an interview which can only be humiliating and painful to both.”

“ Listen to me,” cried Mrs. Courtenaye, catching her hand, and detaining her.

“ Nay,” replied her companion: “ I can understand and pity your feelings; but you must, also, respect mine. I entreat you not to enter on a subject which inflicts on me — I will tell you frankly — inflicts on me a

degree of pain of which you have little idea."

"You do love him, then?" cried Mrs. Courtenaye.

"Madam," returned Ethel, again attempting to leave the room, "you can have no possible right to ask the question."

"I am wrong," exclaimed the other; "but solitude has made my habits abrupt, and my very anxiety defeats my object. All that I implore is, that you will listen to me patiently—listen to me, lady, but for five minutes."

What could Ethel do but resume her seat? and Mrs. Courtenaye continued,—

"Do tell me, before I proceed, whether there was any other motive for your rejection of Norbourne's renewed address than resentment for his former inconstancy?"

"Do not call it resentment," cried Ethel; "perhaps it will save a continuance of this to me most distressing conversation, if I say, that Mr. Courtenaye's conduct has been such that I never could permit myself to regard him

with, if you will force it from me, my once trusting affection.”

“ You do not know,” interrupted Mrs. Courtenaye, “ the circumstances in which he was placed.”

“ I believe that I do,” returned the other, coldly.

Mrs. Courtenaye looked amazed ; a sudden fear, that her story was not the profound secret that she supposed it to be, came over her, and she asked, faintly, — “ What do you suppose those circumstances to have been ? ”

“ Embarrassments,” returned Ethel, with an expression of as much scorn as her sweet face would express, “ from which his cousin’s wealth set him free.”

“ Oh, you are quite wrong ! ” cried his mother ; “ no love of fortune, nor of ambition, could have tempted Norbourne to desert you. Little, indeed, do you know his high and generous nature, when you suppose that he could be actuated by an interested motive.”

“ Was it, then,” asked Ethel, faintly, “ love for his cousin ? ”

“ No,” replied Mrs. Courtenaye, “ it was love for his mother.”

“ I do not know,” exclaimed Miss Churchill, a little natural pride increasing her indignation, “ why you should have objected to his union with one who, in fortune and family, was his equal in every way ; and who loved him — how deeply, how dearly, my own heart only can tell ! But why do you thus seek to stir up again feelings, with which you have each so cruelly trifled ?”

“ Reproach me !” said Mrs. Courtenaye, “ I deserve it ; but do not blame Norbourne. Never has his heart changed from its entire affection for you ; and little do you know the wretchedness that he has endured.”

“ Madam,” you might have spared us both this. I pity him ! I pity myself !” exclaimed she, struggling with the tears she could no longer suppress ; “ but my love and my esteem must go together, and you obliged me to tell you that Mr. Courtenaye has forfeited the last.”

“ But I can restore it to him,” cried Mrs.

Courtenaye ; “ I have already delayed my explanation too long : you are an orphan, Miss Churchill ; but have you never thought how sweet it would have been to have had a mother — one who knelt, blessing your pillow, every night, and watched your steps during day ? Suppose that you had such a parent, that you knew you had been from your birth her only object in the wide, cold world, would you not have made some sacrifice for her sake ? ”

“ Any, even to my life ! ” returned Ethel, in a faltering voice.

“ Suppose, ” continued Mrs. Courtenaye, “ that that mother had knelt at your feet ; told you that her life, and, far more precious than life, her honour, were in your hands, and implored you to save them, would you not have yielded to her frantic entreaties ? ”

“ I would ! ” said Ethel, but her voice was scarcely audible.

Mrs. Courtenaye then rapidly sketched her previous history ; and, long before it was ended, Ethel had bowed her face in her hands, and was weeping bitterly.

“ Oh !” exclaimed she, “ true and generous as ever ! how I have misjudged him !”

“ The atonement is in your own hands,” said Mrs. Courtenaye ; “ you will let him see you this evening ?”

“ If he loves me still,” whispered Ethel ; but now she felt deep in her own heart, that affection knows no change, nor shadow of turning.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

MEETING.

Over that pallid face were wrought
The characters of painful thought ;
But on that lip, and in that eye,
Were patience, faith, and piety.
The hope that is not of this earth,
The peace that has in pain its birth ;
As if, in the tumult of this life,
Its sorrow, vanity, and strife,
Had been but as the lightning's shock,
Shedding rich ore upon the rock :
Though in the trial scorched and riven,
The gold it wins, is gold from heaven.

THE window of Walter Maynard's small and wretched chamber looked into a churchyard, the same on which he had gazed the night of his arrival in London. It was one of those dreary burial-places, where nothing redeems the desolate aspect of mortality. The square,

upright tombstones were crowded together as if there were not room for the very dead. It may be a weakness, though growing out of all that is most redeeming in our nature,—the desire that is in us to make the City of the Departed beautiful, as well as sacred. The green yew that flings down its shadow, the wild-flowers that spring up in the long grass, take away from the desolation, they are the type and sign of a world beyond themselves. Even as spring brings back the leaf to the bough, the blossom to the grass, so will a more glorious spring return to that which is now but a little human dust.

Suddenly, Walter Maynard turned from the window, out of which he had been gazing long and silently: “And there,” exclaimed he, “I shall be laid in the course of a few days, it may be, hours. I loathe those dull, damp stones. Do you care where you are buried?” said he, turning suddenly to Lavinia.

“Not the least! What difference can it make?” asked she.

“It is strange,” continued he, “that the

profession of both has its existence in opinion, and yet you care nothing for what is abstract and picturesque in it."

"You have cared only too much," replied she, gazing upon him sadly.

"Not so," returned he earnestly, a last gleam of enthusiasm kindling up his large clear eyes; "I have not cared enough. Deeply do I feel at this moment, when the scattered thoughts obey my bidding no longer, and the hand, once so swift to give them tangible shape, lies languid at my side, that I have not done half that I ought to have done. How many hours of wasted time, how many worse than wasted, now rise up in judgment against me! And, oh, my God! have I sufficiently felt the moral responsibility of gifts like my own? Have I not questioned, sometimes too rashly, of what it was never meant mortal mind should measure? Have I not sometimes flung the passing annoyance of a wounded feeling too bitterly on my pages? I repent me of it now!"

He paused, for the dews gathered on his forehead; but again the transient light kindled in his face, till it was even as that of an angel. Earthly passion, whether of anger or of sorrow, had faded from that pure white brow; the eyes looked back the heaven on which they gazed — they were full of it.

“ Oh, my Creator!” exclaimed he, clasping his thin, wan hands, “ I am not worthy of the gifts bestowed upon me! Let me not forget that, though this worn and fevered frame perish, the soul ascends hopeful, meekly hopeful, of its native heaven; and my mind remains behind to influence and to benefit its race: may what was in aught evil of its creations be forgotten; may aught that was good, endure to the end. There is a deep and sacred assurance at my heart, that what I have done will not be quite in vain. Even at this last moment, I feel it is sweet to bequeath my memory to the aspirations and sympathies of my kind.”

He leaned back — pale, faint, but calm;

and, at that moment, Lavinia, who had been occupied by anxious expectation of Miss Churchill's arrival, was called from the room.

“Can you,” said she, on her return, “receive a visitor whom, only yesterday, you were wishing to see?”

An instinct of the heart seemed to tell Walter who the visitor was, and a faint colour came, for a moment, over his face.

“She has come!” exclaimed he; “let me look upon her, and die happy!”

He strove to rise, but the next moment Ethel's gentle hand forced him to be seated; as, in a broken voice, she said, “Oh, Walter! was it kind to let your old friends find you thus?”

He looked at her with a sweet, calm smile, as he answered, “They find me happy!”

CHAPTER XXXIX.

PARTING.

That is love
Which chooseth from a thousand only one
To be the object of that tenderness
Natural to every heart ; which can resign
Its own best happiness for one dear sake ;
Can bear with absence ; hath no part in hope,
For hope is somewhat selfish : love is not,
And doth prefer another to itself.

“ Do not,” whispered Walter, as he watched Ethel’s eyes glance round the room, and then turn mournfully on himself, “ do not pity the poverty which surrounds me ; but for that I should have lost the greatest happiness life has known. It is to your gentle charity that

I owe this visit, that my last look will fall on the face which has to me been, through life, my most sweet and sacred dream. Fairest and dearest, if I leave behind me aught of passionate feeling, and of true emotion, it is to your inspiration that I owe it."

Another visitor disturbed them; and softly, but hastily, Norbourne Courtenaye entered the room.

"Oh, Walter!" exclaimed he, "did our true friendship deserve that you should let me find you thus? I have found you, too, with such difficulty ——"

He broke off abruptly, for he caught sight of Ethel. There was, however, no time for indulgence of individual feeling; for, overcome by the exertion just made, Walter had sunk back in his chair fainting. In a few moments he revived, but a change had passed over his countenance—death was in every feature. Once more his large dark eyes lighted with transient lustre, as he gazed earnestly on Ethel and Norbourne, who stood before him.

"Do you remember," said he, in a voice

so hollow and so low, that the accents were scarce audible, “the last evening that we spent beside the little fountain? Why should coldness have taken the place of that love which I then believed was so happy, so perfect? What could have parted you? At this moment, though your looks are averted, there is love in them, that love which nothing else can supply. I pray of you, let no worldly motive, no false pride, no vanity, come between your affection!”

He was holding a hand of each; and, feebly, he put them together. Norbourne started, for he felt that Ethel did not withdraw hers. He looked at her for a moment; her eyes dropped, but in that sweet and conscious look he read a new world of hope and love.

“God bless you!” said Walter. “Lavinia! my kind, my generous nurse!” added he, in accents more and more broken, “may your kindness to me be requited tenfold! Ah! if my dying words might in aught avail, you would leave ——”

But his words died in a strange gurgling in the throat; the eyes suddenly became fixed; the mouth fell; once he stretched out his hands convulsively, but they instantly relaxed, and his head sunk on Norbourne's arm. They raised him; and, carrying him to the bed, laid him there. Pale, tranquil, and sweet, his face looked sleep, not death. They knelt by the bedside, at first too awe-struck for sorrow; prayers, not tears, seemed fitted to the scene: they felt as if around them were the presence of Heaven.

And so perished, in the flower of his age, in the promise of his mind, the high-minded and gifted Walter Maynard. He died poor, surrounded by the presence of life's harsh and evil allotment, but the faithful and affectionate spirit kept its own to the last. Depressed, sorrowful, he might be, as he went on a hard path wearily; but he died hopeful and loving. His poet's heart clung to this world, but to leave it a rich legacy of feelings and of thoughts; his spirit welcomed death,

the eternal guide to the mighty world beyond the grave.

How many beautiful creations, how many glorious dreams went with him to the tomb! but the unfulfilled destiny of genius is a mystery whose solution is not of earth. It is but one of those many voices wandering in this wilderness of ours that tell us, not here is our lot appointed to finish. We are here but for a space and a season; for a task and a trial, and of the end no man knoweth. The earthly immortality of the mind is but a type of the heavenly immortality of the soul. Peace be to the beating heart and the worn spirit that had just departed, "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest!"

CHAPTER XL.

THE END.

Farewell !

Shadows and scenes that have, for many hours,
Been my companions ; I part from ye like friends —
Dear and familiar ones — with deep sad thoughts,
And hopes, almost misgivings !

“ FORGIVE me,” said Lord Norbourne, as he led the bride into the little chapel, where, at his desire, the marriage was to take place, “ if, with vain confidence in myself, I, too rashly, took the happiness of others into my own keeping. Forgive me for the sake of my lost Constance, whose place to me you will fill, while this life lasts !”

Ethel could not speak, but her look was

enough. Mrs. Courtenaye was not at her son's second marriage; unyielding, yet generous, she was one of those spirits to whom self-sacrifice is a relief. The faith of solitude and penance suited her mind; and she had entered one of those convents which, quiet and secluded, existed yet in England. In her eyes the sacrifice was atonement, and an offering for others. Sincere and enthusiastic in her belief, the prayers that, for years, she offered for her son's happiness, made her own.

Both Mrs. Churchill and Lord Norbourne lived to an extreme old age; the last, with a happiness around his latter days, that had never belonged to his earlier years. The loss of his youngest and most beloved child had been to him the bitterest feeling of his life; but it had worked in him for good. Sorrow had subdued, and affection had softened, his nature; his sweet child had been his good angel. Her latest prayer was fulfilled even in this world; and her father found, beside the hearth of her husband, the interest and the solace of his old age.

Lavinia Fenton's history belongs to that of her time. In spite of Miss Churchill's entreaties, she continued on the stage; and her success in *Polly*, of the *Beggars' Opera*, is well known. She ended by becoming Duchess of Bolton; one of those strange instances of mere worldly prosperity, which set all ordinary calculation at defiance.

The conclusion of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's career is, also, matter of history; one of its grave, sad lessons. Clever—beautiful—with every advantage of nature and fortune, her youth was a vain search after happiness, under the mistaken name of pleasure. I do not know a moral picture more degrading than the weakness which, for years, made her shrink from the sight of a looking-glass; nor any thing more disconsolate than her long residence, during her advanced life, in a foreign country, remote alike from the sphere of her duties and her affections. Brilliant—witty—searching into human nature, as her letters undoubtedly are, there is a fearful deficiency in all higher feeling and nobler motive;

the only redeeming point—but how much, indeed, does that redeem—is her tenderness for her daughter. We owe, also, to Lady Mary the introduction of inoculation — the moral courage she displayed; the blessing conferred by her exertions may well silence the harsh judgment which suits so little with our narrow and finite intelligence.

It was just such an evening, by

“ Departing summer tenderly illumined,”

as the one on which our narrative commenced, that Norbourne and Ethel stood beside the little fountain, whose scattered silver fell over the blue harebells around.

They had been married at Norbourne Park, but they mutually wished to pass the first few weeks of their wedded happiness in the place which had witnessed the commencement of their love. We can bear to look back on past suffering when in the very fulness of content. Norbourne had been leaning for some time watching the soft shadows, that, as they passed, gave each a new aspect to the land-

scape around, before Ethel joined him. She came down the same winding path, through the wilderness, by which Henrietta had joined them the night before she went to London.

“ You look pale, dearest,” said Norbourne ; “ these daily visits to Lady Marchmont, in her wretched state, are too much for you.”

“ Not so,” replied Ethel ; “ you would not, I am sure, wish me to shrink from what I hold to be a duty, though a painful one. Poor Henrietta has no friend in the world but myself. Hopeless as her madness is, though she knows me not, my presence soothes her ; and with me she is gentle as a child.”

“ Incurable insanity !” exclaimed Norbourne, “ violent or melancholy, it is an awful visitation on one so young, so beautiful, and so gifted !”

“ God grant,” said Ethel, “ that her sufferings in this world may be her atonement in the next. As far as human skill can say, years, long years, are before her. To us, Norbourne, she will be as a sister, is it not so ?”

Her husband’s only answer was to clasp still closer the hand that he held in his. “ You

must come with me," said he, after a few moments' silence; "you will now know why I would not let you go through the churchyard this week."

They turned into the little path that led to the church, whose Gothic windows were kindled by the setting sun. Even the dark yew trees were lighted up as if by some lustrous and spiritual presence. His wife saw that beneath the one to which they were approaching, a monument had been newly erected.

"It was his last wish," said Norbourne, "not to be buried in London."

Ethel looked up, and read on a white marble tablet the brief inscription of — "SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF WALTER MAYNARD."

THE END.