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PROGRESS AND PREJUDICE.

BY MRS. GORE.

"Aloof, with hermit eye, I scan
The present deeds of present man."

COLERIDGE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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PROGRESS AND PREJUDICE.

CHAPTER I.

GENTEEL poverty is too apt to be garlanded about with arabesques by descriptive writers; like the deceptious honeysuckles twined over a rustic porch.—Even poor Mary Tremenheere, far advanced in the thirties, and much addicted to weak poetry and weak tea, allowed herself to whine occasionally to Mrs. Burton about the “humble cot” of their banished friends, as “the abode of frugality and content.”

But Mrs. Burton knew better. Mrs. Burton

had tasted of the bitter waters and found them unpalatable;—and, aware that the “humble cot” consisted of two floors in one of a row of comfortless lodging-houses, so small, that the smell of the kitchen and voices of its inmates, were never absent from the drawing-room, she knew how greatly the long-pampered invalid would have to suffer, and how much poor Amy would feel in noting her mother’s loss of comfort.

The time had arrived, Mrs. Burton thought, alas! far sooner than she had expected, which justified her former disapproval of the mode of Amy’s bringing up. Too early, poor child, had she been summoned to meet misfortune, face to face. The sight of that terrible aspect might perhaps prove too much for her courage.

Mrs. Burton believed too, and the prim maiden lady believed, that other mischances besides pecuniary ones, had their share in rendering the health of Amy Meadows at the

moment of leaving Radensford nearly as precarious as that of her mother. They had witnessed the commencement of her acquaintance with William Eustace; they had noticed his attentions to her; they had seen her intense anxiety at the commencement of his illness. But they also remembered the severity of countenance assumed by Lady Harriet when they hazarded the smallest allusion to the subject: and neither of them was in the slightest degree aware of Mr. Eustace's hurried visit to Meadows Court, or its results.

It was consequently only natural that, with the proneness of their sex for hearing the wings of invisible Cupids perpetually fluttering in the air, they should decide that Amy Meadows's fall from her high estate was grievously embittered by the pangs of a disappointed first love.

Poor girl!—her troubles needed no such enhancement. It was enough to see the darling mother she loved so dearly, ill-

lodged, ill-fed, and ill-attended; to have had the sunshine of her innocent life extinguished in a moment; to leave old neighbour Savile and the rest of her pensioners succourless in the midst of winter;—to find the hands of strangers laid upon objects she had been accustomed to hold sacred;—and feel herself razed from an honourable line.

While Mary Tremenheere was whispering at the Rectory her fears that dear Lady Harriet and the Eustaces might not prove the only family of distinction likely to disdain an alliance with the poverty-stricken daughter of an ex-governess, the tears of the object of her pity were falling in secret over her discovery *not* that her mother was of humble birth, but that her father's living sister kept aloof from them, even in the day of their tribulation: that no cousin Hugh, or Marcus, or Olivia, took pity on her fate.

The beauty and novelty of the scenery to which they were thus disastrously transferred,

had no charms for the mourners. Overpowered by her journey, and the harassing events by which it was preceded, Lady Meadows was again confined to the sofa; nor would her daughter quit her side, save for her Sabbath devotions. In the little glaring drawing-room, from which it was equally impossible to exclude the sun and wind that rendered its tawdry ornaments so faded, and brought down such gusts of smoke from its narrow chimney, they were

Cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd,

as in a lantern. For some days after their instalment, Amy, with the sanguine promptings of her age, kept listening for arrivals. She felt sure that one or other of the kind friends who had taken so much thought for them, would follow them to see how they fared under their trials. Clifton was scarcely thirty miles from Radensford. They could come and return in a day. Alas! poor girl, she took not into account the amount

of time already sacrificed by these good people in their behalf; that each and all had other duties to attend to. The bounds of human virtue have their limit. Even the Good Samaritan took out only two-pence for the benefit of the wounded wayfarer; and others besides Lady Harriet Warneford were perhaps of opinion that Sir Mark's widow and daughter must learn to shift for themselves.

Amy continued, however, to rush to the window whenever some vehicle stopped in the vicinity of their house; hoping to see the benevolent countenance of Mr. Henderson, the kindly smile of his daughter, or the knitted brows of Dr. Burnaby. Even the deaf old Admiral and his niece would have been welcome. But the carriages brought only strangers to visit the strangers by whom they were surrounded. Not one familiar face,—not one kindly word,—not one glance of comfort for Amy Meadowes.

The worst was that the only civilities offered

her were far more irksome than this enforced solitude. The person by whom their lodgings were kept,—the “lady,” as she carefully styled herself,—having no other occupation for her time and thoughts but the victims under her charge, was moved to bestow an unusual share of both upon her new inmates. They had been especially recommended to her by Dr. Burnaby,—from whom she had often before received consignments of invalid patients. But never a Baronet’s widow,—never a girl so lovely as “sweet Miss Meadowes.” Mrs. Darby felt that she had a right to affect extraordinary interest in their welfare; and bestow her longest dictionary words and profoundest curtsies upon them, while daily inquiring what it would please her ladyship to take for dinner—because the appetite of an invalid like her ladyship ought to be consulted,—and she could easy get a spring chicken for her ladyship, or a little grass, if her ladyship would only condescend to say the word.

To such suggestions, when Amy was alone, Mrs. Darby by degrees ventured to add a few words of advice on the subject of domestic economy and the etiquettes of life: interrupting her officious counsels with cant and palaver only the more offensive to pious ears for being clothed in the language of Scripture;—like robes stolen from a sacristy to be degraded into masquerade costumes.

“Poor dear! one hardly knows which is the greater child, the mother or the daughter,” observed Mrs. Darby, shaking her long streamers of forlorn ringlets as she whispered her confidences to her parlour lodger, Mr. Alaric Amphlett,—(“a hindependent gentleman” she described him to Amy, “which lives on his means, and has resided under my humble roof these seven year come Michaelmas”). — “One wishes to do one’s dooty, and something more than one’s dooty, Mr. Halaric, to such poor forlorn creaturs. The widow of Sir Mark Meadows, of Meadows Court, Sir; one of the

first families in Gloucestershire ; but left very bad off, I'm afeard ;—no male attendant,—nothing but one superannuated groping old maid for both,—as cross and short, if I ask her a question, as if she didn't understand who she was a speaking to."

After which explanations, interlarded with a few well-worn texts which she was accustomed to mince up for her lodgers with their stale bread and rancid mutton, she was requested by her sympathising first-floor to convey to the "poor forlorn creaturs" a copy of the Somersetshire Weekly Herald,—and the last "Punch," "with Mr. Alaric Amphlett's best respects, and hopes that her ladyship felt herself the better for the salubrious climate of her new abode."

Not a little was Mrs. Darby offended when, on gliding more theatrically than usual on the morrow into Amy's chamber, and delivering her credentials with her accustomed attention to stage-effect, Miss Meadows received the overtures of her gallant fellow-lodger with

somewhat more than indifference. She begged Mrs. Darby would return the papers. Her mother did not care for such things. She had herself no time for reading.

When, by dint of perpetually throwing himself in her way in the narrow entry, on her way to church, Mr. A. A. eventually contrived to make himself known by sight, Amy's indifference to his overtures ripened into disgust. The self-conceited vulgarity of the "independent gentleman" (a superannuated Bristol clerk, the Lovelace of the small tea-parties of Clifton,) rendered it pleasanter to proceed in the rain when overtaken by a shower, than accept the umbrella with which he had been officiously following her for the chance of a self-introduction.

"I know it does not become me to be proud. I know I ought to be thankful for any one's civilities. But I have not patience with this forward man. How am I to make Mrs. Darby understand that she is only to make her

appearance when rung for; and that I do not wish to hear again the name of Mr. Alaric Amphlett?—”

She *did* contrive to make both facts clearly understood. But in doing so, when Mrs. Darby presented herself as the bearer of a “bittiful boquet, which Mr. Halaric ’oped would be hacceptable to her ladies,” she also contrived to make an enemy. Though Miss Meadows announced her own and her mother’s wishes for the strictest privacy, in the gentlest terms, with all her usual lady-like self-possession, Mrs. Darby flounced out of the room, scarcely able to bridle her indignation.

“They shan’t be troubled much more with my hassiduities,” she observed, in reporting to her parlour-floor the ill-success of her mission. “Folks which content themselves all the month round with harrow-root and boiled mutton, needn’t give themselves quite the hairs of Hempres Queens.”

It was precisely while occupied in giving

vent to her resentments, in A. A.'s private apartment, that she overheard her Nora in dimity anything but *white*, informing an applicant for an interview with Lady Meadowes, that her ladyship was a great invalid, and saw no company.

“*Miss Meadowes*, then ;— he particularly wished to see *Miss Meadowes*.”

“The young lady never left her mamma.”

The visitor gave utterance to several exclamations of vexation and disappointment. “It was particularly provoking. He had come from a great distance to see them.” To all which, Mrs. Darby listened through the half-open door of Mr. Halaric’s parlour; delighted to believe that *Miss Meadowes*’s haughty prohibition would prove the means of depriving her of the sight of some valued friend.

A peep at the visitor seemed to render this still more probable. For though bronzed in face, and though his mourning-suit was of a cut very different from the Bath fashions

sported by the independent gentleman, he was strikingly handsome in face, and possessed a fine manly military-looking figure.

“ Couldn’t you send up your name, Sir ? ” suggested the servant, on whom his appearance seemed to produce as favourable an impression as on her mistress.

The proposal probably staggered the intruder ; for he neither answered it, nor retreated from the door. Probably because he knew that *his* name was the last in the world likely to be acceptable to those he was desirous to conciliate. But the suggestion had given a new direction to his plans. Taking out his pocket-book, he wrote a line or two on a leaf hastily torn from it ; and requested that it might be immediately taken to Miss Meadows.

What would the lady in the forlorn ringlets, ensconced behind the parlour door, or the individual in the plaid jacket who stood biting his nails in her rear, have given for a glimpse of the mysterious missive !—It was not for them

to surmise that the nameless individual had announced himself as waiting upon Lady Meadows on the part of Messrs. Preston of Cardington; and when the servant returned, bidding him "walk up," they naturally attributed the audience so readily granted by a young lady requiring the "strictest privacy," to the mustachios that graced his lip, and the assurance of his deportment.

Amy, meanwhile, who, after her dismissal of the importunate Mrs. Darby, had sat down to occupy herself at her drawing-table, hoping to recover her composure before her mother, who was enjoying her afternoon nap, should wake and summon her, was little prepared for the appearance of the supposed clerk of Messrs. Preston and Son. Having risen at his entrance and advanced a few steps to meet him, instead of offering him a seat, she paused in an embarrassed manner, colouring deeply, as she surveyed the handsome stranger.

"I fear there has been some mistake," she

began,—scarcely knowing how to express her regret at having sanctioned the visit.

“None,—if I have the honour of addressing Miss Meadowes,” replied the frank stranger ; in a voice which still further deepened the flush on Amy’s cheek.

“You have probably some message for my mother from Mr. Preston,” said she. “I regret to say that mamma is as yet unequal to business.”

“The only business I have to transact with Lady Meadowes,” he rejoined, courteously placing for poor Amy the chair she seemed so loth to offer to himself, “is to express those heartfelt apologies for neglect and estrangement, which would not have been so long delayed, but that the last half-dozen years of my life have been spent in India. I have only very lately become aware of my unintentional failure in duty to so near a relative.”

“My cousin,—yes, my cousin, Mark Davenport !” exclaimed Miss Meadowes, starting

forward with extended hands and a countenance brightened with joy. "I guessed it—I was sure of it the moment you spoke. Your voice and countenance are both so like—so very like"—her voice faltered. She could not conclude her sentence. But there was no need to name her "poor father."

"I have been told so before, Amy. I have been told that I was quite a Meadows; and I have a fond mother who does not, I suspect, like me the less for the resemblance," said he, cordially pressing her hands, as he stood contemplating his charming new-found relative; who, trembling in every limb with surprise and emotion, was only too glad to accept the chair placed for her, and to find Marcus, the often-dreamed of Marcus,—seated by her side.

"I have thought of you so much," said she, with frank unreserve. "Alone as I am in the world, cousin, it seemed so hard to have such near relations without a hope of ever meeting. How happy, how *very* happy, my mother will be!"

“Are you sure of that, Amy?—Lady Meadows has much to resent!”

“She never resents. My mother is an angel. She may perhaps grieve that you never took courage to come and see us at Meadows Court, during the lifetime of my father. Now, your visit will seem like a concession made to people fallen in the world:—not a spontaneous impulse of affection.”

Captain Davenport felt perhaps a little guilty; conscious that a spontaneous impulse of affection for his aunt or cousin was by no means the *primum mobile* of his visit.

“It will be more generous of you, Amy,” said he, “to accept, without retrospect, the contrition of one who has offended. It is the privilege of the Almighty to visit the sins of the fathers upon the children. At Ilford Castle, I promise you, the children,—even when men,—are allowed no will of their own. Will you believe that, for twenty years of my life, I was ignorant that my mother had a brother?”

“ I believe it readily,—because I was brought up in the same error. Never in their lives did my father and mother mention before me the name of Davenport.”

“ Then how came you so familiar with that of your cousin Mark ?” he inquired, with a smile. “ You welcomed me as if I had been long looked for, come at last !”

“ Long *wished* for,—not expected,” was her honest reply. “ I had heard of you from one of our neighbours at Meadowes Court.”

“ Lady Harriet Warneford,—the sister of a friend of my mother—”

“ No, our Rector’s daughter ;—the widow of one of your friends—”

“ Mrs. Burton ?—You know Rachel Burton ?” cried he,—and an expression of reserve suddenly over-clouded his face.—He would have been better pleased, could he have surmised how very little concerning him the “ widow of his friend” had ever allowed herself to communicate to his young cousin.

“She once showed me some of your beautiful sketches,” continued Amy, not noticing his change of countenance; “and I felt quite proud of you. And then, your bearing my father’s name made you seem almost more than a cousin,—more like a brother. It appears absurd, now that we have met at last, and you are sitting here by my side, how often and often I have wished some accident might bring us together!—”

Mark Davenport did not seem to think it at all absurd. Nothing could be more natural. But he was inexpressibly charmed by the kindness and candour of his uncle’s child. He could trace in her, as she discerned in him, marked evidence of kindred blood. Her delicate features resembled those of his sister Olivia. Her winning manner brought Lady Davenport before his eyes.

“And how am I to prepare dear mamma for all this?” said Amy, too much disturbed by the flurry of her own thoughts and feelings,

to perceive how earnestly he was examining her,—perhaps with the hope of discerning some trait of Hargoodism among the many characteristics of the house of Meadowes.—“What am I to say to her?—That you are come with a message of kindness from Lord and Lady Davenport?”

“No, Amy, — you must not say *that*. My father is neither milder nor wiser in his old age than he was in his youth: and there are some points on which I never consult him. My life would otherwise be a perpetual skirmish. But you may tell her, Amy, and you cannot tell it her too kindly,” he continued, again taking his cousin affectionately by the hand,—“that her once cherished Gertrude is breaking her heart that her brother should have gone down to the grave unreconciled. — Go and tell her that, dear child.—Prepare her to be lenient towards the son of her old friend.—Prepare her to accept such atonement as I have to offer. — Prepare her to look kindly on my mother’s son.”

Amy hesitated. She dreaded the agitation to which such an explanation would expose her enfeebled mother. If it were but over!—If all were said, and settled, and Lady Meadowes would consent to take to her heart this outspoken and warm-hearted nephew!—

“Have you brought no letter,—no express message from Lady Davenport?” she inquired, endeavouring to gain courage from delay.

“No, my dear cousin. We trust to the voice of nature to plead for us.”

“It will require some time, at all events, to prepare my mother’s feelings,” resumed Amy.—“To-day, probably, she will not make up her mind to an interview.”

“She must—she must!—To-morrow I shall be gone.—My time is limited.”

“You surely cannot leave us so very soon!” she exclaimed,—startled by this announcement. “It would be too hard to lose you, Cousin Mark, before our acquaintance is half begun!”

“It will depend upon yourself, dear Amy, to

see as much as you please of me, for the remainder of our days." And having drawn to his lips the hand he was holding, he was proceeding to imprint upon it as warm a kiss as if it had been that of Mary Hargood, when a disagreeable voice apprised them that the head of the inquisitive Mrs. Darby was intruded into the room.

"If you please, Miss Meadowes, mem, her ladyship's rung her bell twice, mem," said the lady of the forlorn ringlets, — "and nobody seems to attend to it. If you wish, mem, I have no objection to step up to her ladyship and inform her you are particularly engaged."

CHAPTER II.

THOUGH the spring was now breaking, the orderly domicile of Hargood was, if possible, still more gloomy than in those short November days when Mary was vainly watching for a ray of real daylight to shine upon her unfinished Murillo.

Never in the darkest moments of their unjoyous life had she seen her father so taciturn as during the month which followed his outbreak of ire against Captain Davenport.—She knew him too well to recur to the subject. She

was aware that no intercession of hers would prevail upon him to withdraw his interdiction of the offender's further visits, or induce him to answer poor Marcus's letters of apology.—Inflexible as Jove the Inscrutable, the man who had spent thirty years of his life sitting in critical judgment upon dynasties and governments, kings, lords, and commons, — extinguishing poets by a sneer, mangling heroes by a homethrust, torturing artists, exasperating comedians, and putting poets to the edge of the penknife, — was not likely to abdicate his opinion at the intercessions of an inexperienced girl. The systematic manufacture of leading articles has a marvellous effect on the human mind; and since the frog in the fable, self-inflated into emulation of the ox, nothing perhaps has more nearly approached the arrogance of Oriental autocracy, than the “we” of a popular editor.—Hargood, under his private sense of provocation and injury, went on slashing books, and carving ministerial measures into mince-meat. But he

was none the milder in his intercourse with his unoffending daughter.

Nevertheless, under all this seeming rigour, tender feelings were throbbing in his heart.—His sister's name was once more ringing in his ears. She from whom he had parted a girl, was now, it appeared, a widow,—a widow with an only daughter ; and such a position was only the more sacred in his eyes from the afflictions with which his family experience had brought him acquainted.

He would have given worlds to obtain some information about her, could he have done so without compromising by inquiry, his surly dignity.—Right well he knew how long and diligently she had endeavoured to trace him out ; and what trouble, for many years, it had cost him to evade her officious beneficence.—But this obduracy came back to him, now, like a bitter reproach. He sometimes threw aside his pen, in the midst of a caustic article likely to exterminate some thin-skinned, ill-fated author,

to rest his brow upon his hand, and live over again those happy days at Henstead Parsonage, when Mary was his idol: and her gentle nature interposed like a medium of peace between his victims and the retributive justice of a severe editor. For like most tyrants, he had been a rebel in his youth; just as now, though one of the most eloquent champions of universal freedom, he held in more than iron durance his children and household.

Though he would have rebuked her presumption, had his daughter taken courage to question him concerning the intelligence communicated in her presence by Captain Davenport, he almost resented her seeming *insouciance* on the subject.—Mary did not appear interested so much as to know what had become of her brother artist!—

Hargood was aware that Captain Davenport had left town. Was it to return to India?—Were they never to meet again? The notion troubled him sorely: and to the great surprise

of Hamilton Drewe he found himself called upon one morning by one for whose visits he had vainly canvassed: solely because Hargood fancied it possible that, as pearls are obtained by pricking an oyster, he might extract from this moth-like flutterer round the sacred torch of genius, intelligence concerning the movements of his fellow-lodger.

But Drewe knew nothing more than that the pink cockatoo was incessantly screeching after its master; and that Davenport's servant had returned from Ilford Castle, stating that "the Captain was gone on a tower." For this scanty intelligence, Hargood had to pay the penalty of listening to half-a-dozen wiry lyrics, which the poet modestly hinted he should not be sorry to see inserted in the leading journal of which his visitor was the hierophant.

"The servant did not mention whether Captain Davenport was gone into Gloucestershire?" was all the answer he vouchsafed to this modest suggestion.

As if the lyrist, whose ears were ringing with the rhythm of his own strophes, could have certified just then whether Gloucestershire lay north or south of the Trent! Hargood perceived, at last, that the poet's thoughts, like his eye, were "in a fine frenzy rolling;" and quietly took his hat and returned home.

His two boys had arrived at home for the holidays; holidays which consisted in being kept harder at work and far more tongue-tied, than in their Hammersmith playground; and had found their home if possible more joyless, and Mary still more silent, than on any preceding Christmas. It was almost a release when they stepped into the omnibus which conveyed them from that well-regulated home, where affection and leisure were as conscientiously economised as money or money's worth. For them, poor lads, no pleasant pantomime,—no visits to panoramas, or public shows: albeit tickets of free-admission were lying dusty and uncared for in the card-rack of

their father : who regarded such temptations as a farmer regards the gaudy poppies and danel among his corn. For them, no fond caress, no encouragement to pour forth the mirth hoarded in their young hearts till, like other hoards, it grew mouldy from disuse. Their father, ever occupied, was not to be disturbed by their noise. Their sister, whose heart yearned after their sad faces, must not be diverted from her occupations ; and if they could have found selfish solace in the fact, they must have seen that poor Mary was as weary and taskworn as themselves. She was glad when they went back to school. In straining them at parting to her heart, she felt it a relief that she was no longer to witness the unseasonable subordination of those fondly-loved children of her mother ; to afford intellectual food and training for whom, she was working as unremittingly, as some starved factory-girl for bread.

“ After all, to what purpose ? ” she sometimes thought, when the tears gathering in her

eyes rendered it difficult to pursue her task. "The classical education on which my father so strongly insists, will only avail to make tutors or ushers of them,—effectually crushing down the spirits which have never since their birth been allowed to rise to the natural level of their age. Or they may acquire a taste for literature; and, fancying themselves destined to fame and distinction, sink gradually down, down, down, into such drudges as my poor father!—I would rather see them,—ay, even Frank, who is growing more like his mother every day,—bound to some honest trade, with the chance of acquiring competence and ease, than chained through life to the desk of a professional man of letters; coining the golden ore of his heart and brain, at so many farthings per ounce. The soldier who 'coins his blood for drachmas' is not half so degraded, as the poet who, though glorified by God with 'the vision and the faculty divine,' sits down to cast off his verses at so much a score, to be placed to his miserable

credit in the ledger of his Pharaoh!—Poor boys!—Poor brothers! If he would only make them hatters or calico-printers,—and leave them the free use of their lives and limbs!—”

Such repinings, it was a matter of filial duty to keep from the boys. But better would it have been for them, perhaps, had she allowed her sympathy in their tribulations to become more apparent. To be utterly weaned from the tenderness due to their age, was likely to end in rendering them callous to the value of affection:—perhaps as hard and angular as their too rational father. Even as it was, the project occasionally entertained between the discontented lads of running away and becoming cabin boys,—errand boys,—no matter what,—would have never been entertained, could they have suspected what bitter pain any mischance befalling them would occasion to their uncommunicative sister.

Hating the sight and name of books and pictures, the creation of which rendered their

home-life so cheerless, it was not the fault of the boys if they were ignorant that these toils were undertaken for their benefit; nay, that the knife-grinder, the sparks from whose wheel created a diversion from their monotonous window, was not a more compulsory mechanic than the hard-working Mary.

There were others, however, besides the young Hargoods who, at the close of that Christmas vacation, returned to school far more saddened than cheered by the results of their holidays. A sadder if not a wiser man, was the William Eustace who returned to his chambers in the Albany, on the self-same day that conveyed Mark Davenport to Clifton, than the fastidious young gentleman who had made the Manor House of Radensford his city of refuge during the preceding season of partridge shooting.

The excitement of mind under which he had hurried from Meadows Court, after his humiliating interview with Amy, had scarcely yet

subsided ; for his mortification was in proportion to his self-conceit. For her sake, he had embroiled himself with all his nearest relatives ; and to return to the home on whose hearth he had played the Ajax, was impossible. And though he had made a momentary appearance at the Manor House, not to confide to Lady Harriet the indifference of the woman he loved, but to accuse the Semiramis of Radensford of being, by misrepresentation and plotting, the cause of his rejection, he had quitted the house as impetuously and resentfully as he sought it : scurrying off, like a whirlwind, towards London, —Paris,—Vienna,—Constantinople,— he did not much care where ; so that he might never again set eyes on any member of that degraded and stultified class of the community, the Baronetage of the United Kingdom,—or old granges with moats effusing miasma, and inmates encrusted with Prejudice.

He found himself attacking a basin of mulligatawney soup in the Ship Hotel,

Dover, before he half recovered his breath or self-command.

It might be that his bed or supper proved as hard as his destiny : for sleepless that night was his pillow. How often at an inn, amidst a strange population, detached from home-associations and “extenuating circumstances,” does the naked truth of one’s position come out before one’s mind’s eye!—So much of every human existence is pretence and garnish, that it is good at times for hard realities to be thrust into our path, and startle us into precaution. William Eustace, as he tossed and tossed that night, within his meagre curtains of white dimity, or, jumping from his bed, swallowed off tumbler after tumbler of tepid water, seemed to behold afar off another William Eustace ; who, because a pair of injudicious parents worshipped in him the heir of their honours,—because a household of obsequious servants flew hither and thither at his bidding,—because a horde of half-taught, bailiff-driven

tenants pulled their forelocks when his shooting pony became visible in the distance,—because he had been huzzaed on the hustings by a mob who secured half-a-crown a head by their bawling,—and edged in, after assiduous canvassing, to a crack club, and (with about half as much difficulty) into Her Majesty's Lower House of Parliament,—fancied himself a sort of Serene Highness, and part and parcel of the institutions of the country!—Till now, the William Eustace he was considering, had regarded himself as not only an eminent personage, but a *fait accompli*. Because he had made a hurried tour of the capitals of Europe, skimmed over the German baths and Danubian Principalities,—because he had dined at the Maison Dorée, supped with Rachel at her villa, and voted in one or two critical divisions,—he thought himself as much intitled to rest upon his laurels, as though he had conquered Scinde, or written Eöthen!

But the sleepless philosopher who now sur-

veyed this type of a *blasé*,—this milk and water Lauzun,—this electrotyped Rochester,—this Lovelace in *carton-pierre*,—suddenly perceived that the William Eustace, Esq., M.P., he was contemplating, albeit he dined with Royal Highnesses, flirted with Duchesses, and voted with the Government, was a sorry creature; never heard of ten miles from the donjon of his ancestors and the borough they had bequeathed him; and likely to be forgotten even there, three months after his coffin lid was soldered down;—a useless, helpless being, without salt or savour; good only to absorb in tobacco the annual cost of a couple of poor families, to swell the crush of tailors' puppets thronging the *salons* of the *beau monde*, or parade his deputy-lieutenant's uniform at a levee. Who cared for this William Eustace, except the narrow-minded couple whose clay was congenial with his own?—Whom had he benefited,—whom had he assisted to cheer or enlighten?—To whom

were the tones of his voice familiar, except his father's keepers or the waiters at his club? —He might die on the morrow, without having added the fiftieth fraction of an iota to human knowledge or human happiness. Amy Meadows was right!—He was not worthy of her hand!

The retrospect was bitter; the reaction puzzling. If he resolved to regenerate the nature of the purposeless worldling before him, where was he to begin? He could not return like the prodigal son to Horndean Court, and say, "Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee;" for Sir Henry Eustace, a man who had devoted his whole life and energy to keeping up the breed of old English long-horned cattle in the country, and old English long-winded glees and madrigals in town, was capable of taking out a statute of lunacy against any kinsman of his, venturing on such unbecoming defiance to public opinion. He could not advertise in the *Times* that "W. E. had seen the error of his ways, and

entreated A. M. to send a line to the Gloucester Coffee House, stating where she might be heard of, and whether she would give him a second hearing." He could not even return to his chambers in the Albany, to chew unobserved the cud of these sweet and bitter fancies; for what would his pearl of a valet think, and what communicate to other valets, if he went rushing distractedly to Dover and back, per express train, for no ostensible purpose?

The Christmas holidays were at hand; and the weather being open for hunting, should he be seen, a lonely man, in his club window, at that epoch of country conviviality, there would be a general report that he was on bad terms with his family;—perhaps that he had been disinherited by his father;—and he might possibly come to an untimely end, under a sudden influx of long-standing bills.

To such petty influences are most of us subject in this life. Men, whose counsel is cogent in the Forum, are often slaves to their

valet de chambre. And so, since for Paris his passport was taken out, and to Paris his baggage was addressed, onward went the penitent *blasé*; in a miserable state of mind, between frost and thaw; much as Don Juan may have felt, when the icy grasp of the Commendatore was sending its first chill through his marrow.

Ah, me!—If one of the seven wise men of the Athenæum, or one of the Sybils of the Cimmerian Grot in Printing House Square,—state engines,—vindictive and terrific old women in their way, who rule with adamantine pens the destinies of mankind,—would but set their wits to work on a system of modern philosophy, and create a Platonic republic calculated for the atmosphere of Belgravia, or a Utopia which the tyros of Tyburnia might survey with submission! If even some Fenelon among our contemporaneous Bishops would indite a new *Télémaque* for the instruction of the rising youth of Britain!—But alas! the lawn sleeves

we wot of, would more likely produce "*une autre paire de manches.*"

There are more things in the age of clubs, and turf, and steeple-chases, than are dreamed of in academic philosophy. The gorgeous parliament-houses of Barry demand other lungs and other linguists, than the homely old Chapel of St. Stephen's; and periods must be polished to correspond with the gilded cornices, and plausibility pumped up with the azote vouchsafed to the conscript fathers,—

Like cats in air-pumps, vainly doom'd to strive
On sense too thin to keep the soul alive.

The apothegms of Bacon are ill-suited to the digestion of a man who dines on *petits pâtés à la Béchamel*; and it is like opening the batteries of Gibraltar or Ehrenbreitstein on a battalion of Azteks, to encounter the trivialities of our cackling-and-crowing age of poultry shows, and table-turning, with that tremendous catapult called the wisdom of our ancestors.

The few great steps taken by individuals, the few gigantic strides taken by nations, since the commencement of our new half-century, have been effected in defiance of the well-drilled march of the old school; and though Mother Earth herself, as if sick of the murmurs of the many, has opened new veins of nutriment in remote countries, as if to provide for the more equal distribution of her children over her surface, and aggrandise their undertakings,—there still remains for reformation that inner kernel of civilised life, divided from the pulpy fruit by a hardened shell; which contains the precious germ of future vegetation.

For this little world,—so minute in its philosophy, so powerful in its agency,—oh! Editor of the Westminster Review,—oh! proprietor of the Panopticon,—oh! Monsieur Robin,—oh! Mrs. Hayden,—oh! S. G. O.,—oh! D. C. L.—be pleased to concoct a double-revised criminal code.

Without such aid, however, and simply under the influence of what physicians term an effort

of nature, William Eustace took his seat in the House at the commencement of the session, in a mood as changed as if some mesmeric operation had transformed his nature. Like the relief we experience in throwing off an eiderdown coverlet after a nightmare, as though a mountain were removed from one's breast, he felt unaccountably emancipated. As yet, he had accomplished nothing, but the resolution to look the world steadily in the face. But such resolutions lay the first stone of the greatness that won the battle of Waterloo, or established steam locomotion.

The great point was to turn as deaf ear as Princess Parizade in the story, to the idle voices scouting his progress.

“What a prig Billy Eustace is becoming,” was soon a common cry at his club. “He has returned from Paris *‘trainant l’aîle et trainant le pied,’* like a disabled carrier pigeon.”

“The worst result of these wondrous wise times!” sneered one of his playfellows. “Fel-

lows used to come back from the continent with wings fixed to their heels, Mercury fashion, like a pair of skaits; having melted their lead at the Bal Mabilie, and their gold at *trente-et-quarante*. Now, they are returned upon our hands, charged to the muzzle,—ay, and without being placarded ‘dangerous,’—with the gunpowder cotton called Socialism; for the invention of which, their fathers would fain have placed Jeremy Bentham in the pillory.”

“And looking as wise, all the time,” added Lord Curt de Cruxley, “as a magpie that has stolen a marrow-bone, which it does not know how to pick.”

“I don’t see that Billy Eustace is grown at all like a magpie,” observed his nephew Captain Halliday, a whiskerless young guardsman, not yet quite out of his accidence in the new jargon of irony, vulgarly called ‘chaff.’—“He scarcely opens his lips;—mum as—as—”

“As a patriot gagged by a good place,” added Cruxley, helping him out.

“*Has* Eustace got a place under Government?” inquired the matter-of-fact Captain Halliday.

“Didn’t you see him gazetted? He is made Under-Secretary of State to the Subterranean Electro-Railway Department; and what makes him look so grave is Sir Roger Murchison’s recent discovery of the Central Encavitation of the earth. It seems we are likely to be reduced to a mere crust; which would necessitate the abolition of his office.”

“How *can* you find pleasure in mystifying that poor boy, Curt!” remonstrated another of Eustace’s quondam friends, as young Halliday, never quite certain whether his uncle were in jest or in earnest, made an embarrassed exit to inquire of a brother-officer *who* was Sir Roger Murchison, and look in his Entick for the exact meaning of “encavitation.”

“*Mystify* him?—Pho, pho!—I am as good as a grindstone to sharpen his wits,” retorted the other, snatching up a newspaper. “If it

were not for me, these lads would grow as dull and sensible as Billy Eustace; and there would be no more cakes and ale."

"But your ale is so confoundedly bitter, and your cakes so gingered," replied his friend, "that, as the French say of our devilled wild-ducks, *ils sont bons à emporter la bouche.*"

"Or as a *bonne bouche!*"—rejoined Curt; fancying he had made a pun, and chuckling so confidently, that all the idlers round him joined heartily in his laugh. Nay, one of them remarked that day, to his wife, in the *entr'acte* of a dull domestic dinner, "Curt said some capital things this afternoon, which made us all roar!—"

"Can't you remember some of them?"

"I was not near enough to hear him very distinctly. That pert, forward little dog, Jack Mem., who is always cramming for his commonplace book, takes the front row whenever Curt is in the vein. But as far as I could catch the sense, somebody said that devilled

wild-duck ought always to be kept for a *bonne bouche*: to which Curt answered that it was a *plat bon à emporter*."

"I don't exactly see the joke!" replied her ladyship, who ought to have been inured to listening to *bon-mots* with the point extracted.

Yet in this blurred and disjointed style are London stories usually repeated; and when, fifty years hence, the *mot*, so little deserving the name of *bon*, finds its way, unexplained by antecedents, to our grand-children, through the common-place book of Jack Mem., or some treacherous volume of memoirs, the Hargoods of the press, who delight in breaking on a wheel those butterflies the fluttering of whose brilliant wings imparts a charm only to the atmosphere for which they are created,—will append a foot-note to the passage, saying: "If we may judge by this sorry specimen, the reputation of a wit was not, in the reign of Queen Victoria, *very* difficult of attainment!"

CHAPTER III.

“BUT what possible advantage can you foresee, Captain Davenport, in our removal to London?”—expostulated Lady Meadowes, as the family at Clifton sat united round a sociable tea-table, the evening after Marcus’s arrival at Clifton ; already, after a thousand grievous explanations, animated by a spirit as friendly as though their intimacy were of half a century’s duration.

“A thousand!—ten thousand!”—was his earnest reply. “In the first place, to people of

small means, London is the cheapest place in the world. In the next, since you desire to throw off at once the habits of your days of opulence, so complete a change will greatly facilitate the task. Above all, this dear little cousin of mine will lead a far more cheerful life."

Lady Meadowes was perhaps a little disappointed that he made no allusion to his expectations that approximation to his father and mother might eventually lead to a family reconciliation. But Amy considered his arguments conclusive. She was already beginning to think the eloquence of her handsome cousin as powerful as his sepia sketches of Hog-hunting.

"Mark is right, dear mother," said she,—having at once adopted that familiar name, which Lady Meadowes, haunted by painful reminiscences, found it impossible to pronounce. "I have been thinking over the Welsh cottage scheme, to which I had been looking forward for next spring. But it would involve a thou-

sand evils. You cannot live at a distance from medical advice. You cannot stir out on foot."

"And do you imagine, darling, that London would make me stronger for the attempt?" said Lady Meadowes, smiling at her enthusiasm.

"You might obtain carriage exercise at an easier rate," said Captain Davenport.

"Above all," pleaded Amy, "we should not be watched and overlooked as we are here. In this small place, minnows are Tritons. In the great throng of London, we should be unnoticed."

Lady Meadowes was not a person of inquiring mind; or she might have experienced a little surprise at the arguments which Amy suddenly discovered in favour of a spot, to which she had always before expressed the utmost distaste.

"Remember, darling child," said she, "that, in fixing ourselves on leaving this place, we must make no mistake. We cannot afford to be whimsical or restless. It would be criminal

to encroach on the little fund created by the sale at Meadows Court,—(your sole dowry, my dear Amy,) to gratify our roving fancies.”

“No fear—no fear, my dearest mother. I feel certain, from all my cousin Mark has told me, that a *very* tiny house in the suburbs of London would cost less than these odious lodgings, and be the very thing for us.”

“Mr. Henderson and Dr. Burnaby thought otherwise.”

“Worthy men, no doubt, but wretched judges of such matters,” cried Captain Davenport, pettishly. “What does either of them know of the world or its ways, beyond the parish of Radensford?”

“And we, alas! still less,” added Lady Meadows. “And therefore, if for no other reason, surely we are safer in the country.”

“You set little value on my zeal and prowess as a champion, my dear aunt,” said Captain Davenport, encouraged in his pleading by the earnest looks of Amy.—“Did you not promise

me this morning to accept my poor services as a friend,—a nephew,—a son?”

“Most thankfully. But *you* will return to your regiment—”

“Never!—I have done with soldiering.”

“At all events, you have engrossing occupations and engagements, which would often leave us lonely.”

“Why always lonely?” rejoined Captain Davenport. “You cannot mean to remain permanently estranged from society? For some time to come,” he added, as he saw her cast a saddened glance on her weeds, “you will naturally live in seclusion.—But Amy must not, at eighteen, renounce a world she has never seen.”

“She must, — she must,” interrupted his cousin. “Poor as we are, it will be an act of self-respect to avoid collision with people richer and greater than ourselves.—Why may not a quiet home, with all its duties, be enjoyed in London as elsewhere?”

“We will leave *that* question to take care of itself hereafter,” said Captain Davenport, glancing at the lovely face as yet so completely unconscious of its attractions,—a dowry how much richer than the fund created by the sale of his uncle’s pictures and plate!—But he fondly fancied that the occasion was a good one for alluding to a subject which, at present, he had not ventured to approach—a reconciliation between Lady Meadows and her brother.—To allude at once, however, to his acquaintance with the Hargoods, appeared impossible; and Love, the sire of crooked contrivances, suggested that it would be better to approach the subject by a zig-zag.

“But without rushing into the great world for amusement, dear Lady Meadows,” said he, “a thousand pleasant circles are to be found in London where merit finds its level. Among my own friends, many would strive to render your position agreeable. Among your own connections too, surely, some pleasant friends

might be found?—Lady Harriet Warneford, for instance, who has hundreds of relatives in town.”

“From *her*, I fear,” rejoined Lady Meadows, “we must look for little assistance.—There is just now a coolness between us.”

“Already?—alas! The way of the world!”

“I cannot accuse her of being actuated by our change of fortunes,” said the truthful Lady Meadows. “But the fact is—”

“Mother!” interrupted Amy, with flushed cheeks, and sparkling eyes,—“we have no right to talk of this.”

“Pardon me, little cousin,” cried Mark, perceiving from her emotion that some secret of poor Amy’s heart was about to be disclosed, “as your future champion, I am intitled to learn all about you. How am I to put lance in rest, pray, as your own true knight, unless fully aware by what felon foes you are menaced, or towards what mirror of chivalry your heart inclines?”

“The only felon foe of whom I stand in fear,” said Amy, hoping to change the subject, “is the lanky hero lodged under our feet, who besets me with what Mrs. Darby calls ‘boquets!’”

“Him we shall extinguish anon, with a blow of a powder puff,” said Mark, perceiving her stratagem. “But about Lady Harriet Warneford?”

“Only that she has become a little estranged from us by her nephew’s attachment to Amy.”

“Her nephew?”

“Mr. Eustace, her sister’s son.”

“Mr. Eustace, *Sir Henry* Eustace’s son, it becomes the mother of a young lady on her preferment to describe him.”

“I ought perhaps. For it was *that* superiority of condition, I presume, which rendered Lady Harriet so averse to a marriage between them.”

“*Superiority*, indeed!—Why, as I conclude the courtship must have taken place during my

poor uncle's lifetime and your more prosperous circumstances, no alliance could be more equal."

"Don't talk of courtship—pray don't talk of alliance, dear cousin," interposed Amy, fancying that Captain Davenport's manner was already chilled by her mother's allusions.—"There was never more in the matter than that Mr. Eustace offered me his hand and that I refused it."

"In your father's lifetime, when you were an heiress as well as a beauty, eh, Amy?"—

"No, cousin. Since I became penniless—"

"You actually refused the hand of William Eustace?" Amy nodded. "Member for Horndean, and heir to Horndean Court?" Again, Amy nodded; and *this* time she could not resist a smile at his pertinacious incredulity.

"Give me your hand, Amy!" cried he, suiting the action to the word. "You are a brave girl,—a good girl.—I liked you at first

sight, Amy :—I loved you at first sight. But by Jove! I didn't half suspect the worth that was in your nature."

"Why so surprised?" inquired Miss Meadows, a little indignant. "I refused him simply because he was an object of indifference to me."

"*That* is what surprises me; and will surprise *you* too, cousin, when you become a denizen of that London world, for which, I am beginning to think with Lady Meadows, that you are too good."

"You fancy, then, that I shall *there* discover Mr. Eustace to be intrinsically superior to the impression he made upon me?"

"As I don't know the nature of that impression, Amy, I can't pretend to solve the difficulty. But I'll tell you what *I* think about him;—that he is a prig and a bore; and if my sister Olivia were to consult me about accepting his addresses, I should say send him to the right-about without compunction!"

“ You see, mother !” said Amy, with a brightened countenance.

“ At the same time,” resumed Captain Davenport, more seriously, “ as I am not exactly able to endow you with ten thousand a-year, I have no right to put you out of conceit with those who *can*. Nay, I am bound to tell you all the good I know of William Eustace. My brother Hugh, a judge far more trustworthy than my harum-scarum self, has a high opinion of him. They were chums at school and college ; and Hugh has always predicted, as partial friends do of a bad picture, that sooner or later, his friend Eustace’s good qualities and fine abilities would tone out.”

“ For his own sake, the sooner the better :— for mine, *n’importe !*” replied Miss Meadowes. “ But I should almost as soon have expected to find you taking the part of ‘ Mr. Halaric Hamphlett,’ as of the supercilious self-conceited nephew of Lady Harriet Warneford.”

“ I don’t take his part, confound him !” cried

Captain Davenport, pushing away his tea-cup. "I detest him. Of all defects in the world, affectation is to me the most nauseous. And nothing will persuade me that any human being was ever born with the languid drawl, and duodecimo misanthropy of William Eustace. Talk of his distinguishing himself in Parliament? Why, I would make as good an orator out of a pound of gelatine, stamped in one of Hansard's printing-presses!"

Lady Meadows listened, at once amazed and gratified. Unaccustomed to deal with natures so impetuous as that of her husband's nephew, she attributed to jealousy of William Eustace's pretensions to the hand of his cousin, an antipathy which had commenced in a cricket match at Eton! What more natural, indeed, than that a woman so unversed in the ways of the world should attribute his unconcealed admiration of Amy, and frank demonstrations of affection, to love at first sight? The notion was inexpressibly pleasing to her. Her dear

Gertrude's son,—a nephew so singularly resembling her beloved husband,—a man whose person and intellects were of so superior an order,—what could she desire more in the future husband of her idolized child !

While all this chat was proceeding round a tea-table at Clifton, the gregarious instinct which annually assembles on our housetops the migratory birds, was impelling Londonwards the flight of its spring population. Members and mammas having speeches or daughters to throw off, were foremost in the race ; eager for the mart where patriotism and matrimony achieve their highest premium ;—the over-crammed orator bursting with prose as studied as Monsieur Jourdain's ;—the accomplished *débutante*, rehearsing on the road her bursts of *naïveté*. The same old London,—the same old ambitions,—the same old impostures— which we go to see again and again, though as thoroughly cognisant of the sleight of hand as when viewing Robert Houdin's prestidigitations.

Since the last prorogation of Her Most Gracious Majesty's High Court of Parliament, indeed, a few changes had taken place. A few legislators had passed from the Lower to the Upper House, by right of succession. A few ephemeral reputations had sprung up like Jonah's gourd, a few ancient ones had accomplished, with stately araucaria-like growth, their allotted number of inches : a few disappeared from the face of the earth, like the dodo, leaving only colossal skeletons behind. A few public journals had changed their proprietors and politics, conveying much confusion of mind to their country subscribers ; who, unless leading articles bear, like a Tartar's arrow, the superscription of the sender, are uncertain whether they find themselves tickled, or mortally wounded. A few giants had become pigmies ; a few pigmies, giants. A few who were iconoclasts in their youth, had become idolators in their age. A few were seeking for wives, a few seeking to get rid of them ;—but

all and each concocting their follies or crimes with the well-schooled composure of voice and feature that forms the quintessence of modern good-breeding.

The Eustaces settled early in their roomy unattractive house in Cavendish Square,—Sir Henry looking forward to his Catch Club and Exeter Hall, to waft his little soul upon a jig to Heaven ; and the Davenports in their mansion in New Street, Spring Gardens ; to which, somehow or other, his lordship contrived to impart as much the air of an official residence, as if he possessed a voice in the councils of the country, beyond his croak in the Upper House. Blue Books, Petitions, and Circulars sharing his library table, with uncut copies of the Farmer's Magazine and the Transactions of the Agricultural Society, looked at least as if his life had a purpose : while in the cheerless back-room overlooking the sooty leads towards the rear of the stables, allotted to his son Hugh, who was really a working bee,

nothing was to be seen but a damaged standish and shabby blotting-book, on a rickety old table ; accompanied by a few cane chairs fit only for a cherub to perch upon, and on the wall, a map of the county of Westmoreland published fifty years before the invention of railways : its turnpike-roads twisting like boa-constrictors among lakes and gentlemen's parks, represented alike by dreary patches of verdigris.

The map, however, was intitled, though not exactly to trust, to the reverence of the Davenport family ; for, occupying in the corner twice the space allotted to the mighty Helvellyn, were engraved the arms of that illustrious house ; with a pompous dedication of the same to Hugh the second baron.

Often had Lady Davenport felt inclined to reform this cheerless bachelor den.—But she saw it would not do. His lordship invariably opposed the attempt with a declaration that, such as it was, it had sufficed *his* wants and

wishes, as heir apparent of the family, till he was five and forty years of age; and that he considered the luxurious habits of the young men of the day, whether in their homes or clubs, as a chief source of their mediocrity in public and private life. And so the kindly mother, who saw her eldest son less comfortably established than many a counting-house clerk, and her younger banished from the family circle by the prison-discipline of New Street, was fain to content herself with rendering Olivia's school-room and chamber as trim and cheerful and simply-elegant, as became their pretty occupant.—*They*, at least, were secure from the intrusion of the grim *pater familias* who regarded young ladies, as a race, as useless, noisy, and unprofitable as canary birds;—worse, indeed; since *their* singing-lessons, tulle dresses, and marriage portions must be provided for. Had his lordship been a Papist, there is little doubt that the Honourable Olivia Davenport would have been destined to a convent.

As it was, her mother was beginning to find in her all the solace experienced by her estranged sister-in-law in the affectionate Amy. Olivia, though shy and timid in her father's presence, expanded into another being when alone with her mother. Frozen by Lord Davenport's severity, her blood seemed to liquify, like that of the Neapolitan Saint, when sunned in more cordial looks. Now that the moment was approaching for launching her child into the world, Lady Davenport seemed doubly to appreciate the value of the remaining moments in which the mother would continue all in all. She knew that, at no distant time, a stronger influence would prevail. Nor was she selfish enough to wish it otherwise. She wished her pretty Olivia to marry so happily that her claim on her daughter's affections might become subordinate. Hard indeed if another generation of the family should perpetuate such a fate as her own!—

The docile and dutiful nature of Olivia, and

the seclusion to which she was condemned by Lord Davenport's notions of female education, had hitherto enabled her mother to keep wonderfully out of her view the paternal despotism exercised over the family. There was in fact considerable analogy of character between Olivia and her unknown cousin Amy :—partly originating in kindred blood :—partly that the loving mother of the one had been trained and formed in character by the loving mother of the other. Less petted and brought forward than the idol of poor old Sir Mark, and naturally of a less buoyant temperament, Olivia was more reserved ;—just as her mother, chilled by the companionship of a domestic tyrant, was far less demonstrative of tenderness than her former governess, whose sensibilities had been fostered in the balmy atmosphere of domestic bliss.

As Miss Davenport was now partially emerging from the school-room, her mother looked forward with pain and grief to the discovery awaiting her of her father's coarseness of mind,

and hardness of heart: and endeavoured to get her out of the room whenever the tact, created by long experience, forewarned her that a domestic storm was at hand.

One day, shortly after their arrival in town, Hugh was in the drawing-room with his mother and sister, when a heavy creaking step to which even the massive stone staircase responded as if in awe, announced that the head of the family had issued from his sanctum below, to join the family conclave.

“Can either of you inform me,” he inquired, addressing his wife and son, after assuming his most imperial and tonant attitude on the hearthrug, “what has become of Captain Davenport?—When he quitted Ilford, he told me, with his usual disrespectful levity, that we should meet in town;—nay, that he should probably be in London before me.”

“And is he not arrived?” inquired Lady Davenport, anxiously.

“Neither arrived nor expected, that I can

hear of. Having business of importance to talk over with him, I wrote to desire he would wait on me at dinner to-day. No answer. Accustomed to his habitual disregard of the decencies of life, I thought it better to send and inquire whether he chose to give me the honour of his company. John has just returned."

"Why not mention the subject to me, my dear father," interposed Hugh, "I could at least have told you he was not in town."

"Perhaps then," grunted Lord Davenport, "you can relieve my uncertainty by favouring me with his address?"

"I wish I could. But on that point, I must plead ignorance.—Mark informed me that he promised himself the relaxation of a little tour in the South of England, before he settled in town for the season."

"Relaxation!" cried Lord Davenport, indignantly shrugging his shoulders. "A pretty person to need relaxation, whose whole life

is a system of the most contemptible lounging !”

“ He earned his leisure, however, father, by some years of professional exertion !”

“ Professional fiddlestick !—Carried by sepoy in a palanquin, smoking a hookah.—I heard him own it, one evening at Ilford, to my neighbour Sir Gardner Dalmaine.”

“ As a joke, my dear Lord Davenport,” remonstrated his wife. “ Mark is, I own, a little too fond of hoaxing our country neighbour.”

“ At all events, he has had time to recover from what Hugh is good enough to call his professional exertions ; and having partaken throughout the holidays of the cheer and cheerfulness of our fireside, there is no occasion surely for his wasting money in skulking about the country, like Dr. Syntax in search of the Picturesque, without so much as acquainting his servant where his letters are to be addressed.”

“His servant accompanied him when he left Ilford,” observed Lady Davenport in a deprecatory tone.

“When he *left* Ilford.—But he soon shook him off. And I know nothing more suspicious than when a man gets rid for a time of a favourite servant, on whose attendance he is at other moments effeminately dependent.”

Lady Davenport whispered to Olivia, who was beginning to look nervous and alarmed at the increasing irritability of her father’s manner, that she ought to run over her *soifége* for half an hour in the school-room, preparatory to her lesson from Signor Garcia.—But the angry man did not wait for the door to close upon his daughter before he renewed his vituperation.

“It is scarcely respectable,” said he, “for a man’s whereabouts to be so great a mystery, that his own father knows not where to address a letter to him.—And I shall be placed under the necessity of making this disgraceful admission to my friend Lord Lothbury.”

“I have not the least doubt that Mark will be here in a few days,” said Hugh.—“London is filling—the exhibitions are opening—”

“In a few days, Sir!” reiterated Lord Davenport, in a louder key;—“London filling!—the exhibitions opening!—A pretty plea for me to adduce to my Lord Lothbury. Do you suppose his Excellency will wait,—for a week perhaps,—to learn whether Captain Davenport is graciously pleased to accept the offer he has made me to appoint him his aide-de-camp?”—

“Aide-de-camp to the Lord Lieutenant?” repeated Lady Davenport, —astonished that anything like preferment should be tendered to poor Mark through the medium of his father.

“I am persuaded my brother would *not* accept the appointment,” said Hugh, almost equally surprised. “Indeed I think you must admit, my lord, that it is a place for which

he is peculiarly unfitted, by his independent habits and hatred of everything like courtly formality.”

“And what business, Sir, has he to hate it, or to pretend to independent habits?—Who, pray, is to afford him the means of maintaining them?—Captain Davenport is always complaining of the narrowness of his fortune. An opportunity is afforded him of doubling his income.—Let me see him refuse it.—I say, only let me see him refuse it!”

Lady Davenport and her son interchanged a hurried glance; as if to interrogate each other as to the prudence of placing his lordship at once in possession of Marcus’s intentions.—The candour of Hugh Davenport’s nature prevailed.—He could not be a party to even an innocent concealment.

“I fear, my lord, it is now too late,” said he. “Lord Lothbury’s kind intention can no longer be of service to my brother. I have reason to think he has already sent in his

papers to the Horse-Guards, with the intention of selling out."

"Without apprising *me*?" roared Lord Davenport. "A son of mine has actually committed me by an important communication to the Horse-Guards,—concerning which the Commander-in-Chief may at any moment accost me, in the House or elsewhere, and find me utterly ignorant!—Impossible, Sir, impossible!"

"I understood that he *did* consult you, so long ago as last spring," expostulated Lady Davenport: "but found you so violently opposed to his views, that he dared not again broach the subject."

"My opposition to his project, then, you consider a justification of his rushing headlong to its execution?"

"Not a justification,—a motive. He was afraid to displease you by communicating his plans."

"Then let him pause before he announces

that they are carried out!"—cried Lord Davenport, livid with anger.—“For by the living God, if Mark Davenport renounces an honourable profession to become a mean, snivelling, hireling mechanic of a limner, never shall he enter my doors again—no, *never*.—Nor will I harbour even his brother or sister, if they keep up the smallest intercourse with him under circumstances so derogatory.—This I will thank you, Mr. Davenport, not only to bear in mind, but to communicate to your brother, in its full extent, when he skulks out of his hiding-place, and makes his appearance among gentlemen.”

The loud clap of the door slammed behind himself by his lordship on quitting the room after this outburst, scarcely sufficed to startle his wife out of her stupefaction.—She knew that her son *would* persist in his intentions;—that he had already taken measures past recalling.—And what would be the result to them all?—Family disunion,—family disgrace!—The affec-

tion which united in so strict a bond of mutual reliance herself and her three children, seemed on the eve of dissolution.

“For mercy’s sake, dear Hugh, hurry off to your brother’s lodgings,” she faltered, the moment she recovered her power of utterance, “and if he be not yet arrived, leave a line for him, explaining all this, and entreating him not to appear in this house till you have had a personal interview.—Marcus *must* not meet his father in Lord Davenport’s present state of excitement.”

Almost before the charge was given, he was gone. And not till then, and she found herself alone, did poor Lady Davenport give free course to her maternal anguish. She resolved to address a few words of admonition to her rebellious son. But before her pen was dipped in the ink, the door opened hastily, and he was by her side.

“My dearest, dearest Mark—how lucky that you are come!” cried she. “When did you

arrive? Have you—*have you*—seen your father?”

“Seen him? Yes!—Though, thank Heaven, he did not see *me*. I perceived him at a distance just now, near the Horse Guards,—pushing down to the House I presume,—with his hat pulled over his brows as if he had been bonneted!—I need not add that I instantly glided off towards the Mall; and sidled round gracefully into Spring Gardens.”

“Luckily; for he is greatly incensed against you, my dear boy!”

“Of course, mother, of course. From the day I went to Eton, when was he otherwise?”

“But this is a very different affair. He threatens—”

“To disinherit me,—to throw me up,—to cut me off with a shilling.—I know it all, mother!—I have heard it hundreds and thousands of times. It is about as alarming

to my ear as the thunder of an Adelphi melodrama."

"Mark,—I must not hear you talk thus of your father."

"Then don't listen to my father when he talkes such nonsense of me.—But I have things of greater consequence to say to you, dearest mother," he continued, having closed the still open drawing-room door, and taken a seat beside Lady Davenport; who vainly endeavoured to recal his attention to his father's anathema. "I have a great deal to tell you that will give you pain."

Lady Davenport thought, perhaps, that no addition to her present sorrow was needed.

"I have just quitted Lady Meadowes and my cousin."

Involuntarily she started, and turned towards the door. As if, though this time her husband was at the House of Lords, the treason might reach his ear.

“ You fancied them safe at Meadowes Court. You thought poor Amy was an heiress.—My dear, dear mother, they are all but beggars.”

“ Impossible!—I know through the Eustaces that my brother left all he possessed in the world to his daughter.”

“ But he had nothing to leave. The heir-at-law is in actual possession of the estate. The house is dismantled—uninhabited;—the most desolate place you ever beheld.”

“ Poor old Meadowes Court !”

“ Say rather poor Lady Meadowes,—poor little Amy !”

“ You found them then, Mark ? — You made all the explanations we agreed upon ?”

“ I found them in a wretched lodging, and was far better received than was due to any one bearing the name of Davenport.—I disclaimed, however, at once, all share in my father’s doings or opinions.”

“And Amy:—is she pleasing,—does she resemble my poor brother?”

“My uncle I never saw. But she resembles *you*, mother; you, and Olivia. You will shortly have an opportunity of judging. I am going straight from here to engage lodgings for them. I have persuaded them to come to town.”

“A rash step, dear Mark, seeing their circumstances are so narrow.”

“You must do something for them; we must all do something for them.”

“You did not, I trust, promise this?” said poor Lady Davenport, conscious how often the disposal of a five pound note was beyond her command.

“Indeed, I did. I promised that you would be all kindness to them. I told Lady Meadows how bitterly you repented having been so tardy in advances of reconciliation to him she has lost.”

And this, Lady Davenport, even alarmed as

she was at the thought of an impending struggle with her husband, could not deny.

“But it is not too late to make amends,” resumed her son. “And I am convinced that when my father sees what a pleasing lady-like woman is Lady Meadowes, and what a charming creature her daughter, he will bury the past in oblivion, and receive them as they deserve.”

“Will you *ever* gain experience, my dear boy!”—was Lady Davenport’s mournful rejoinder. “Surely you should know your father well enough to conclude that if he rejected my poor sister-in-law, when prosperous and under her husband’s protection, he is not likely to be kinder to her now she is indigent and helpless. You, and I, and Hugh, must do what we can:—cautiously, however, and by stealth; or family disunion will be the result.”

“And let it!” cried Mark, with indignation. “By stealth and cautiously? No! by Jupiter,—in the open face of day!—I have not many

relations, mother ; but the two I am proudest of, are Amy and her mother. I challenge the whole dry, cold-blooded, race of Davenports, from the wars of the Two Roses to the wars of Mark Davenport and his father, to produce anything worthy to be their waiting-maid!—By stealth?—No! You will hear me vindicate their claims to my father's face, ay, as boldly and conscientiously as to yours."

"Do not, however, too precipitately sacrifice to these new-found relatives all consideration for the comfort of your mother!" remonstrated Lady Davenport. "Wait, at least, for the advice and assistance of Hugh!"

"I will wait for nothing!" said Captain Davenport,—angrily seizing his hat.—"I have pledged my word to stand by them. I cannot compel you, mother, to keep the promises I made them in your name. But *my* word is not to be broken."

He was off before she could reply. All her present anxiety was that he might clear the

house without encountering his father. The new sources of discord opening between them were not likely to slake the blaze of the feud already flaming.

CHAPTER IV.

LADY MEADOWES was not altogether fortunate in her self-constituted champion. Though no man could be more honourable of purpose, or more undaunted in carrying it out, he was too much of a Hotspur for one who needed quieter sustainment.—Uninfluenced by the wisdom of his ancestors or experience of his contemporaries, he took, in sporting phrase, “a line of his own across country,” which often brought him to grief;—betraying him into miry ways, and even peril of life and limb.

The more observant years of his manhood had been passed in a distant country; and if this had emancipated him, to his advantage, from conventional trammels, it also left him ignorant of a thousand trivial proprieties, which, massed together, constitute the macadamized pathway of human life.

It was March when he returned to town, to perpetrate his single combat with his father, and throw the whole family into confusion. But the buds on the sooty shrubberies of the squares were attempting to turn green, before Captain Davenport proceeded to the Paddington station to welcome the inexperienced travellers he had taken under his protection.

Only twice before, in her life, had Lady Meadows visited London,—her daughter and their attendant, never; and as it was already dusk when, weary and saddened, they reached the outskirts of the foggy, misty, unsavoury city, wearing that heavy coverlid of smoke which modern bombast has dignified into “the

tiara of commerce,"—their impressions were somewhat disheartening. Several miles still divided them from the domicile provided for them. Captain Davenport's experience of Hargood's gloomy lodgings had decided him against the interior of the town; and the more fashionable outskirts, with their little two-storied pigeon-houses, of equivocal respectability, were ill-adapted, he thought, to the age and appearance, and unprotected position, of his cousin Amy.—Ever in extremes, he had consequently selected for their domicile the antipodes of these sunny little bird-cages; and engaged a portion of an old-fashioned brick house in the Battersea road, the other half of which was partitioned off for the family of the proprietor,—a thriving market gardener.

To attain this far from attractive abode, with its slanting floors, creaking staircase, sloping ceilings and ill-fitting windows, they had to undertake five miles of suburban road, converted by the rains of the preceding day into

rivers of mud :—ill-lighted, ill-scented, solitary ; —the dreariest causeways which ever in her life Amy Meadows had been fated to traverse.— Was this the city of Whittington,—the London whose streets were paved with gold ?—Poor old Marlow, their prim maiden attendant, heaved a deep sigh as she secretly wished they were all safe back in Gloucestershire, on the pleasant banks of the Severn.

Even Marcus, when he saw them installed, enlivened by the light of a pair of blinking, tallow candles, and a smoky small-coal fire, began to fear he might have chosen better. The horse-hair couch on which he carefully deposited the invalid, was hard as Neighbour Savile's oaken settle ; and though Amy declared that the tea provided for them, in a black, earthy-smelling teapot, was excellent, and that they should make themselves perfectly comfortable on the morrow, her cousin felt his chest tighten at her assumed cheerfulness ; and had never so deeply lamented his own want of means to place these

dear relatives in a situation more consonant with their rights. He kept glancing at Lady Meadows's pale face and wasted features, till, albeit unused to the melting mood, tears came into his eyes ; and even after, at her request, he had taken leave of them for the night, he could not forbear remounting the creaking staircase and looking again into the sitting-room, to say that if they wanted him earlier than his appointed noon-day visit the following day, one of the garden lads could be despatched by the omnibus to fetch him, and he would be with them in a moment.

“ I am almost sorry now,” said he, with an involuntary glance round their cheerless abode, “ that I did not engage a bed here, or in the neighbourhood. I cannot bear to leave you, alone.”

He shrank, somehow, from the avowal, in Amy's presence, that he had been debarred from such an arrangement, lest, among strangers, it might lead to injurious imputations.

“If you don’t go away, at once, Cousin Mark, I and Marlow must put you out of the house!” cried Amy, so cheerfully as almost to disarm his suspicions of her heavy-heartedness. And in a moment he was gone; leaving them to their weariness and their tears.

The courteous reader,—the experienced reader, at all events,—will not need to be told that of the three solitary women, Marlow found herself that night the most disconsolate. The dignities of the housekeeper’s-room were in her person sorely outraged. For her, there was no palliative to the damp kitchen, “the gurl,” her only assistant, the black beetles, and the cracked crockery.—No illusions remained to the decayed waiting-maid to blind her to her privations and those of my lady; whereas Amy, in the wakening sympathies natural to her age, the consciousness of having an earnest protector in the incomparable Cousin Mark who had been the idol of her girl-dreams, could by no means give herself up to despair.—Even Lady Meadows, deceived

by the devoted zeal of her nephew, his manifest delight in their society and activity in their cause, was confirmed in her opinion—an error how natural,—that her child was becoming the object of an attachment calculated to secure her happiness for life. Thus deceiving themselves, as all of us are prone to be deceived, they sank to sleep after their wearisome journey; thankful to Providence for their escape from the impertinence of the lady of the ringlets, and the importunities of her Celadon, Mr. A. A.:—and persuaded that they discerned a break in the heavy clouds by which their destinies were overhung.

As yet, however, Davenport had been unable to extort from his mother an explicit promise concerning a renewal of intercourse with Lady Meadowes. The woman who had sacrificed her inclinations through life to the maintenance of family peace, was not likely to rush unguardedly into proceedings certain to exasperate her lord, and create an unhappy home for

Hugh and Olivia.—They had stronger claims upon her than even her brother's widow. It was quite enough to have to confront just then Lord Davenport's sullen resentment of the conduct of his younger son in leaving the army. He had forbidden Marcus the house. He had forbidden Lady Davenport to communicate with him. He would fain have forbidden Hugh. But he knew from former experience that it was useless.

With his usual perversity, however, Mark Davenport had himself effected what his father's prohibitions would have failed to accomplish. When he found his brother seconding Lord Davenport's projects for his advancement, and strongly recommending his acceptance of the aide-de-campship, he chose to take in dudgeon the interference of Hugh, and express his sentiments in terms the most ungracious.

A coolness naturally ensued. But it was the commencement of a busy session, and

Hugh Davenport was too fully occupied by a tedious committee, which added a long legislative morning to a long legislative night, to have leisure for grieving over the interruption of fraternal intercourse arising from the turbulent spirit of his brother.

“I wish, dear mother,” said he one day to Lady Davenport, “you would ask my father’s permission to invite young Eustace here, with his father and mother, whose names I see on your dinner list for Saturday next.”

“Willingly,—for we have two places vacant. But I fancied you disliked that young man?”

“I am not particularly fond of any of the family.”

“Nor I,” thought Lady Davenport; and she sighed when she recalled to mind her former motives for cultivating the acquaintance.

“It was Marcus, however, not myself, of whom William Eustace was always the pet aversion. It was Mark who gave him at Oxford the name of Young Vapid.”

“Your brother’s antipathies are often capricious and unreasonable.—But I have heard even *you*, Hugh, describe Mr. Eustace as a languid fastidious dandy.”

“And so he used to be. But I suspect he affected the character as characters are often taken up by young men thrust too early into society, to disguise their shyness and *malaise*.”

“From the little I have seen of Mr. Eustace, I should have attributed his fastidious airs to self-conceit, rather than *mauvaise honte*.”

“So do most people. Public opinion is against him. But I shall be surprised if the wind do not eventually turn in his favour.—He has come out an altered man this year. The leopard has changed his spots, and the Ethiopian his skin. Egregious studs and frilled shirt-fronts have disappeared ; and he looks like an English gentleman.”

“That is *something*,” said Lady Davenport.

“As an indication, it is much ; and I

sincerely believe the moral reform to be correspondent. Eustace made a capital speech the other night. All the clubs are talking of it; and as we happen to sit on the same side of the House, I am of course interested in his triumph."

"Your sudden conversion in his favour, then, is a mere question of political partisanship!" said Lady Davenport almost reproachfully.

"Nothing half so respectable," replied her son, with a smile. "It is a question of personal vanity. Eustace has lately made advances to me that I can scarcely understand. He has nothing to gain by my friendship; and must entertain of me a far higher opinion than I deserve. He manages to hook himself to my arm from Pall Mall to the House, or from the House to our club. And I am not sufficiently rich, mother, in personal friendships, to be callous to the attentions of those who condescend to single me out."

“And if you were so, dearest Hugh, your mother must ever recognise so great a proof of discernment,” said Lady Davenport warmly; touched by the sincerity and simplicity of his avowals.

A formal card of invitation was accordingly written and despatched. No fear that the son of a great landed proprietor and thorough-going Tory, like Sir Henry Eustace, would prove an unwelcome guest to the lord of Ilford Castle.

The result of this dinner-party was, that Lady Davenport fully concurred in the opinions concerning Young Vapid expressed by her son. She would have been a little amazed probably had she known that, in order to accept her gracious invitation, Mr. Eustace had thrown over the most fashionable of duchesses, one of the golden idols of his earlier worship.—But she was pleased by his endeavours to meet the spirit and level of one of those intolerable dinner-parties composed of dunny,

prosy, petty-minded people of established position, whom other people of established position are compelled to invite in London, because they have the misfortune to live near them in the country.—Hard fate! to be forced to swallow a russeting, in a garden where golden pippins hang triumphantly on every bough.

But most of all, she admired the tact with which Mr. Eustace appeared to turn the deaf ear becoming a respectful son, while Lady Louisa held forth, in her usual peremptory tone concerning books she did not understand, and political measures she could not appreciate; or Sir Henry, squeaking out his unmeaning rhapsodies about Mendelssohn;—looking all the while like the Homunculus which the antique artist introduced into a cameo as measuring the thumb of a colossal statue, to demonstrate its greatness. To an intelligent mind like that of young Eustace, this exhibition of family folly must have been torture. Yet he bore it with a countenance as unflinching

as the Spartan's, whom the fox was gnawing under his cloak.

“If Mark were here, he might take a lesson much to his advantage,” glanced through the mind of Lady Davenport. And the thought that he was absent from his father's board, and long likely to remain so, cast a sudden gloom over her countenance.

It brightened, however, when on adjourning to the drawing-room after that long, weary dinner, Olivia went the round of presentation to her female friends; and she saw how even those lukewarm judges were struck by the sight of her beauty. It needed not the admiration of others to apprise the fond mother of the native grace investing even her shyness with a peculiar charm.—But she was delighted to see her encounter, with perfect self-possession, the ordeal of being complimented to her face by a half-doting dowager, and loftily interrogated touching her studies and pursuits by Lady Louisa Eustace, with the air

of a doctor of divinity catechising a Sunday-school.

Olivia was still seated by this education-crazed lady, when Mr. Eustace, who made his appearance as punctually as the coffee tray, approached the sofa where Lady Davenport was listening with the good-breeding able to disguise the most perfect absence of mind, to the dowager's blundering description of a flower show of the preceding day.

“Your ladyship's daughter, I presume?” said he, glancing towards the poor girl, who was fluttering in the talons of his intellectual mamma, like a dove in those of a hawk; adding, less audibly—“a most singular likeness!—I should have known her anywhere as a relation.”

Lady Davenport, fancying he alluded to herself, pitied his deficiency of perception. How was she to conjecture that he was comparing the ingenuous countenance of Olivia with that of her cousin Amy. He did not, however,

follow up his indiscreet remark, by requesting a presentation to the young lady whose muslin frock and unadorned braids announced her as “not out”:—perhaps because unwilling to undertake the task of reviving a victim who had been talked dead by his lady-mother. He endeavoured more sagely to recommend himself to Lady Davenport, by relieving her from the necessity of replying to questions put by the dowager, much after the style of those addressed by “correspondents” to weekly newspapers; assuring her that the Duchess of Kent had never been Duke of Cornwall,—and that the *Freischütz* was *not* the last opera of Rossini.

He *had* his reward.—When, on the old lady’s carriage being announced, he offered his arm to conduct her to it, after which, he was to give a lift to Hugh Davenport in his brougham to be in time for a division, his hostess, while receiving his parting bow, expressed a wish to see him again.

“If you will come some morning, Mr. Eustace,” said she, “I shall be delighted to show you the herbal I was mentioning just now to Lady Dundrum, collected by my son Marcus in the Himalaya.”

On overhearing the invitation, Hugh Davenport was of opinion, that his dear mother was nearly as susceptible as himself to the flattery and improved deportment of William Eustace. He would have been still more amused could he have heard his father, when the party broke up, observe with much solemnity to Lady Davenport, “a very promising young man, Mr. Eustace, to be the son of that old Tweedle-dum, Sir Henry, and that dictionary-in-petticoats, Lady Louisa.—Some very remarkable proofs he related to me of the superior advantage of sowing, in low-lying pastures, the *Festuca heterophylla*, instead of *Dactylis glomerata* or *Aira cæspitosa*, so much recommended by our Northern Agricultural Society.—He tells me too, that, at

Horndean Court, last winter, Matson's purple-top Swedes, of which I have always thought so meanly, proved a dead failure!"

If that dear Duchess, to whom William Eustace was just then repairing at the opera, after giving Hugh Davenport the slip at the House of Commons, could but have heard him talking turnips and artificial grasses with an ill-conditioned old landed proprietor!—Above all, if she could have imagined that his object in the attempt was to ingratiate himself with the nearest relations of an insignificant country girl, —by whom his hand and heart had been already ignominiously rejected!—

CHAPTER V.

LADY MEADOWES would not have been induced to renounce so readily her plans of provincial retirement, even by the earnest persuasions of her nephew, had he not afforded hopes, amounting almost to certainty, of a reunion with her brother.

He had not indeed been perfectly frank with her : for men in love conceive themselves privileged to assume a vizard.—He had not courage to avow that he was actually acquainted with Hargood : fancying that his aunt would infer

the covert motive of all his advances ; an act of ingenuity of which that single-minded woman was about as capable as, by ruminating on her sofa, to discover the north-west passage.—He promised, however, to leave no means untried to bring together the brother and sister.

Now that they were installed in the environs of London, a thousand coincidences seemed to suggest delay. Hargood must not find him established as the guardian angel of his sister and niece, till some act of conciliation had been vouchsafed by his parents. The unbending spirit of the clear-sighted man would perceive the indelicacy of their relative position:—and, sternly ejected, Battersea would fail to afford him a single step towards Soho.—To engage his mother to meet his wishes, was at present impossible. His own wilfulness had created too powerful a barrier betwixt himself and home.

All he could do was to trust, as too many of us trust, to the chapter of accidents: a con-

fidence which utterly depreciates the value of duty and principle.—It was passing pleasant, however, to be welcomed every morning,—those bright spring mornings, when the vivifying influence of purer air and renovated vegetation seemed to put new life into his veins,—by the grateful^m mother and lovely, loving girl, who evidently regarded him as a guardian angel sent to guide them out of the land of Egypt.

Though as yet no Hargood was brought to light, their time had not been lost. Benefited by change of air, Lady Meadowes was daily gaining strength. The necessity for exertion endowed her with the power.—As to Amy, though *her* cheek needed from the first no accession of bloom, never had her eyes beamed so radiantly as when rewarded by her cousin's encomiums for the diligent use of her pencil during his absence, or the assiduous use of her needle in his behalf.—A portfolio bearing his cypher contributed by Amy, a railway bag artistically braided by her mother, proved to

him that, absent or present, he was ever in their thoughts. He saw that the sordid economy imposed upon them had ceased to be irksome, when they noticed his perfect indifference to the luxuries of life. Cousin Mark having once quoted as an axiom of true philosophy that "half the ills we complain of, arise from wounded vanity," Amy adopted the virtue of rising superior to their lot; and ceased to repine after the halls and fields of Meadows Court.

Blind, — wilfully blind, perhaps, — to the decorum of the case, Lady Meadows could not deny her daughter the enjoyment of those early walks with her cousin, which were to render Amy acquainted with the beauties of the neighbourhood; the shrubby heights of Wandsworth, — the terraced banks of the Thames. — Sometimes, he took her on the water. Mark was a capital oarsman; and a glowing summer rendered the river breezes a delicious refreshment. It was there he received

from her, in his turn, his first lessons in Italian. It was there he rehearsed to her, by way of repayment, the stirring lyrics of Macaulay, or charmed her ear with the magic rhythm of Edgar Poe.

In the confiding self-surrender with which she hung upon his accents, spontaneously and unconsciously adopting his sentiments and opinions, he fancied he could recognise the influence of what the French call *la force du sang*.—She loved him nearly as well as Olivia. A cousin resembled a sister then, still more closely than he had supposed!—Would the time ever come, he wondered, when Amy's cousin would be added to the party; wandering with them among the ferny paths of Putney Heath, or listening to the dipping oars and the even-song of the blackbirds, in the green depths of the Twickenham meadows?

Amy, at least, needed no third person to perfect her happiness! Though they sometimes discoursed of a remote time, in that or some

future summer, when Lady Meadows was to be strong enough for a drive, or row, or even stroll, under the Richmond lime-trees, neither of them seemed in haste for a change. The deep family mourning which rendered their seclusion and retirement a matter of necessity, served to reconcile them to the monotonous sameness of their days.

Had the more cautious judgment of the Rector of Radensford, or his gruff colleague, been exercised upon the state of the case, Lady Meadows would perhaps have been accused of rashness, in her unreserved adoption of her nephew's supremacy in her house. But their interference was limited to the control of her pecuniary affairs. They had already invested her small personalty of £900. They were to receive quarterly, and pay down to her, her jointure; but by Sir Mark's will, she was left sole guardian of her daughter. And even had it been otherwise, what pretence could they have found for denouncing an intimacy, likely

to place their ward in the honourable position of daughter-in-law to the highly-allied sister of her father?—

The lady of the forlorn ringlets had in fact accounted to her patron Dr. Burnaby, for the premature departure of her lodgers, by announcing an approaching marriage.

On his first visit to Clifton, he was assured that “his hinteresting prottijay was about to be led to the Hymninnial haltar by the Honourable Captain Davenport; leastwise it was to be ’oped so,—for there was hevery *happearence* of a hengagement.” And when the vindictive lady endeavoured to avenge by this malicious insinuation the slights inflicted on the independent gentleman whom Captain Davenport had threatened to kick into a limbo often named in vulgar parlance, though unknown to ancient or modern geographers,—“the middle of next week,”—the good old doctor accepted the announcement in its pleasantest sense; and wrote immediately to offer

his hearty congratulations to the mother of his “hinteresting prottijay.”

The letter startled her. But, however little she knew of the world, Lady Meadows was aware that, in nine instances out of ten, such reports attend the commencement of every intimacy likely to end in courtship and marriage ; and, prematurely promulgated, often lead to their termination.—She contented herself, therefore, with vaguely replying that “there was no probability of her losing her dear child so soon as her kind friend seemed to anticipate ;” and, having committed his letter to the flames, hoped that the subject was disposed of.

But the knowledge that others placed the same interpretation as herself on the devoted attentions of her nephew, did not tend to decrease her interest in his lively and varied conversation ; her pride in his manly frankness ; and more than all, her delight in the cordial looks of those expressive hazel eyes,

diffusing what appeared a light from other days. There were moments when she could no longer refuse herself the indulgence of calling him "Mark."—There were moments when she could even scarcely refrain from addressing him as her son.

One day when, dusty and tired, Mark Davenport arrived at his lodgings, after spending a pleasant June morning at Battersea,—partly in his favourite occupation of sketching from nature with Amy, when the emulation excited between them served as a stimulant to both,—partly in reading aloud to Lady Meadows, Fortune's descriptions of Oriental scenery, to which his own experience enabled him to append unnumbered valuable comments,—he found his brother Hugh waiting for him, newspaper in hand, in his easy-chair.

They had not met for weeks ; and Mark was prepared when they *did* meet, to testify the most magnanimous resentment. But the man must

have possessed a colder heart than his, who could have resisted the extended hand and winning smile of the attached brother who started up to greet him, as though estrangement between *them* were out of the question.

Both longed to say "forgive me." Both longed to say "I was wrong." Though in truth, blame was attachable only to the less repentant of the two.

"I could not stay away any longer," Hugh was the first to observe. "I have been wanting to come this long time.—I have many things, my dear brother, to say to you."

"Say on, then," said Mark, after refreshing himself with a glass of Seltzer-water, on pretence of weariness from his walk, but in reality to appease the choking in his throat produced by his brother's generous affection. "I am too tired by walking a dozen miles under a hot sun, to interrupt you."

"In the first place, you must no longer delay

a reconciliation with my father.—I have promised that—”

“Nothing, ~~I~~ I hope, which engages me to violate my liberty of conscience?”

“Already, an interruption! No, Mark, your conscience will surely admit that some concession is due to a parent, even had he injured you, whose days are numbered in the land.”

“Come, come! No humbug, my most plausible brother. Don’t attempt to get round me by false pretences.—I saw his lordship the other day, in the window at Arthur’s, with a dozen years’ life in his countenance.”

“Since then, he has been seriously attacked. Holland has a very indifferent opinion of him.”

“Not more than *I* have,” added Mark, with a contemptuous shrug.

“This is no moment to speak of him with disrespect,” pleaded Hugh, gravely. “My word of honour should have some weight with

you; and I pledge it, that, to my belief, my father has not a month to live.—My mother is in a dreadful state of mind. I left poor Olivia in tears.”

“It passes all patience!” muttered Mark, peevishly. “I verily believe that the greater the savage, the greater the affection wasted on him!—My poor mother fretting for the sufferings of a man who has rendered her life a prolonged martyrdom?”

“The more reason that you should not increase her vexation by holding off, at a moment when my father ought to be surrounded by his whole family.”

“You seem to forget, Hugh, that he forbid me the house,” said Mark, a little disconcerted by all he was hearing.

“Forget it too, my dear brother.—I am certain it would give him pleasure to see you.”

“Has he *said* so?”

“No,—for his nature is as obdurate as your own. But I found him yesterday—having

suddenly entered my mother's dressing-room, of which he has taken possession since his illness,—standing in earnest contemplation of that fine view in Lahore,—one of the best things you ever did,—of which my mother is so proud. I could see by his face, as he turned to speak to me, that his heart was full of kindly feelings towards you."

"Pho, pho!—He had been examining the herbage in the foreground, and fancied he discovered a new grass!—"

"Be serious, Mark; for serious, believe me is the case.—Walk back with me to Spring Gardens, and convince yourself."

"*I* walk anywhere, within the next four-and-twenty hours?—My dear fellow, if Solomon in all his glory were living across the way, I could not stumble over, to take a sight at him.—I am tired to death.—I was going to ring for my slippers."

"As if a Hansom were not to be had," said his brother, almost angrily. Justly surmising,

however, that Marcus would not yield without some pretence at resistance, as a compromise with his wounded self-love, he added—"At least, if you are at present too fatigued for the undertaking, promise me that you will come in a day or two,—perhaps to-morrow. Or, if you don't choose to risk an interview, come to the door, and inquire after his health. It would gratify him. He is sadly weak—sadly pulled down."

"To gratify *him*, I would not stir a step," retorted Mark. "But if it would afford the slightest pleasure to my mother—"

"The very greatest. She is miserable at your absence; and dear little Olivia does nothing but fret after you."

"I wish I could think so.—I often fancy not a soul of them would care if I were hanged!" said Mark, in a hoarse voice.

"You fancy nothing of the kind. You know we all love you dearly, though it is sowing seed

on a barren rock," rejoined Hugh, with much emotion.

"I shouldn't be at all surprised," said Mark, abruptly, "if this illness of the governor's resulted from the downfall of Protection!"—He was evidently determined not to be touched.

"Holland is of opinion that his first paralytic seizure was caused by mental anxiety."

"I told you so!—Wheat at forty-two shillings a quarter!—"

"May not the ingratitude of a favourite son have had some share in his worries?" said Hugh, vexed by his pertinacity.

"If worries were mortal," rejoined his brother,—pointing to the writing-table, on which lay a pile of papers, exhibiting a vile plaid-work of blue and red lines in intersecting columns, headed by an important emblazonment of Royal or Serene armorial bearings,—unmis-

takeably bills,—“I might order my coffin, and make an end on't.—But come!” cried he, suddenly starting up,—“If this odious step is to be taken,” as Macbeth says, “‘if it were done, ’twere well it were done quickly.’—That bottle of Seltzer-water has done me worlds of good.—Let us be off, Hugh.—We can pick up a Hansom in Pall Mall.”

His brother was too wise to exhibit either surprise or exultation at the move. He had long been accustomed to accept his brother as he could get him; and he accordingly talked all the way down-stairs and into Pall Mall, of the telegraphic news from Paris, in the evening papers;—anything rather than the subject uppermost in their hearts.

The interview between the stubborn father and stubborn son was, at last, all but impossible to accomplish. Poor Hugh had to undertake in Spring Gardens the same hard work, using the same levers and pulleys he had already brought into action. But the end of it was

that Mark stayed to dinner in New Street ; not a little shocked to find that Lord Davenport was far too seriously affected to appear at table.

He was repaid for the concession by the heartfelt joy of his brother and sister. Not that their tears were altogether stanchèd by his presence. But there was more comfort for them, now that this, their brother, who was lost, was restored.

After dinner, Lord Davenport appeared in the drawing-room ;—and it seemed strange to find him established there in his novel character of an invalid. But even when reclining feebly in an easy-chair, the acerbity of his nature was perceptible through the languid movement and tremulous voice.—Though gratified by his son's return, he could not for the life and soul of him refrain from his usual taunts.—He informed Marcus that poor Olivia had gone back sadly lately in her drawing,—as well she might :—that he had been forced to sell his bay colt by Jason,—since no longer

wanted for a charger,—more was the pity,—where was the use of keeping it, to eat its head off?

On finding the rebel remain silent,—for Marcus, painfully impressed by the dispensation which had overtaken the hard old man, answered never a word,—he became as angry with his son's submission as ever he had been with his assumptions.

“What the devil!—Hadn't he a word to say for himself?—Evidently didn't care a straw for anything that happened within the pale of his own family.”

“Answer him,—no matter what,” whispered Hugh, under cover of the tea-tray, which was at that moment passing round. “We are ordered carefully to avoid the slightest exasperation.”

Marcus accordingly inquired the name of the purchaser of the bay colt; and threatened to bring up Olivia's halting proficiency by a severe course of lessons.

“ You will find Miss Olivia requires putting down, instead of bringing up,”—said the old despot, with a grim smile, which appeared peculiarly hideous on his ghastly face. “ Your sister has had her flatterers, lately, though *your* compliments have been wanting. We have made a pleasant acquaintance, Mark, during your absence.—Shall I tell him, Lady Davenport?”

“ Mark is well acquainted with Mr. Eustace,” stammered her ladyship, remembering with dismay her son’s antipathy to the individual who, till the moment of Lord Davenport’s illness, had perseveringly frequented the house.

“ Ay, but he never saw him in his new character of Sir Charles Grandison,” added the old lord, whom the completion of his family circle rendered, for *him*, almost jocular. “ Capital pheasant shooting at Horndean Court, Mark!—Four or five years hence,” he continued, lowering his voice as if to be unheard

by his daughter, "young Eustace might suit you very well as a brother-in-law."

"Suit *me*?—As a *brother-in-law*?" cried Mark, no longer able to master his temper.—
"A pitiful fellow, without moral pith or marrow,—a snob only fit to dance attendance on dowagers—!"

"My dear Mark, you have mistaken your man," interposed Hugh, who discerned by the swelling veins in his father's forehead, that the mercury of his ire was rising.—"*You* are talking of the Billy Eustace of last year. The Eustace who visits here, belongs to another species."

"The transformation must be very recent, then. Not six months ago, he was refused as an empty coxcomb by the daughter of Lady Meadows."

"By *whose* daughter?"—muttered Lord Davenport, almost inarticulately.

"My late uncle's,—Amy Meadows."

"You mean to say that Mr. Eustace actually

offered his hand to the offspring of—of that governess-woman?—”

“To his credit be it spoken, he did.”

“Ay, ay!—Plain enough—plain enough!” rejoined the old man, panting for breath,—“Meadowes Court and two or three thousand a-year cover a multitude of sins.”

“You labour under a complete mistake, my dear father,” cried Mark.—“Amy Meadowes has not a shilling.—The whole property has devolved upon the heir-at-law, the present baronet, Sir Jervis Meadowes.”

“Thank God!” was the vindictive rejoinder of his lordship—losing sight, in this unexpected triumph, of the slight offered to Olivia. “So should all such shameful matches be punished!”

“You would scarcely say so, my lord, if you were acquainted with my Cousin Amy and her mother,” persisted Mark, in spite of the interdictory gestures by which his mother and brother were endeavouring to stop his indiscreet communications:—“Two more amiable,—more

charming women never lived:—Worlds too good for an empty impostor like William Eustace!”

“ You know them, then, Sir ?” inquired Lord Davenport, in a low tremulous voice.

“ Intimately.—I left them only a few hours ago.”

“ Being aware that, through life, I have interdicted all intercourse between them and my family ?”

“ Having heard so from vague rumour,—from your servants,—from country gossips. From yourself, I never heard mention of their name: except that you have once or twice, when angry, accused me of being a thorough Meadowes.”

“ And so you are,—and so you are,—so, by GOD ALMIGHTY, you are !” cried the old man, almost in a state of frenzy—“ To harp on the quibble that I never expressly forbid you to consort with these low baggages ;—when you *know*,

—when—when—” A frightful execration closed the sentence he was unable rationally to terminate.

It was the last articulate word uttered in this world by Lord Davenport.—A few minutes afterwards, he was borne insensible into his room, and laid on the bed from which he was never to rise again.—Apothecaries, instantly summoned, came in haste; and physicians, at leisure. In vain!—Cupping and leeching could not supersede the will of Heaven. They did not even serve to torment the palsy-stricken man,—so heavy upon him lay the hand of death.

Next day, all was over. The window-shutters in New Street were reverentially closed; and the answer at the door to inquiring visitors was, that “My Lady and Miss Davenport was very poorly; and Lord Davenport as well as could be expected.”

Let us hope for the credit of the decorous-

looking family butler, by whom the solemn phrase was so often repeated, that it was the present peer to whose present state he made allusion.

CHAPTER VI.

LET no one imagine that, because released by this solemn event from domestic thralldom, Mark Davenport so far lost sight of the decencies of life as to renew in haste the intimacy with which it was so sadly connected. However reckless his nature, he was painfully shocked by the scene he had witnessed; still more so, by the consciousness of his share in bringing it to pass. The whole family, horror-stricken, nay even grief-stricken by the presence of death, united in beseeching him to remain with

them for a time, to afford both counsel and comfort.

In New Street, therefore, was he at once established; and from thence,—from the roof which covered his father's coffin,—it would have been heinous to emerge for the direct purpose of outraging his latest wishes.

His advice too, was required in a thousand emergencies. The new head of the family seemed unwilling to take the smallest step without consulting him.—As to Lady Davenport, the knowledge she had recently acquired of his friendship for the niece and sister-in-law, towards whom she had acted so harshly, though feelings of delicacy restrained her at such a moment from any allusion to the forbidden topic, seemed to render him the dearest of her children. She was not satisfied to have him a moment absent from her side.

It was arranged that he was to escort her and his sister to Ilford Castle, to be in readiness to receive the body of his father, which

the young lord undertook to accompany to its last abode.—The funeral was to take place within ten days of his accession to the title : and till then, no object was allowed to divert the attention of the family from the respect and forms of respect due to the dead.

Most people gain in consideration by departing this life. The felon launched into eternity by the justice of his country, is kindly accosted by the sheriffs when his irons are knocked off, and tenderly spoken of on the morrow in the newspaper-details of his execution ; and the most disagreeable personage commands a modified species of absolution from unpopularity, when invested by the dreadfulness of death and judgment, with a solemn halo.—Lord Davenport was no exception to the rule.—In his shroud he became an object of tenderness to his family ; in his crimson velvet coffin, of awe and deference to his vassals.—Even the public spoke of him with indulgence. In political life, he had been remarkable for his consistency :

a virtue which some call stanchness—some, pigheadedness:—but which most people respect. It was only Lord Curt de Cruxley who had the cold-blooded audacity to remark that “no doubt Lord Davenport was reconciled to his end, by the opportunity of certifying to the Agricultural Society, that ‘flesh was grass.’”

But independent of the usual pomp which converts virtuous men deceased in ~~the~~ saints, and sinners into virtuous, all that transpired after death of the late lord of Ilford Castle, was highly to his advantage. The opening of his will brought to light that not only had his penurious habits of self-denial tended in a wonderful manner to the extension of his family estate; but that the most prudent combinations and foresight had enabled him to double the portion of his daughter, and lay by for the benefit of his recalcitrant second son no less a sum than forty thousand pounds, in addition to the provision which was his birthright. During those uneasy years in which the impracticable

Marcus had persevered in kicking against the pricks, sometimes fancying himself an object of malicious persecution on the part of his father,—at others, of complete indifference,—Lord Davenport had unswervingly watched over his interests, both private and professional; as a series of elaborate codicils to his will, and copies of letters to the Horse Guards, now brought to light.

Would not even a less generous temper than that of Mark have been touched by the discovery?—Mole that he must have been, not to discern in the old man's lifetime what sterling gold was mixed with that rugged clay!*

Among other testamentary suggestions was a request addressed to his successor, that his brother should succeed to the representation of Rawburne: the improved fortunes of Marcus justifying his entrance into the Senate.—Had no such desire been expressed, indeed, the seat vacated by the new peer would, as a matter of course, have been offered to his

brother. But there was something in the forethought evinced by his father in his behalf, which called up all the compunction of that undutiful son.—After perusing such sentences, traced by the tremulous hand of the old man now stretched in the stiffness of death, he could no more have disobeyed his last wishes by rushing off to Battersea, than have smitten him as he lay in his grave-clothes.

There was no need to write and apprise Lady Meadows of what had occurred. The newspapers,—and now they were no longer tendered for perusal by Mrs. Darby's parlour-lodger, Amy seldom omitted to read one daily to her mother,—took care that an event so important to society as the exit from the stage of life of a wealthy peer, should be suitably recorded and deplored,—with an appropriate emblazonment in the Illustrated News of his armorial bearings, in token of his being conjoined with the dust. Marcus *did*, however, previously to his leaving London for the North, despatch a few lines

acquainting her that, having succeeded by his father's decease to ample means, he trusted she would permit him, as one of the nearest relatives of her late husband, to place her and his cousin in a more agreeable position: enclosing a cheque to her order upon his banker, which he entreated her to fill up at her convenience.—But he knew both Lady Meadows and Amy well enough to be certain that this would afford a poor substitute for the visit and words of affection he did not at that moment feel intitled to afford.

Even when the mournful ceremony was at an end, till the conclusion of which the new Lord Davenport seemed scarcely in lawful possession of his honours, Marcus was unable to resume at once the command of his leisure.—His brother continued to look to him with the helplessness of a loving child.—He was made to confer with the men of business and address the tenantry, as if *he* rather than the elder born were in possession of the title and estates. And if Lord

Davenport did not insist on his accompanying him to town when he went up to take his seat in the House of Lords, it was only because, the time being too short for the issuing of a new writ for Rawburne during the present Session, he dispensed with his company in favour of the mother and sister still more in need of his protection.

At Ilford Castle, therefore, with Lady Davenport and Olivia, he remained: and in their congenial society, amidst the most delicious summer weather, how different did the place appear from the irksome prison of the preceding winter.—How rich the verdure of its woods!—How blue, how glassy, the waters of the adjoining lake!—How calm those sequestered valleys!—And how far, far nearer to the pure Heavens spreading over all, did he feel among those peaceful scenes, than when harassed in body and polluted in mind, by the strife and orgies of his days of early dissipation.

At times, he might sigh after a compa-

nion more intellectual than his little sorrowful sister; to whose sympathetic eye to point out the matchless beauty of the scenery, and the improvements he was prepared to suggest hereafter to a brother, as eager as himself to ameliorate the condition of the working classes.—But if, when mooning in the twilight, in the gardens now fragrant and florid in their summer luxuriance, he not only *dreamed* of such companionship but invested it with a pair of large dark eyes and a blouse of grey camlet, he had not yet allowed himself to avow even to his mother, that he was such a “thorough Meadows” as to contemplate the confirmation of his happiness for life by stooping to an unequal marriage.

But how, during this interval, was poor Amy enduring so sudden an interruption of her golden days of happiness?—Even as girls of her age, under the influence of a first attachment, usually support the trying moments of separation from its object; fancying each of

them an age, and every inhabitant of the civilised globe in league to render those ages a term of torment.—Had it been possible for one by nature as blithe as a bird and sweet-tempered as an angel, to become peevish and perverse under the excitement of constant watchfulness and repinings, Lady Meadows would have passed a miserable summer.—But for her mother's sake, the anxious girl took as much pains to conceal her heart-aches, as she had done to meet with fortitude their reverses of fortune.

She was rewarded by the improving health and increasing cheerfulness of the invalid ; who, though she seldom permitted herself to revert to the Davenport family or their affairs, was not the less convinced in the happy secrecy of her heart, that the wealth and distinction acquired by Marcus had removed the only obstacle to his seeking the hand of his cousin.—As soon as the formalities of the case would admit, she felt certain of his making his appearance among

them to accomplish the dearest wish of her heart.

Meanwhile the influence of the absent one was not a moment suspended. Till he came again, till he returned from that terrible Ilford Castle, which appeared to Amy as many thousand miles off as though Cousin Mark were still botanising in the Himalaya, what could she do better than devote herself to the study of the art so dear to him? She rose accordingly, with the sun, to watch its ever-varying sports and gleamings among the kindling clouds, and transfer them to her sketch-book; and almost every line of the copy of "Bell's Anatomy of Expression" which he had left with her for perusal, had she committed to memory. Alas! poor Amy!—How was she to conjecture that in a murky back-room in Soho abided a Muse, in whose bright intelligence all she was labouring to acquire, was spontaneous and intuitive:—that unknown cousin, on whose image the absent Marcus dwelt with a perseverance as in-

fatuated, as was squandered by her own young heart on the image of the absent Marcus !

A portion, a very small portion of the garden adjoining their quaint old house, had been fenced off by Mrs. Margams at Captain Davenport's solicitation, the preceding spring, to substitute a few flower-plots for the asparagus-beds and ridges of French beans, extended under their windows ;—a poor substitute for the beautiful shrubberies and greenhouses of Meadows Court, but delightful to Amy and her mother as a token of the kindly thoughtfulness of Marcus. And now, as the repining girl watched, day after day, the growth, and bloom, and decline of the successive summer flowers, she could scarcely forbear complaining to Mrs. Margams, her jolly comely old landlady, of their transient nature.—“ Scarcely a blossom left !—If her cousin absented himself any longer, there would not be so much as a carnation to offer him on his return !”

The old market-woman, who went rumbling

off in her cart to Covent Garden, every morning, at daybreak, and returned thence only when daylight was disappearing, was beginning indeed to feel nearly as much surprised as "Miss" that the "Young Captive" for a time so devoted to "her ladies" was heard of no more.—But like every one else who came under the influence of Lady Meadowes's gentle manners and Amy's ingratiating smiles, she did her best to promote their comfort and enjoyment; and took care that a succession of autumnal flowers was provided, if not for the welcome of the expected cousin, at least for the consolation of her to whom his absence was evidently so depressing. The fair Ophelia never gave utterance in more plaintive tones to the

And will he not come again,—

which forms the burthen of so many a maiden murmur, than saddened the voice of Amy Meadowes when inquiring evening after evening of her mother, the nature of English

elections, and the amount of days still necessary to enable her Cousin Mark to represent at the re-assembling of Parliament the free and independent Borough of Rawburne !

One morning,—the summer was over and even the autumn beginning to wane,—many hours after jolly Mrs. Margams had rumbled off to “maarket,” presiding in her black calash over a cartful of hampers of salsify and spinach, Amy had been present as usual at her mother’s toilet, and was assisting Marlow to place her comfortably on the sofa before she established herself at her drawing-table for the day, when she was startled by a footstep on the creaking stairs far heavier than that of the boy who at that hour usually brought in the newspaper. The door was hastily opened,—a handsome young man in deep mourning hurried forward,—Cousin Mark was by their side !

In five minutes, all three felt as though he had never been away. For he was come

back full of animation, joy, and love ; and all compunctions were overlooked in the delight of the meeting. Everything, in short, was overlooked ; for in the excitement of the moment he folded Amy in his arms, and, for the first time, imprinted a cousinly kiss upon her forehead.

“ You *must* forgive me,” said he, with a half-conscious laugh, as he performed the same ceremony over the thin trembling hand of Lady Meadowes. “ I am so happy,—so *very* happy to find myself with you again !”

Scarcely *less* happy, Lady Meadowes was not unrelenting. She listened anxiously while he announced that he was “ only just come to town with his brother,—on business,—to squabble with lawyers,—and go through a few necessary forms.” He was a long time in coming to the point so near the hearts of both.

“ My mother is still in sad low spirits,” said he, at length. “ It is only lately I have

ventured to talk to her about you,—and explain a thousand things it was necessary she should know. But she knows all, now; and though she has not charged me with a letter, *feels* as we could wish. The moment she returns to town—(it will not be till January, I'm afraid, dear Lady Meadows) —she will hasten hither with my sister, and take our dearest Amy to her heart.”

This was speaking plainly. This was saying all, or nearly all, the mother could desire. But the result of so complete a realisation of her hopes was a sudden faintness; and so evident and painful to witness was her emotion, that to resume a subject likely to increase her agitation was just then impossible.

Luckily, the day was fine; and nothing seemed more natural than that, after a little desultory conversation, Marcus should propose a walk. It was like falling unconsciously into his old habits.—He wanted, he said, to ascertain whether Amy had worked as diligently in her

garden as with her colour-box.—He wanted,—and he glanced fondly and significantly towards her as he spoke,—to “have a little private talk with his cousin.”

They did not loiter long over the glaring petunias and African marigolds, which were the pride of Mrs. Margams’s heart.—Away they went, on the old track,—a favourite road bordered with villas and gardens, and leading to the river: and though no fashionable carriages now disturbed its dust on their way to Gaines’s adjoining nursery-gardens, a few tramping holiday-makers, hurrying to Cremorne, stared after the handsome young couple with their smiling faces and deep mourning, deciding them to be a newly-married pair.

Regardless of the yellow leaves, and dusty, shrivelled hedgerows, so changed since their last expedition, they went on and on; and had reached the more secluded portion of the lane, before Marcus found courage to unburthen his heart.

“Your mother is still very feeble, dear Amy,” said he. “I wanted to talk to her on a most important subject,—a subject that involves all the happiness of my life. But I was afraid. I really was afraid of shaking that fragile frame. You must help me, Amy. You must bear your portion of the danger and difficulty. May I count on you, darling Amy, to do your part?”

It needed not the fond pressure of the arm by which these words were accompanied, to point out to his cousin the nature of the office to be imposed upon her.

“I have some news,—*good* news I hope she will think it,—to communicate to my aunt. But I scarcely dare attempt it to-day. You must prepare the way this evening, Amy: and to-morrow I may be able to venture all.”

How pleasant would be the task of preparation, there was, luckily, no need to express. For often as Amy had looked forward, for months past, to the present moment of

clearing up her doubts and difficulties, now that it was come, her heart beat too tumultuously, and her thoughts came too stirringly, for enjoyment or self-command. Not a word could she utter in reply. Not a promise could she hold out.

But Marcus was in no mood to care for answers. In the egotism of happy love, he went talking on ; as if Cousin Amy's part in the dialogue might be taken upon trust.

“ In the first place, my dear child,” said he, “ you must prepare her for an interview with her brother—”

“ Her brother ?—My uncle lives, then ?” murmured Miss Meadows,—for this was not the question the expectation of which had caused her heart to throb, or her eyes to glisten.

“ I should long ago have satisfied her of the fact,” resumed Mark, “ for Mr. Hargood was known to me previous to our first interview. But circumstances connected with himself and

his family, rendered it desirable to postpone the announcement. Hargood is a peculiar man,—good, gifted, but eccentric,—and far from easy to deal with. The wounds inflicted on his pride by the Meadows and Davenport families, are still festering in his heart. Even against myself, though a mere collateral, he has exhibited the most vindictive rancour. I almost dread, Amy, unless at a moment when Lady Meadows is in the enjoyment of her best health and composure, any attempt at an interview between them.”

He paused,—either for breath or reflection ; and Amy fancied he might be waiting for her opinion.

“ It is hard to decide for others in matters of feeling,” said she. “ But had *I* an only brother, long estranged from me, I could not rest an hour till I had fallen on his neck, and entreated him to exchange forgiveness with me.”

“ You are a dear and good girl, Amy ; and from *your* entreaty, forgiveness could never be

withheld. But Hargood's is a different nature,—the nature of the old Puritans,—from whom he once told me, he was lineally descended,—conscientious, upright, but hard and pitiless. Sooner or later, however, the attempt to soften him must be made; not only for yours and your mother's sake, Amy, but for mine and hers."

Miss Meadowes felt puzzled; and her expressive face was turned inquiringly towards her cousin, for the first time during their walk.

"Yes, dearest, for hers;—for the sake of your two cousins,—Mark, and Mary."

Amy, who knew only of a cousin Olivia, was still more astonished.

"For I have not yet told you," he resumed in a more hurried manner, "half the happiness awaiting you.—Your uncle Edward Hargood has a daughter,—nearly of your own age,—lovely—to *my* thought at least—in person as in mind:—full of the highest qualities,—the highest genius,—noble-minded, honest-hearted

—the epitome of all that is touching and ennobling in your sex.”

“You are acquainted with her then?” said Amy, in a voice that differed singularly from her usual tones.

“*Acquainted* with her?—For nearly a year past, Amy, she has been the ruling influence of my life!—It was for her sake,—it was with the view of furthering my addresses to her,—that I first sought out the unknown aunt and cousin who constituted so valuable a link between us. I dare to make you this frank avowal, darling Amy, because since I came to know you, I have loved you for your own sweet sake, almost as much as for Mary’s.”

He did not hear the gasping sigh that burst from the bosom of his companion. He was listening only to himself.

“And when you come to know your cousin,” he continued, “you will open your heart to her, for *her* sake, as I now ask you, dear cousin, to do for mine. Esteem and admiration

Mary Hargood must command from every one. Attachments such as mine is, and I trust yours will become, must remain the privilege of the few."

Amy's heart was sinking: her legs were giving way under her. But there was no resting place at hand. Even had a seat been near, she would have shrunk from the betrayal of her weakness. But Mark, in his paroxysm of selfish passion, heard and saw nothing of her faltering; and proceeded to describe his introduction, already known to the reader, into the silent solitary studio where the patient girl stood slaving away the bright morning of her days, for the maintenance of her indigent family.

"Think, my dearest cousin," said he, "think of the happiness awaiting me, in the power of transporting this noble girl from her dungeon, into the sunshine of a prosperous home and affectionate family."

Amy thought of it, ay! thought of it with

a degree of anguish which was as the burning of iron into her flesh and calculated to leave a sear upon her wounded heart, ineffaceable till it should have ceased to beat !

But she uttered not a word,—she uttered not a moan. She listened with patience while, throughout their way homewards her selfish cousin, engrossed by his own transports, left no circumstance untold of his happy hopes and expectations.

CHAPTER VII.

IT did not strike Lady Meadows as at all surprising, that, after so prolonged a *tête-à-tête* between the supposed lovers, they should part at the door; her nephew having doubtless delegated to Amy the duty of asking her consent to his proposals. It did not even surprise her that her daughter, instead of rushing into her presence and asking her blessing, should retire for a time into her own room.—Overpowered by the emotions consequent on her new position, Amy was doubtless endeavouring to recover

breath and self-possession for the task of apprising her that the best of daughters was destined to become the happiest of wives.

But when half-an-hour,—an hour,—more than an hour, passed away, and no Amy made her appearance, the good mother grew a little uneasy. She could not move unassisted from her couch. But Marlow, summoned by her little handbell, was desired to go into her young lady's room, and inquire whether she would not take some refreshment after so long a walk.

Poor, good mother!—She fancied this ruse would succeed.—She expected to see her darling hurry into the drawing-room, to make a clean breast of her happy prospects.

The report rendered by Marlow that Miss Amy, overtired by her walk, was lying down and nearly asleep, was rather a disappointment than a warning. And when, after the lapse of a full hour, Lady Meadows herself rose from her couch, and crept quietly into the room, on finding Amy still wrapt in slumber, she

*

was more inclined to rejoice than to experience the smallest uneasiness.

Poor, good mother!—To believe that a daughter such as hers, newly affianced and full of joy, could sink off into the heaviness of sleep without a word of gratulation exchanged between them!—She gazed anxiously on her child, as Amy lay extended on the bed, with her face half-buried in the pillow, half-covered with the locks of her dishevelled hair. For so fatigued was she, that she had left untouched the tresses escaped from the comb; and it was only through that partial veil the outline of her features was discernible.

“How wrong of him to take her so far,—how very, *very* unreasonable!” murmured Lady Meadows, as she moved slowly back to her accustomed place.—“Amy is but delicate. He ought not to have overtaxed her strength.”

Poor, good mother!—If as clear-sighted as she fancied, might not she have seen that the pillow in which that fair face was buried, was

wet with tears?—That the pale eyelids of her child were voluntarily closed against the light of day, and the contemplation of her own exceeding misery?—

She tottered back, however, contentedly to her sofa. For worlds she would not have disturbed the sleeping girl. Time enough when she woke of her own accord, to unfold the story of her happy love,—past, present, and to come.

The dinner hour arrived,—which, in that humble household was an early one; and Amy was still fast asleep. It was not till dusk,—again early, for the autumn was far advanced,—that Amy emerged quietly from her room; her hair carefully rebraided,—her dress carefully refreshed;—but with a sort of unnatural quietude pervading her face and person, as if suddenly converted into stone, or walking in her sleep.

Having approached and kissed her mother,

she jested faintly on her own laziness in having absented herself from the dinner-table for the sake of rest. But to Lady Meadows's entreaties that she would still "take something," she replied by a request for tea. She was so completely overtired, that solid refreshment was distasteful.

"It was very, *very* wrong of Mark to take you so far," said Lady Meadows, in a tone of vexation: for instinctively she began to fear more was amiss with Amy, than the over-extension of her walk.—"It was selfish of him to consider you so little."

"You must not blame him, dear mamma," said Amy, placing herself on a low stool, which she often occupied beside Lady Meadows's couch. "He came to bring us news likely to afford you such heartfelt pleasure, — likely at once so to surprise and gratify you."—

It was impossible to proceed just then.—She bowed her head over Lady Meadows's hand,

which she had taken into her own; and in spite of all her endeavours at self-command, the tears *would* fall.

“Not surprise me, darling—I was prepared for it,”—replied her mother, stooping to imprint a kiss upon her cold forehead, and inexpressibly relieved by this opening.

“Not prepared for what I am about to tell you, mother. You must call up all your self-command:—for good news is sometimes as painful to hear as bad.”

“I *am* prepared—I *am* prepared!” said Lady Meadowes,—perplexed and painfully anxious. “Tell me, my child!—What, what had Mark to communicate?”

“That my Uncle Hargood is not only alive, but well and prosperous;—that he inhabits London,—that we may see him if we will, to-morrow.”

“God be thanked!” murmured Lady Meadowes, clasping her hands fervently together.

“ My brother,—my dear, dear brother!—Tomorrow, Amy?—Why not to-night?—It is not late.”

“ *Too* late—and we are neither of us strong enough for the interview,” replied Amy, faintly. “ We have borne his absence long:—let us bear it a few hours longer.”

“ Well, well!—I must take patience, I suppose. I am accustomed, Amy, to take patience.—But tell me, dearest child, how came Captain Davenport to discover him?”

“ I can scarcely tell you how.—My uncle is, it seems, a man of letters,—well known and respected in his calling,” said Amy, to whom prudence suggested some limit to her immediate disclosures.

“ Well known and respected in his calling,” mechanically repeated Lady Meadows. “ Yet scarcely distinguished, or his name would have reached us through the public press.”

“ Many authors are celebrated under a *nom*

de plume.—We may not know my Uncle Hargood's.—We know so little, mother, of what is passing in London !”

“ True—true !—And Marcus lives in the centre of the intellectual world. But why did he not come and tell me all this himself?—There is so much I want to know,—so much I want to ask !—Edward is now a middle-aged man.—Is he married, Amy ?”

“ A widower.”

“ With children ?”

“ Several, I believe,” replied Miss Meadowes, whose mind was made up to leave untouched a chapter, for the discussion of which she knew her moral strength to be unequal.

“ Several children !—Several dear nephews and nieces !—How often have you wished for this, dear Amy !—How fortunate for you !”

“ Yes—if on acquaintance my cousins love me.”

“ How can it be otherwise, my child ? Look at Marcus. In spite of a family quite as much

alienated from us as my brother's,—*he* sought us,—*he* loved us—*he* devoted himself to our cause.—I feel persuaded that Edward's children will become equally dear."

"God grant it!" was Amy's scarcely audible reply. "Surely, mother, the evenings are getting chilly enough for a fire?" she added, with an involuntary shiver.—"May we not have a fire?—Shall I ring?"

The tea-tray, opportunely brought in by Marlow, afforded a welcome interruption to their confidences.—But was Lady Meadows growing as selfish as her nephew, that, in the midst of the tumultuous emotions besieging her heart, she had no leisure to note, when the lamp was lighted, the death-like paleness of her child?

So long as Marlow was fussing about the room, to resume their conversation was impossible. The fire had been lighted by the "gurl"—not without sulky mutterings about the unreasonableness of the demand at so late

an hour.—Amy sat shuddering down before it; chiefly that, by turning her back towards her mother's sofa, the disturbance of her features might remain unnoticed.—But no sooner had the two servants left the room, after removing the tea-things, than the nervous and over-excited Lady Meadows resumed her questioning and cross-questioning.—Had Mark said this?—Had Mark undertaken that?—When was he to write?—When was he to return?—

Poor Amy found all this too much. She began to feel the room circling round with her.—Dizzy, despairing, she asked leave to retire to rest.

“If you would permit Marlow to wait upon you alone to-night, dear mother, it would be a relief to me,” said she faintly. “I cannot shake off my fatigue.—Sleep, alone, can restore me.—And we have a busy day before us to-morrow!—I must rise *very* early, to go and fetch my uncle to you.—No! mother, no! Impossible for *you* to attempt the exertion

of seeking him out," she continued, interrupting the proposal Lady Meadows was beginning to make.—“You are not equal to it.—You are uncertain, too, how he may receive you. My uncle appears to be a peculiar person,—severe and resentful.—Against you, he may cherish animosities. *I* can have done nothing to offend him.”

“*You* offend him, Amy!—*You* offend *any one*!—”

“He may, therefore, hold out less sternly against *me* than against yourself.—I have his address. Let me go there early, in a cab,—with Marlow if you think it better; and, trust me,—trust your child, mother,—before the day is over, he shall be here.”

The objections raised by Lady Meadows were gradually overruled by the mild perseverance of her daughter. When she bestowed upon Amy her parting kiss for the night, all was settled between them. The pre-occupied mother bade her, carelessly, “take care of herself and

sleep off her fatigues, for she was looking sadly pale ;” then, almost before Amy had left the room, was resuming her audible ejaculations of “ *Several* children !—What a heavy charge for a widower. If they are but half as handsome and as clever as dear Edward used to be !”

Alas ! it was evidently the spirited young brother of Henstead Vicarage, the excited Lady Meadows was preparing to meet on the morrow.—The present was nothing. Surrounded by visions of the past, she saw nothing, knew nothing, that was passing around her.

It was a saying of the Duc de Richelieu, a man how versed in the physiology of the human heart,—that “ *il faut découdre l’amitié, mais déchirer l’amour.* ”—If ever love were torn asunder, it was unquestionably that which had been fostered, like a young dove in its nest, within the gentle heart of Amy Meadows. Had the sentiment however been ever so tenderly unripped, the end must have been the same ;—

a disappointment calculated to embitter the remnant of her days.

What she felt, and what she thought, that night, on her sleepless pillow, it were painful to dwell upon. GOD was merciful to her; for in the bitterest of her sufferings, He hardened not her heart.—Duty to her mother retained the uppermost influence.—To conceal her trouble from Lady Meadows,—to make the best of Marcus and his cause,—inspired her with strength to rise on the morrow as though rested and refreshed;—prepared to confront with fortitude the trials of the day.

The wanness of her face and heaviness of her eyes were unconcealable. But all was attributed by her mother to the deep emotion natural to her position, on the eve of being introduced to relatives so near and dear.

It was a rainy, misty day,—the first fog of approaching winter; and very long did that wet, dreary drive appear even to Marlow, as

their rough vehicle jolted leisurely from Battersea to Pulteney Street. She was anxious to arrive early ; apprised by Mark Davenport that her uncle's professional avocations often took him out for the day.

Her diligence had not its reward, however. The same little weazened female servant, who had so often repulsed her Cousin Mark, the preceding year, answered her inquiries whether Mr. Hargood were at home by a sour negative—"Master was out."

"When was he expected back?"

"She could not say. Certainly not before an hour or so. Would the lady please to call again?"

"The lady would very much prefer to wait for Mr. Hargood's return." And perceiving the hesitation of the woman to admit her into the house for this purpose, she unwisely suggested as a passport the name of Captain Davenport.

The prim servant now became inexorable.—That name insured denial.

“If you insist upon it,” pleaded Amy, humbly, “I will wait in the cab at the door, till Mr. Hargood arrives. But I assure you,” she continued, on reflecting how vexatious it would be if her first interview with this dreaded uncle occurred at the street door,—“I assure you that I am one of Mr. Hargood’s nearest relations. I am persuaded he would not wish me to be kept here in the rain.”

The woman hesitated. A relation of “master’s” was such a novelty in that house, that it seemed as monstrous to close the door upon her, as upon some angel seeking hospitality in the olden time. After some moments’ delay, she showed symptoms of mollification; ushered her up into the drawing-room, and left her to her reflections.

Upon Amy, that square graceless room, rendered more than usually chilly and disheartening by the state of the weather, created a very different impression from the light in which it had been originally viewed

by Davenport.—It was the scene of her cousin's love,—of her cousin's courtship. What could Windsor Castle or Osborne,—the Escorial or Versailles,—Schönbrunn or the Alhambra,—exhibit to vie in interest with a spot so favoured! Every syllable he had told her of his *liaison* with the Hargoods,—and she naturally supposed it to be a millionth part of what he *had* to tell,—was engraven in her mind; and she sat trembling and tearful, with her eyes fixed upon the heavy black door of the studio,—remembering with agony the scene he had so graphically described as concealed within:—knowing that *she* was there,—her enemy,—the being who stood between her and perfect happiness:—that she had only to turn the handle of that door, and stand in Mary's presence:—that she was equally intitled to rush upon her with words of reviling, as one by whom she had been made a wretch for life; or to steal lovingly to her side, as one in whose veins her own blood was flowing.—Cousin

Mary!—Mark Davenport's bride!—In which light did this favoured being possess most interest in the eyes of Amy Meadowes?

It was perhaps because still asking herself the question, that unbidden tears found their way between the slender fingers of the hand by which she was concealing her face.—She fancied she could hear the slight rustling of a dress, in the chamber within. She almost fancied she could hear her breathe. What would she have given to obtain a glimpse of her, unseen:—the grave calm face described by Mark;—the intellectual countenance,—the outward development of the elevated soul that inspired her character and conduct:—a more than mother to her young brothers,—a more than daughter to the tyrant by whom she was held in durance,—a more than angel to the lover who was willing to become her slave in his turn.

Creeping cringingly towards the studio door, her face clouded with tears, Amy was about to

enter the presence of her cousin, cast herself at her feet, and appeal to her for affection and mercy,—when the opposite entrance suddenly admitted a stranger; a man, whose lowering countenance and sable-silvered hair, seemed to announce Mr. Hargood, even before he accosted her in the authoritative tone announcing the master of the house.

Her abject attitude as she approached the forbidden door, and the face bathed in tears she turned towards him, prepared him for one of the scenes to which, as a professional critic, he was often exposed by candidates for public favour;—some rising actress, or poetess,

Some virgin tragedy, some orphan Muse.—

But Amy no sooner found herself in presence of her uncle, than she recovered herself.—She advanced towards him, if not boldly, with a frankly extended hand.

“My business,” said she, in answer to his question, “is to claim your love and kindness. You do not know me, uncle. But I am Amy, —Amy Meadowes.”

Already, Mr. Hargood, struck dumb by the familiarity of her address, was about to withdraw the hand which, in his first surprise, he had mechanically extended to meet her own: for he now began to fancy he was dealing with a mad-woman or an impostor. But Amy was too earnest to be discountenanced.

“My mother sent me here, uncle,” she faltered—“my poor mother, your sister, now a widow; who, after seeking you for so many years, and grieving over you as dead, only discovered yesterday that you were alive, at no great distance. Judge what must be her happiness in the prospect of meeting her dear brother Edward, once more, in this world.”

While she thus spoke,—tenderly—falteringly, femininely,—in the sweet tones which few people ever resisted,—something in her voice

and manner so powerfully recalled to Hargood's mind the Mary of his youth, the loved lost sister of Henstead Vicarage so long deplored, that, clasping her at once to his heart, he lifted up his voice and wept.—The emotion of the strong man so new to such impulses, was terrible to witness. His frame was all but convulsed. His tears fell large and heavy, like the thunder-drops that precede a storm.

For some minutes, not another word was spoken.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN, by degrees, all was explained and some degree of composure restored, Hargood's joy was demonstrated in truly English fashion, by an extraordinary expansion of hospitality.—The weazened maid was scolded for not having lighted the fire; and in spite of Amy's entreaties, refreshment was called;—nay, even wine,—a rare indulgence in that wisely parsimonious household. — The delighted uncle seemed as if he would have moved Heaven and earth to banquet this fair and loving niece.

Like Schiller, in his lyric, he wanted *all* the Immortals to crowd his terrestrial hall.

The last presence which he seemed to miss, was that of his daughter. Warmth and wine were wanted, but no Mary. It was not till some reference to "the keys" on the part of the weazened parlour maid reminded him of the omission, that he hurried into the studio, bidding his daughter come instantly forth and welcome her cousin Amy Meadows.

And now, once more, it was Cousin Amy's turn to start and tremble.

The lapse of a year, so important to them all, had been nowhere more productive of change than in the person of the poor neglected Mary. The stores of sensibility fermenting in her close-sealed heart, now imparted threefold expression to her fine features; and she had gained in height and contour, and consequently in grace. What a model for a Cassandra, a Sybil, an Egeria!—Amy Meadows could not disguise from herself, as her cousin slowly and scruti-

nisingly approached her, that she had never seen a finer form or more impressive countenance.

Her father's hurried explanations she met half way. What appeared so strange to *him*, seemed to *her* perfectly natural: for, from the moment of that terrible scene at Captain Davenport's lodgings, Mary had been looking forward to active advances on the part of Lady Meadowes.

Still, Mr. Hargood,—circumstantial in all his measures,—saw fit to enter into the fullest particulars; and while so enlarging, and dwelling on the past, recurrence to the name of his once-loved sister caused a renewal of his former emotion.—Again he clung, weeping and fondly, to the being so much resembling the Mary of “poor old Henstead.”

The spectacle converted his daughter into stone. He had not wept so, even when her mother died!—And what would she not have given, at times, for even the slightest indication

of his present over-wrought sensibility, bestowed upon her brothers or herself!—This stranger, this fair-faced Amy Meadowes,—was she come to conquer in a moment the affection for which through life they had all laboured in vain?

With a pang of jealousy, in short, quite as painful as that which was gnawing the heart of her cousin, Mary Hargood advanced,—like some sullen wave swelling reluctantly under a sunless sky towards the shore,—to offer her hand to the new comer.—There was at that moment as much hatred between those two beautiful girls,—those all but sisters,—as might have been engendered by a Corsican *Vendetta*.

It was a relief to both of them when Mr. Hargood, about to quit the house with his niece and return with her to Battersea, signified in his usual lofty manner to Mary, that she was not to be of the party.—Not directly, however;—for it did not occur to him as possible that

she could have presumed to form such a project.—He merely said when he took his hat to leave the house, “I shall not be at home till late. Do not wait dinner.”

He would as soon have thought of offering an apology or explanation to his old leather-covered writing table, or his elbow chair, as to his taciturn daughter.

She was not, however, fated to remain companionless during his absence. The weazened maid, whose mind was a little bewildered by a succession of remarkable events in that usually unincidental house, did not find it in her heart to persist in denial when Captain Davenport, soon after Hargood’s departure, applied for admittance.—She even deigned to accompany him half-way up stairs and point out the door of the sitting room, where she believed her young lady,—her neglected young lady—to be still lingering, after the departure of her guest.

But no Mary was there. He found all in its

usual order. More new books lying on the desk, to be cut, and cut up.—More new engravings, craving for notice. More tickets in the card-rack for more exhibitions, shows, and theatres.—The same process of mind-mongery.—The same tare and tret of the intellectual market.

He naturally expected that notice would be given to Miss Hargood of his visit, and that she would soon make her appearance. It was not his intention to greet her as more than a friend. Marcus was, by this time, too well acquainted with the positive character of Hargood, to risk exasperating him by addresses to his child unsanctioned by his paternal authority. But he wanted to see her again—only to see her.—His eyes hungered and thirsted after that mournful but noble face.

After waiting, with more patience than might have been expected, for her arrival, he gently opened the door of the studio; that door on which poor Amy's eyes had been so anxiously

fixed.—But the wonted aspect, rendered so familiar to him by the sketch which never quitted him, no longer presented itself.—The easel stood solitary.—The artistic light streamed upon vacancy.

Grievously disappointed, he advanced into the room. But Mary was not far distant.—Coiled up into the wide window seat, she was weeping her very heart away. No luxurious sofa pillows, in that frugal house, to conceal the face of a mourner!—She was resting her aching head against the closed window-shutter; thinking, amidst her tears, how many comforts and alleviations were denied her; that, however hard to live, she must not—*must not*—die. She could not leave her mother's sons to the rearing of so severe a taskmaster as her father!—

That Mark Davenport hastened to evince his sympathy in her sorrow, cannot be doubted.—But Mary was in no mood to be comforted.—The less amiable qualities of her nature were in

ruffled activity. Having hastily dried her tears, and composed her countenance, she asked him why he came, and what he was doing there, in opposition to her father's wishes, as crudely as became the daughter of Edward Hargood.

“I came,” said he, (with a ready mendacity, for which, Heaven his soul assoilzie!) “thinking to find Mr. Hargood. I was in hopes that, as having been the means of reuniting him with his sister and niece, he would receive me back into favour.”

“It was *you* then who sent Amy Meadows hither!—I guessed it!”—cried Mary, bitterly.

“Your father received her, I trust, with kindness?”—said he, in some alarm.

“He received her,” murmured, or rather growled Mary Hargood, “as though she were an angel from Heaven!”

“And so she *is*,”—said Marcus, with generous enthusiasm, so warmed was his heart by finding himself once more under that forbidden roof. “Never was there a sweeter creature!—She has

not your genius, Miss Hargood,—she has not your energy. But she is the most dutiful of daughters to an ever-ailing mother; and the kindest and most forgiving of human beings.”

Propitiated by his praise, praise she could enjoy because she knew it to be just,—she invited him in a somewhat more gracious tone to accompany her into the sitting-room.—But Mark found himself best where he was.—On uncoiling herself from her recumbent position at his entrance, Mary had sought the reading-chair usually occupied by her father; while her visitor unceremoniously assumed the comfortless place she had quitted. Attributing her swollen eyelids to emotion arising from her recent affecting interview with her new cousin, he endeavoured to brighten her thoughts by reference to her avocations;—the pictures she had recently undertaken,—the Murillo in whose progress he had been so deeply interested.

She answered him pettishly: fancying that he was soothing her distemperature by pretended

interest in her pursuits :—how little, how little surmising the portion they had occupied in his thoughts since their last meeting !

“ And the bird and dog, to which you introduced me last year,” said she, in her turn, with a smile bordering on the ironical : “ I suppose courtesy requires me to be as inquisitive as yourself?—”

“ Thanks,” he replied,—accepting all in good part. “ The dog has been begged from me by a dear little sister of mine, who fancies herself fond of him for my sake. The bird, being of a more sociable nature than its master, fretted so sadly for companionship during my absence, that I presented it to my friend Drewe.”

Mary Hargood, acquainted only, through his occasional visits to her father, with the elder Drewe,—Member of so many learned societies, but of society, so useless a member,—smiled, and, this time, in earnest, at the notion of a colloquy between the prosy old gentleman, and the flippant bird.

“ I was not aware,” said she, “ that so learned a pundit as Mr. Wroughton Drewe would condescend to ‘ speak parrot.’ Better have given the bird to *me*, Captain Davenport ; to me, so often in need of a companion.”

The melancholy intonation of other days was in her voice as she made this avowal. Marcus liked her better so, than when caustic and bitter. He now noticed for the first time the extraordinary development which time had wrought in her appearance since last they met ; and could hardly refrain from telling her how beautiful he thought her.

To avoid the temptation, he rose and examined the painting on her easel. And there, too, improvement was delightfully perceptible. It almost vexed him to think that in the interval of absence *he* had acquired so little, and Hargood’s uncared-for daughter, so wondrously much.

A little moved by his enthusiasm,—but far more so by a few judicious words of censure,

(which attested the worth of his eulogy as a flaw, the genuineness of a gem), she opened her portfolio, and showed him hundreds of half-finished sketches and *scherzi*,—the recreation of her leisure hours.—

“You must not mention this rubbish to my father,” said she, on perceiving how eagerly he entered into the spirit of her works, “My father discountenances everything that leads to waste of time.”

“He may be right,” replied Mark. “But in the grandest forest, nature finds space between oak and oak for wild flowers and wild fruit, without impeding their growth.”

He said nothing, however, of the exquisite pleasure it afforded him to know he was the only person to whom these sportings of her fancy had been exhibited.—He was glad that not even her father had sullied the bloom of their freshness. There were jottings of Egyptian scenery,—dim reminiscences of his own.—There were designs after Shakspeare,—Dante,

—Goethe;—and more than one humorous sketch of the notabilities who frequented her father's tea-table: among others, of Wroughton Drew^e, in the character of an owl, endeavouring to decipher through a huge eye-glass the hieroglyphics inscribed on the Rosetta stone: the likeness being of so speaking a nature as to elicit peals of laughter from Marcus.

“And who are these?” said he, on turning to a page on which a couple of rough-looking lads were delineated in every possible posture and pastime;—reading, writing, boxing, playing at ducks and drakes.

“The two beings dearest to me on earth,” she replied. “My own two scrubby schoolboy brothers,—Ned and Frank: whom I must cherish more than ever, now that my father's affections are likely to be largely diverted from them, by the postulants for his love with which you have supplied us.”

Mark Davenport hastily turned the page.—The aspect of the schoolboys did not charm him.

There was too much of the square dogged uncouthness of Hargood in their unrefined faces. Like most selfish people, he detested children. It was because she had a child to share her love with him, that he had refrained from offering his hand to a lovely young woman, the object of his first and only attachment, till Mary fell in his way.

“And what is *this*?” he inquired, stooping to examine on the following leaf, a water-colour drawing, of the highest vigour and finish; representing the chancel of an old Gothic church; in the foreground, a seraph stationed beside a noble mausoleum, holding the scales and sword of Justice in either hand.—“What is the subject of this admirable drawing?”

“The tomb of the Lady of Avon,” said Mary.

“And who is the Lady of Avon?—”

“If I remember, her legend is written on the back of the drawing.”

Turning it hastily round, Captain Davenport read aloud, with the strongest interest, the

following stanzas.—To be seated side by side with Mary, initiated thus intimately into the secrets of her gifted mind, was a privilege likely to endow them with all the merit in which they might be intrinsically deficient.

The Lady of Avon.

Low in a chilly death-vault
 Where mildew taints the air,
 In her lonely shroud enfolded
 Lies Avon's fairest fair :
 No breath—no life—is stirring
 In that cold and noisome place,
 Save the little red worm still threading
 The lawn that shades her face.

They have folded her slender fingers
 Meekly across her breast,
 Though seldom, when warm and wilful,
 Those palms in pray'r were press'd.
 Else had an angel spirit
 Guarded her cheek with grace
 From the little red worm still threading
 The lawn that shades her face.

When to that last lone refuge
They bore the haughty dead,
No human heart yearn'd o'er her—
No human tears were shed ;—
They laid her there, and left her
In grisly Death's embrace ;—
With the little red worm still threading
The lawn that shades her face.

“ Oh ! mother,—oh ! mother,—come *to* me,
Lay thy soft hand on my brow !—
Sisters ! your low sweet chaunting
Were a sound of solace now !”
Yet living, she shunn'd their presence ;
And scoff'd at her homely race,
Ere the little red worm was threading
The lawn that shades her face.

When the aged and poor besought her,
She laugh'd their cry to scorn ;
When the orphan and widow sought her,
They went their way forlorn,—
Else had their interceding
Hallow'd that ghastly place
Where the little red worm is threading
The lawn that shades her face.

In her lofty oriel chamber,
A gentler now hath sway ;
The vassals she chaf'd and chided
A merciful will obey.
The hound that she spurn'd, is bounding
Where a kind voice cheers the chase ;
But the little red worm is threading
The lawn that shades her face.

“ Oh !—lonely—lonely—lonely,—
Around—beside—above :—

Oh ! for one human whisper,—
Oh ! for one word of love !”

“ No !—by this death-borne torment
Thy ruthless life efface,—

With the little red worm still threading
The lawn that shades thy face !”

“ And does your father tax such sentiments as *these* as idle effusions and waste of time ?” inquired Captain Davenport, turning towards his companion, and gazing with admiration, almost with awe, into the depths of her tranquil eyes.

“ You surely do not imagine I would en-

croach upon time so bespoken as his, to make him the confidant of my foolish whims and fancies?—Were I indeed so selfish, there would be justifiable grounds for reproof.—I never showed him a line of poetry in my life.—But we are forgetting,” said she, taking the volume from his hand and closing it, on perceiving that he was about to recommence the perusal of *The Lady of Avon*,—“we are forgetting that even *my* time is not my own.—We have idled enough for to-day, Captain Davenport. Thank you for having cheered me into better spirits. But I must now to work, with what appetite I may.—I have only six days remaining to finish this copy of the *Aurora*; and of those, one perhaps must be devoted to the claims of my father’s newly-found relations.”

Marcus, knowing by some experience the distance to Battersea and back, and that there was no immediate prospect of Hargood’s return, proposed to sit by her while she painted, and favour her with his advice.—But

to this Mary objected.—“My father would be exceedingly displeased. He will, I fear, be angry enough at hearing of even this short visit.”

“And is it absolutely necessary he should know it?”

“Absolutely. But I must endeavour to soften his displeasure by greater diligence for the rest of the day.”

Before he had time for further remonstrance, the bell was gently rung by Mary, and he found himself forced to perform his parting salutations in presence of the weazened maid.

“This will not last long!” was all the comfort he could find for himself as he slowly quitted the house.—“Even without the advocacy of Lady Meadows with her brother, Hargood cannot be so selfish as to wish to monopolise this gifted being as a household slave, when opulence, distinction, and happiness await her as my wife.”

And as he wended his way back towards Spring Gardens, trippingly as Diomedes, he found himself unconsciously reciting the rhythmical allegory of *The Lady of Avon*.

CHAPTER IX.

A FAMILY recently deprived of its head and ruler, is sure to present curious anomalies. Between respect for the dead, and respect for the living, a straight course is not always attainable. A too sudden reform of established abuses conveys reproach to your predecessor ; a too patient tolerance implies approval.

The kindly heart of the new Lord Davenport might perhaps have fallen into the latter error, but for the vigorous counsels of Mark.

“ Whatever you mean to reform, reform at

once," said he, on the week succeeding the funeral at Ilford.—“At this moment, your people are prepared for a change, Don't give them leisure to fall back into their old habits. Strike your *coup-d'état* and have done with it.”

Already, therefore, contracts had been entered into for the construction of a hamlet, to which a suitable allotment of ground was apportioned ; to supply habitations for the families about to be ejected from the houses in Quag Lane, so long an eyesore to Marcus, and now condemned to demolition.—Several of the larger farms on the domain were to be divided, on the falling in of the present leases ; and a large enclosure and drainage of heath-land for future plantation, was to afford work and winter wages for the labouring poor.

Within the walls of Ilford Castle no need to operate a change.—The relief, spontaneously though unavowedly experienced by all its inmates, was as if an iron cincture were removed

from every heart. Every one now breathed freely.

Poor old Madame Winkelried, relieved from her functions as governess, remained attached to the family at her own entreaty, though her future independence was secured;—that, when her pupil was sick, or her patroness sorry, or any one wanted comforting or nursing in the household, her services might be at hand. But Olivia and her mother now for the first time admitted to unrestrained intercourse, found in each other's society a degree of comfort and confidence which perhaps no human affection so intimately engenders as the love between mother and daughter.

Together, they reconnoitred the beautiful scenery of the domain. Together, pursued their plans of judicious charity. Together, made acquaintance with those striking new works and serials of the day, which the pernicious prudence of Lord Davenport had excluded from the house. Authors hitherto known to them

by name, were becoming, through their works, their friends and benefactors. The horizon of their life was enlarged,—the purposes of their existence were multiplied.—Lady Davenport, though she had attained her fiftieth year, was now only beginning to think,—to feel,—to live.—

If tyrants,—public or domestic,—would but consider that the days of man are numbered in the land, and that the autocrat of to-day is the handful of dust of to-morrow, surely it would less frequently occur that cheerful voices are audible within earshot of a family sepulchre to whose mouth the stone has been recently rolled ; or loud hurrahs in the vicinity of an imperial mausoleum, where the scent of the funeral incense has scarcely died upon the air.

So peaceful in mind was the widowed Lady Davenport in Ilford Castle, where no discontented looks or knitted brows were longer perceptible, that she would have been content to abide there for ever,—the world forgetting, by the world forgot—but that she felt the des-

tinies of her children to be as yet imperfectly accomplished.—London, the grand Exchange for the negotiations of worldly interests, must be again visited. Since her sons were now in Parliament, both, at the opening of the Session, must repair to town; where they would probably settle in life, as their liberal fortune intitled them.—Domestic happiness, she trusted, was in store for them; to moderate the turbulent nature of the younger brother, and animate the indolence of the elder.

But it was for the sake of Olivia, she had chiefly made up her mind to resume for a time her place in London society, as soon as the solemnity of her position as Lord Davenport's widow gave place to the influence of her maternal duties.—In spite of what had broken from the lips of Marcus, in that fatal scene to which neither herself nor her son had ever found courage to revert, she felt convinced that her daughter was the magnet by which the once supercilious son of the Eustaces had been

attracted to their unfashionable house. Mr. Eustace might be the friend and associate of Hugh ;—but his admiration of Olivia was unquestionably the ruling influence.

She could desire nothing better for her daughter than such a marriage.—Dismissing from her mind all she had heard to the disparagement of William Eustace,—for what human being endowed with advantages of birth and fortune, is not the chartered victim of detraction ?—she saw in him only what was pleasing and estimable ;—good breeding and good looks that were pleasing,—good feelings and good principles that were estimable. And thus convinced of his rectitude of mind, the worldly position which she would have otherwise disregarded, was not without its charm.

To have accomplished at his age a name in public life, was something ; and even Marcus had been forced to admit that, during the preceding Session, not one among the rising young men of the day had been more frequently cited

than William Eustace. She would not have been much distressed had she known that Lord Curt de Cruxley, the marrer and maker of reputations, had pronounced him to be a solemn coxcomb; for Lady Davenport, as belonging to what her younger son was saucily pleased to term "the barn-door nobility," had not yet learned to translate the "award of Gods, men and columns," of graver days, into the award of "Gods, men and clubs," in our own.

There was consequently nothing in Mr. Eustace's personal standing to deteriorate his consequence as heir in tail to a landed estate of ten thousand a-year and a baronetcy of the seventeenth century; with the inestimable advantage of somewhat more than a couple of thousands per annum in enjoyment;—derived from one of those model grand-uncles who, peevish with old bachelorhood and the gout, take delight in spiting the *Capo di Casa* by rendering his son independent.—It was, in fact, this liberal provision which had enabled

William Eustace, in defiance of parental thunder, to offer to Amy Meadows the hand she had so injudiciously rejected.

“If Olivia were only to take a fancy to him,” was Lady Davenport’s *résumé* of the case, “I know no one with whom I consider my darling child more likely to be happy.—As regards *his* feelings, I am convinced that all is right.”

To the flighty assertion made by Marcus of his attachment to her niece, she assigned little importance: for Marcus was neither a careful observer nor an accurate historian. Just as unscrupulously as he mystified their country neighbour, Sir Gardner Dalmaine, with tales of insurrections in Iceland, or the discovery of a dodo’s nest on Salisbury Plain, would he have declared his brother to be in love with Madame Tussaud, or reported Lady Louisa Eustace to have become a Mormon, had the fancy of the moment dictated the flighty assertion.

Of that dear unknown niece, however, both Lady Davenport and Olivia were beginning to think and speak with the utmost interest. Her beauty and diffidence had been described by Mark in glowing colours; and it was settled in the family that, on arriving in town in January, their first visit should be to Lady Meadows. Meanwhile, it was no secret that her sons were about to take the initiative during their present hurried sojourn in town; and as Olivia and her mother pursued their walks beside the lake, or drove through the rocky defiles interspersed among the green dales of Ilford, they often indulged in surmises concerning the welcome likely to be afforded to Lord Davenport and his brother by the hardly-used widow of poor Sir Mark.

Little dreamed they how much more occupied, just then, was the mind of Lady Meadows by her unhopèd-for reconciliation with her brother! The first meeting between them, indeed, had excited emotions productive of more pain than

pleasure; for each measured the duration of their estrangement rather by those whom they had lost, than by the years of their lives. The husband of the one, the wife of the other, had in the interim lived, and loved, and vanished, as flowers had sprung up and withered.—There seemed to exist a chasm between their hearts which nothing now could fill up, to enable them to meet on level ground. It was not the premature wrinkles stamped on the brow of the invalid;—it was not the silver hairs interspersed among the massive dark locks of her brother, which served to record the lapse of time.—There were scars upon the hearts of both, of which their faces exhibited a sad reflection. Hargood saw the beautiful girl of Henstead Vicarage transformed into a careworn matron; Lady Meadowes beheld the handsome, sportive, ardent Edward changed into a grave, stern-visaged, middle-aged, necessitous-looking man.—Neither, alas! had escaped unwounded from the Battle of Life.

When they spoke, however, the tones of their voices possessed a mutual charm. There, they recognised each other; and before they had talked an hour together, “with open hearts, affectionate and true,” they were Mary and Edward again. — Intervening obstacles, intervening injuries, had disappeared; and but for their living children as witnesses of the fact, it was difficult to believe that half a life had divided them from each other.

This state of reciprocal feeling afforded heart-felt gratification to Amy; for she foresaw in it a mine of happiness for her mother. And it was also a relief to find that, absorbed in her brother’s presence, Lady Meadows took little heed of her saddened looks.—It was doubtless only natural she should retire to her chamber, leaving their conference undisturbed. But the tears of solitary anguish she was shedding might have lasted the day long without exciting notice or sympathy, but that, at the hour of their homely dinner, which Hargood had con-

sented to share, it was necessary she should make her appearance.—Those meals,—those meals!—To what subordination do they reduce the most critical interests of life!—

On rejoining, with a face as serene as she could assume, her mother and uncle, she found them seated side by side,—the past forgiven,—the future unthought of;—loving, confiding, gracious :—nothing more, she fancied could be desired to perfect their reunion.—Her father had never looked more tenderly upon his wife, than Hargood on his sister. All his former pride in her was renewed ; all his early love revived, like flowers emerging from the earth, at the touch of May.

But in the course of their family meal, and the talk that followed when Marlow quitted the room, Amy perceived that the perfect sympathy which had united the brother and sister at Henstead Vicarage, was among the things that had been.—Time does not labour in vain. Ineffaceable changes had taken place in both.—

Man can no more remain the same man, or woman the same woman, for a lapse of thirty years, than the swan can abide a cygnet, or the wolf a cub.—Mary had tasted largely of the sweets of this world :—Edward of its bitters. Their palates were no longer identical.

Hargood, for instance, could not bring himself to regard his sister's lot as cast in the iron frame of adversity. The miserable poverty she complained of,—the income of four hundred a-year gratuitously provided for her, was nearly what the hard labours of himself and his young daughter were, in the course of the twelvemonth, able to realise. And what would *he* have given to have been spared his monotonous routine of work, or to have relieved poor Mary from her slavery, only to enjoy what his sister seemed to think starvation !—Again, the £900 which she told him, with tears and sighs, were to form the whole dowry of her injured daughter ; if the little hoard his self-denial

was gathering up for the benefit of his three children, could only have amounted to half the sum!—For a moment he almost fancied himself insulted by the sister who thus unfairly estimated their relative value.—Had she no pity for him or his, that she dwelt with such absurd exaggeration on her own humiliations?

Alas! could he have seen her in those palmy days at Meadows Court, when *he* was struggling and toiling at a distance,—surrounded by her husband's idolatry with luxury and love,—not a care, not a thorn, not an adverse breeze allowed to approach her,—enabled to diffuse happiness to her household and blessings to the poor,—to foster the girlish fancies of her darling Amy, and consult the whims of her husband,—he might have judged her by a different standard.—So cared for,—so soothed,—so pampered,—was her nature to retain through life the humble frugality of Henstead Vicarage, as the sea-shell the everlasting murmur of its native waves?—

But though Hargood allowed some token of impatience to escape him, though he endeavoured to convince Lady Meadows that even in such circumstances as hers, happiness was completely within her reach, his demeanour towards her and her daughter was so considerately tender, that could his own have witnessed it, her jealousy would have had some justification. He surveyed the feminine beauty of his niece with unspeakable admiration. Something of aristocratic grace in her supple figure and mutable countenance, seemed strangely contrasted with the severer form and face of poor Mary,—so much a copy of his own.

He was not so unjust towards his daughter as to compare her masterly paintings with the slight but tasteful sketches of his niece. But then, Mary had enjoyed the highest advantages of tuition. On the other hand, Amy's embroidery, like her mother's, was as if wrought by the hands of fairies; whereas his daughter handled a needle as though it were a cobbler's awl.

It was well perhaps that he did not give audible expression to these opinions, when, later in the day, Captain Davenport joined the party. Marcus entered the room with some degree of confusion ; arising from remorse of conscience at his invasion of Hargood's castle during his absence ; or from disagreeable reminiscences of the attitude in which they had last parted.— But his embarrassment was of short duration. Ere a word was uttered on either side, Hargood started up and grasped his hands with the most friendly welcome. The recital in which Lady Meadows had been indulging of her nephew's devoted kindness to her, and of the affectionate overtures already made by his mother, had softened Hargood's feelings towards all possible Davenports,—Marcus among the rest.

“ I was hasty,” he said in abrupt allusion to what had formerly passed between them. “ Forgive me. Let by-gones be by-gones. We are all upon velvet, now.”

Poor Amy, whose heart had fallen below

freezing point on the entrance of her cousin, felt it growing colder and colder as she listened to their expressions of mutual regard ; evidently precursive of their future relative position as father and son.—It wanted only Mary to complete the family circle :—the family circle, from which she might as well be excluded at once, for any interest that any one of them seemed to take in her existence. All three were far too much occupied with each other to think of Amy. Marcus, full of the studio he had quitted an hour before, saluted her with the careless gaiety he might have bestowed on his terrier or his bird !

“Did not Miss Hargood accompany you here to-day?” said he, addressing her father, in pursuance of the abominable hypocrisy he had been practising so successfully elsewhere.

“No ! But I must bring or send her here to-morrow, my sister tells me,” replied Hargood.

“Without fail, dear Edward.—I long to embrace my niece.”

“You have a nephew too, Lady Meadowes, who hopes to make your acquaintance to-morrow,” rejoined Mark,—having thus adroitly obtained the information he wanted.—“My brother Hugh craves leave to deliver to you a letter from my mother.”

“What! the pearl of brothers, of whom you used to be so proud?” inquired Hargood, cheerfully.

“And of whom I am prouder than ever.—I trust, Hargood, you will allow me to present him to you?”

“It does not need, my dear Sir,” he replied. “I have already made Lord Davenport’s acquaintance. He was on a committee, last spring, before which I had to be examined, touching the state of the pictures in the National Gallery; and I can scarcely tell you whether I was more struck by his extensive information on matters of Art, or prepossessed by his manners.”

“You forgave in *him*, then, the name of Davenport which you visited so heavily on

me !” said Marcus, laughing. “But I don’t wonder. The man who could cherish a malicious feeling against Hugh, would tar-and-feather a child.—Amy, dearest,—why are you sitting out yonder by the window?—Why so still and silent, when we are all so happy?”—

“Only still, because I am listening,” she gently replied.

“So hoarse, too!—I’m afraid you have caught cold. That long walk, yesterday, was too much for you!”—

“She said so herself, poor child, on her return,” interposed Lady Meadows, “and then she was forced to go out this morning in the rain.”

“I hope she is not delicate?” inquired Hargood, with as reprehensive an air as though he had inquired whether she were addicted to shop-lifting.

“Not very strong. But she had better go to bed and take care of her cold, that she may

be able to devote the whole of to-morrow to her cousin.”

“ Ay, go to bed, dear Amy !” rejoined Mark, humanely. “ A little gruel and a great deal of sleep, will bring you all right again.—Good night, dear little coz !” said he, holding open the door for her to pass, after her hurried salutations to her mother and uncle.—“ We must not have you ill. Think,—think what a happy day we have before us to-morrow !—”

CHAPTER X.

NEXT morning, greatly to his inconvenience, but punctual as a chronometer, Hargood conveyed his daughter to the old garden-house,—where, having ascertained that his niece was disabled by a severe cold, he left her with injunctions to devote herself for the day to her aunt; as peremptorily delivered as those he had previously issued that, in her best attire, she should be ready at noon to accompany him on his visit to Lady Meadows.

The best attire of Mary Hargood consisted,

as aforetime, of a black silk gown of the simplest form : her dress alternating between the costume of a *sœur grise* or *sœur noire*, for her workday or Sabbath costume.—But there was an ornament of nature's bestowing, which imparted grace and even dignity to both :—the profusion, namely, of rich black hair which, crowning her head in a thick braid, became a diadem ; or falling over her shoulders, was in itself almost a garment. It was in the former guise that, when her bonnet was removed, she presented herself to Lady Meadows ; who, accustomed to Amy's light brown hair and girlish features, was startled by the lofty character of her beauty. There was in fact nothing of the "girl" in Mary Hargood. She had never been young. When a child, she was a mother to the boys ; as through life, her father's slave.

The aunt who had once borne her name, was not the less prepared to cherish the noble-looking being of whom her brother had spoken, if

not in the words of tenderness she was wont to lavish upon Amy, in terms of esteem more commonly bestowed on persons of twice her age: as Lord Russell might have spoken of his Rachel, or More of his Margaret.—Strange did it seem to her, when Hargood under the pressure of his professional avocations had returned by omnibus to town, to find herself alone with a young companion as different from her Amy as night from day; still more so, when, by degrees the young girl, won to confidence by Lady Meadows's kind and attaching manners, drew nearer and nearer; and was led by her inquiries to talk of her mother and brothers;—the dear mother she had lost,—the brothers who were all but lost to her. Tears moistened her slumberous dark eyes when thus kindly questioned.—She was not used to sympathy. It almost pained her torpid heart; like the pang we experience on the first renewal of sensation in a frozen limb.

“We do indeed lead a cheerless and iso-

lated life," she replied to her aunt's interrogations.—"My father's time is too deeply engaged to afford leisure for society, or the cultivation of new impressions. He is afraid of distracting my attention, or his own, from pursuits with which we cannot afford to trifle."

"Still, dear Mary, occasional relaxation is indispensable."

"My father thinks otherwise.—He fancies that glimpses of the land of Canaan only deepen the darkness of the land of Egypt."

"In future, my dear girl, this house will afford you some little change,—though smaller and probably far less provided with means of entertainment than your own—"

"Did I not describe our own as the House of Bondage?" answered Mary, with a melancholy smile. "And here, dear aunt, I feel already half enfranchised.—This air seems easier to breathe: and though *you*, accustomed to extensive landscapes probably despise the view from your window over yonder orchards,

to *me* they are country :—something, at least, of nature's creating, in place of soot-stained houses, and staring windows."

She spoke with animation ; for it was not often she obtained a sympathising ear.—It was pleasant, indeed, to talk of the two absent boys she loved so dearly ; and whom her father seemed to consider only like the rags thrown into a paper-mill,—valueless till they finally emerge from its complex machinery, in the form of glossy cream-laid.—Lady Meadows encouraged her to talk of their looks and disposition,—the quaint originality of Ned,—the affectionate simple nature of little Frank.

"Frank—after my grandfather, I believe," added she, hoping to recommend the child to the kindness of her grandfather's daughter.

While still absorbed in these family details,—seated upon the same cushion by the sofa-side habitually occupied by Amy,—the door was quietly opened by Marlow, with the announcement of "a gentleman."

And a gentleman, decidedly, was the visitor who closely followed her into the room. But she might quite as well have announced him as "a stranger;" for neither Lady Meadows nor her niece had ever seen him before.

"You must allow me to make myself known to you as your nephew Hugh," said he, approaching the sofa from which the invalid was making a languid effort to rise; "and for a nephew, you will not surely disturb yourself!" he continued, addressing Lady Meadows, and pressing the hand already extended to welcome him. "Lest you should misdoubt me as an impostor, dear Lady Meadows, I lose no time in presenting my credentials, as envoy from my mother."

The letter placed in her hands, addressed in the once familiar writing of the once dear Gertrude Meadows, brought an instant flush of pleasure to her cheek.—But it faded as it came.—Her head was dizzy from emotion.

Lord Davenport stood watching her with an

embarrassed air ; but when, endeavouring to recover herself, and relieve his awkwardness, she said in a scarcely articulate voice, while the letter still trembled in her hand,—“ You are most welcome.—Pray sit down.—Let me introduce you to—”

“ Thanks, thanks ! don't think of me just now,” interrupted Lord Davenport, taking the nearest chair, after courteously shaking hands with Mary. “ No introduction is necessary. Pray read your letter.—My brother Mark has so often talked to me of you,” he added, addressing Miss Hargood, “ that I feel as if we were already well acquainted.”

“ I understood from him that he was coming here this morning,” observed Mary, humanised at once by his graceful ease of manner,—the charm of high-breeding being as yet as little known to her as the lustre of brocade, or glitter of diamonds.

“ It was a great disappointment to Marcus to be prevented accompanying me, as he pro-

mised," replied Hugh. "Just as we were starting, he was summoned by a lawyer's letter, to make an affidavit before the Accountant-General; essential to the interests of the widow and orphan of a brother officer, killed by his side in one of his Indian campaigns."

"A paramount duty," rejoined Mary. "A claim he could not compromise."

"Was he to have given you a drawing-lesson to-day?" inquired Lord Davenport, with an air of interest. "I assure you he often vexes his other pupil, my sister Olivia, by taunting her with an account of your superior progress."

Mary Hargood, conscious of the parity of proficiency between herself and Captain Davenport, was not a little amused at the idea of his having represented himself as her master; and the momentary smile which, like summer lightning, brightened her countenance, imparted to it the only charm in which it was deficient. No wonder Lord Davenport thought he had never seen so beautiful a face.

“My father informed me,” said she, “that if you cannot say, like your brother, ‘*anch’io son pittore,*’ you have devoted much time and thought to the interests of the art.”

Lord Davenport looked exceedingly bewildered. How his late uncle should ever have become cognizant of the nature of his studies, or how a mere fox-hunter like Sir Mark should have acquired any information concerning arts of a higher order than regarded the sporting prints of Fores and Ackermann, puzzled him extremely. At length, Lady Meadows, after a second perusal of the few affectionate lines addressed to her by her once-loved Gertrude, resumed sufficient self-possession to perceive that her companions were at cross purposes.

“You are mistaking my niece Mary Hargood for her cousin Amy, who keeps her room to-day in consequence of a severe cold,” said she, cheerfully. “Another time, I hope you will make acquaintance with my daughter.”

“I have only my own stupidity to blame,”

replied Lord Davenport, a little embarrassed by the familiarity he had unduly assumed. "I ought to have known that the auburn curls and hazel eyes described by Mark to my mother, as the counterpart of Olivia's, could not have been so suddenly converted into Miss Hargood's raven braids.—I am grieved, however, to learn that Amy is indisposed.—For I may not for ages enjoy another opportunity of seeing her. To-morrow, I am forced to leave town again, on my return to Ilford Castle."

"For 'ages,' if I am to believe Lady Davenport's letter, we are to read, 'till the month of January,'" said Lady Meadows, with a cordial smile. "To me, however, the time will indeed seem long; so anxious am I to take dear Ger—Lady Davenport," she added, checking herself,—“once more by the hand.—But you, between shooting and fox-hunting, will find little idle time."

"*Very* little—if you knew what a multiplicity of work the Ilford estate has brought on my

hands," he replied. "But you mistake me, dear aunt,—I am no fox-hunter; nor much of a sportsman in any way. Marcus has always been the Nimrod of the family."

"True, true," rejoined Lady Meadows,—with a sigh, as she reflected how much, in manliness of pursuit as in name and feature, he resembled her beloved husband:—while Mary, whose cockney prejudices connected something of the rat-catcher with the idea of a thorough-going sportsman, conceded all the greater interest to Lord Davenport's expressive countenance, already familiar to her in his brother's sketch book, on finding him no votary of the stable or kennel. She longed to question him concerning his occupations.—But since she found that his previous sociability originated in the belief of consanguinity between them, she felt scarcely privileged to address him again.

Lord Davenport, on the other hand, would have found it difficult to renew his conversation with the beautiful girl whom he still

kept furtively watching, and noting as a living impersonation of Sir Joshua Reynolds's picture of St. Cecilia ;—for to her tastes and pursuits, he possessed not the slightest indication. While rambling with him among the mountain passes of the north, Mark had talked to him for hours of Amy Meadows,—of her sweetness, and daisy-like prettiness, and endearing *naïveté* of nature. But touching a certain studio, and a certain Muse, converted by her selfish father into a domestic drudge, as the Mexicans used to frame their vilest household implements of virgin gold, he had been cautiously mute.—He had in fact endeavoured, by a lapwing-cry of pretended enthusiasm for Amy, to mislead his brother from his nest.—How therefore was Lord Davenport to accost this unknown cousin of his cousin ?

Lady Meadows soon relieved his embarrassment by taking the conversation into her own hands. Often as she had questioned Mark concerning the inmates of Ilford Castle, end-

less inquiries suggested themselves respecting Lady Davenport and her daughter. Nor were they half brought to a close, when Hugh, whose diffidence of nature was apt to make him fancy himself an intruder, decided that he ought to hasten his departure, as they must wish to be in attendance on his Cousin Amy. Having secured a promise from Lady Meadows that she would lose no time in acknowledging his mother's letter, he took leave of the old garden-house, little accustomed to the presence of guests so distinguished; so little, indeed, that, on espying from her latticed window the coronet on the blinkers of his lordship's cab-horse, Mrs. Margams scarcely refrained from rushing forth and offering him a posy, composed of Michaelmas daisies and sprigs of winter savory.

“Neither so handsome nor so brilliant as our dear Mark,” was Lady Meadows's commentary, after his exit: “but apparently a most amiable young man!”

To which Mary, who was already projecting a study of his graceful head for that of the Beloved Disciple, had scarcely patience to answer.—As it was clear, however, that Lady Meadows, like Antony, paused for a reply, she at length rejoined—“ Less *showy*, perhaps, than Captain Davenport ; but I suspect, infinitely more elevated in mind and humane in nature. There is something *brusque* and dictatorial in Captain Davenport ;—something presuming, and—”

“ *Presuming*, dearest Mary ?” interrupted Lady Meadows, aghast at so much severity. “ Never in my life did I see a man attach less importance to worldly distinctions.”

“ Perhaps so—because he attaches more to his intellectual ones. Surely there is other pride, dear aunt, than the arrogance based on coronets or escutcheons of pretence ? Mark Davenport is as proud of his abilities as some new-made baronet of his gauntlet.—His abilities ? — nay, of himself. He sails down

upon one with all the force of his personal superiority ; as overbearing as his elder brother appears mild and gracious.”

“ Do you know him then so intimately, Mary ?—How have you managed to study him so closely ?”

“ On the contrary, dear aunt ; my censure only serves to prove that I am as presumptuous as himself :—since I fancy that, like Cuvier, who described the whole physiology of some fossil animal after examining a single tooth, I can decide upon Captain Davenport’s nature from his criticisms upon one of my daubs. He is an acute observer, a harsh monitor ; nay, I should not be surprised to find him what Johnson called an excellent hater.”

Lady Meadowes, persuaded that she had seen her nephew oftenest in the character of an excellent lover, made no reply.—She was becoming a little alarmed at the young niece whose opinions were so decided, and whose

expressions so bold.—It was not thus her own dear silver-voiced Amy was accustomed to think and speak; a reflection which probably suggested that it was time to visit the sick room; and that if

Lips though blooming must still be fed,

even a catarrh must not be defrauded of its barley-water.

CHAPTER XI.

It is not to be supposed that while Lady Davenport and Lady Meadowes were thus profoundly interested in the prospects of their children, the patriarch of Horndean Court and the casuistic Lady Louisa were regardless of the laurels sprouting round the brows of their son and heir.

Lady Harriet had never acquainted her sister with his ignominious rejection at the hands of Miss Meadowes, which, in the paroxysm of his disappointment he had confided to her ;—though

she might almost as well have made a clean breast of the secret, since their utmost stretch of credulity would never have accomplished faith in the story.—And as, from that moment, the name of Amy had never escaped the lips of William Eustace, they concluded that their arguments had prevailed, and that their family tree had been preserved from pollution.

Still, when they found him so changed in temper and pursuits, they began to fear that love, or the typhus fever, might have bequeathed to his constitution the germ of some other disease.

Whether to attribute to the want of skill of Dr. Burnaby, or the sinister influence of the governess's daughter, the growing Liberalism of their son's opinions, and his estrangement from the Lilliputian stage of fashionable society, with its gaudy puppets and pasteboard scenery, they could not exactly decide.

Sir Henry, the more uneasy of the two, often

ejaculated in private to the mortified Lady Louisa, that Heaven above only knew how it would end; that he was jeered by his demi-semi-quavering old chums at Arthur's for the profligate Radicalism of his son; and that Mr. Dundeput the family apothecary assured him that many highly respectable people among his patients were of opinion that the safety of the country might be seriously compromised, if such Jacobinical principles as those of Mr. Eustace were suffered to spread. The poor old gentleman was getting quite thin on the strength of it. His favourite madrigals, heretofore as precious in his ears as to the Yankees their frog-concerts, or to the Chinese their tom-toms, seemed "jangled and out of tune;"—and on reading in the papers, some time after Lord Davenport's death, the high prices realised by the sale of his stock, he was unable to get up a proper sense of indignation at the triumph of the short-horns he so thoroughly despised. The possibility that a Eustace might become the

hero of a popular outbreak, and produce the swearing-in of another ten thousand special constables in kid gloves, kept him at once depressed and irritable, as though there were thunder in the air.

When they returned to Horndean Court, at the close of a Session throughout which, for the first time in his life, the rash frenzy of his paternal and political curiosity induced him to snatch, unaided, the Times newspaper every morning, steaming from the press, and run his eye over the leading articles to ascertain whether his patronymic were held up to shame,—Lady Louisa found her usual resource from his peevishness, in the school-room: where she instructed the governess, tutored the provincial masters, and kept the poor girls strictly to their backboards.

Sir Henry, however, remained true to his indignation against his son. It would have been like Lady Townshend's two rabbits quarrelling for the single Holkham blade of grass, had *both*

parents endeavoured to find food for their fidgetiness in an over-strenuous education of their daughters: and the poor little baronet was content to worry himself with wondering what could have become of Mr. Eustace; who was neither up to his knees in heather on the moors, nor up to his chin in tepid water, at the German baths; nor attempting the nautical in the still waters of the Solent, nor prosing at Mechanics' Institutes, nor doing anything that may become a man, whose pastimes still savour of the boy.

Had Sir Henry Eustace, instead of gazing mopingly through the small panes of his narrow windows at Horndean Court, been just then an inmate of one of those pleasant and popular country-houses where the chosen sportsmen of the *beau monde* succeed, by direct inheritance, to the stubble fields vacated by the Michaelmas geese, he might have picked up from the sneers of a sect, of which Lord Curt de Cruxley was the examining chaplain, all the information he required.

“What has become of Billy Eustace, do you ask?” said one of these idlers. “Does any one besides his Paternal and Maternal care a straw to know whether he be on this side, or t’other, of the Styx?”

“The editor of the Baronetage perhaps, or of Dod’s Parliamentary Companion, for their winter edition.”

“Then tell them he’s in the highest possible condition. Eustace has hired a place in Gloucestershire:—whether with a view to establish a lamprey-pottery, or propagate slips of the Glastonbury Thorn, I can’t pretend to say.—All I know is that he has taken a long lease of some mouldy Grange; and that

Rapid Severn hoarse applause resounds.”

“And a very wise thing too,” observed one of the party, who was accustomed to live in a red coat from October till April. “Horndean Court is a shocking style of place for a man like

Eustace;—not a pack of hounds within forty miles. Now in Gloucestershire, he may hunt with Lord Fitzhardinge's,—with the Badminton,—with—”

“If hunting were his object,” retorted the other, “Leicestershire or Northamptonshire would have been nearer the mark.—But Billy Eustace is no sportsman;—don't know a hound from a harrier.—I should be deuced sorry to find myself in 'a ditch, with Billy going over me.—No! Billy is a *Myrmecophaga-jubata*, or *ant-eater*. The place he has taken is close to Radensford Manor, which belongs to a sister of Lady Louisa Eustace; to the savings of whose jointure, Billy is paying his addresses.”

“Eustace a legacy-hunter?—a man who does not spend half his income—and invests his balance every Christmas in the 15 per cents!” cried a faithful follower of the Cruxleyan school.

“To say nothing of the fact that the stiff-necked Lady Harriet in question would

as soon bequeath her fortune to Calcraft the hangman, or the ghost of Tom Paine, as to the radical member for Bawlinghurst."

"For Horndean, you mean," said old Cruvey, the fact-hunter of the party,—a diligent correspondent of *Notes and Queries*: "a borough town of 4,322 inhabitants, which sends one member to Parliament."

"In addition to which," resumed the former speaker, not noticing his officious interruption,— "her ladyship has adopted Colonel Warneford's orphan sons."

"Then what the deuce, pray, *is* he doing?" demanded one of the party; who, having lunched largely on lobster-salad and Amontillado, was fractious from indigestion.

"What the deuce are any of us doing?—I'm sure our left hands would be puzzled to vouch for the proceedings of our right,"—retorted the Cruxleyan.

"I thought all *your* proceedings *were* left-handed ones!" sneered his bosom enemy. "But we haven't yet got the true and correct

history of Billy Eustace's doings in Gloucestershire."

"He is doing what would puzzle most of you,—*Good!*" gravely rejoined old Cruvey.—
"He has hired the house of Sir Jervis Meadowes of that ilk;—a vulgar dog who, having pottered through life in a roadside house near Hockcliffe,—red brick with white stone facings to match the uniform of his militia,—could not manage to expand, like the frog in the fable, to the dimensions of his family mansion.—The land was easily let off,—for 'tis the best in the county; and the house and paddock were all but hired by a detachment of the Mont Meilleraie Trappists,—to the great dismay of the neighbourhood, consisting of the lowest of the low,—Church, of course,—when Lady Harriet Warneford luckily bethought her of William Eustace's desire for a home in a hunting county; and by alternately coaxing her nephew and cajoling a lawyer's clerk named Chubbs Parkis, or Parkis Chubbs,—contrived to oust the monks, and establish Billy within a

couple of miles of Radensford Manor.—Only the forest of Burdans between them, to keep their hands out of each other's pockets, or from a family fight."

"I really believe, Cruvey," exclaimed his dyspeptic companion, "that you keep an 'Own correspondent' in every market-town in England, to supply you with the road-scrapings of country gossip!"

"In this case, I am my own purveyor," replied old Cruvey, no whit abashed.—"My brother-in-law, Admiral Tremenheere, was one of the identical Low Churchmen who got up parish meetings against the Trappists. I was staying with him at the time: and was edified beyond measure at seeing him make the neighbouring Clodpoles believe that these monks were only High Farmers disguised under woollen cowls; who would undersell them in Gloucester Market, and bring down anathema and potatoe famine upon them by unorthodox rural economy."

“*My* verdict upon all this,” growled the dyspeptic man, “is that Eustace has earthed himself in one of the dullest neighbourhoods in England, to cram for Parliament unmolested. Billy has cut his wisdom-teeth before his time. Billy has been suddenly taken ambitious.—If ever I saw an unfortunate fellow booked for public life, it is Eustace !”

“Naturally enough. After a drought, a downfall,” added the Cruxleyan. “To squeaking Sir Henry and his music-books, will succeed speaking Sir William and his blue-books.—In place of the false notes uttered by the father, the son may live to issue Exchequer bills !”

“Ay—if he be only consistent,” added one of his condisciples. “In public life, nothing like dogged perseverance!—Stick to your text, and the turn of the wheel will make you Something ; and Something soon becomes Somebody.—Had the donkey at Carisbrook Well been trained to bray ‘ay’ or ‘no’ for forty years, instead of drawing up buckets of water,

my life to a hank of red tape, he would have died a Junior Lord of the Treasury !”

“Eustace’s chance, I should say, was as good a one,” observed old Cruvey. “There is adhesiveness in Eustace:—derived no doubt from that model-mother of his, who would fain drill her daughters into automatons to which the wax figures in Westminster Abbey are lively.—The poor girls are so closely wired down, that, now they are growing old enough for mischief, nothing would surprise me less than a pop.—Lady Louisa, proud and prudish, believes her family to be superior to the fragility and effervescence of human nature.—We shall see.”

“I don’t care about Lady Louisa or her daughters,” rejoined the Cruxleyan, captiously. “But I do care about Billy. At one moment, I fancied that Billy had in him the making of a good fellow. What famous times one used to have at Burfont Abbey, so long as he made *la pluie et le beau temps* with the duchess ! But

if he is taking up the Young-Men's-Mutual Improvement-Association sort of thing, and means to cultivate Italian rye-grass and the domestic virtues, one must throw him over, at once. That class of the community ought to live in Wimpole Street, and take its name out of the clubs. Cruvey, my dear fellow, as you appear to draw the same coverts as poor Billy, let him know what we think of his reformation."

Had old Cruvey been pleased to undertake the commission, which he dared no more attempt than smoke a cigar in the drying-room of the Dartford powder-mills, Mr. Eustace would have cared no more for the threatened ostracism, than for being excluded from his father's Glee club. The moment a man has emancipated himself from the charm of fashionable enthrallment, it is with him as with the dreamer who by the slightest movement has dispelled a night-mare.

But all this is a wide way from Battersea.

The marble smoking-room in which this idle talk was audible between puffs of Latakia and sips of mild cognac-and-water, had little, indeed, in common with the time-crazed old garden-house with pointed gables, where Amy Meadows was weeping her girlish tears ;—precious as the “med’cinable gums” that flow from some tree in Araby the Blest, because indicative of its balsamic nature.

“You are pleased, dearest mother, with your new niece?” said she, approaching Lady Meadows, when, later in the evening ; she rose, and, as they were now alone together, there was no further motive for reserve.

“*Much* pleased,” replied Lady Meadows. “No one who looks at Mary Hargood, can deny the loveliness of her person ; no one who listens to her, the superiority of her talents.”

“She is indeed beautiful—*most* beautiful !” rejoined Amy, with a heavy sigh.

“My brother has great reason to be proud of her,” resumed Lady Meadows. “But as

regards my own prepossessions, Mary is a person whom I would far rather possess as a niece than as a daughter."

"Thank you for *that*, mother," said Amy, sighing more deeply than before.

"It is perhaps because accustomed to a gentler manner and a more loving heart, that I am so fastidious," resumed Lady Meadows; "but Mary's self-assertion depresses me. The strict subordination maintained by my brother seems to have had the effect of enfranchising her opinions to a degree alarming at her age. Forbidden to act for herself, she thinks for herself more, I fear, than is good for her."

"It was, perhaps, that very independence of mind that attracted him!" mused Amy, aloud.

"Attracted *whom*, my dear?"

"My Cousin Mark. Has not Miss Hargood informed you that—"

"Not Miss Hargood, darling;—*Mary*!"

"Has not Mary, then, informed you that he is about to become doubly your niece?"

Lady Meadows kissed her daughter's cheek with a smile implying compassion for her girlish jealousy.

“Not exactly, Amy. On that point, she probably knew me to be better informed.”

“What information can be better than the express avowal of Mark?”

“His *avowal*?”

“My cousin himself apprised me of his attachment.”

“To Mary Hargood? No, no!” cried Lady Meadows, changing colour and countenance.

“And that the dearest object of his life was to make her his wife,” added Amy, with a degree of exactness not to be mistaken.

For some minutes Lady Meadows remained silent as death. Unconsciously her arm extended itself round the waist of poor Amy, whose tears were now falling unconstrainedly. Poor girl! Poor darling child!—Her fatigue of the day before—her sudden indisposition—were now explained.

“You, mother, will, I know, bear with me,” whispered Amy, “if I experience a little sorrow and mortification at discovering that we are not first objects with one who has so long seemed to make us so ;—nay, that so far from being his first objects, he has frankly owned to me that—”

It was hard to complete the purposed avowal ! While resting her head on her mother’s shoulder, she was forced to take breath for the effort.

“He has owned to you, darling ?”—inquired Lady Meadows, in an encouraging voice.

“That he sought us out, at first, *not* as the nearest relations of his mother,—but of Mary Hargood !”—

“From first to last, then, his conduct has been as false as cruel !” was the indignant rejoinder.

“Not intentionally. But he seems to have thought only of *her*.—You know his impetuous nature :—all impulse,—all energy—”

“ All selfishness, Amy. He has thought only of himself. But how strange,—how more than strange,—that a son of Lord Davenport—of the man by whose animosity my whole life has been embittered,—should so little inherit his prejudices as thus desire to ally himself with a family so contemptuously spurned by his father !”

“ Marcus is a person thoroughly independent in mind and conduct.”

“ Which makes me doubt their being happy together.—For Mary appears to be as opinionated as himself. Already, though you assure me they are engaged, she judges him with the most impartial severity. So far from reciprocating his love, I should say that she almost disliked him.”

“ You really think so, mother ?” said Amy, a ray of hope brightening her face.

“ She spoke of him this morning so harshly, that I was hurt and offended.”

“May she not have wished to conceal her real feelings towards him?”

“Concealment is not in her nature. Never was human being more thoroughly ingenuous.”

“I may perhaps come to like her better on acquaintance, dear mamma,” said Amy, with a sigh a trifle less heavy than that which accompanied the commencement of her confidences. “After all, it is not Mary’s fault, if my want of experience and knowledge of the world should have induced me to assign to Mark’s attentions a stronger preference than cousinly good-will.—Still, he certainly seemed convinced of Mary’s attachment.”

“Because he is as vain as selfish,” replied Lady Meadows, who was rapidly acquiring strange impartiality towards the virtues of her nephew.—“But the whole affair is a mystery, —a mystery I must lose no time in clearing up.—To-morrow, I am to see my brother again.”

“Not a word to *him*, however, darling mother, till we have Marcus’s permission to speak out.—If you think my uncle is not as yet in the secret, it might seriously injure my cousin’s cause to have it prematurely disclosed.”

Lady Meadows imprinted a fervent kiss on the cheek of her generous child; amid her own disappointments, ever careful of the happiness of others.

“And Hugh, dear mother. You have told me nothing about Hugh. Is he likely, do you think, to approve his brother’s choice?”

“I saw little of Lord Davenport,—I was occupied with his mother’s letter. To own the truth, I fear he interested me only as the brother of Mark. When I found him so unlike, I looked no further. But I cannot help fearing—”

It was perhaps as well that she was prevented confiding to Amy the nature of her apprehensions, by the bustling entrance of

Marlow ; who persisted in administering to Miss Meadowes's cold as assiduously, as though her reddened eyes and husky voice were really the result of the influenza.

“ Her ladies ” were hurried angrily to bed.

If the officious zeal of the waiting-maid could only have secured rest to their pillows !

CHAPTER XII.

LET us hope that Hargood's literary duties were of a nature to be vicariously fulfilled ; and that he possessed, like other functionaries of the same class, a *double* by whom authors could be slain, and politicians instructed, whenever the real Hurllothrumbo felt disposed to rest upon his laurels. — For his hitherto unincidental life was becoming singularly convulsed. He might almost have inscribed in his journal, like Lady Sale, “ earthquakes as usual.”

With his mind still agitated by his affecting interview with his sister, he was startled by a note from Captain Davenport, requesting an audience for the following morning :—“ a private audience for the discussion of business of importance ;” not commencing “ my dear Hargood ” as of old, when offering an operaticket, or proposing an excursion to the Dulwich Gallery ;—but filially and respectfully, “ my dear Sir.”

That he wanted to discuss the affairs of Lady Meadows, probably to inquire in what manner the pecuniary aid of the Davenport family could be most delicately and effectively afforded, seemed a matter of course ; and Hargood consequently set aside his customary avocations, and appointed an early hour for the visit. It even occurred to him that Captain Davenport might be desirous of soliciting, through his good offices, the hand of his niece. Without positively asserting the existence of an attachment between the young people, Lady

Meadowes had talked of Marcus far more as her son-in-law than as her nephew; and as Hargood cut the pages of a new review, while waiting his arrival, he kept smiling to himself at the notion of the futility of human prejudices:—Lord Davenport scarcely cold in his grave; and his son already renewing the forfeiture of caste which, for forty years, the old lord had resented with the utmost rigour of his narrow mind.

He accordingly received his guest with a degree of cordiality foreign to his nature. Lady Meadowes's account of Marcus's kindness had touched his heart.—On noticing the flush which animated the young man's cheek, and the emotion which somewhat impeded his utterance, Hargood congratulated himself, as we are wont to do when we most deceive ourselves, on the perspicuity which had so readily foreseen the purpose of his visit.

“ In love,—poor fellow,—decidedly in love !” thought he ; and he assumed a benign counte-

nance and gracious attitude, to encourage him to be as brief as possible in announcing his passion and detailing his proposals.

“You must have seen, my dear Sir,” said Mark, “you cannot but have noticed that for some time past, my heart has been no longer in my own keeping.—Clear-sighted as you are, Hargood, you probably penetrated my secret long before it was known to myself.”

“I am not very observant of such matters. But I am certainly prepared for your avowal of attachment.”

“And I trust also to sanction and promote it?”

“Certainly,—certainly:—though *my* consent is perhaps not the most important.”

“Hers will follow. Hers, if I may say so without presumption, I entertain little doubt of obtaining. But I thought it right first to place before you the exact state of my affairs.—The sale of my commission cleared me, some months ago, from every sort of embarrassment; and I

now stand in possession of something more than two thousand a-year.—Of this, I propose to settle half on her and her children, securing three hundred a-year pin-money to her for life ; and if—”

“ Stop stop, my good friend,” cried Hargood, scarcely able to follow his impetuous volubility. —“ Before we enter into all these commercial particulars, surely it will be better to satisfy yourself whether the young lady’s feelings justify such an exposure of your affairs.”

“ They do,—they do !” cried Marcus. “ I am satisfied that she loves me,—perhaps I should say *likes*,—for till after marriage, few women have courage to apply the right name to the right thing.—But for Heaven’s sake, Hargood, do not keep me in suspense. Tell me that I have your sanction to my addresses.”

“ Of course you have ;—but—”

“ No buts, no buts, I entreat !—I feel so happy, so hopeful,—that the slightest obstacle drives me distracted.—But when may I see her ?”

“As soon, I presume, as you can make your way to Battersea.”

“Gone there, already?—I felt so sure, at this early hour, of finding her!”—

“*Gone* there?” repeated Hargood, a little astonished; yet making due allowance for the bewildering influence of love.

“I fancied that, having passed the day yesterday with her aunt and cousin, Mary would to-day remain at home.”

“*Mary!*—Of whom in GOD’S name are you talking!” exclaimed Hargood, aghast.—“Are you out of your mind?”

“A little, I’m afraid!—Nor can you wonder at it, my dear Hargood, when you reflect that you have just given your consent to my marriage with your daughter.”

“*My daughter*, Captain Davenport? I believed, throughout, that you were alluding to my niece Amy Meadowes.”

“My Cousin Amy?” cried Mark, impatiently shrugging his shoulders. “Amy is a charming

little girl. But who that has been admitted to the happiness of seeing and conversing with her cousin, would for a moment think of one so every way inferior !”

“ And I am to understand,” said Hargood, his face growing white as ashes from repressed emotion, “ that an attachment exists,—has perhaps long existed,—between you and my daughter ;—and that you are only waiting my consent to make her your wife ?—”

“ And myself, the happiest man on earth.”

“ *That* miserable phrase follows as a matter of course !” retorted Hargood, with a scornful smile, “ for so grateful a daughter must needs become a true and faithful wife. Mary !” cried he, almost fiercely, having stalked across the room and snatched open the heavy door of the studio,—“ Mary, come hither ! I wish to speak to you.”

What a contrast between the calm sober-suited girl who made her appearance at the summons, and the two men who awaited her ;

—the one overflowing with love and joy,—the other scarcely able to restrain his rage and resentment.—She was a little startled by the ardour with which Captain Davenport rushed forward to seize her hand. How much more so by the tone in which she was addressed by her father.

“I find, Mary Hargood,” said he, in his most grating accents, “that I have been warming a serpent in my bosom.—Instead of the perfect confidence which I supposed to exist between us,—instead of the affection which *ought* to have existed between us,—you have given, without consulting your father, your affections and troth-plight to a comparative stranger!”

“Who says so,—who accuses me?” inquired Mary, almost too much amazed to be angry. “I will not say that perfect confidence subsists between us, father; for you have never sought *mine*—never interrogated my feelings,—never seemed to suppose I could entertain any. But

this I can also assert,—that had any man living spoken to me of love or marriage, I should have instantly apprised you; and that, till this moment, no word of courtship has ever been uttered in my presence.”

“Thank GOD!” ejaculated her father,—immeasurably relieved.—“To see you married to an emperor, Mary, would not have repaid me for having reared a thankless child!”

A stern glance towards Mark Davenport seemed to demand further explanations.

“You mistook me, Sir,” said he, chiefly moved at finding himself the cause of the severe admonition addressed to that dear Mary, into whose ears he was burning to pour a thousand endearing protestations. “You mistook me in supposing that I announced myself as *engaged* to your daughter. The utmost I asserted was a hope that I was not altogether indifferent to her; and *in* that hope, I asked your sanction to my addresses.”

“I did mistake you, then. You seemed to

imply that my daughter,—that this girl,—this child,—had been wooed and won, in secret, without my sanction or knowledge.—You certainly told me that she preferred you.—But in these days, and in *your* class, Captain Davenport, I believe it is customary to make such boasts concerning every woman with whom you ever held ten minutes' conversation."

Marcus was determined not to lose his temper. To quarrel with his future father-in-law, would be a bad beginning.

"I trust at least, Mr. Hargood," said he, "that, if I should hereafter obtain your daughter's favourable reception of my proposals, your consent will not be withheld on account of this misunderstanding?"

"Mary is at liberty to choose for herself, Sir. In my opinion unequal matches afford small prospect of happiness. Whether she likes you well enough to overlook the objection, must rest with herself."

"To overlook the objection!"—A strange

hearing for Mark ; who had been contemplating with unfeigned admiration his own disinterested magnanimity in offering to share his rank and fortune with the penniless daughter of an obscure man of letters.

“What say you, Mary?” continued Hargood, addressing his daughter, who was now leaning against the arm-chair, in which he was magisterially enthroned.

“I do not admit the objection, father,” said she, in a tone of decision, for which Captain Davenport longed to throw himself at her feet.—“I do not consider worldly position of sufficient moment to make it either a motive or an obstacle. But as regards the affection which Captain Davenport is generous enough to profess for me, I owe it to him to declare, at once, that my heart says nothing in his favour.—Were he an artist, like myself, or did I belong to his own class of society it would be the same.—I could never love him.”

Even her father was a little astonished.

“I have, however, heard you speak highly in his praise,” said he,—perceiving that Marcus was too overcome to utter a syllable.

“As an acquaintance,—almost as a friend. As one whose talents I admired—”

“*That is something, Mary,*” pleaded her father. “You are not a girl from whom I should have expected any Missish notions concerning the romance of love.”

“Not the *romance* of love—but the reality,” replied his daughter, firmly. “There are points in Captain Davenport’s character—(I like him well enough,” she continued, directing a deprecatory glance toward Marcus, “to speak before him with as much candour as though he were not present,)—which would render him insupportable to me as a companion for life. The man to whom I devote myself, as a wife, must be steady of purpose, gracious of deportment, gentle with his friends, generous with his enemies, forbearing with my faults, cognisant of his own, and submitted, humbly and trustfully

as myself, to the will of God. I do not find these qualities in Captain Davenport ;—and therefore, could not love him as a husband. I do not care for distinctions, either of birth or talent. Affection must be all and all.”

“You have said enough, Miss Hargood,” exclaimed Mark Davenport, stung to the quick. “God forbid that I should force my addresses on any woman breathing ;—more especially on one so exacting and fastidious. Whether I have deceived myself, or whether you have deceived me, it matters not now to inquire, I take my leave of you at once and for ever, —lamenting only to have wasted a year of my life,—with all its honest purposes, manly projects, and warmth of affection,—on what appears to have been the shadow of a dream !”

It was perhaps because he found himself on the point of betraying emotions which he was too proud to exhibit in presence of the woman who had so cruelly slighted him, that, having wrung Hargood by the hand, he hastily quitted

the room. As the door closed loudly after his departure from the house, Mary, whose courage had not failed her when it was wanted, sank languidly into a chair.

“You are not angry with me, father?” said she, perceiving that the brows of Hargood were contracted by vexation or displeasure.

“Not angry with you for having a mind,—and knowing it;—not angry with you for disclaiming a preference you do not feel.—But it strikes me, Mary, that you owed me the respect of consulting me before you so decidedly rejected an opportunity of securing an honourable home for yourself, and an advantageous connection for your brothers.”

Mary Hargood folded her arms over her bosom with a look of despair. Were *her* feelings then *never* to be consulted?—Was she always to be a mere stepping-stone to the family?—

“But it is too late now to discuss the matter,” added Mr. Hargood, noticing her des-

ponding attitude. “Davenport is not a man to be recalled, or trifled with.—So now, my dear, go back to your painting-room. All this must not distract our attention from business:—and I have already wasted half my morning.—Remember, Mary, that, at this time of year, every glimpse of daylight is precious. We have contracted to send home your ‘Aurora’ varnished and dry before Christmas Day. We cannot afford to be idle.”

As Mark Davenport rushed blindly towards Spring Gardens, — no longer trippingly, but —almost distracted,—may not his mind have reverted to the fate of the haughty “Lady of Avon?” May he not have wished (in his haste) that the hard-hearted Mary herself—the Muse,—the *traitress*,—might in her turn, have cause to exclaim

“ Oh ! lonely—lonely—lonely
 Around, below, above—
 Oh, for some human whisper,
 Oh ! for one word of love ! ” —

CHAPTER XIII.

THE heart of Lady Meadowes sank within her when, two days afterwards, she heard her brother, while ascending the stairs, inquiring of Marlow after the health of his niece. She dreaded his entry into the room. His joy and exultation would be too much for her. She knew not where she should find presence of mind to offer him the congratulations on Mary's approaching marriage, which he was doubtless come to demand.

But to her surprise, Hargood seemed irritable

and out of spirits. His manner towards herself was far less kind than at either of his former visits. Something had evidently ruffled his temper.

When she spoke of Amy as still poorly, he warned her, almost angrily, against encouraging in so young a girl, the languors and headaches of a fine lady.—In his own daughter, he said, he would never have tolerated a habit of making the most of a finger ache.

“Even yourself, my dear Mary,” said he, “might, I am convinced, have overcome your ailments, in the first instance, if an over-indulgent husband had not nursed you into fancying yourself a confirmed invalid.”

Tears came into the eyes of Lady Meadows at this harsh allusion to the tenderness of him who was gone.—But so far from being checked by her emotion, Hargood pursued his strain of what he considered rational reproof.

“And look at the consequence,” said he. “Now that the state of your circumstances renders it imperative upon you to exert yourself,

you are utterly helpless ; incapable of affording either succour or protection to your daughter. You must consequently perceive how much it is your duty to repress in Amy the weakness so fatal to yourself.”

Poor Amy was just then so much an object of pity to her mother, that Lady Meadows felt doubly hurt by the blame unjustly imputed to her.—It seemed hard, that her niece’s triumph should have inspired her brother with such rigorous feelings towards them.

But his contrarious vein was not exhausted. “I *do* hope, my dear sister,” added he, “that, when your term here expires, you will consent to settle in town.—It will be otherwise impossible for myself or Mary to realise the wish you have expressed for our being frequently together.—We, you know, are working bees. As little as we can afford to indulge in headaches or vapours, can we spare money for omnibuses, or leisure for long walks.—*Our* time is money, Mary: the money on which we are dependent for bread.”

A momentary tingling of the cheeks denoted Lady Meadows's mortification at hearing these melancholy facts so acrimoniously expressed.—She had been too long accustomed to the courtesies of refined life, not to perceive that naked truths may inflict as painful a wound as a naked sword.

“I am grieved that we should have been forced to inconvenience you,” said she, mildly. “We must look forward to some more eligible arrangement.”

But she had already found time to wonder at his allusion to his daughter's professional avocations.—Had Marcus altered his mind, and desisted from his intentions?—Was this worshipped Mary still fated to work for her own subsistence and that of others?—In spite of her maternal sympathies, Lady Meadows could not but experience deep regret at this thwarting of the poor girl's destinies.

Unable to hit upon any other immediate grounds for fault-finding, Hargood remained silent.—Hoping perhaps to reach the root of his

discontents, his sister alluded timidly to the affectionate overtures she had received from Lady Davenport.

“I wish I were certain never to hear that hateful name pronounced again!” was his petulant rejoinder.—“Those Davenports seem born to be the curse of my life. But for them, Mary, I should never have been goaded into extremities, which estranged me for thirty barren years from the dear sister vouchsafed by GOD to be the comfort of my days—”

“But *that*, Edward, is now past and forgotten,—atoned and absolved,”—said Lady Meadows, in her usual peace-making spirit.—

“Ay!—but the evil spell remains unbroken!” he replied.—“That young man Mark, who, you say, has proved so kind a friend to you, has to *me* proved the worst of enemies.”

“Indeed?” murmured his astonished sister.

“By sowing the seeds of perpetual discord in my house!—He has inspired Mary with notions of her own consequence, that will doubtless sooner or later estrange her from her

duties, and create a distaste for her allotted portion in this world !”

“ By expressing an attachment to her ?” faltered Lady Meadowes, anxious to bring him to the point.

“ By asking her to become his wife.—He, Lord Davenport’s son !—Yes, Mary,—the son of that old coronet-ridden idiot, who trampled us into dust, and scoffed at my father’s daughter as a menial, a hireling,—has condescended to become a suitor for the hand of a second Mary Hargood !”

“ And you refused it to him ?” faltered Lady Meadowes, scarcely able to articulate.

“ Not I !—She might have married him and welcome, had she thought proper. *I* am not so encrusted with prejudice as the Davenports. *I* can imagine that even *their* family might produce an honest and enlightened man.—It was Mary herself who dismissed him.”

“ She has formed, then, some other attachment ?”

“ No !—But she is a girl of sterling prin-

cipe. The same strength of body and mind which secures her from nervous headaches, would disdain even a coronet, where she could not conscientiously pronounce the marriage vow.—She neither loved nor honoured Captain Davenport; and told him so frankly to his face.”

Lady Meadowes was thunderstruck. Their own dear generous, spirited, accomplished, distinguished Mark, to be thus ignominiously rejected!

“And what has become of him, then?”

“Gone back to the North, I suppose. I have never inquired. It is enough for me that he has set fire to the train of vanity latent in every female nature.—Mary has already become moping and taciturn,—reflecting upon,—perhaps repenting,—the precipitancy of her decision. And now the boys are coming home from school, instead of attending to them as usual, I shall probably have her neglect the business of the household to indulge in idle reveries and construct castles in the air!”

“My niece appears to be the last person in the world likely to indulge in weaknesses injurious to herself or others,” replied Lady Meadows, with spirit. “I never saw a young person more prudent or more self-governed. Trust me, dear brother, a girl born to a servile condition like mine and Mary’s, is often called upon for the exercise of courage and fortitude as great as in the crusading days of women-warriors produced the Clorindas and Erminias, whose heroism became the world’s example.—I, who have endured the struggle, can feel for Mary.”

Though gratified by her generous sortie, Hargood could not coax himself into better humour. Nor was he in the slightest degree aware that half his vexation arose from jealousy at finding honour and independence forced upon his insignificant daughter, while he, the strong-minded man and superior scholar, had been labouring his life long at the oar, without seeming to approach a mile nearer to the port.

It was a relief to Lady Meadows when this

trying interview was interrupted by an event so rare in her solitary life as a morning visit. A visitor, too, from Radensford!—And if it afforded satisfaction to Edward Hargood to see his sister affectionately and deferentially accosted by a woman of superior manners and appearance, with whom she seemed to have been intimately connected throughout the years of his estrangement, it caused equal surprise to Mrs. Burton to find in the burly, surly man, who disappeared shortly after her entrance, a brother of Lady Meadows; whom, during their long friendship, she had regarded as much isolated from human relationship, as though she had been produced out of a crucible.

Lady Meadows meanwhile welcomed her warmly: for Rachel Burton seemed to bring with her something of the climate of her lost Eden.—She was looking so well and so bright, that it was clear her sudden visit to the metropolis was connected with some pleasant vicissitude.

“My father could not be prevailed upon to

accompany me," said she, in reply to the inquiries of her friend after Mr. Henderson. "His days are numbered, he says ; and he has scarcely time left to attend to his professional duties : far less to indulge in pastime.—But I know you will be glad to hear, dear Lady Meadowes, that in his declining years his labours will be lightened. Since he undertook the maintenance of his daughter and grandchild, my dear father has, as you know, been forced to relinquish the assistance of a curate. But all will now be right again.—We are grown wonderfully rich.—He is released from all anxiety on our account."

Congratulations were readily offered ; and the explanations asked for, as readily offered.

"My husband's father (who was on terms of enmity with poor Sylvester, nearly from the time of our marriage) has lately died, without a will ; and my little Sophia becomes his heiress. My business in London was to make her a ward in chancery ; and a liberal allowance has been already assigned me as her guardian."

Again, the friendly sympathy of Lady Meadows was forthcoming.

“Yes! it is indeed an unexpected turn of fortune,” replied Mrs. Burton. “Yet, discontented mortals that we are,—I find myself oftener repining that riches should come so late,—than grateful that they should come at all: something whispers to me, dearest Lady Meadows, that had that dear child obtained better medical treatment immediately on our return from India, her health might have been established.—Good old Dr. Burnaby pats me on the back, and says ‘No, nothing more could have been done.’ But already, since I came to town, a consultation of the first advisers has decided that warm sea-bathing must be instantly resorted to.—The curvature of the spine beginning to be apparent, may thus, they hope, be remedied.”

“God grant it!—You have been some time then in London?”

“Only long enough for the execution of legal forms indispensable to substantiate our claims

on the estate of the late Mr. Burton," replied Rachel.—"This is the first day I have had to dispose of."

Lady Meadowes shook her head misgivingly. "Nay, nay, for some months past, you have almost ceased to write," she resumed. "Except for an occasional letter of business from Dr. Burnaby, I should fancy we were already forgotten at Radensford."

"Never, dear Lady Meadowes,—never,—*never!* But to own the truth, I believed your thoughts to be engrossed by Amy's marriage."

"Her *marriage?*"

"The news was brought back from Clifton by her guardian, last spring. You yourself seemed to confirm it."

"If my refraining from direct contradiction was so interpreted, I am much to blame," said Lady Meadowes, with something of a guilty consciousness; "for Amy is not, and never has been likely to be married to her cousin."

Mrs. Burton started forward, and seized her hand.

“Then accept my heartiest congratulations,” said she. “For Mark Davenport is wholly unworthy of her!”

“You know him, then?”

“No one better.”

“Yet believing him to be affianced to Amy, you said not a word to his disparagement!”

“To what purpose,—if they were *really* betrothed?—Besides, from peculiar circumstances, my lips were sealed.”

“But even before this supposed engagement, dear Mrs. Burton,—at Radensford,—at Meadows Court, you never spoke of Captain Davenport as an acquaintance?”

“I once mentioned his name to poor Sir Mark; who burst into such a fury of invective,—disclaiming and denouncing the whole family,—that I never ventured on the subject again. Of yourself, dear Lady Meadows, I still stood, on my return from India, somewhat

in awe. I fancied you still saw in me the wilful, flighty Rachel Henderson, who had been such a torment to her father."

"Rather the *child* Rachel Henderson," rejoined Lady Meadows, "who, from being spoiled by her father, became so great a torment to herself."

"It was only after I had proved to you by years of resignation and retirement, that time and suffering had subdued me to a sense of duty, it was only *then* I ventured to approach you on a more equal footing."

"Admit, at least, that you were received with open arms:—that we all loved you, Rachel, both for your father's sake and your own?"

"The best consolations of my forlorn life reached me from Meadows Court," was Mrs. Burton's earnest reply. "Still, the difference of age between us,—my own recent afflictions,—your personal motives for avoiding every allusion to the name of Davenport, united to preclude all confidences connected with Marcus."

“But *now*, dearest Rachel, these objections are removed. *Now*, you can no longer hesitate to acquaint me with your reasons for believing him unworthy to become the husband of Amy.”

Mrs. Burton did, however, hesitate.—To talk of him at all, seemed like withdrawing a veil of oblivion from afflictions only half obliterated.

“When I tell you,” persisted Lady Meadows, “that, by convincing us of his want of merit, you would be the cause of softening to your young friend the bitterest disappointment;—and by this means, reconcile me to myself for having rashly exposed my darling child to the penalties of an ill-placed attachment?”

“Thus adjured, I cannot refuse,” replied Mrs. Burton. “But bear in mind, dear Lady Meadows, that it is only on such sacred grounds, I revert to this painful history.—It is at least known to you,—no, of even *that* circumstance you are ignorant,—that Mark Davenport and my husband belonged to the same

regiment. It was not till we landed in India, however, that I made Captain Davenport's acquaintance. Nor was it till I landed in India that I became aware of being united to a man to whom the excesses of vice were familiar. In these, as in all else, Davenport was his associate; but to do him justice, it was as a scholar rather than a teacher.—I hate to dwell on that miserable period of my life.—Neglected and insulted by the man for whose sake I had sacrificed my father and my country, I was often in want of the comforts of life. The feeble health of my poor little Sophia is in fact attributable to the privations I endured previously to her birth."

She paused for breath. But Lady Meadows was too deeply interested to interpose a word.

"Throughout my troubles as the wife of a drunkard and a gambler," she resumed, "but one protecting hand was extended towards me,—that of Marcus. Amidst the worst of my husband's follies and extravagances, Marcus

seemed to be endeavouring to reclaim and recal him to a sense of duty towards his helpless wife and child.—Often, the common necessaries which I was no longer able to purchase reached my bungalow, or were supplied to me on our line of march, at the moment they were most wanted, as if by magic interposition. I will not deny that I soon guessed to what compassionate friend I was indebted; and, knowing that I should eventually obtain from my father the means of repayment, I accepted in silence,—but even more gratefully than if I had spoken my thanks.—I felt that to this generous protector I was indebted for preserving the life of my sickly infant.—Judge therefore, dear Lady Meadows, of the nature of my feelings towards him !”

“It was like Marcus!” ejaculated Lady Meadows. “Just so kind,—so considerate was his conduct towards ourselves, when he withdrew us from our miserable retreat at Clifton and escorted us hither.”

“In *that* case, his interference was justifiable,

his motives honourable.—In mine, he acted like a villain.—After establishing himself by my side as a benefactor,—protector—friend,—after winning my confidence and loading me with obligations,—he presumed upon his trust to offer himself as a lover !—Yes, to *me*, the wife of his friend and brother officer,—the daughter of a minister of the church,—the mother of a dying child !—I scarcely know in what words of disgust I banished him from the house. He knew that, from my husband, the fear of bloodshed would compel me to conceal his conduct. But I threatened, should the offence be renewed, to expose it to his superior officer, and his family at home ; and by this means, succeeded in breaking off the connection.—Remittances from home luckily enabled me to discharge my pecuniary obligations. To requite the sense of humiliation to which he had reduced me, was impossible.”

“ And at your husband’s death ? ” inquired Lady Meadowes, with lips now pale and tremulous.

“At my husband’s death, to render him justice, he behaved as became his ostensible friendship for the dead.—Of all that occurred on that terrible occasion, I am not fully certain. But he did not again intrude upon my presence ; and I have since learned that, among the friends who busied themselves most actively in arrangements for my comfort on my return to my native country, was Captain Davenport.”

“The least reparation he could offer.”

“The least,—for, to my apprehension, he owed me more.—I need not tell you that at the moment of his insolent advances, the outrage was attributed to the violence of an insurmountable passion. On that occasion, he swore that, from our first interview, his sole care or thought had been for *me* ; that, had I been free, he would have instantly offered me his hand ; nay, that if I would even then desert my husband for his sake, a divorce should be obtained, enabling him to make me his wife. He promised to be a father to my child,—to watch over me,—to love me.—My only answer

was to bid him begone ; lest I should be tempted to bring down upon his head the vengeance of the man he was betraying.”

Mrs. Burton's voice was now becoming broken by sobs.—She was evidently scarcely able to support the reminiscences her narrative had conjured up. She recommenced, however, in a subdued voice, and with an air of despondency.

“ I thought, therefore,—I believed,—I *hoped*—that if the repentance he professed were real, he would, when the decencies of society admitted, offer me the best proof of his sincerity, and the only reparation in his power ; by seeking as a wife the woman he had vainly attempted to detach from her duties.”

“ As, Heaven knows, was her due.”

“ I heard from him no more. I saw his name mentioned with honour in the despatches. I knew that he was pursuing with success,—I might say with glory,—his military career.—From Marcus himself, not a word !”

“ He perhaps felt unworthy to address you.— He dreaded a second repulse.”

“ No—the levity of his nature was alone in fault. He had forgotten me.—I waited for him and watched for him ; but he had forgotten me.—In time, I learned to reproach myself for having watched and waited ;— and began to submit myself, without one backward glance, to the exigencies of my position. In the accomplishment of my duties as a daughter and a mother, I entered a new phase of my existence. Thanks be to Heaven, dear Lady Meadowes, I soon forgot him in my turn.”

This last assertion was, perhaps, of all the narrative, the only word that did not bring instant conviction to her auditress. There was no need, however, to open the eyes of poor Rachel Burton to the real origin of the tears that were, even now, flowing from her eyes.— Enough that she was able to thank her warmly for her confidence ; and fully assent to the assertion that, united with a man so unprin-

cipléd,—so given up to the impulse of the moment,—poor Amy would have been a miserable wife.

“ You will tell her as much of all this as is good for her to know,” said Mrs. Burton, having gradually recovered her composure.—“ I own it deeply grieved me when I heard that the misdeeds of her cousin were crowned by the conquest of her innocent affections. He used to boast that he was ‘ on the best terms with Luck.’—Those who lean on such a shadow for support, sooner or later find themselves grovelling in the dust.”

Lady Meadowes did not feel justified in relating to her companion the humiliation lately undergone by this grievous offender.—But it was agreed between them that, previous to repairing to Brighton, where the good Rector was to join his daughter as soon as an efficient substitute could be procured for his Radensford duties, little Sophia, the new heiress, should be brought to visit her dear Amy and her kind friend Lady Meadowes.

“And then,” added Mrs. Burton, at parting, “I shall have leisure to give you news of your old neighbourhood, of which I must now glance over the details. Old Nichols, as you doubtless know, has established a Meadows Arms in the village.—Neighbour Savile has followed her beloved old master to the grave.—The Manor House has been empty throughout the autumn; and Lady Harriet has been on a visit to her sister at Horndean Court, where there has been a sad family affliction. The eldest of Lady Louisa’s daughters,—a young girl, not yet introduced into society,—has disgraced the family by an elopement of the most unfortunate nature; and Lady Harriet has been remaining ever since with her sister, affording such consolation as lies in her power.—But Lady Harriet herself, I suspect, is really as much mortified as the parents. It does not appear to have entered into the minds of either of the sisters that a member of *their* family could possibly stoop to a plebeian attachment.”

“The lover then is of a rank beneath their own?”

“The son of the gamekeeper. Judge of Lady Louisa’s horror—of Lady Harriet’s consternation:—they, such slaves to public opinion!”

“May the blow soften their hearts,” said Lady Meadows, in a saddened voice. “They have been smitten where they were most vulnerable.—And Meadows Court,—poor old Meadows Court?” she added, with averted eyes, and in a faltering voice.

“I scarcely liked to pronounce the name till you broached the subject.—Meadows Court is undergoing the most complete repair.—The gardens have been completed; the paddock is newly fenced—”

“Sir Jervis, then, is coming to reside there?”

“No, it has been taken, on a long lease, by a stranger: a friend or relative of Lady Harriet Warneford. She is not expected to return home

from Horndean, till the new tenant is installed at Meadows Court.”

“And you do not know his name?” said Lady Meadows, greatly interested.

“I have heard,—but not from good authority—only from the supposition of poor Nichols—that the new tenant is no other than our old acquaintance,—Mr. Eustace.”

CHAPTER XIV.

IT was a serious loss to Hamilton Drewe when Captain Davenport vacated the bachelor apartments which enabled him to exercise some sort of control over, or rather oppose some species of drawback, to the vagaries of that budding poet.—For poor Drewe was as loving and docile to the bold hand that castigated him as the Hippopotamus to his keeper ; and when the last van of luggage was removed, under the inspection of the model-servant, to Spring Gardens, he felt that the faithless Marcus had left the world to darkness and to him.

He even attempted, that foggy afternoon, a sonnet as black as Erebus, to the empty spaces on the wall where the pictures of the aristocratic artist had left a faded trace on the paper. But, having run himself aground at the eleventh line, for want of a rhyme to gloom more rhythmical than Simoom, he renounced the attempt ;—threw off his Turkish robe, girded up his loins, dined mopishly at the Athenæum, and by way of *chasse café*, took three miles of mud and patience on his road to the enjoyment of Shakspeare made Easy, at the theatre once nautical, now royal, Sadlers' Wells.

Secure from Davenport's unsparing irony, he now gradually returned to the affectations which Marcus had "scotch'd not kill'd."—His love-locks were again unpleached : and on his table, there re-appeared mysterious tomes of flimsy Poesies, pretending to Miltonic sublimity because quaintly printed in *rouge et noir*, and bound literally in boards, as wooden as the heads of their pretentious writers ;—masquerading triflers, like some beardless Master Slender, made up,

stage-fashion, to impersonate King Lear — German duodecimos, written in the worst taste, printed on the worst paper, and setting forth the worst philosophy of æstheticism run mad, were lavishly scattered about, to indicate to the initiated that the *Geistreich-feine Milde* of Goethe was duly appreciated by the Timon-Alcibiades of Bury Street. Works of imagination from the fanciful printing presses of Berlin and Munich, illuminated in all the colours of the rainbow, or of a Puseyite's vision of cathedral windows, did their best to convert the human mind into a kaleidoscope:—all the frippery and foppery, in short, of literature,—all the shreds and patches of an age which, instead of sharing Milton's solemn veneration for “a good book” as “the precious life of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life,” thinks only of the gilt morocco or blind-tooled calf in which it will figure to advantage on a library table; or the wood-cuts or vignettes which convert its pure margin into the picture-alphabet or fairy-tale-book of the nursery.

Cheered by the adulation of the six Knights of the Standish, who, while smoking his Havannahs, and imbibing his Curaçoa and Maraschino, satisfied him that it would be a sin if he allowed the waters of Helicon to slip through his fingers, poor Drewe began to court the Muses, with polygamic intentions fatal to the honest wedlock indispensable to engender legitimate issue. He was already at work on a Pamphlet for the million—intituled “Incineration,”—advocating urn-burial and the suppression of public cemeteries in the style of Sir Thomas Brown *done* brown;—on an Epic, intituled “The Rose and Cross,” of which Odyssey it may be inferred that Martin Luther was the hero;—and an Essay on the Internal resources of Turkey, (to which Mark Davenport, at his last visit to his fellow-lodger, had waggishly appended in a foot-note, Truffles,)—when Wroughton Drewe, who was always urging his ex-ward not to waste his “fine mind” upon such ephemeral trash, but to write for posterity, persuaded him to under-

take a study of Hannibal's passage of the Alps,—for which he, Wroughton Drewe, Esq., F.R.G.S., undertook to furnish the geology. A famous *olla podrida* would the brains of the poor young man have presented, could they have been exposed to the magnifying lens of some scientific dunderhead!—

He had already profited by one of his kinsman Wroughton's suggestions, since his Turkish fez was first introduced to the reader, at the cost of as many thousand pounds as he had works in embryo:—having been persuaded to stand a contested election for a borough sunk up to its ears in the Slough of Corruption; in spite of which indication of ignorance and stolidity, he had scattered over its mob, from the hustings, flowers of rhetoric,—interwoven with choice quotations from Schiller and Dante;—much as if he had showered gardenias and tea-roses over the styes of Mr. Huxtable's pigs.

Of course, he lost his election. But he did not lose his temper. His nature was as kindly

as his muse was crabbed. But had Mark Davenport still predominated over his head from the second floor, he would not have been allowed to expend five thousand pounds on making a fool of himself, when the thing can be done for a thousandth fraction of the figure. Neither would he have been permitted to preside at maccaronie suppers where both the wit and wine of the would-be *beaux-esprits* and *bon-viveurs* were alike spurious. Whatever the eccentricities of Davenport, the gentleman always predominated in his proceedings.—Not the *fine* gentleman: but the individual created by the wear and tear of a public school, and substantiated by the learning and slang of the university. And he would as soon have thought of picking the pocket of the mock-turtle man of genius, as of instigating him to a discharge of literary squibs and crackers. If he took pleasure in making his neighbour occasionally dance on the tight-rope, he did not call in the public to be witnesses of the exposure.

Among those of the “better brothers” who

occasionally visited the bachelor retreat of young Drewe, was Hargood :—less perhaps to investigate his literary progress, than to ascertain whether tidings ever reached him from Ilford Castle. It is even whispered in the purlieus of Bury Street, that the man of letters occasionally addressed his greetings to the discarded cockatoo ; who had fallen from her high estate as the artist's best companion, to become sole auditress of Drewe's laborious rhymings, and the washed-out platitudes of his parasites : till her response of "*Nullus go-us !*" to one of the Addisonian periods of the great critic so shocked the ears of the pedant, that he thenceforward left her unquestioned on her perch ; and

Dodone inconsultée ne rendit plus d'oracles.

Unluckily, Cocotte's new master was quite as incapable of supplying the information wanted, as Cocotte herself.—Hamilton Drewe knew nothing of Davenport or his proceedings ; and all that Hargood could do to punish him for his ignorance, was to turn his seamy side out-

wards when extracts from the Incineration pamphlets were poured into his ears ; assuring the young philanthropist that his failures were more flagrant when he floundered in prose, than when he lisped in numbers ;—that his English was remarkably German, and his German far from germane to the matter.—In short, he recommended poor Drewe to do with his essay what *he* wanted to do with the remains of all Christian people : *i. e.* commit them to the flames.

One day, a week or so after the last of these visits, which, like an early frost, seemed to blacken and wither down the premature shoots of the poet's laurels ; one of those December days when London is at its hatefullest and the atmosphere seems doubly dense from coming snow and impending Christmas bills, unannounced and impetuous as a whirlwind, Mark Davenport rushed into Drewe's apartment, and threw himself on the sofa ; while Cocotte recognising in ecstasy her umquhile master kept screaming from her perch " Marcus, old fellow, —Marcus, Marcus !"

“My dear Davenport!” exclaimed the recumbent neophyte, who lay masticating a preparation of *hacschish*, in order to get up the steam for a page of hexameters:—“where, *where* on earth do you start from?”—

“No matter whence I come or whither I am bound, — for I have little leisure for idle gossip,” said Mark, in an accent to which any one who dared to take liberties with him might have ventured to answer ‘Cease, rude Boreas.’ —“I am here to ask a favour of you, Drewe,— a *great* favour!”

Involuntarily, the man of many stanzas glanced towards the wall; where, betrophied in warlike attitude, in company with Malay kreeses and Turkish yataghans, hung a pair of Wogdon’s duelling pistols, to which he had succeeded with his family estates:—nothing doubting that the favour about to be demanded at his hands by his fiery friend, was to accompany him as second, in single combat, to Wimbledon Common.

“You are a gentleman and a good fellow,

Drewe," resumed Davenport,—“though a bit of an—no matter!—*Will* you oblige me?”

“Willingly,—if you will explain yourself,” rejoined Drewe,—who was seldom asked to oblige anybody, unless with his autograph, inscribed on the reverse of a bit of stamped paper.

“I want you to take *this*,” said Davenport, opening his pocket-book and presenting him with a blank cheque upon Coutts, “to fill up as you find occasion.—Take it!” said he, extending the paper (in a hand whose tremulousness sufficiently attested his emotion), on seeing that Drewe was so utterly at a loss to interpret this act of munificence, as to hesitate about accepting the deposit.—“You know the Hargoods—that is, you know Hargood,—you know his pursuits, his necessities,—or at all events, you know those better informed concerning them, who will place you *au courant* of his wants.—To supply them, use my money as you will.—I am going away,—to leave town,—to leave England,—to leave Europe.—I scarcely know indeed at

present *whither* I am bound.—But you must represent me here, Drewe. All I ask,—and I know no man's word of honour on whom I can more fully rely,—is that you will never name to any living soul the nature of this interview; or risk the discovery of the source of the benefits secretly conferred on Hargood."

"This is a serious commission, my dear fellow," said Drewe, unspeakably surprised.—"I must think twice ere I accept it."

"No!—Like a good fellow, close with it at once."

"But reflect that, in the first place, some unexpected chance may bring your share in the business to light; when the vials of wrath you are likely to pour on my head would be no trifle.—In the next, that if Hargood, as haughty in his way as Coriolanus, were to find out that you were insinuating alms into his wallet, an eruption of Vesuvius would be a mild alternative.—No! take back your cheque, my dear Davenport.—By Jove, I daren't!"

"I might have expected it!" cried Marcus,

starting up. "Everything and everybody is against me! I haven't a friend I can trust to in the world!"

Drewe surveyed him with amazement.—He, Mark Davenport, the bold,—the overbearing,—the triumphant,—the successful,—who "drew out Leviathan with an hook, and bored the jaw of Behemoth with a thorn;"—he, the crusher of other men's feelings, the anatomist of other men's thoughts, the analyser of other men's purposes, to be so thoroughly cast down! The kind-hearted lyrist could scarcely set bounds to his sympathy. His voice became troubled,—his eyes tearful.—It might be that the influence of the *hacschish* had its share in streaking his sallow cheek with hectic spots and veiling his glazy eyesight.—But Marcus was deeply moved by his apparent warmth of feeling.

"I will do what you wish, Davenport," said Drewe, resignedly. "Only explain yourself as clearly as possible, to avoid all chance of my mistaking you. For, as you were about to say just now,—I am but an ass,—especially in

matters of business: and you are not the man to be tolerant of a fellow-creature's deficiency of judgment.—So tell me,—how much am I to devote to the exigencies of Hargood and his family,—and how is it to be applied?”

“How *much*?—Hundreds, — thousands if you will.—Anything within compass of my fortune,—the cypher of which you know:—as much at all events as can be converted to his advantage without exciting his suspicions.”

“You have answered only half my question. How is all this to be done?”

“A poet, and so wanting in invention? It is to be done like Ariel's spiriting,—‘gently.’—Is anything easier than, in this town, to forward to a house the objects wanting to its comfort, as from a nameless friend?—To what purpose are red-men and ticket-porters,—to what purpose parcel-delivery companies, or railway-vans?—My dear Drewe, I don't wonder your play was damned, if for such plotting and stage-business as this you are incompetent.”

“I am glad, at all events, to see you more

cheerful," said Drewe, rallying a little.—“ You almost frightened me, just now. But I really believe you use me as a damper, and come and tame down your rage upon poor me, as the Roman Empress used to try the strength of her poisons upon slaves.”

“ You, too, are recovering your courage, since you can afford to be pedantic !—” replied Marcus; shrugging his shoulders. “ But whether I draw it mild or bitter, be certain, Drewe, that I have a sincere regard for you. I should love you better if you would go and spud up weeds in your neglected Northumbrian farms, instead of digging hopelessly on in this over-worked garden of the Hesperides. Perhaps by the time I return, you may have wisely exchanged your ever-pointed Mordan for a bill-hook? And now, good-bye—God bless you, Drewe.—We may perhaps never meet again. Take care of poor Cocotte for my sake. Let her have her almond daily, and don't corrupt her ears by nonsense. Good-bye. I sail — that is, I steam to night from Southampton—a first

class screw—letter A. 1. I am going sketch-making to the Ionian Islands. Better for me, and all belonging to me, if we went down at once, like the poor Amazon.”

Another second, and he had disappeared. Hamilton Drewe felt as if a rocket had gone up, — or a diving-bell down,—leaving him a gaping, powerless spectator. But that the *hacschish* was inflaming his veins with its subtle poison, and subduing his brain with its narcotic ascendancy, he would have endeavoured to follow him, and offered to accompany him to his place of embarkation.

As it was, he only sank powerless into his lounging-chair;—as much excited yet as fairly overcrowded, as Dominie Sampson after his interview with the terrible Meg Merrilies;—while still Cocotte kept muttering elegiacally on the perch—“ Marcus, old fellow!—Marcus, Marcus !”

CHAPTER XV.

CHRISTMAS, so great an impostor in its usurped character of an epoch of universal peace, proved indeed a season of probation to those two young cousins, whose beauty and merit, though not without votaries, had failed to accomplish a single object prized by either.

Hargood had succeeded,—for when does a quietly arbitrary man fail to succeed,—in determining his sister's removal to town.—She now resided near him, in an ill-furnished roomy lodging in Golden Square; as if to place herself

and her daughter more immediately within reach of his objurgation. Seldom a day passed that, in spite of his occupations, he did not find ten minutes' leisure to break in upon them, and find fault : if fine, because they were keeping house ; if they had been out, because the weather looked uncertain. He was often angry with Amy for reading ; because, if engaged in needlework, she might have amused her mother with conversation. But if he happened to discover her at work, he blamed still more an employment which encouraged Lady Meadowes to fatigue herself by reading aloud for her entertainment.—Amy was beginning to understand why her Cousin Mary often came to them with such harassed looks and heavy eyes. Nor was she much puzzled to discover why her two young cousins, Ned and Frank, on their arrival at home for the Christmas holidays, found so pleasant the dull drawing-rooms in Golden Square ; because it contained no moral crank to which they could be sentenced.

Mary was thankful to her cousin and aunt for the kindness with which these intrusions were tolerated.—From her heart of hearts, she thanked them that the two motherless boys were able, for the first time, to apprehend the value of home, and understand the meaning of the word holiday.—Under Lady Meadows's wing, they were able to indulge their youthful fancies ; wandering far and far away, out of foggy London,—out of blue-booked England—into the land of Faëry :—into the magic realm of Scott's novels,—into the wilds of Arctic or Australian adventure. How their young eyes sparkled over the pages of *Robinson Crusoe* ; in which, if placed for the first time in the hands of the eldest Hargood, he would have seen only a book to review !

Amy, on her part, was keenly alive to the affectionate interest maintained towards her by her cousin. Intuitive perception had warned her of the jealousy of which she was at first the object : for her own wounded heart emulated this defeaturing sentiment so long as she

beheld in Mary Hargood the envied object pre-engrossing the affections of Marcus. But no sooner did the *sœur-grise* of the studio perceive that her father was becoming still severer towards Amy than he had ever been towards herself, than she became her unflinching champion and advocate; just as Amy, on learning that her Cousin Mark had quitted England,—perhaps for years,—perhaps for ever,—turned spontaneously towards the being he loved best on earth, as towards a guardian angel.

They sought each other, in short, with reciprocal affection and to their mutual advantage. Each sisterless,—they became as sisters. The strength of mind of the one,—the tenderness of heart of the other,—could afford to amalgamate without loss to either.

To Mary, the mere detail of Amy's daily life at Meadows Court was a page of the choicest poetry. Every one has heard the mournful answer of the Birmingham child when examined at the National School—"Flowers, child,

you must have *seen* flowers?"—"Yes, but never *growing!*"—Such was nearly the condition of Mary Hargood. The nearest approach she had seen to the majesty of nature was in the landscapes of Claude or Turner; and to listen to Amy's vivid description of the beechen avenue at Meadowes Court, the old chase at Burdans with its ferns and lichens,—its orchises and anemones,—its birds and squirrels,—its "spotted snakes" with shifting skins,—its urchins and newts all breathing to Mary's ear of the Midsummer Night's Dream rather than of vulgar experience, was as if a minstrel were reciting. Gusts of the sweet breath of the country seemed to visit a cheek too long "in populous city pent." Mary Hargood could much more easily picture to herself Zenobia in chains, Medea hanging over her cauldron, Regulus surveying his torture-cask, or Jason charming the dragon, than bring before her mind's eye a living landscape of wood and wold.—Her studies rendered her familiar with the awful features of Jupiter, or

the triumphant grace of Venus.—A woodcutter, or gleaner, or the savage wildness of any other “ dweller out of doors,” was far harder to imagine.

All the advantage, however, was not on Amy's side. When her talk was ended of homely scenes such as Gray and Goldsmith have described in song, or Izaak Walton in prose, and her own turn came for drawing or for stitching, Mary used to recite to her chosen passages from Massinger and Jonson, Corneille and Molière ; imposed as tasks by her father in her childhood, and now familiar to her lips as her national language.—Her declamation was of the highest order. She enunciated these noble passages with that spontaneity of intuition, the want of which, owing to the overburthened memories of actors, is one of the chief deteriorations of the public stage.

Nor were gayer inspirations wanting. At an earlier period of Hargood's career, when his wife was still living, and insisted on occasionally collecting around him guests of their own class of life, Mary had witnessed pleasant scenes of

mimicry and mirth; rapidly caught by her quick perceptions, and drawn from the stores of memory for the amusement of her cousin. She could tell a story, enlivened by the polyphonic changes of the elder Mathews,—or rehearse the *complainte* of Monsieur de la Palisse, with all the quaint solemnity of Texier.—Before strangers, nothing would have induced her to attempt these mummeries.—But while Helena and Hermia were playing the “double cherry, seeming parted,” in her quiet studio, during the absence of Dionysius Hargood, she refrained from no effort that could bring a smile to the saddened cheek of Amy.

The nature of the two cousins was of too refined an order to admit of indulging in vulgar confidences about lovers and conquests, such as are occasionally audible in the boudoirs of May Fair. There were reasons, indeed, for a more than common reserve between them.—The name of Marcus, for instance, was impossible to pronounce. Once, when Amy adverted to some letter which had just reached them from Lady

Davenport, dwelling with fond partiality on the merits and charms of her dear Olivia, Mary could not restrain a half-envious ejaculation of:—"You are fortunate, Amy,—you are indeed rich in cousins."

But it was not of Olivia Davenport Mary Hargood was thinking;—still less, of Mark.

A nice observer might have been amused, perhaps, to perceive that, unconsciously to himself, Hargood's appreciation of his daughter was gradually rising.—Had some frank speaker adverted to the fact, he would probably have ascribed his increased approbation to the disinterested spirit she had displayed in her rejection of worldly distinctions. But it was not really so. He now saw in her one who might have been, had she chosen, and might still be, if she chose, the associate and equal of that aristocratic class which he opposed only under the instigations of wounded pride.

He was aware,—for the vicissitudes of his public avocations often brought him into collision with men of the highest rank,—that no

class of society contains a larger portion of administrative talent, of refined taste, of generous purposes, than the nobility of England;—and above all, of the tact and courtesy which brings all these to bear, like the unguent indispensable to keep in movement all complex machinery. Hugh Davenport was far from the only man of his caste to whose abilities and intentions he rendered justice.—And to know that Mary, had she so wished it, might have walked in silk attire for the rest of her days, hand in hand with one of the privileged, seemed to affix on her a hall stamp of sterling value, guaranteeing the purity of the gold.

He was even beginning to judge less highly of the sweet little niece who had failed to obtain a similar certification. It extorted from him some peevish remark whenever Lady Meadows seemed to hold *her* daughter exonerated from certain duties, all but menial, which he strictly exacted from his own. The incomes of their parents were nearly on a par. Why was one to be more fastidious than the other?

But when in Mary's presence he once gave utterance to the same opinion, her honest indignation was not to be silenced.

“ *Why?* Because Amy has been reared in the lap of luxury,—with servants to wait upon her,—with friends to idolise her :—as the heiress of Meadows Court,—as the spoiled child of doating parents.—Whereas I have roughed it through life ; and scarcely know the difference between white bread and brown.”

“ Amy Meadows has now attained woman's estate, and should understand her new position,” persisted Hargood, gruffly. “ It is time she took a lesson out of your book, Mary, and turned her hands to useful purposes.”

“ It is a shame to carry a porcelain vase to the well as you would an earthen pitcher,” rejoined Mary. “ Amy's nature, so instinct with delicacy and refinement, would wither up if she were compelled to labour as I have laboured. God has appointed a different vegetation, father, to the hill and the valley ; and a different temperament to the enjoying and the

working class. Don't quarrel with Amy. She was born to be sweet, and dear, and ornamental. It makes my poor aunt happy only to look at her. It makes *me* happy only to listen to her. I am persuaded some auspicious destiny is in store for her. We are told that

spirits are not finely touched

Save to fine issues.

A being so formed to diffuse happiness as my Cousin Amy, cannot have been intended to waste her charms and talents in hemming dusters and chronicling small beer. When I look at her, father, in her *robe de bure*, the 'All hail, Macbeth! that shall be king hereafter,' of the weird women of Forres, comes to my lips in the shape of 'Porphyrogenita! thou wert born to the purple, and in the purple shalt thou die. Thou art too noble for any humbler tenement.' "

Hargood's rage was now irresistible.

"This foolish girl is making you as romantic

as herself," cried he. "But beware, Mary!—People must have clothes to their backs before they can indulge in vagaries and megrims.—Enough that we have two porcelain vases in the family. You and I must not forget that 'we are of the earth, earthy.'"

But it was not by his daughter only, that Hargood's patience was just then fated to be tried.—So practical a man, measuring both time and people by money's worth, was not likely to be tolerant of the importunate espionage with which he was pursued by Hamilton Drewe.—

In what he considered the conscious discharge of the duty he had undertaken towards his exiled friend, the zealous poet kept dogging the steps of Hargood, with his blank cheque in his pocket; intent on discovering the foot of clay or vulnerable heel lacking a lamb's wool sock.—How was he to ascertain what might be the necessities of the Hargood family, unless he could penetrate into their interior, and discover whether they were hungry and wanting to be

fed, or naked and wanting to be clothed? Wherever Hargood turned his steps, followed this troublesome appendage! At the meetings of the learned societies whose initials were legion, where the two Drewes (*Canis major* and *Canis minor*, both erudite puppies) were as essential as subscribers as himself as reporter, he was sure to find the poet fidgeting at his elbow.—Whether the lecturer were describing the reliques found in the tombs of the Pharaohs, or classifying the strata on the height of Popocatepetl, if Hargood did but turn his head while screwing down the lead of his patent pencil, *there* smiled the trivial, insignificant face of Hamilton Drewe!—He began at last to feel almost afraid of drawing out his handkerchief, lest the Homer of the ‘Rose and Cross’ should emerge with it from his pocket, and roll over like Vathek’s dwarf, upon the floor.

Now there was very little of the Man of Uz in Edward Hargood; and it was astonishing how a being so slender in mind and body as Hamilton Drewe, could venture to confront the

thunder-storms levelled at him, while pursuing his courteous aggravations.—Though Hargood had ceased to reply to the questions, frivolous and vexatious as those of a parliamentary committee, or college tutor, or catechising curate, which Drewe was perpetually discharging at him, except by the most snappish monosyllables,—a “yes” or “no,” impelled as by a percussion cap,—still, true to his promise, the faithful hound went on licking the hand of the tyrant, and dogging his heels.

One day, one glittering frosty day in January, either because the cheque was burning in his pocket, or because Cocotte at breakfast time, cheered by a gleam of sunshine, had indulged in her usual cry of “Marcus, old fellow!—Marcus, Marcus!” so as to rouse up a thousand echoes in the sympathetic bosom of Hamilton Drewe, he started off, resolved to penetrate at all hazards into the sanctuary in Soho, where abided the “family” forming the Co. of the firm recommended to his protection.—The maiden

sister, or aunt, or whosoever might be the presiding genius of the place, should be coaxed or coerced into explaining the domestic cares to which the poet attributed the frowns and peevishness he had of late seen lowering on the brow of Hargood.

Leaning upon the huge gold-headed Malacca cane, almost large enough for a beadle, which he was in the habit of wielding as if it constituted his wand of office as Chamberlain of the Muses, and buttoned to the chin in a dolman lined with sables which he had brought back with him from the Balkan, he addressed himself so strenuously to the weazened maid, whose appointment as Cerberus was beginning to be no sinecure, that half-a-sovereign obtained him access to the house.

“I don’t know whether you means Miss Mary or Miss Amy, Sir,” said she, having pocketed the baksheesh insinuated into her palm by the visitor, whom she knew not whether to class as a play-actor, a painter’s

model, or a quack-doctor.—“ But you’ll find ’em both together, Sir, in master’s room.”

And together he found them, seated side by side at Hargood’s old leather-covered table; their heads inclined, so closely that they might have been comprised in a medallion, over a volume of Callot’s etchings borrowed by her father from an eminent printseller at the request of Mary;—who was pointing out to her cousin in the series of Spanish Mendicants, the origin of innumerable modern plagiarisms; when the sudden opening of the door and the announcement of “ Mr. Drewe,” caused them to look up;—exhibiting to the poet a brighter Vision of Fair Women than Watteau, Redgrave, or Frank Stone ever put upon canvas,—or Tennyson upon paper.

Dryden’s proverbial hero, “ the fool of Nature,” did not stand more stupidly transfixed, when first he caught sight of Iphigenia!—The latest echo evoked by Cocotte in his bosom seemed to reiterate in tones most

significant,—“ Marcus, old fellow !—Marcus, Marcus !” on discovering, at a glance, the origin of his friend Davenport’s munificence, in the lovely objects before him.

The two girls, on the other hand, were scarcely less struck by the singular figure that presented itself: — the long-haired, — moustachioed,—be-furred,—be-frogged incognito ;— something between Beniowski escaped from Siberia, in the frontispiece to a cheap edition of his memoirs, and Tekeli, as performed at Her Majesty’s Theatre, Drury Lane. Since Amy Meadows’s last encounter with the independent gentleman so liberal of “ boquets,” she had never beheld a more ludicrous specimen of the severer sex.

As he stood blushing, tiptoeing, and twisting in his hands his somewhat broad-brimmed beaver, Mary Hargood almost expected to hear him break out into exclamations of “ O sweet Anne Page !” Nor was his self-possession restored when, finding him still speechless, she

rose and accosted him ; her noble head, crowned with its rich black braid, making him fancy himself in the presence of a queen of Nature's making. Since his memorable *fiasco* on the hustings, never had he felt so much as if his legs were made of cotton, and his tongue of flue.

The last male intruder on Mary Hargood's privacy was Mark Davenport ;—that ready-witted, ready-voiced Leonatus, who had very soon contrived to make her feel herself at home in her own apartments :—and whose “garment, whose meanest garment,” possessed more character and substance than the whole composition of the Cloten before her.

“ You probably wish to see my father, Sir ?” said she. “ You will find him at his business chambers in St. Martin's Lane.”

“ Pardon me, Madam ; that is, I—I *do* wish to see him,—that is I—I have the honour to be particularly known to him—But if I have the pleasure of now addressing his—his family,

—it is to them—that is—by Captain Davenport's express desire, I—I—”

“ Captain Davenport ? ” exclaimed Amy, starting up from the volume of Callot over which she was endeavouring to conceal her merriment.—“ You can perhaps give us news of my Cousin Mark ! ”

“ ‘ *Cousin Mark.* ’ (‘ Marcus, old fellow, Marcus, Marcus ! ’ again significantly repeated the echo in the mind of poor Drewe. “ And this mystery, these charming cousins,—he kept to himself ! ”)

But the spell was now in some degree broken ; and he replied in a more coherent manner to the milder-looking of the two beauties.

“ I wish it were in my power to afford you the smallest intelligence. His sudden departure from England caused as much uneasiness to myself, as to his numerous friends,—*and family,*” added the poet, with a profound inclination of the head towards the fair kinswomen of “ Cousin Mark.”

“You are at least acquainted with his destination,” said Amy, impatiently.

“He spoke of Egypt,—Australia,—” Hamilton Drewe remembered that there were other places suggested by Marcus, which it might not be decorous to name.—“But he chiefly talked of a sketching tour in the Ionian Islands.”

“You have not heard from him then, since he quitted London?”

“Not exactly. But the ‘Orinoco,’ in which he embarked, arrived at—”

“Yes, we know, we know!—Of that, the public journals apprised us,” interrupted Mary Hargood.—“But I do not yet exactly understand the motive of your visit here?”

Again poor Cymon was beginning to quake.—Another investigating look from those large dark eyes, and he was a gone ’coon!—But the case was desperate; and with as strong an effort of nature as if, with a fresh sheet of cream-laid before him, and a new goosequill in his hand, he were about to lay the foundation

stone of a Shelleyan lyric, he informed her that, at the moment of quitting England for ever, Captain Davenport had charged him with the duty of watching over Mr. Hargood and his family, as the objects dearest to him on earth.

Though Mary could not but consider the guardian selected for her, somewhat strangely chosen, she was touched by the forgiving spirit which had suggested the appointment.

“I am afraid, Mr. Drewe,” said she, still struggling with a smile at the oddity of his appearance and address,—and the locks curling up on either side the central parting of his hair, like the waves in a bad picture of the Passage of the Red Sea,—“I am afraid that, like diplomatists in general, you have somewhat overstepped your mission.—I can scarcely imagine that Captain Davenport instructed you to *call* here, since he was not himself a visiting acquaintance.”

He was just warming up into courage to

state that some cases were exceptional,—that great minds were superior to vulgar conventions,—when a glance of Miss Hargood's towards the door,—a glance full of mirth and malice,—caused him to turn round. And lo ! Edward Hargood, looking very much like the didactic apparition in the *Haunted Man*, stood in an imposing attitude by his side.

Like Nicol Jarvie in his interview with Helen Macgregor, the terrified man endeavoured to conceal his dismay under an assumption of familiarity.

“He had called hoping to find his friend Hargood,—and not finding him, was on the point of returning. But since his friend Hargood had so opportunely returned,” he added, taking a much begilded volume from his pocket, “he would not neglect the object of his visit : which was to recommend to his critical indulgence a new comic serial work by his friend Dick Dodsley, author of ‘Fast and Slow, or the Dodgers,’ illustrated by

Cruikshank.— That is *a* Cruikshank — not *the* Cruikshank.”

“ A very indefinite article, indeed !” ejaculated Hargood, who was in one of his most volcanic humours :—having just returned from a visit to his sister, whom he found full of pleasant anticipations from the expected arrival in town of the Davenports. “ But you must really excuse me, Mr. Drewe, from dipping my pen in the same puddle with those literary associates of yours, who seem to confound the Pierian spring with a bowl of gin-sling or whisky-toddy !—I do not profess to understand slang.—I leave it to dustmen and cab-drivers.—I have some difficulty, I confess, in following even Thackeray and Dickens ; though one is a man of education, the other, a man of genius.—But when it comes to the detestable school they have founded,—to the rinsings of the punch-bowl,—the ashes of the cheroot,—the peel of the forbidden fruit,—my gorge rises at it !—So long, Sir, as we have classical authors on our shelves,

—a legitimate drama bequeathed us by our ancestors, and immortal specimens of high art to elevate our tastes and understandings, I do not see why we should descend to such trash as ‘Fast and Slow,’—the monstrosities of Adelphi farces, or the vulgarisms of Phiz and Cruikshank.”

Hamilton Drewe felt very much as if an elephant’s foot were upon his neck:—or as Bozzy may have felt under the influence of one of Samuel Johnson’s knock-me-down diatribes.

It scarcely needed for Hargood to add, “But I fear I must wish you good morning. We are interrupting the occupation of these ladies,”—to stimulate him to a profound parting salutation to the fair *protégées* of Cousin Mark, a hurried farewell to the Rhadamanthus of criticism—and a hasty exit.

It would have been a dangerous inroad upon Captain Davenport’s balance at Coutts’s, had Hamilton Drewe proceeded to fill up the blank

cheque in favour of the Hargood family, while his feelings were perturbed by the majestic and intelligent beauty of Mary Hargood; or the sweet countenance of the cousin already eliciting from his heart a jealous echo of Cocotte's evocations of—"Marcus, old fellow! Marcus, Marcus!"

What would he not have given to have been intitled to call cousins with so fair an angel!—

END OF VOL. II.

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