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THE
HISTORY OF A FLIRT.

RELATED BY HERSELF.

“Disdain and Scorn ride sparkling in her eyes,
Misprizing what they look on ; and her wit
Values itself so highly, that to her
All matter else seems weak : she cannot love,
Nor take no shape nor project of affection,
She is so self-endear’d.”

SHAKSPEARE.

Second Edition.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,
GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1841.

HISTORY OF A FLIRT.

CHAPTER I.

IF there is a portion of time composed exclusively of flutter, useless amusements, and insufficient existence, it is comprised in the life of a Flirt. All other vicious courses may have originated in feelings at first honourable in intention, though depraved in after life through want of moral energy; or they may have arisen in unselfishness, though they terminated in vice. A gambler might hope to win a sum to meet the accomplishment of some purpose amiable in design, though futile in practice; and the drunkard might intend to be simply jovial in the infancy of his career. But a flirt has no

apology to plead : her actions originate in the purest selfishness ; they tend to no end ; they have no motive but self-gratification, grafted upon the wounded feelings of others ; and the only reflection which springs from such a turn of mind is, the bitter thought of having given pain, inflicted torture, and separated objects who might have been happy, without gaining the expected compensation. Disappointment and disgrace become her eventual portion, and the evening of life creeps on without offering a consolation, or securing a friend. This is a state of things hard to be borne, yet it must be endured, for it is earned by the sacrifice of every generous principle, and laboured for at the expense of tranquillity : as we sow, so shall we reap. I remember, at eight years of age I was a flirt in every sense of the word. My brother's playfellows were my earliest quarry ; and I coquetted with undefined but strong feelings of pleasure, if I only drew their attention from kites and balls. To win any notice which might have been directed towards my sisters was triumph to the uttermost ; yet I loved them in my heart, and would not willingly have given them pain under any other circumstances ; but the demon of coquetry was strong within me, and provided that passion was grati-

fied, all was well. But sometimes it was not gratified; it would happen that my happiest efforts failed, when Charlotte with her gentle *insouciance* won the heart I only wished to attract and trifle with; and then anger and revenge urged me to do and say a thousand things I bitterly regret now. Oh! the diary of a flirt is a heartless, hopeless catalogue of vanity and injustice.

Mary, my senior by one year, never interfered with, or understood, my proceedings; her taste was for age and steadiness, the very things I despised; and in all the pride of youth and beauty, she avoided the society of the young, and preferred to sit silent among the elders. In parties, there was Mary listening courteously to tales of other times from turbaned heads; and at balls, there sat Mary smiling sweetly upon the good Mr. Jones, with gray hair, or quiet, excellent Dr. Drinkwater, with cotton in his ears. She could not have chosen more wisely for her own peace, for I never deigned to look at either.

Charlotte, my junior, was indeed my rival; but a more innocent, unconscious rival, could not exist. She was the kindest of human beings, unsuspecting of evil, and indifferent to the homage she received. Her composure

under such circumstances astonished *me*, who delighted in the frothy nothings of compliment, and considered them essential to my reputation. I was in two “untoward affairs” before I quaddrilled in public, which might have operated as a caution; but I entirely declined reflection at that time, and considered them simply as matters of experience. The clergyman of our village had a son, and the lawyer had a nephew; both underwent the ordeal of my notice, and both too easily succumbed. Alfred Jones and young Dyneton had been intimate friends, but were soon bitter enemies, each endeavouring to supplant the other in my favour, while I triumphed in the glory of having caused a rupture between them. And all this was effected without a feeling on my side beyond intolerable vanity. I had not one excuse that could make my conduct respectable; even in the eyes of prejudiced affection it was despicable. Alfred Jones considered my manners sufficiently encouraging to hazard a proposal to my mother. Widows, in rather straitened circumstances, are never very particular in fixing a daughter’s establishment; or it might be that, perceiving my foible, she concluded it safest to give me in marriage to a worthy man; at any rate, she did not make any objections to Alfred’s suit, provided he

could succeed in winning my affections. Alfred flew to me with affectionate earnestness, to detail his successful application, and entreat me to ratify it. I affected the greatest astonishment; I could not conceive on what grounds Mr. Jones presumed to address me. I was all indignation. Alfred looked aghast, and was some minutes struggling for composure. He then asked “why I had admitted his devotion, since I loved him not? why I had always appeared to welcome his arrival, and delay his departure, since I valued him not? and why I had so cruelly and ungenerously tampered with his peace?” I could make no reasonable answer to his reproaches, so I made a flippant one. I told him, “I was not aware of his predilection; I was too young to form so important an engagement; I did not think—I could not suppose—in short, his appeal had startled me—but I hoped it would end here, and that he would soon forget me.” Alfred bowed, and retired in silence; but his look, as he fixed his eyes on my face for one instant, seemed to say, “An enemy hath done this.” The following morning brought the sequel of the storm I had raised. Alfred had sought Mr. Dyneton, reproached him with secretly undermining him in my opinion, and challenged him to mortal

combat. They had met, and Dyneton was severely wounded. The village quiet met a serious disturbance. Such an event as a duel was unknown in its annals; and that such unholy warfare should take place within its precincts, roused the inhabitants to a strict investigation of its cause. In this court of inquiry I made a sorry figure. It was ascertained that my coquetry had raised jealous feelings between two friends; that I had trifled with each, and lost the regard of all. A thousand stories were in circulation, and a thousand circumstances invented, which had no foundation in truth; but in all and each I was the object of unmixed abhorrence. Old Dyneton threatened me with an action; old Jones looked at me in silent indignation; my family lectured me; every one shunned me; and my conscience smote me. I really was low-spirited for some time, and made strong resolves never to coquet more. I had little opportunity to put my good resolutions in practice, for I was never again received into intimacy with my neighbours; and the tide of opinion set in so strongly against me, that my mother judged it right to change the scene. Another long lecture upon coquetry, and a strong remonstrance against selfishness, and then we all went to Bath.

A large well-furnished house in St. James's Square repaid me for the melancholy I had endured in Gloucestershire. I did not vex my spirit about absent ones. Young Dyneton must in future be doomed to wear a wooden leg, and his friend had not been heard of since the fracas, but I dared to say the latter would re-appear when the event of the duel had blown over; and as to the former, it little signified whether lawyers had legs of flesh or wood; their vocation, in my opinion, was to raise feuds, and widen disturbances, and very little sympathy existed between them and their fellow-creatures. No one would pity him, or blame me; so I laid the unction to my soul, and was at rest.

We were very fashionable at Bath. "The handsome Vansittarts," was our cognomen, and it procured us more than welcome to all the best parties: Charles was at this time at home, and a gay young dragoon was an accompaniment which raised our value in the eyes of the female portion of society. It was not to be inferred with all these advantages that we shone much in a domestic point of view. We were too highly in fashion, too much sought, to admit of any leisure hours; and all our plans of education—finishing masters, and accomplishments, were doomed, like many ill-fated bills in the

house, "to lie on the table." We had each a friend too, who demanded our superfluous hours, and as the life of a female always takes its colouring from the first choice of associates, I will sketch our characters, in the persons of those who held the strongest influence over us.

Mary's confidence was given to a discreet Miss Partington, twelve years her senior, and who was advancing to the confines of youth, which trespass upon middle life. She was pale, and had rather a tendency to a red nose. I never loved her. She detected my schemes at a glance, and once or twice contrived to traverse them. She had also a disagreeable way of putting a home question, when I was least prepared to answer her; I could not conceive how she obtained such an influence with my sister—but Mary always liked odd people.

Charlotte had a somewhat serious turn of mind, and therefore selected a methodist—at least so I designated her, because all her remarks were rational, and all her tales had morals. She was exquisitely pretty, but so calm withal, that I had no feeling but ridicule for Emma Brereton.

My own friend was of other metal. I vowed eternal friendship to a dashing, well-dressed, lively Irish widow of quality, whose opinions

were admired and adopted by me as rules of right. Lady Anne O'Brien was the cynosure of my eyes, and we felt a strong interest in each other, if those feelings may be so denominated, which originated in a mutual flirtation with Sir William De Burgh, who was at that time the *ultima Thule* of young ladies upon their preferment. I do not exactly remember how, when or where, our friendship took its rise; there is a freemasonry, I suppose, in coquetry; and its members, despite of situation, gradually approach each other, as clouds appear to point to the setting sun. I was no match, however, for my friend; I was but setting forward on my course, but her powers had reached their zenith; I was a machine in her hands, which suited her purpose to keep in employment, though I believe she must have been amused at my imitative powers. She shot like a meteor across the Bath horizon, while I gazed at the light which dazzled and delighted. Lady Anne had taken a house in Marlborough-buildings, and every thing was conducted there on a princely scale. The parties were very fashionable, if not extremely select, and amongst a certain set, no one could be the "proper sort of thing," who had not passed through the alembic of Marlborough House. There, Sir William

made his daily bow, and the coteries at which Lady Anne and myself presided, soon became themes for envy to dilate upon. In vain my mother and sisters, headed by the Partington, read lectures upon my conduct, and besought me to avoid future regrets, by relinquishing the gay and dissipated hours of idleness patronised by Lady Anne. *Cui bono?* My mother never threatened, and could not insist: her paths were peace, and the gentleness of her nature yielded to my despotic rule. Her gentle administration was amply rewarded in one sense; she was beloved tenderly by all, and none save myself gave her cause for sorrow: I bitterly lamented when the tears chased down her pale cheeks at my delinquencies, but the feeling past away too rapidly, and though my passions might incite me to acts of apparent generosity, the heart lay embedded in its clay of selfishness. Lady Anne was particularly happy in repartee, and I listened to her lively sallies with undisguised admiration. There is something very attractive in creating an agreeable impression, even in ones own self; Lady Anne felt the charm and encouraged the intimacy, till we were rarely separated. Sir William had much to endure from the united attacks of two such confederates, but his heart appeared proof against our bland-

ishments. He stood high in fortune, and was a lover worth securing; but, though ever ready to meet our advance, the baronet continued to retreat in good order as we pressed too forward, and this generalship, so provoking to a coquette, only strengthened our determination to conquer and win the citadel. I was deeply occupied in realizing my wishes, when a conversation, accidentally overheard, changed my plan. I was with my party at Lady Belfont's ball: Sir William and myself were partners, and feeling fatigued, I had taken a seat in a recess, and requested a cup of coffee: Sir William was some minutes absent, and I had full leisure to attend to a dialogue which threw me into a new train of thought.

“I shall win my bet, major,” said a soft voice, “and remember its fulfilment is to be to the letter; I shall be a very Shylock.”

“The time is not expired by half a season,” replied the officer, “and I persist in asserting neither lady will triumph in that quarter.”

“I will double my bet in favour of Louisa Vansittart,” rejoined the soft voice.

“It will never do; neither Lady Anne or Miss Vansittart will succeed, they are too decided in their attacks. No man fears a public announcement of views, and their conduct is little less

than a pointed statement of their intentions. He is amused but not interested: they are taking his heart by a *coup-de-main*, and it's no go. I know De Burgh has too often been the subject of matrimonial speculation to be caught, so you had better conclude the affair unsuccessful."

A laughing and flirty dialogue succeeded, which had no power to fix my attention. I had heard enough to ascertain I was observed and ridiculed, but that did not cause me much uneasiness—my vexation was raised by supposed want of success. I believed the public voice utterly mistaken, but to evidence it required skill. I fancied a little rivalry would at once bring Sir William to order, and suppressing my discontented feelings, I was able to receive the delicate porcelain cup of coffee from his hand, with light and agreeable indifference. I sipped its exhilarating contents, and then rose to take a survey of the ball-room. I saw Mary safely and honourably seated between two old people, to whose ancient history and remarks she was offering undivided attention. Charlotte was dancing merrily with young Brereton, both of them standing *vis-à-vis* to Charles and the pretty Emma. They were the most indefatigable of quadrillers.

“If I can but pique this man into a declaration,” thought I, “how I should triumph over the Bath gossips, and surprise Lady Anne!”

My heart was bent upon succeeding in this most heartless chase, and all my woman’s energies were put forth to effect a lodgment in Sir William’s heart; and to what end? I felt no sentiment of attraction beyond the anxiety which prompted me to attack a man considered invulnerable. I never contemplated becoming his wife, or looked forward beyond the moment of exhibiting him in my chains. Oh! for the moment when I could claim my vassal, and gratify the demands of an overweening vanity!

I suffered an appearance of fatigue to steal over me; Sir William perceived the change, and led me to a seat near the spot where Charlotte was dancing, all animation and artless good-humour.

“How I hate these very large parties!” I exclaimed languidly. “I am weary with their monotony.”

“Miss Vansittart, then, must be weary of compliment and admiration,” insinuated Sir William.

“I seldom listen to either,” was my reply. “I am weary of dancing, weary of talking, and

weariness of mixing among crowds, where there is no object to give one real interest."

"Yet you are an object of interest to many, Miss Vansittart; are you ungrateful, or is it the privilege of beauty to be unable to requite the disquietude it causes?"

"I scarcely know how to frame a reply to your very courteous speech," I laughingly returned, "but Lady Anne shall be my counsel."

Her ladyship was passing at the moment, escorted as usual by a little army of dangles. She caught the sound of her name, and challenged our subject.

"You are retained in the cause of beauty," said Sir William, bowing, "or rather, its queen is requested to pronounce judgment in her own court."

Lady Anne's vivacity never failed her. She drew up her fine showy person, in queen-like dignity, and forming her band of courtiers into a circle, she waited to hear the plaintiff's statement. A whimsical and very amusing dialogue ensued, which attracted every one round our mimic court. A new impetus was given to curiosity; and quadrillers, spectators, and even literati, pressed to the novel exhibition. Charlotte and her partner stood near me, but they

looked gravely on, and did not join in the plaudits lavishly bestowed. I could discern their distaste to the scene of display in which I was engaged; and suddenly quitting Sir William's arm, and taking that of Brereton, I begged him to withdraw me from the noisy assemblage. Charlotte accompanied my transit, and I could perceive Sir William's eyes fixed upon us as we moved from the room into a cooler atmosphere.

“Piqued, or not piqued?” thought I.

My attention was given to Henry Brereton for the first time, as we retired to the lesser and almost deserted drawing-room. I had been frequently in his society—indeed he was a daily inmate in the Square, but my flighty nature had overlooked his claims to merit, or my mind had been otherwise occupied, for he had never impressed me favourably, which probably originated in being only Emma Brereton's brother, as I do not remember having ever entered into conversation with him. My reply to inquiring strangers was always couched in the short sentence—“Oh, he is only Emma Brereton's brother,” and the subject dropped. But this evening I beheld “Emma Brereton's brother” in a different light; for Sir William must be piqued, and there is no possibility of piquing a man to purpose, unless a rival appears on the arena.

Mr. Brereton was the very thing. He was genteel enough to flirt with in public, without feeling ashamed of producing him in one's train, and just the sort of thing to victimize without compunction. A clergyman, and a very steady character, according to the phrase of the day—just the sort of person to make useful, and then pass on to a sister or friend. I was *au fait* at the light badinage which detains a gentleman in attendance, and from which it is difficult to break away, without appearing abrupt. I allowed no pause in our playful dialogue, till the announcement of supper, and then it was impossible to avoid leading Charlotte and myself down stairs. At the supper-table, I equally required devoted attention; I was gay, low-spiritedly, all, and everything by turns, and Mr. Brereton was occupied in proffering those little assiduities which my caprice exacted, but which I intended should produce observation.

Lady Anne and Sir William were stationed nearly opposite to us, and I fancied him already less lively, and less able to answer his partner's vivacity with his usual ease of manner. His eyes, too, were often wandering towards our party. All was as it should be; I continued to give my attention and smiles to Mr. Brereton, and when the hour of separation arrived, I left

the Crescent in full conviction that Sir William De Burgh was restless and unhappy. What a delightful contemplation for me! In the full swell of gratified pride and elation of spirit, I retired to rest, and slept sweetly and profoundly.

My flirtation was much commented upon the following morning. Charles rallied me unmercifully on my new turn of ideas: "You are improving in morality, Miss Louisa; last week a baronet not *sans reproche*, and this week a clergyman in the odour of sanctity. Charlotte was jealous, by Jove!"

A slight suffusion passed across the fair cheek of Charlotte, but she made no reply.

"Well," cried I, laughingly, "I wish to create no disturbance: I will only honour him for a season: I particularly request the loan of his attention for one month, after which I give him to the winds: I shall be particularly weary of him long before the furlough expires."

Charlotte shook her head. "You will have your say, I know, Louisa, but beware of consequences."

"As to that," I replied with hauteur, "Mr. Brereton cannot suppose I require any thing from him beyond amusement: his vanity alone

can be blamed, should he misconstrue my meaning."

"Miss Louisa is right," drily observed Miss Partington, who was now my evil genius: "no one would pity Mr. Brereton under such circumstances."

I gave her such a look! "Spectators," continued she, "are seldom deceived, and motives may be penetrated, while we deem ourselves very cautious, and defy scrutiny."

"How red her nose looks this morning!" thought I, but I had no desire to continue the subject; besides, I was engaged to attend Lady Anne on her airing to Clifton. "My Lady is late," observed Charles.

"Disappointed, perhaps," said that bird of ill omen, the Partington.

"Probably arrested," continued Charles. "Is De Burgh to pay the gay widow's debts, love? I take the liberty of applying to you as her confidante."

This insinuation offended me, and giving way to unjustifiable anger, I accused Charlotte of feelings which she knew but by name: I levelled indirect reproaches at Miss Partington—and disregarding my mother's presence, I left the room with an air of offended dignity.

I unbosomed my sorrow to Lady Anne, as we bowled towards Clifton in her showy barouche, and met her deepest sympathy—at least she said so. She introduced me to her companion, Monsieur Adolphe, as I entered the carriage, and then proceeded to rally me on the flirtation of the previous evening.

As to de Burgh, she assured me he was a changed man—what was I doing!—I need not fear confessing before Adolphe—he knew little of our language—had been poor O'Brien's intimate friend, private secretary to Talleyrand; an *attaché*, however, highly gifted, but would not understand one word of our conference. She was sure I was piquing de Burgh, was I not? and what was worse, I was succeeding.

“Am I?” quickly passed my lips, which at once detected my plan, and flushed my cheek with pleasure. “Then I defy the Partington!”

“Oh! who minds Miss Partington?” said Lady Anne. Do you know I have discovered a penchant in that quarter for de Burgh. Have you never observed a little *empressement* in her manner, a very little additional flush in her nose, when he is present?”

“No, I have not.”

“Unsuspecting creature!—But I am serious,

and advise you to follow up the impression you have made ; my *vis-à-vis* will be invaluable as a means ; he is more striking in appearance than Brereton, more likely to alarm : no one minds a Frenchman ; frogs and Frenchmen are only intended to hop about innocuously ; he is quite sentimental ; try him.”

I looked at Adolphe ; he sat smiling at Lady Anne’s volubility, although she probably spoke too rapidly to be understood. He was wrapped in a fur pelisse, and had exactly the air Talleyrand’s secretary ought to command—bold, free, and careless of opinion. I was quite ready to begin my third flirtation.

We spent a long day at Clifton, took an early dinner in the Mall, and were excellent company. I cannot think our conversation was worth detailing ; at least, on looking back, I deem it sad stuff ; but at the time, I considered it the *beau-idéal* of chat. Lady Anne was loquacious, and not very particular in the pattern of her speech, which struck me as tending, sometimes, to broad Milesian ; and after dinner the conversation grew extremely unrestrained, which I concluded was fashion in its most fashionable array. I had the disagreeable awkwardness of home education to contend with, which prevented perfect enjoyment. I

could not throw off all at once a modesty which was my bane ; and charmed as I was with my situation of intimacy with such high-cast characters, my happiness was purchased at the expense of burning cheeks and distressed feelings. I hoped, however, to cast off my slough at some convenient season, for it was ridiculed by Lady Anne, and she was the fountain-head of fashion at Bath.

“ Really, Louisa, you must shake off this wretched bread-and-butter manner, which will bar your progress in good society. Adolphe thinks you must have emerged from the bog of Allen—I mean the interminable forests of Germany, where he is an *attaché*. It prevents, too, all hope of shining in public or private ; for what attraction can there be in listening to tiresome sentences, so true, so right, so dull, so disgusting ? Do you think our conversation to-day would have been so sparkling, if we had quoted the Bible, or talked Partington ?”

I had nothing to say.

“ Do try to feel less distressed when any thing is said a little equivocal. Appear not to understand equivoque, which you are not prepared to be sprightly in bandying ; but if your subjects are to be drawn from stupid moral

ideas, my dear love, you must sigh farewell to popularity.”

I sighed.

“What a long inspiration!—But cheer up, and resolve to throw off the cobweb of rusticity, which clings to your country habits. Every man likes ease of manner. You can be very good, you know, and all that; but fashion includes a certain ease, which is only obtained in ridding yourself of vulgar prejudices. Don’t be chained by common axioms; it does very well to keep school-girls and maid-servants in some order, but it is the grave of complete success.”

“And is it so?” I thought, as we rolled towards Bath; “am I indeed supposed to have had art or part with the bog of Allen, because my cheek crimsoned, and my heart throbbed with painfully-wounded modesty? Well, then, I must try to suppress nature, and invoke fashion, since one is folly, and the other wisdom; but it is the hardest lesson I have yet studied.”

Lady Anne laughed down my qualms of conscience, and prophesied success. I promised to do “*mon possible*,” and we parted—a most promising tutoress and pupil—but we were to

meet again at Lady Langham's ball, and there was scarcely time to dress and attend properly to the cares of the toilette.

Charlotte received me as tenderly and kindly as if we had parted in peace ; but I felt not her gentle forgiveness, for I was hurried in preparation, and could only think of myself. I heard she had declined going out that evening, but I forgot to ask the reason. I only remembered to borrow her pearl comb, and away I went with Charles and Mary. I fancied I had made an exquisite toilette, and with a hint or two from Lady Anne, I had every intention of effecting "complete success." I was to annoy De Burgh, and flirt with Brereton and the Secretary *ad libitum*, therefore I wore simple white, and confined my clustering ringlets with the delicate pearl comb ; this was *recherchée*,—a bouquet of hearts-ease was in my hand ; this was French, and meant for Adolphe.

"The handsome Vansittarts," was whispered round as usual, when we entered the room, and we were objects of general attention. Sir William De Burgh stood at some little distance, and bowed as he caught my eye, but he never approached me ; and although our party was apparently watched by him, he kept pertina-

ciously aloof. This was not to be endured. I wished to pique him forward, not to freeze him into withdrawing; and I endeavoured to meet his eye, that I might smile him into hope; but he was obstinately bent upon repiquing, for he never gave me an opportunity. Alas! *le jeu ne vaut pas la chandelle!* the piquing system rarely answers; at least it must be done with tact, and one should understand the mental constitution upon which it is to act; but I never gave myself time or trouble to consider anything. Some patients will bear a double dose before their torpid nature is roused to jealousy; while other irritable natures reject it altogether, which I supposed was the case in the present instance, and I should have a world of coquetry to effect, in luring back poor Sir William. Lady Anne's vivacity and easy way of reconciling things comforted me under my disquietude.

“Nonsense, my dear,” said her ladyship, as I detailed my error, “nonsense, the fit will only last a few hours. You have annoyed him, whereas every other woman has sought to conciliate him; flirt with Adolphe, and compel him to capitulate; you are young, and ignorant as a school-girl of the science of managing men. Beware of timid measures.”

“But Lady Anne—the creature is a perfect mule—see now, how resolutely he champs the bit, and refuses to be comforted; I have been some minutes trying to catch his eye.”

Lady Anne laughed. “You are charmingly dressed to-night, Louisa, and look most captivating; do not put on a serious look to destroy its effect. Leave De Burgh to me. I will elicit his feelings;—now go and smile upon your other captives, and divest yourself of apprehension. I’ll tell you some day how I managed O’Brien; it only requires time, very great perseverance, and,” she whisperingly added, “a very tolerable share of impudence, to make and mar any match you please.”

“If impudence is to be part of the admixture,” replied I, laughing, “I shall effect nothing.”

“Nonsense, now you are a school girl again. Observe the difference of our formation—a man looks straight forward, and, except in a few instances, can never detect our doublings; that proves they are meant to be acted upon, while a woman’s gifts of ready invention, and talents for manœuvre, evidences that she was born to put the machine in motion; therefore we are not to hide our talents, you know, but exercise them

to our purpose. How should I have caught O'Brien without manœuvre? it would never have come to a proposal, and I was poor and in debt; he was rich, fat, and illtempered, but what did that signify? here I am a gay widow, with crowds at my feet. I must seek De Burgh, you are unequal to contend; leave your affairs in my hands."

I saw my friend depart on her errand, and I affected nonchalance, and flirted with the sentimental secretary.

"So," said Charles, as he took a seat by me late in the evening, "De Burgh is departed sadly cut up."

"Cut up!" replied I, smiling triumphantly; "then he is very silly to take anything to heart—but he will be in better humour and spirits to-morrow."

"Ay, change of air will cure him I dare say, but he is devilish low just now. He asked me if there was the least hope of any alteration in his favour; and from the appearance of things, I could not deceive him, poor fellow."

"Oh, Charles! I cried vehemently, "how could you tell him so? seek him this instant, for heaven's sake, and tell him to return, say it is all a mistake."

“The devil it is!” replied Charles. “Charlotte seldom makes mistakes, and she commissioned me to confirm her answer, if he applied to me.”

“What are you talking about, Charles?” and I looked at him in amazement. “What in heaven’s name are you talking about?”

“Oh, I bring to mind now,” said my brother, “you were all day with the flighty widow, consequently a stranger to the scene this morning in the square; but I supposed one or other of the girls would unfold it—women don’t make secrets of these things in general, I’m told.”

“What things? do say what things—do for the love of mercy, explain your meaning.”

“Do you mean to say,” replied Charles, “that you are ignorant of Sir William’s offer to Charlotte, this morning?”

Any one might have knocked me down with a feather. I gasped for breath. Charles made things worse by entering into particulars.

“Miss Partington saw it coming on long ago, and always wagers his flirtation with the widow and yourself was to cover his approach. He admired her retiring manners. Men of the world love simplicity of manners—they are

wearied with eternal flirts and flirting, and always choose a wife among the quiet ones. I am sorry Charlotte refused him—his income is princely, and his character so-so, as times go, but the little puss was obstinate. She gave a plump decline, and said something about his morals, which she might have digested under a good settlement; but as she could not fancy him, why, there's no more to be said."

If Charles had talked till doomsday, there I should have been found listening at his side, for reply was cut off; I could not utter. I had, then, been wasting time in vain attempts to attract a man who made me useful in answering his views towards my quiet sister! How came I to be so blind to all that was passing? the Partington to be so quick-sighted, and of course ridiculing me in all her coteries! this was a blow I had not, could not have foreseen! Charles was disposed to be garrulous, and finding a silent auditor, he continued his string of catastrophes.

"I saw Lady Anne just now; she has long considered Sir William her own, and her barouche was on the strength of her speculation. I had great satisfaction in acquainting her with Sir William's departure for the season; you

should have seen her face! She and Talleyrand have disappeared. She had better face it out with you, but I suppose she has good reasons for her flight, and friends of your calibre, I fancy, do not extend the sentiment beyond personal convenience."

This gibe roused my pride and recollection. I was resolved not to be pitied and ridiculed, or allow Miss Partington her revenge, so I tried to smile, and deceive my brother, as I replied with a wretched attempt at nonchalance.

"You surprise me, indeed; for although I believed Sir William attached, I did not suspect my quiet Charlotte was a party."

"I believe you there," said Charles. "You fancied yourself the charm, and contemplated 'doing' the widow—it was the link which united you."

"Not quite, Charles, you know I have been receding lately; I fancied Lady Anne was the favourite."

"I only know you are two cunning ones," observed Charles, "and you have both been taken in; but let it be a lesson for your benefit, and depend upon it, my dear girl, you are quite handsome enough to please,

without degrading yourself by acts, which men despise and resent when they are discovered. And now as the rooms are thinning, shall we depart?"

CHAPTER II.

I KEPT my bed for some days. I abhorred hearing the matter canvassed, which had mortified me so deeply, and although my absence was likely to create the surmises I wished to avoid, I was too selfish to sacrifice my feelings to appearances and make an effort to stem observation. I heard no strictures, saw no sneers in my bed, and there I remained. I received a note from Lady Anne during my eclipse, containing the following laconic and pithy lines:

“ Dear Louisa,

“ Done up—gone—I hope we shall meet in better times; but at this moment our glory is departed from us. Yours ever,

“ A. O’B.”

When I emerged, I heard Lady Anne had quitted Bath suddenly, with her friend the secretary; her barouche had been seized for

debt, Marlborough House rifled of its contents, and no one could guess the direction of their flight. This was another climax, two strings had snapped, but where was Brereton?

I will do justice to my sisters and the Partington; never by word or look did they revert to the past—Sir William's mistake and Lady Anne's affair were a sealed book. This delicacy on their parts would have softened and won a demon, but it only healed my wounded vanity, and brought me more quickly into public.

I was soon at my old tricks. The curtain had fallen upon the gay scenes at Marlborough House, and left a vacuum not easily filled up; but since the superlative was removed I must take the comparative and flirt with Brereton, who was the only *dramatis persona* left on my stage of folly. Upon him I played off all my coquetry, and practised all my energy to win his attention and secure his heart. He was now the Sir William of the hour, and I amused myself and others by making him the object of public ridicule—none knew it was becoming private anxiety. I was witty upon the gravity of his profession, and jested with the severity of his principles—a pretty way of attaching a man whose sentiments deprecated such unfeminine attacks. He danced with me, sung with

me, and flirted with me ; but I did not make the progress I wished, and I found myself becoming seriously interested, when I only intended to be amused. I had often a spell upon me, which laid coquetry at rest. I felt occasional lowness of spirits, and once or twice caught myself talking rationally to Miss Partington ; this was altogether an awkward situation.

Charles joined his regiment about this time, so I had not his remarks to contend with : he would have rallied me without mercy, and I should have cut an indifferent figure in close argument with his boisterous and alarming way of blurting out truth when it was least welcome. I never could silence his matter of fact by the most bland sophistry, and it was a jubilee when he gave me his parting blessing, though a lecture was appended to it.

“ I say, Louisa, give my love to Lady Anne when you next meet, and tell her Bath is not the place for her talents—she requires a wider sphere, and I don’t think Talleyrand adopted the wisest policy in bringing her here : and Lou—none of your tricks—copy Charlotte, and keep quiet ; don’t move through society with ‘flirt’ pasted on your character— it won’t answer—adieu, my dear ;” and Charles departed, leaving regrets in all hearts but mine.

Mary, the gentle and polite Mary, was now speaking hope to Dr. Drinkwater's foot, which had seduced its master out of Gloucestershire to try the waters, and enlist among the gay cripples who daily ornamented Bath. Wherever we walked, there was Dr. Drinkwater shouldering a light crutch, and endeavouring to give it the air of a walkingstick. Every morning brought him in a sedan to the square to learn our movements, and a disengaged evening rarely passed without finding the doctor ensconced at Mary's side. It was a curious sight to behold so young and handsome a creature content to chat with a being so unlike herself in all respects, and to be engrossed by his conversation, when youth and station would gladly have contended for hers; in spite of my dejection, I could not help being amused at the contrast they exhibited. Dr. Drinkwater was a gentleman in the full meaning of that expression; honour and integrity were as firmly fixed in his heart, as the gout was resolutely stationed in his foot; they were all three part and parcel of his nature, and must remain or depart together; — fifty years of joyless bachelorship had bestowed a few eccentricities, but they were harmless, and even added raciness to his character, which might otherwise have been considered insipid from its general quiet.

He was indolent by nature—indolent in practice;—his servants cheated, “how could he help it?” his friends urged him, “what could he do?” his correspondents blamed him, “what could he say?” His very memory was indolent, and as persons or places never gained entrance there,—certainly no permanent situation, it required instinctive perception to comprehend his whereabouts. I was amused by the peculiarity; but Mary often coloured goodnaturedly as a laugh arose at his expense, and acted as his interpreter. What did it signify?—the world will smile at oddity to the end of the chapter, and the doctor laughed in turn at Mr. Stanhope, who was never at rest in acquiring what he mildly termed “knowledge,” but which really consisted in learning people’s engagements, asking a thousand questions, and proffering advice and information upon all subjects. Mr. Stanhope was a fidget, and it might be thought his active nature could never amalgamate with the quiet tenour of Dr. Drinkwater’s habits, yet were they never apart, and both met in St. James’s-square, where we learned to value each gentleman for really intrinsic worth. I do not include myself whenever I name that revered circle. I was at that time, as Childe Harold waywardly expressed himself,

“with them, but not of them.”

I never acted with their concurrence, or thought but in opposition to their sentiments; therefore I considered the doctor and Stanhope nuisances, who never roused my attention, and to whom I never addressed conversation; but I saw them without observation, and heard them without listening to their discourse. They were in my eyes insects—ephemeræ—things that crawled across my path, but too insignificant to touch. I wonder what they thought of me?

And now Brereton's star was in the ascendant, yet I became dull, and my spirits were unequal, when I most implored their aid. I no longer shone in society, or gave the tone to our home parties; I was accused of being absent, and joked upon past events; I heard many hints whispered, and was sometimes referred to in matters of disappointment of the heart. Once I actually heard "poor Miss Vansittart" substituted for "handsome Miss Vansittart," an expression in the highest degree offensive, but which failed to produce its proper effect. I had never attempted to gain respect, or restrain my feelings in their expression, and now, after a season of exultation and flirtation, I was only exchanging envy and dislike for ridicule and pity. I deserved this; I had never cared to conciliate, or give pleasure to an individual save myself; therefore none, in my hour of need,

respected my fallen fortunes. I was supposed to be pining under Sir William De Burgh's desertion, and writhing in defeated ambition, when in truth I was seriously in love with Henry Brereton; none gave me credit for a respectable feeling, or supposed I could be attracted by simple worth, therefore was I the amusement of all whom I had defied and haughtily passed by in the days of my triumphant career. My sisters and Miss Partington alone rallied round me, and tried to sustain my spirits, which began to fail me now, beyond my ability and inclination to strive against. Emma Brereton's conduct gave me pain—the first pain which had ever reached my heart in an honourable way. She was always polite, but my society created a disgust she had difficulty in concealing. As the sister of Brereton, she had gradually become of importance to me, and I tried sundry winning ways to attract her towards me, but she shunned every effort of mine to attach her. Doubtless my flirtation with her brother disgusted her ideas of right, and she probably looked with an eye of suspicion towards the motives which prompted a change towards herself: she was quite right. A change came over me. I began to listen in some degree to others, and even to exchange polite nothings with the doctor and

Mr. Stanhope. I found myself at a very gay ball one evening actually seated by Mary, and in the very act of listening to Dr. Drinkwater's bulletin of his foot.

“Why do you not consult Vance at once?” I said rather suddenly.

The good doctor stopped short in his discourse, and looked as Balaam might have looked when the dumb ass spoke. That I should have vouchsafed a remark upon his case, or even attended sufficiently to comprehend it, was a modern miracle—but the doctor had neither mother nor sister, so how could he possibly understand the ramifications of a woman's mind! His politeness prevented a pause of any continuance.

“I went to what's-his-name, but he did me no good.”

“Did you take his prescription?” I condescended to ask.

“Why no—but I sent it to the what's-his-name's to make up. I was sure it could not answer.”

“Was that quite fair doctor?” asked Mary, with a smile which must subdue disease itself.

“Oh, I don't know, I have tried everything, but I can get no relief.”

“Persevere, doctor.”

“Umph, I don’t know—I have consulted all the what’s-his-names, and they have done me no good.”

Mary gave a look that would have brought down an angel from his sphere, but the angel was Dr. Drinkwater, with cotton in his ears, and a crutch in his hand. For once, a gleam of something unconnected with self, shot through my mind, and I rose to seek Charlotte. She was dancing with Henry, and I had not courage to approach her, but her eye caught mine, and she joined me at the conclusion of the quadrille. Brereton sought me for the next set: all I had to confide to Charlotte’s ear was lost — I could recal nothing, for I was engaged to Brereton, and everything merged in that gratification. Yet my manner was calm. I did not affect it—I never could affect anything in my life—it was the consequence of a conscious passion which softens and alarms, and under whose tyranny none are free agents. I was the happiest of the happy, yet I heard a lady remark to a friend, “How dismal Miss Vansittart looks now !”

My conversation with Brereton had ceased for some time to be playful, and we had ended a quadrille without an attempt on my side to be witty; he too was dejected to taciturnity. We

pas-de-zephyr'd in silence, and heavy were the steps which advanced to the gay clash of harps. I have heard it remarked all English people dance as if they were sacrificing to melancholy. Any foreigner would have decided so, who had seen Brereton and myself that night. Mr. Stanhope was puzzled to find a cause for the change, and even quiet Dr. Drinkwater observed to Mary, "Miss what's-his-name did not dance with her usual spirit." It was evident I must make an effort, or the spell would never be broken. "We are not doing our best, Mr. Brereton, how is this?"

"I feel it," returned Brereton, with a deep sigh; "I am not doing you justice, but I cannot rouse myself. I feel a weight at my heart which shackles my limbs and tongue, yet I cannot shake it from me."

"Caught, by the gods!" thought I. My heart throbbed perceptibly, but I did contrive for once to master a violent agitation.

"If I was only sure that—if I was quite convinced—but it is folly. I am addressing you in sad disjointed style, Miss Vansittart; but you must have guessed the truth, and will not reproach me, will you?" And he looked earnestly in my face.

I blushed crimson of the deepest dye; but at that moment, had my life been the forfeit, I could not utter a syllable.

“You do not answer, Miss Vansittart. You cannot give me a hope, yet I *will* hope—things may not always remain the same. Yet I feel too deeply to be happy.”

“Gone—gone beyond recal,” thought I, and all my spirits rose. Figures danced before my eyes—the music seemed a heavy continuous sound, and for a few moments I felt stunned. But the mist gradually dispersed, and I saw Brereton still before me. Love almost yielded to gratified vanity—my eyes sparkled, and my tongue became unchained.

“You complain, but you do not confess, Mr. Brereton. Here am I prepared to absolve, if your sin be not too excessive; but you are dumb;” and I repeated from Goldsmith,

“For grief was heavy at his heart,
And tears began to flow.”

“Heartless—heartless,” exclaimed Brereton, in great distress; “but how could I expect it otherwise? Miss Vansittart, I can stay here no longer. Will you excuse me to—” He turned to quit the room.

“Mr. Brereton, stay!” I exclaimed, in equal distress of mind; “do not go. I am sorry I

trifled. Oh! do not leave me now ;”—but he was gone.

I returned to St. James's-square, full of bright and agreeable images. It could not be but Brereton would again seek me, and I must duly consider whether I could and would meet his wishes. What! marry a clergyman! Sink all my powers into a curate's wife, and renounce the pomps and vanities of this wicked but attractive world; high views in expectancy, and present flirtations, to dole out broth in a tin can, live upon boiled mutton, and talk common sense to a worthy man for ever! Oh, no, no! A nursery of squalling children was ever a blessing bestowed on the poor clergy, to balance other deprivations, and enable them to face their enemies in the gate! The gay and wild chat of joyous independence must be exchanged for good store of nursery rhymes, and those who had known the “handsome Vansittart” in her plenitude of power and brilliance, would, in future, only bring her to their remembrance as “The old woman who lived in a shoe;

She had so many children, she couldn't tell what to do.”

Ah, never—it was impossible. I could not brook such a fate; but I would state this to Brereton—hear his pleadings—his objections—I would not marry him, if I could

help it; but I would retain him as my lover. What folly! Brereton, however, came no more.

June had opened in all its heat and brightness, and it was time to think of returning into Gloucestershire. I shrunk from the idea of encountering young Dyneton's wooden leg as a judgment upon my sins. I began to understand the nature of the misery I had taken such pains to bring upon those two unfortunate young men, and some glimmering of real regret stole into my selfish heart. My mother had lately desisted from reproach, for her words fell unheeded. She believed me incorrigible, and left me to time and experience, which are, in truth, unsparing monitors; but, since the period of Lady Anne's flight, she resumed her maternal hopes, and trusting the disappointment, under which she believed I laboured, would amend my heart, all her endeavours were pointed towards amusing my mind and dispelling its disquietude. I was one day packing up my wardrobe for our removal, and sighing over reminiscences, recalled by each article as I removed them, when my mother entered the room.

“I am come, my love, with good news to enliven your packing: it will not be news in one sense, but the realization of our hopes is

great happiness to me as a mother, and I have left dear Charlotte enjoying her prospects, while I acquainted you with particulars. We shall soon have a wedding, Louisa.”

“A wedding!” I exclaimed. “You really mean to tell me, then, that Mary has accepted old Drinkwater?”

“Think again Louisa. Have you had no eyes or ears these three months, that you have not known Charlotte’s attachment though you jested so unmercifully with her lover.”

“Oh, I see; she is to be Lady Stirling then. My compliments to Sir Jemmy; I will laugh at him no more, but I did not think he would ever win Charlotte. I thought she scorned settlements and jewels, and for what other delights can she have accepted Sir Jemmy?”

“Still blind,” said my mother; “but I will assist your memory. Old Mr. Brereton writes word he has no objection, and offers to act very handsomely by the young people. We greatly feared his objecting on the score of fortune.”

“Old Brereton!” I exclaimed, amazed and unable to divine my mother’s meaning. “What has Old Brereton to do with Charlotte’s marriage! Is he going to portion her?”

“I perceive,” said my mother, coldly, “you have attended to nothing but your own amuse-

ments, or you could scarcely have been blinded to the disquietudes of so affectionate a sister. When will you become less selfish, Louisa?"

My spirit chafed under the reproof. "I am aware reproaches and lectures are always my portion, and at home, at least, I am always wrong. Charlotte never confided any attachment to me, and I am blameless of selfish views. I cannot deserve harsh remarks for failing in observation, when I detected nothing. Old Brereton being mixed up in the affair is a mystery. Surely, he has not—"

I hesitated, and looked with intense earnestness at my mother. "Has he spoken of *me*?"

Charlotte will be our dear Henry's wife in three months," said my mother.

Had a pistol been discharged at my ear, I could not have started more suddenly, or been felled to the ground more surely. When my senses returned, I found myself on the bed, my family eagerly watching over me. "Let her recover gradually; do not hurry her," was spoken in accents which discovered the prompt and ever-ready Miss Partington. To know she was present in the scene of my shame, to witness the blow, and mock my woes in private, drove me wild. "Let me die—let me die, mother—let no one come near me," I faintly

cried, exerting myself to rise, but the effort was too great, and I sunk again on my pillow.

“Be still, my child, and you shall be alone,” said the soothing parent. “Rest quiet, and none shall visit you till you ring; I will answer your bell myself.” The room was darkened, and I was left to rest with a conscience which never bestows rest. Good heavens! was I a second time duped by my own vanity and blindness! What had I done to deserve such misery? Conscience answered the question but too readily. I had allowed intolerable vanity to supersede every right feeling; it had even blinded me to self-preservation. I had defied propriety and prudence—selfish amusement had broken down the delicacy and modesty of manner so lovely in a female, and I was struck by the very weapon I had hurled so recklessly at others. Mr. Brereton did but answer my attacks—a selfish coquette is never an object of consideration, and I had prepared my own sorrows. Alas! these thoughts destroyed repose. My bed was a couch of thorns. My brain seemed on fire, and I could not bear the breathing of my own sighs. “Oh, mother, mother, come!” I rang the bell with impetuosity, and my mother’s mild features instantly bent over me.

“Peace, my child,” she whispered, in accents of parental love. “I understand all—rest on your mother’s bosom.” She laid my head gently on her shoulder; but the tempest was up, and could not be hushed. I fell into long and violent hysterics, which was followed by deep exhaustion, and I lay for many days under strong mental and bodily depression. When the severity of my indisposition abated, I rarely spoke. A deep melancholy had seized me, and it was judged prudent to change the scene, by removing immediately into Gloucestershire. The first sentence I uttered on the journey was within a mile of our home. I heard the church-bell toll. “Who are they tolling for?” I asked. My family were pleased at my noticing any circumstance which augured a return of interest. “I hear it too,” said Charlotte; “and here is Sally Bates, let us stop and ask the news.” Old Sally was pleased to welcome us again. She had some long querulous tales to tell, which Charlotte patiently endured till she saw symptoms of restless impatience gathering on my brow. “Well, Sally, I will come and hear the rest to-morrow—who is the bell tolling for?”

“Young Mr. Dyneton, Miss,” replied the old woman; “he died last week terrible bad.”

Charlotte drew up the glass quickly, and there was a deep silence, unbroken till we reached our home. My room commanded a full view of the churchyard, and as I entered it, fatigued and spiritless, I saw the melancholy procession enter the great gate. The minute-bell again pealed its dismal and prolonged note, and a thousand images crowded to my memory. I wept bitterly, and was roused by the soft pressure of Charlotte's hand. "Oh! Charlotte," I cried, "take me away; take me any where so conscience may not follow me."

She led me into her apartment distant from the sounds which appalled my ear, and endeavoured to cheer me, but how could I be cheered? I grew worse, and more hysterical, and at length I was placed in her bed in high fever, produced by excitement and self-reproach. How that sister nursed me and watched over me, I need not, cannot dwell upon; or how she contrived by her unceasing care to lead me to better thoughts, as I gradually recovered under her gentle treatment; but I did recover, and more than all, I worshipped the creature whose tenderness and goodness led her to offer wholesome but unpalatable medicine to a diseased mind, so steadily and kindly. Heaven knows I was a severe trial upon her patience. My

family visited me in turn till recruited strength again enabled me to join the family party, and return to my usual pursuits. I found Henry Brereton was soon to become our inmate, and I could not endure the meeting yet. The idea of his approach caused a relapse; and I am sure, at that time, an interview would have destroyed me: but Charlotte had foreseen and provided against such a fearful event. I received a very kind and undeserved invitation from Miss Partington, to try change of air, and accompany her to Southampton. I fancied a visit to Miss Partington must be a trip to the valley of the shadow of death! A visit to Miss Partington!—it was dulness steeped in misery; yet I grasped at any opportunity which could be afforded me to quit home and its recollections, and I civilly, almost gratefully, wrote my acceptance of her kind offer. Miss Partington arrived in two days after the receipt of my letter, and the following week we were to leave Gloucestershire. How strong must have been her attachment to my family, since it overlooked a thousand disgusts to be of service! She must have looked forward to the fate of the patient ox, mildly bearing its yoke under stripes and suffering, yet she persevered!

The interregnum was passed by me in

wretched listlessness; and but for Charlotte's unceasing attention, I had sunk into despair. The night preceding my journey I had a long conversation with her. No event was distinctly named; but I guessed, from her cautious manner in evading the subjects, that Henry only waited my withdrawal to be summoned down to happiness, and that Miss Partington sought my company from pure compassion to those around me. I never doubted her motive. I felt assured she must contemplate her futurity with terror. Alas! I suffered equal agony!

“And now, Charlotte,” I whispered, as I clung to her hand, “tell me all I ought to know, and tell me truly: I shall be better when I think nothing is concealed.”

“I understand you,” said the gentle girl, laying down by my side, and putting her arm round my neck; “I will conceal nothing—Dyneton died broken-hearted.”

I shuddered, and hid my face.

“His mind was never strong, and your thoughtless manner led him to dwell too strongly upon its sincerity. Alfred Jones is not in England; he has joined the volunteers in Spain.”

My whole frame shook with agony. “And I caused all this!—Oh! Charlotte, Charlotte!”

“You were young, Louisa, and did not consider what pangs you were making others endure; but pray that such thoughts may be put from you in future: this is indeed a trial, but it has crushed your heart to amend it; and now, my sister, take rest. I have given you pain, but I have not shrunk from the task. May our prayers heal the wounds of your poor troubled spirit.”

We held each other in one long embrace, and she left me to silence and tears. Did I rest? No: all my past transgressions rose in review before me, and I felt how richly I deserved to wander like Cain in the wilderness. I rested not that night.

The following morning at eight o'clock Miss Partington's carriage drove to the door. A cold chill came over me. I was leaving my home where all my whims and faults had met but a gentle opposition, and I was embarking my frailties with a stern uncompromising lover of justice and right. The voyage looked unlovely, but that was done which could not be undone, and I must depart. I had implored that none of my family should see me, to unsettle my resolves—one glance at my mother would have undone me. I never loved them so dearly as at this hour, when my own folly had banished me

their presence, and I was to become an alien for a season from the most indulgent home that ever blessed a human being. What would Charles have said, could he have seen me steal from my room, pale and miserable, seeking refuge in the arms of the Partington!

Miss Partington smiled kindly as I entered the breakfast-parlour, but she saw my struggles, and forbore to address me. One cup of coffee we swallowed standing and in silence. I entered the carriage—Miss Partington followed—the door closed upon us. I looked once at my mother's window, and thought I could perceive a hand drawing back the curtain. I could look no more; the postilion mounted, and we were gone.

CHAPTER III.

No penitent ever formed more useful and excellent resolutions than I had done, ere we reached our destination, and took possession of a large bow-window lodging in Southampton above Bar. Had we been situated any where else, I feel assured my good genius would have hovered near, and preserved my heart from wandering into forbidden feelings—but whose genius ever spread his wings in Southampton? What was there to look from, but bow-windows? and what was there to look at, but dust and glare and single women? I have since that time travelled many a weary mile, visited antiquarian collections, and investigated the wonders of the British Museum, but never has my eye rested on more time-honoured materials than Southampton poured forth in the fair forms of

some of its inhabitants. In one week I was on bowing acquaintance with twelve widows, and fifteen spinsters, and the fraternity accumulated like a snow-ball. Every swarm of gipsies, bees, and spinsters, boast a leader, and the queen of celibacy in Southampton was Mrs. Almeria Stapleton, a lady of large fortune holding her court in the Polygon. Miss Partington was received by all her friends with open arms, and as our sojourn was uncertain, invitations were showered upon us: but she had the art of giving pleasure, and making friends, which I marvelled at, for no one spoke less in society, or caused less sensation. She was not good-looking, she was not well-dressed; she never rose to vivacity, but she was the favourite of young and old—the referee upon all occasions—the mild and beloved Miss Partington; while I, the handsome, the showy, the clever, only followed in her wake, and received civilities through her interest. This was incomprehensible. I confess I was touched by her manner towards myself, which might have solved the riddle. I expected kindness from her hands, but I as certainly looked for lectures and horrible hints of past times to bend me into order; I looked for rebukes and sermons, side blows, and mental missives of every calibre—but it was not

so. My attentive companion understood my character, and did not seek to gather grapes from thistles. I was never annoyed by a remark or vexed with allusions to the past; every thing was said and done in the spirit of Christian charity, and I must have been less than woman to have resisted her unexampled worth: but my love was of slow growth. I was pleased with the scenery of Hampshire too, which offered a thousand attractions compared with the flat orchards and bean-fields in Gloucestershire. The drives, the sea-breeze, the pier, the steam-boats — all were blessed novelties which kept my mind amused and my person in action: had the society kept pace with external beauties, I had become a modern Griselda. I was full of goodly intentions, but how could I help being sown among thorns above Bar?

Mrs. Stapleton's card-party was our first appearance in the *beau monde*, and to be seen in the Polygon was to be eligible everywhere. When Mrs. Stapleton's large white feather had waved over us, and stamped us, *bonne société*, we might go forth—the mark was on our foreheads. It was however necessary to my happiness to be sarcastic and offensive, and at breakfast the very morning of our engagement, I asked Miss Partington if she could ensure me

a welcome in the Polygon, as I did not consider myself eligible as a candidate for admission, and might be considered an intruder.

Miss Partington understood me well, but she parried the thrust.

“Are you aware of any reason, Louisa, why you should be excluded good society?”

“Good society!” I replied, piqued; “if such a party is not composed of a certain grade which constitutes the expression, what title has it to recommendation?”

“I don’t quite understand you, my dear, you must speak more comprehensively.”

“I mean that as I am neither old, ugly, nor disagreeable, I have no passport into such a party.”

“Fear not, Louisa, every member may introduce a friend, and I will qualify you, by assuring the ladies who shall demur, that if you cannot be ugly, you will grow old if time is lent to you, and that you can be very disagreeable when the spirit moves.”

“I suppose,” I continued, “conversation will rest exclusively on two subjects—scandal and flannel-petticoats for the poor. I fear I can add nothing to the general stock.”

“But you may borrow from it, my dear girl, and add to your own. A Christian cannot draw

too largely upon the subject of charity, if that is alluded to under the head of flannel-petticoats, and in the way of scandal, surely a few recent events might vary the conversation,—unless indeed you object upon principle.”

Miss Partington was always too hard for me. I ventured no further remark, but sat pettishly in the bow-window. The kind-hearted woman pitied the wayward temper which ever recoiled upon itself, and having reproved its vehemence, was anxious to change the current of my thoughts. She proposed walking on the pier, which she knew was my favourite lounge, and as any change was a blessing, I gladly quitted the bow-window, its objects, and its glare, to quaff the sea-breeze. The pier was crowded to witness the debarkation of the Cowes packet, and we pressed forward to observe its busy grouping. The first object I beheld was Stanhope. There he was, all bustle, addressing every one, and asking questions innumerable. It was hopeless to escape his eye. I saw by the wave of his hand we were recognised, and it was our destiny to meet. He was speedily by our side. He had been to the channel islands—such wine! such flowers! He was delighted. He was able to recommend the trip as worth adventuring. He should be happy to return with us.—He had

no engagements, and could be very serviceable as our guide. In other words, he would be happy to talk us to death. Such, however, was the state of things, that Stanhope's presence was a real relief. The Stanhope who was a perfect bore in Bath, was an angel in Southampton. He was the first man I had spoken with for many weeks, and he came

“ Like the sweet south, stealing and giving odour.”

Such is woman, and such the altered view we take of an object under different phases. I doubt not, Miss Partington saw and was amused by my *empressement*; it may be, she sketched the scene in a letter to Mary, but she wisely withheld all comment to myself. And now what was to be done?—Where was Stanhope going, and when? Stanhope was bound to Bath, but he was equally willing to remain near us. He was ours—yours—theirs—anybody's—if there was anything to be done, or seen.

“ Then dine with us, and escort us to a party.”

“ Done—delightful!”

Till the hour for squeezing into a fly arrived, there was no rest for Stanhope's tongue. His habit of arguing, repeating, and questioning, scared silence from his presence; his mind was

an inexhaustible fountain of trifles, and as those articles are ever at hand, Stanhope's conversation was a flow of nothings.

Let me do Mr. Stanhope justice : he was a kind-hearted man ; nothing was further from his purpose than causing pain, and a certain tact preserved him from giving offence. It was that tact which kept him silent on the subject of our extraordinary coalition. That he felt assured some unaccountable circumstance had brought Miss Partington and myself together, I am quite prepared to certify ; and that he must have marvelled at so strong an opposition amalgamating into a perpetual *tête-à-tête*, I could equally rely upon ; but he had the discretion to withhold all allusion to the subject, while with me. If his spirit chafed with curiosity, it was soothed in another quarter. Our conversations had no reference to the past, and from me Stanhope could glean nothing.

Mrs. Stapleton received our party with courtesy, and surely a gentleman must have lent considerable effect to our *entrée*. My eye traversed two rather spacious drawing-rooms, and, with one single exception, I beheld a continuity of caps and turbans. The exception was Mr. Flynn, the guiding star of this bright heaven. He sat at the upper end of the room,

smiling complacently upon all. He handed cakes to the elders, and they handed over their disputes to his arbitration. He was the master-spirit of the Polygon. Stanhope shot like a meteor through his hemisphere, yet was Mr. Flynn's equanimity unshaken. He saw the enemy, but he feared him not; even when Stanhope's voice was heard in one continuous motion, enchanting three fair ones at a distant whist-table, Mr. Flynn sat smiling on, unchanged—unchangeable.

As soon as the usual formalities of our reception were ended, I had obtained a seat near a very pretty girl, who appeared stationed for no purpose in that assembly but to bear in charge the tippetts of three maiden aunts; I, therefore, turned to my young neighbour.

“ I suppose, my dear young lady, all these respectable characters are contending for Mr. Flynn. How do they manage? Are their little jealousies decided by pugilism according to rule, or are they awarded to the best scratcher ?”

The young girl smiled as she vindicated the intentions of her superiors; she assured me likewise that the present party was a select few—a Thursday *soirée*.

“ Good heavens! are all the *élite* here—how

do you like this sort of thing, young lady?—does it appear to you in the fitness of things?”

The young creature stared.

“Are they really bringing you up for a spinster?—which of this select few have you studied as the model of your futurity—that fat lady with the upright feather, or that pleasing individual in a cap and ringlets? Let me recommend the feather; its perpendicular is so well established, that, rest assured, its possessor has in no wise swerved from the straight path. Who is that excellent person?”

“Lady Mannering,” replied my laughing auditor; “she has three large jointures.”

“Then she ought to be expelled this society. I cannot wonder at the impatient looks of her neighbours. They will tell you her play is provoking, or complain that she always turns up honours; but, depend upon it, her crime consists in having shuffled into matrimony. They cannot forgive her for counting three honours, when they have each missed their deal.”

All this was new to a young girl who had never quitted the side of her aunts, and her merry laugh encouraged me to proceed in my heedless and improper remarks.

“If I were you, I should begin a flirtation with Mr. Flynn, to set the venerables in an

uproar. Pray, are all the single women here buried in the churchyard, or is there an old maid's burying-ground?"

Stanhope broke in upon a dialogue which had only flippancy to recommend it to the taste of my young neighbour. His table had broken up, but he had enjoyed much agreeable conversation. He had surprised his party by naming the trifling price of cards in Guernsey, and he was engaged to join a party to Netley Abbey. Southampton was certainly a lively, interesting town, and he should write and say so to Drinkwater. Stanhope escorting a party of old maids to Netley!—it would be an edifying sight; it would be a situation, too, of strong moral courage, but

“None but the brave deserve the fair!”—

The first hour at the Polygon had amused me; I had turned a young creature's friends into ridicule, and had, perhaps, given her the first elements of distaste to a society which it might be her destiny never to quit; that idea did not disturb me, because I never suffered disturbance for others; but I was wearied with Stanhope's remarks, and my spirits suddenly flagged. The remembrance of Charlotte's happy prospects took possession of my mind;

tears and sighs forced their way, and with them my old enemy—self-will. Alas, for human nature, when it has no wholesome restraint, and when adversity operates in a mind anchored on vanity! The moment lassitude attacked me, I rose to quit Mrs. Stapleton's drawing-rooms. In vain Miss Partington entreated me to stem the violence of my feelings, and conceal my agitation from the public gaze. "Not for worlds—not another five minutes for worlds—get me a fly—a wheelbarrow—I care not what, so I return instantly."

Stanhope flew to be of use; a carriage was in waiting—I was led to it; I waited no one's leisure, I could brook no one's polite inquiry—I scarcely thanked the civilities of the well-meaning, or attended to the common forms of good breeding; I withdrew, regardless of opinion, and indifferent to remark. Our short transit was effected on my side in sobs, and on Miss Partington's in silence not unmixed with indignation. I rushed to my room and gave way to my usual ungovernable feelings. Where was Charlotte, who alone knew how to soothe me? Alas! I had banished myself from her presence,—and for a season I must endure Southampton, its bow-windows, its sameness, and its card-parties. If such visitations were to follow me

in the shape of penance, I would give love to the winds; I would regain my freedom, and offer Southampton to my friends in future, as an unfailing recipe in affairs of the heart. I sobbed like a child deprived of its toy, complained of destiny, and fell asleep with fatigue and exhausted passion.

The following morning brought no pleasing recollections. I met Miss Partington at breakfast with dejected spirits and exhausted frame, but without the redeeming graces of a contented mind, or an amiable expression of countenance. When I look back upon this period of my life, I am astonished at the fortitude and unwearied kindness of that heart which bore so long with my infirmities, and persevered in the good cause. What a lesson for my own contemplation! Alas! my lessons were gained by a terrific experience, and I struggled inch by inch against its powerful attacks. Reflection had spared me these frightful conflicts, but I detested her dull precepts.

When I had satisfied Miss Partington's inquiries respecting my health, the silence was again broken by a gentle "hem," which always preceded a disagreeable dialogue. At length the battery opened.

"Will you allow me, Louisa, to take the

liberty of speaking to you as I would to a younger sister, and will you listen with patience to a subject you have forced me upon?"

"Say on, Miss Partington," replied I, languidly; "I am not very partial to prosy admonitions, but a lecture I see is coming, and I bend to the blast."

"I only wish, my love, to press upon your notice the extreme rudeness with which you were heard ridiculing a society, who admitted you a member of their party."

"A member of that body, Miss Partington! Good heavens! had they prepared a freedom, to present me in a snuff-box?"

"Your smartness is useless now," said my friend, mildly: "to be feared and disliked is not pleasant to any one's feelings, and there is little wit in seeking objects for ridicule among a class of inoffensive females, who may have had painful reasons for continuing a single life, and who were anxiously polite in endeavouring to procure you amusement."

"They certainly succeeded; there was a fund of amusement in their own persons,—of course they expected to be laughed at."

"But not by one of their own sex, Louisa; more particularly by one whose own destiny is yet uncertain: did you know the incidents of

their lives, probably each might furnish a moral or a warning."

"No doubt," I replied flippantly, "each had a Smith or a Jones to adore them"—the name of Jones ran glibly from my tongue, but it brought a painful remembrance to my heart—I faltered; Miss Partington's eyes were fixed upon me; I tried to recover myself—it would not do, and I burst into tears.

Miss Partington took my hand. "My dear friend, forgive me, if once and once only I allude to the distressing circumstance which disturbs you—it will give you consideration for others. How many of the ladies who amused you last night may have brought themselves into discredit through coquetry, we know not; but, possibly, more than one may have endured the regrets of Louisa Vansittart."

I folded my arms on the table, and my head sunk upon them for support.

"One moment of real reflection," continued she, soothingly, "will establish the truth of my remarks. Your emotion does you honour, and raises you in my esteem—I will leave you for a few minutes." She would have quitted the apartment, but my outstretched hand detained her; my heart was too full, perhaps too proud for words; but I drew her towards me, and she

understood its purport. One gentle sentence of admonition, applied in a moment of real repentance, wrought wonders. If “the Partington,” could esteem me, I was raised in my own estimation; for she never flattered, and I knew her to be the soul of truth; from that hour there was peace between us; each seemed tacitly on better terms, and though I relapsed often into error, it was unmixed with bitterness towards my companion, and I never more voluntarily gave her offence for the simple pleasure of being impertinent. I am quite certain there is but one passion in existence—vanity; all others are but ramifications from that stock. Miss Partington’s admiration stimulated vanity, but it was mental vanity, which promised happy results.

Stanhope paid us frequent visits, amusing and wearying me in turn with the recital of his thousand nothings. He was superseding Mr. Flynn in the graces of the aged fair ones. Poor Flynn!—to have endured such an existence in the first instance must have been an evil destiny—but to wane in the light of a newer star, and decline in the Tabby hemisphere, after twinkling there for years, was malice and all uncharitableness! If love of novelty, if inconstancy, was so ingrafted in the hearts of the elders, what ex-

cuse might not be pleaded for one who had youth and beauty to lead her astray?

Stanhope was in ecstasies with all things; he was at this moment intrusted with the arrangement of the Netley party; and his expression of anxiety and deep responsibility, his plans and protocols, were worthy of a Palmerston, and not less useless. I confess I looked with horror towards that engagement. I wonder who first invented pic-nics? They began, doubtless, in a simple and agreeable form, till art, or dulness, created wants, and added numbers. I could fancy a pic-nic of the olden time a very enjoyable affair—a combination and concentration of conversation and tastes, scenery and sentiment, with a few loved ones. An English pic-nic of the present day is entirely another matter, and is very easily described. A number of individuals, loaded with provisions, rush to a given spot to discuss them; riding, boating, betting, follow the substantial meal, and cigar-ing, yawning, and silence, end the sprightly meeting. *Le voilà!* It has one advantage: unlimited numbers allow matrons to enter their nine daughters *en masse*, and a very excruciating young man takes the advantage of the day's toleration to be amazingly disagreeable. I could only contemplate a Southampton pic-nic as a

review day for spinsters; yet if I declined accompanying Miss Partington, what was my portion but wretched thoughts and solitary misery? I was unable to receive any enjoyment or profit from reading, which alone refines and strengthens intellect; and my study in its most effective hours had never strayed beyond romances,—what resources had I to oppose to my sorrows?

The day, the eventful day of our projected party, dawned at last, and we prepared our stock of health and spirits for the nonce. A more glorious sun never warmed the earth than the orb which rose that beautiful morning; even my churlish heart felt its influence, and I found my spirit refreshed and equal to cope with the emergencies of the occasion. Our lodging was the rendezvous; and as we were to go by water, it was deemed prudent to move early. There was Mrs. Burton, the gentle deaf widow of a departed admiral, and her loud excellent daughter; there was Miss Nightshade, who loved to be “independent,” and Miss Adair, who never uttered; likewise there were the Misses Ruth and Truth Stedman, two very insufficient sisters, and half-a-dozen single ladies, whom I cannot think worth describing, but who added to the pictorial effect as a whole. Stanhope and Mr. Flynn

composed our escort. I never beheld the former so occupied, so entirely identified with the scene before me; he was the very head and front of official despatch, and the gravity and skill he displayed in doling to each lady her reticule, parasol, and clogs, were worthy a better cause. Mr. Flynn stood smiling by, but Stanhope was the man-at-arms. He had need of infinite tact in his civilities, for each elder had her particular whim which she made a point of never relinquishing, and to every remark there was a demur. Stanhope, however, had mastered all prejudices and objections, and we were preparing to set forth, when Mrs. Burton's heart failed her:—she turned to her daughter with a tremulous voice—

“Esther, I'm frightened!”

“Well, mother, I told you so, but you persisted in assuring me you did not know what fear was,—now don't fidget and be alarmed; Miss Partington will allow me to order a fly.”

Stanhope offered his services.

“Thank you, sir, my mother makes a point of spoiling every party, but I never allow her to be frightened: we shall meet again soon.—And now, mother, don't look as if you had revoked, but think if you have left nothing behind: where is your workbag?”

“Here, Esther,” said the mild old lady.

“And where is your lozenge, and the two gingerbread nuts?”

“Quite safe, Esther; but are you sure the man will not upset us?”

“Do you think the man has nothing to do, but amuse himself by upsetting you, mother? Now try not to fidget, and never mind the driver.”

“Well,” said Miss Nightshade, “I am one of those who never feel alarmed at anything: I harness my own donkey, and when I break down, I get some boy to drag the chair home, and I follow with my donkey.” Miss Nightshade looked round to receive general admiration for such intrepid sentiments, and she received it at the hands of Mrs. Burton, who gazed at her with awe.

“Do you really never mind such dreadful scenes, Miss Nightshade? I should have fainted with alarm.”

“I never fainted in my life, Mrs. Burton; I am one of those who never give way to fears, or feelings: when the iron roller crushed my sister’s leg, I held her under the amputation; and when the donkey choked last week, I put my finger down its throat to assist the passage; the donkey recovered.”

Miss Nightshade again looked steadily at each person, to read their thoughts on her prowess. I fancied Mr. Flynn turned away in disgust from the lady without fears and feelings; his face lost its perpetual smile, and we were for an instant hushed. Miss Nightshade's sentences were like the east wind—dry, cold, and withering, and forbid all voluntary approach. Stanhope reappeared, and a fly wheeled to the door.

“Come then, good mother of mine,” cried Miss Burton, “I hear our vehicle, and you will be an hour departing:—now don't stand looking as if you had lost the odd trick, or we shall be behind our time; and don't worry the man about driving.”

So saying, she wrapped the quiet old lady in her large silk cloak, and putting down her veil, led her down stairs, assuring her she was going to have a delightful drive. It was half an hour before they were fairly seated in the carriage. I saw from the window a long conversation was taking place between our friend Stanhope and the driver. Mrs. Burton was making some gentle remarks, which her daughter was repelling in her decided tones, and I believe they would never have arrived at a conclusion, had not a waggon of iron bars, clashing and jingling

by, made all lesser sounds impossible to be heard. In the midst of this din all was pantomime; and Miss Burton, taking advantage of the moment, carried off her parent in triumph.

But who can portray our group as we slowly followed Stanhope to the pier! His place was in the van, leading, directing, and explaining. Mr. Flynn brought up the rear in smiling acquiescence. We did not resemble the Israelites quitting their house of bondage, for they rejoiced on their way with the spoil of the Egyptians; neither could we compare ourselves to "Goldsmith's Deserted Village," for there were young men and babes to complete that picture; but we might have been mistaken for a group of "free females" destined for Van Dieman's Land, escorted by an alert police-officer. I was exhausted long before the entertainment commenced:—the heat, the noise, the silly remarks, the affected alarms, all overcame me, and I sank silently into a corner of our little vessel, leaving Miss Nightshade sole proprietor of Stanhope's ceaseless tongue. She was quite equal to the undertaking; and her dry, high-pitched voice never relaxed its duty, till our bark lay high and dry, beneath the woods of Netley. Every one is acquainted with the character of Southampton water, the

richness of its banks, and the gaily-dotted residences which meet the eye at every turn. Netley has been too often the theme of poets and painters to require my feeble approbation; but it was a scene of beauty. My companions could not sympathize in my delight, for they had long ceased to be interested in a scene which had met their eye in many annual pilgrimages, and deadened their perception of its loveliness: to them, Netley was only a combination of dinner, knitting, and chatting in the open air.

We found Mrs. Burton safely deposited on a camp-stool, sitting with her back to the scenery, the sparkling water and its opposite shore. Miss Burton was knitting.

“ Oh! you are come?—we have been here some time; I have almost rounded the heel of my stocking, and my mother has been playing patience, and watching a bird’s-nest. Well, and now what do you all mean to do?”

We all looked at each other: no one knew exactly what was to be done, and walking was evidently not in their thoughts. Miss Nightshade said she was one of those who liked a meal after a voyage; and Miss Burton, who was certainly the dominant spirit, besides having long experience in her vocation, was

also of opinion we could not do better than dine. Some little time was agreeably got rid of in preparing the collation: Mr. Stanhope did everything; poor Flynn was a mere machine. We seated ourselves, and the repast began: many subjects were canvassed, and much intellectual matter elicited, which may never reach the public eye, or gratify the ear, if I am to be the historian of that memorable day; I pass over the scene. I saw Miss Partington's countenance beaming as benignly as though her mind had been illumined by the eloquence of a Burke, or the sallies of a Sheridan—there she sat radiant in smiles, enjoying her deserved popularity. I could now guess her strong influence over the mind, and the secret of her power. She had no alarming propensities which could raise a rival, or give umbrage to ambition, self-love, or any human evil principle: her want of shining talent, her mediocre person, above all, her gentle forbearance of character, secured her from the blight which ever attacks an object in the foreground of observation;—this is not a compliment to our nature; but let that pass, we all feel its truth. Eating establishes a pleasing equality; and in the present case there was much hilarity. Stanhope stood alone in the happy art of giving

equal satisfaction to all and each. He was the mental “*anatomie vivante* ;”—his attentions divided and subdivided into a hundred parts, and as quickly concentrated into one magnificent whole, when occasion demanded the effort. He carved, talked, and drank wine indefatigably. Mr. Flynn’s requiem was knelled in the hearts of the elders, for ever.

“ ’Twas a light that ne’er could shine again
On life’s dull stream.”

Nothing pleasurable lasts long; it carries decay in its principle, and the dinner must have its ending, like all sublunary pleasures. Voices waxed feeble, and conversation died into short sentences—yawns succeeded—Mrs. Burton’s eyes closed, and there was silence for nearly five minutes, when Miss Burton’s full deep voice was again heard.

“ Well, and what are you all going to do now ?”

The trumpet had sounded, and the party was under arms in an instant. The female Wellington combined and arranged, as the Tabby troop deployed, and filed off into line.

“ Now, good mother, where is Pam? Gentlemen and Miss Partington, be so kind as to form her whist party, and we will have some invention stuck in the shade that her eyes may not

suffer. The servants will invent a table, and I always bring a sort of thing to look like a baize; there mother, now you are going to be very happy, so don't score honours improperly—here, pop yourself down on this stool.”

“But Esther, are you sure there are no snakes?”

“Snakes! what should snakes creep after you for, mother? they have all dined like yourself and are gone to sleep.”

In ten minutes a table was tolerably arranged, and I defy Bath, or Cheltenham, to have produced a more determined scene of whist, than was at that moment enacting, under the time-honoured walls of Netley Abbey. But Miss Burton's task was only half ended; she had yet to arrange the rest of the group, and I was amused by the tone of decision she adopted, proving how long and ably she had wielded the sceptre of power over the sisterhood. I could perceive from the style of her dictation, she was in the habit of thinking and deciding for the whole class. She invited us to form a circle round her, and proposed each lady should furnish a pleasant or instructive subject, only observing that an audience being always necessary to create a speaker, we were only to talk three at a time. As she presumed too, most of

us had but a sorry perspective, it would be wiser to draw altogether upon the past for subject, and she felt sure each lady would tender a reminiscence, for the benefit of the whole. Her plan was much approved by the assembly, who were attracted by the whimsicality of the arrangement, and we were soon engrossed by her oddity. "I vote myself in the chair," cried she, seating herself on a fragment of stone, "and the subject upon which we will descant shall be love: love, Miss Nightshade—love, Misses Stedman—love, my dear creatures all; that is, if your memory will bear going back so far—if not, you must endure a small fine—say an ounce of snuff: I will lead the way, and bear the penalty. My history, ladies, begins and ends in few words, and, as the weaver has it, 'it shall be called bottomless, because it hath no bottom.' I never had an offer in my life, and, what is equally true, I never received an attention which could lead me to suppose such a thing was ever intended. Ladies, I owe you an ounce of prince's mixture."

A general laugh, and a round of exclamations followed this concise and amusing confession. Every one had a softening observation to offer, but Miss Burton admitted none. "If," said she, "I was never addressed, I at least escaped

folly and mortification. I know nothing of sighs and reveries, and sleepless nights; I take care of my dear old mother, and I don't know what indigestion means; and now, Miss Nightshade, your turn follows."

"Oh, Miss Burton, I am one of those who never feel ashamed of being single, since so many accidents occur which one can't help: indeed I may consider myself as not having been handsomely treated by a friend, who advised me to decline Captain Heaviside at his first asking; because, she said, it looked forward and unwomanly to accept a proposal instantly, and implied one never had such a thing before. I confess I was not of her opinion; but to avoid misconstruction, I certainly did refuse Captain Heaviside, and he took me at my word, by marrying the very friend who advised me not to be forward."

There was condolence *in finitum* upon this little dark spot of history, but Miss Nightshade saw matters very much through Miss Burton's prism.

"All things are for the best, my dear ladies; I do not by any means see the action of Mrs. Heaviside in a handsome point of view, but I am one of those who fancy it will all be the same a hundred years hence."

Miss Stedman was the next in rotation : she had been restless for some time, endeavouring to stave off her part in Cupid, but the moment was rolling rapidly on, in which she must appear on the arena, or meet the merciless fine proposed by Miss Burton : fortunately, another direction was given to the attention of these highly respectable ancients, by one of the party asking her neighbour, *sotto voce*, who was to preach at chapel, on the Sunday. Miss Burton heard the question, and harangued her troop with power and ability on the subject of chapel-going, the Established Church, Wesleyans, Unitarians, Thumpers, Bumpers, and Shakers. Her sonorous voice held on its way without meeting any impediment, so completely had she taken a position of strength over the minds of her companions, from custom ; and still more from a fluent play of language, united to a determined manner of laying down her opinions. Miss Nightshade alone could meet her in the battle-field, with dry sentences and an enduring front, which never shrunk under Miss Burton's blows. On this point of discussion, she bore the onset with steady indifference, because the exposition of sects little interested her, and she probably understood but little of the matter ; yet she held forth with unflinching pertinacity when Miss

Burton approached the argument of quitting the church to listen with greedy ears to dissenting ministers. Both ladies now were resolved to "die hard" in advocating their views of religion, and each held their way firm in their right.

"You are a very silly woman then," exclaimed Miss Burton; "and I detest a seceder from the forms of her forefathers."

"Oh, Miss Burton, I am one of those who greatly prefer Mr. Jervis, and I cannot think myself wrong in letting our pew, and attending Mr. Jervis in his excellent lectures."

"Mr. Jervis deserves to be ordered out of Southampton," cried Miss Burton, with increasing emphasis. But Miss Burton had trod on a wasp's nest: almost all the party were of Mr. Jervis's fold, and the confusion of tongues drove me from the scene of altercation. Miss Burton stood her ground undaunted, and met the united attacks of her opponents. I could hear her deep voice rebutting the shrill clarions that clamoured round her, as I fled to avoid the disputation. Miss Partington soon joined me. "Good heavens!" I exclaimed, "how can you exist among such women, and yet assure me age is respectable! These are a worshipful company of martyrs, if you like to call them so, quarrelling about a parson, and

contending where they are to pray. The state of singlehood is not blessed, in this company."

Miss Partington smiled. "Bear in mind, Louisa, I did not select the present company, as criterions of celibacy, to your attention. These ladies would have been equally inefficient as wives and matrons, but less harmless; for as parents they would have entailed folly upon posterity: it will now die with them. Reserve, however, your respect for Miss Burton; her ideas are strictly right, though not conveyed with suavity of manner; and, as a daughter, she is exemplary."

I wandered half an hour with Miss Partington, listening to her mild remarks, and feeling almost inclined to be a Christian, in spirit myself. Her lot appeared cast in singlehood, and her years were melting away in the pale light of spinsterhood, yet she was content and happy. I expressed my surprise.

"By the time you attain my age, Louisa, the trials of life will have taught you the value of real sincerity and integrity—the hollowness of admiration, and romantic expectation. You will then, like me, find happiness consists truly in bestowing it upon others; while you, at this moment, expect to receive it in large draughts; and, let me ask you, from

whence is it to come, if it does not spring from a mind content with its own resources, grateful for received good, and humble under trial? But you cannot understand me yet, Louisa. When your bloom is fading, and those saucy eyes are losing their power to bewitch—”

“Hold, Miss Partington! I do understand you; but let me not think you mean to say, the day may come when I shall be ‘one of those’ who may be found sitting in a bow-window, in Southampton!”

She laughed. “If the day arrive—it must yet be far off—only prepare to receive events in meekness. None begin their novitiate too early; but let us return to our party.” We did so: the controversy had ended, and Miss Burton was giving fire in another direction. We caught her last words. “You know, mother, the fly is come, and there is no reason why you should make everybody miserable by squalling in the boat. Didn’t we play Beggar my Neighbour very comfortably in the fly? and why can’t we do so returning?”

“I know, Esther, the man is tipsy, and will upset us; his face is very red.”

“And why shouldn’t his face be red? a sure sign of health, mother. You should not be

looking in men's faces at your time of life ; you see they only terrify you."

"But, Esther, I'm frightened!"

"Well, then, you must go in the boat, and there you will sit staring at the boatmen, till their noses turn red. Mr. Stanhope or Mr. Flynn, I will trouble you to discharge the flyman ; my mother does not approve of his face."

Stanhope was off in an instant to effect the arrangement, and all was again confusion. Mrs. Burton had nothing to do after whist had broken up, but prepare to return, and every one was busy securing their property. Once more, we were safely launched upon the water. Mrs. Burton sat motionless in alarm, too terrified to glance at the ripple which the movement of the oars created, and assuring her daughter the gurgling must be caused by some planks having given way. At length she tremulously addressed the boatmen.

"Has there been any accident, sirs, lately?"

"No, ma'am, none since last week," replied a sturdy son of Neptune.

"Was any one drowned, sir?"

"Three people, ma'am."

"There, Esther, you see some people *were* drowned."

“ Well, mother, don't take it to heart ; you were not there, you know, so you had nothing to do with it ; the blame wont rest on your shoulders.”

Mrs. Burton was silenced, but not convinced by her daughter's way of propounding the matter. Stanhope took up the parable in his way, and was gratified in having it in his power to talk two hours, “ by the Shrewsbury clock,” to Mrs. Burton's delighted ear ; he explained the nature of boats, boatmen, and boatbuilders, and assured Miss Nightshade she was wrong in being one of those who thought vessels too slightly built. The shape and material of boats were perfect — there were other and more serious causes of alarm : a sudden change of wind, for instance ; a sudden squall would swamp the best boat in Christendom ; then, an over-loaded boat was very dangerous. Mrs. Burton was in an agony. We were fourteen in number, and the little vessel was over-weighted — down we must go. Her alarm was piteous to witness. In vain Stanhope tried to allay the storm he had conjured up ; in vain Miss Burton and Miss Nightshade both talked at once, to reason and dissipate her alarms : it was too late. The soft south breeze, which scarcely curled the water, was the coming

squall; and the boats which scudded by, as we neared the town, were certainly running us down. It was, in truth, a miserable party of pleasure, and even Mr. Flynn's smile was no more. Tired and disgusted, how I hailed the debarkation! We were to have taken tea with the Burtons, but the daughter dismissed us at the landing-place.

“Good evening, ladies. We should have had the pleasure of your company to tea, but my mother is only fit to go to bed. She is very much gratified by her pleasant day, and, having enjoyed terrors by sea and land, nothing can equal her agreeable reflections, till another equally charming expedition shall be proposed. She will have much pleasure in talking over her fears to-morrow.”

“But indeed, Esther, I am quite well, and should like to receive my friends this evening. I ordered a sally-lunn, and there are oysters—”

“Never mind oysters, mother; you had better not see them to-night, they will only put you in mind of sea-water, and the perils you have escaped—the sally-lunn will keep. Good evening all of you—my mother is going to bed.”

Mrs. Burton quietly submitted to her fate, and Stanhope escorted them to the Hill. We all felt too unsettled to reunite; therefore, Mr.

Flynn took charge of Mr. Jervis's fold, and I returned home with Miss Partington.

“And now,” I exclaimed, as I sank into an arm-chair, “hear me vow, by all the bow-windows in Southampton, by its endless alleys, by the glare of its streets, and the widows and old maids who inhabit them, I never more will lend myself to a pic-nic at Netley Abbey!”

“May you live, Louisa, to consider this day the most disagreeable of your life: you will have drawn a happy lot.”

“Ah! what pictures elderly people compose upon the adventures of a long existence; every casual remark is an insinuation against being happy. Don't you think a little judgment prevents much disquiet?”

“Certainly; but judgment is rarely formed, till experience has laid a heavy hand upon us. Of all women in the world, *you*, Louisa, will be slowest in acquiring that command of yourself which involves good judgment; your very restless mind, and distaste to dulness, will keep happiness constantly at ebb.”

“Not so, Miss Partington; my last vow proves me acting upon a sound judgment. Have I not forsworn pic-nics to Netley? and will not my tact in so doing prevent *ennui* and misery?”

“We do not think alike yet, my dear, but we are of accord on one point, which is in preferring our quiet tea to conclude the day, instead of remaining with poor Mrs. Burton. I feel fatigued, and very much inclined to be stupidly happy with my own company, not forgetting yours.” And Miss Partington bowed to me, I thought very gracefully.

“The next time I vex that good woman,” thought I, “may I die — that is, if I vex her without being previously vexed myself!”

CHAPTER IV.

THE following day brought letters from home. Charlotte's destiny was decided—her marriage had taken place—she was now a wife, and Brereton must be to me in future the husband of my sister. I read the intelligence with tolerable steadiness, but my feelings were more deeply concerned than I had confessed even to myself, for I felt my head and heart struck, though I read on. I sat motionless for some time, with my eyes fixed on Mary's handwriting. I heard Miss Partington speak, but I could not understand its purport; the furniture of the room danced before my eyes, and I fell back in strong convulsions. Again I was on the couch of suffering, and Miss Partington my only companion. Well for me was such a friend

raised up in my weakness to soothe my sickness of the heart. How differently I felt now towards her, when my returning sense beheld her for the second time at my side! Again I heard her voice, and listened to its tones as the accents of my better angel. "Oh, peace! peace!" I cried languidly—"but there is no peace for me!"

"There is peace, my love!" whispered my kind attendant; "there is rest and peace, even in this world, if it be sought in a proper spirit."

"I cannot reach it then; I am born to suffer and struggle with woe. I thought I was prepared for this blow, but my very soul shudders under it. Oh, say something to still the beating of my pulses—speak on, for I am fallen and will not chafe—say I am not to pass my days in this wasting sorrow, and I will bless you."

Miss Partington did still my pulses, by administering a narcotic which lulled me for many hours. When I woke, I felt relieved and calm—it was the calm of weakness. For some weeks I was unable to walk; and when my strength returned, I drooped perceptibly, my appetite failed, and a deep melancholy took possession of my mind. My mother and Mary came to relieve Miss Partington's cares; but their presence had more the effect of irritating, than of

soothing my malady. I loved to sit alone with Miss Partington, and listen to her conversation. The sight of my family renewed, I suppose, certain ideas inimical to my recovery, for it was judged expedient they should return into Gloucestershire, and leave me to Miss Partington's management. She proved her ability for the task ; gradually she impressed my weakened nature with the elements of good, and led me into a train of thought and argument, which improved my heart and understanding. But I was weary of Southampton ; I could not bear the tone of its society—its nothingness—its crowds. I sighed for a quieter scene, and we prepared to visit the Isle of Wight. Stanhope was still fixed in Southampton ; he had taken lodgings, and was the sun of gallantry, and the fixed star of popularity—that evanescent, and heartless thing. Mr. Flynn was extinguished. Stanhope was never known to forget a friend, or relax in his attentions under any circumstances ; he was, therefore, ready to assist our flight, and attend us to the packet. Our adieus were soon over, and as the vessel hissed and boomed along, I saw him stationed on the pier, till his form was lost in the distance. I did not perceive anything extraordinary in Stanhope remaining so enchanted with his present position ;

I supposed his actions proceeded from the motives which always actuated myself, and there I let the matter rest; but Miss Partington had different notions, and contended there was some individual who chained him to the spot. “Nonsense, who was to chain Stanhope, or quiet his fidgets?—he was only fit to hand old Mrs. Burton about.”

“I agree with you there, Louisa; and I am mistaken if he has not some thoughts of handing Mrs. Burton about for life, but it will be through the medium of her daughter.”

“Nonsense! my dear Miss Partington—do not fancy such unlikely things.”

“Very well—I am silent. Time will discover all things.”

We arrived safely at Cowes, and our intention being to court tranquillity, we soon left its precincts, and in two days were most comfortably arranged in a cottage at the base of St. Catharine’s. How much better women manage to elbow their way along, than men! Miss Partington was a lady in all respects; in some, she was even a delicate and timid woman; but she had a strong understanding, and much acquired information, to guide her steadily and carefully on her way. It availed her in every situation, and our little journeys, I fancied, were accomplished with

far greater ease and accommodation, than our movements had ever been effected under the *surveillance* of Charles, whose temper chafed at every incident. Postboys cheating—waiters “damned saucy”—hurrying this person—checking the other—we were always glad to arrive at their conclusion. Miss Partington made a journey cheerful and interesting. I set it entirely down to temper.

At St. Catharine’s, I felt the benefit of tranquillity. There my nerves recovered their tone, and my spirits expanded in the delicious breezes which came over the waters. Here, also, I could roam alone and fearlessly over the hill, to watch the white cliffs of Freshwater, and meditate on the past. Miss Partington encouraged my taste for rambling, and allowed me to absent myself for hours, believing locomotion, and reflection, would do its work in healing internal struggles. I did indeed enjoy the deep repose of the scene, and for long hours I would sit on a stone near the little ruin which crowned the summit of St. Catharine’s, gazing on the sea, which rolled its deep waves on either side. There, I pondered upon the nothingness of life, the turbulence of its passage, and the shortness of its duration. There, also, I dwelt on the bitterness of unrequited affection, and the deep chill which sur-

rounds a heart, once vivid in its passionate feelings, then plunged into hopeless suffering: the tears would gush from my eyes as these melancholy reflections passed before me, and I fled to my home and my friend, whose conversation was a medicine which my mind in its present state coveted. She was ever ready to minister consolatory thoughts, and gently lead my troubled mind to holier hopes and wishes; she never wearied in her labour of kindness, and she was patiently winning a turbulent heart into peace. Who can say they possess such a friend? Who can feel there is a heart breathing love and charity for their errors, interested in their earthly career, anxious for their heavenly hopes? If such a friend now exists, oh! be careful for nothing more—you have, indeed, the one thing needful, the balm of the earth: be thankful, and enjoy the boon in trembling.

One loveliest of all lovely nights I had strolled to my usual resting-place, and sat watching a distant sail, which, emerging from the dark blue sea, traversed a long trail of light thrown across the water by the bright moonbeams. The effect was beautiful, and in harmony with the exquisite repose around me. As the sail displayed its white canvass against the light, I heard a gentle voice exclaim, “Mother,

he is coming—he is coming!” and a slight figure rushed past me towards the lovely scene. I remained motionless, watching its movements. “He is come at last,” said the figure, approaching me, after a protracted gaze at the vessel, as it remained apparently stationary in the stream of light, “He is come after all.”

I looked at the form which drew near to me, and I observed an emaciated, but pretty face and head, totally uncovered, and a thin figure wrapped in a red cloak, worn down by apparent illness and woe. She sat down by me, unconscious we had never met before, and continued her soliloquy.

“Yes, there he comes at last, and how patiently I have waited for him! I said he would return, and all things must be right in good time!”

“Who are you expecting?” I gently asked. “Is a friend on board that sloop? It is a still night, and there is no wind to speed her on her way.”

The poor girl heeded me not; her crouched attitude, and eyes fixed on the vessel, proved my words fell unheard, or unheeded.

“It will be a glorious thing to tell him how patiently I have waited,” continued she, mutter-

ing to herself; “and he will love me more dearly than ever—sometimes, I know, a signal hastens people.” She untied her cloak, and waved it in the still night air. “There is one sees my signal, however, and will soon be on shore; how glad he will be to hear how I waited in patience!”—Again she resumed her seat. I spread my pocket-handkerchief over her dishevelled hair, and bade her avoid night damps. She snatched it away with impatience, as though it was too heavy a covering for her poor brain, but in other respects did not notice my action, or remark. Her head was turned towards the sea, and nothing had power to withdraw her attention from the vessel, as it loomed in the distance.

“Mary Pearson! Mary Pearson!” cried a voice at some little distance.

“There they come to trouble me again,” exclaimed the poor young woman. “I cannot watch one hour, but they disturb me, and if I take my eyes from the vessel, I shall see it no more—it always happens so!”

“Mary, dear Mary!” repeated the voice.

“Mother, he is coming, he is coming, and I must not leave him again!”

A venerable figure drew near, but paused at

seeing a stranger. I explained my situation, and requested to know who was the object of poor Mary's solicitude.

“ Alas !” said the afflicted parent, “ my poor child has lost her mind these many months, and her strength is wasting, looking for one who cannot return upon earth. Just now she is in her old way, and I must win her home, or she will not quit the spot while a sail or mast is to be seen.—Mary, my pearl, I want you home, and you never refuse to follow the widowed mother.”

“ Then I'll lose him again,” exclaimed Mary, clasping her thin hands upon her breast, “ and he cannot come home, and I'll see him no more !”

“ We will return again to-morrow, Mary,” replied the widow, trying to draw her from the spot.

“ Too late, too late,” repeated Mary, but she rose instinctively to obey; her feelings had exhausted her, and she sank again by my side. “ This cannot go on long,” said the poor old woman, “ her frame can't bear all this, she cannot walk to-night, but I'll be able to carry her light weight.”

The scene had roused all my energy, and

I tried to assist in lifting up the blighted flower. Luckily my long absence induced Miss Partington to send her servant towards my favourite haunt, and to him we committed the slender form of Mary, who seemed insensible to the voice and touch of strangers. She lay tranquilly in the servant's arms as we bore her from the cliff. "Too late, too late," I heard her murmur, as her eye could still rest on the distant sail; but when the sea closed from her view, she sunk into unbroken silence. We laid her on her lowly bed, and fancied her tolerably composed ere I quitted the cottage to return home. "If this is love—if this is the effect of that overpowering passion," thought I, "how ought we to guard against its approach!" Yet a pain at my heart, and a restless night was the consequence of my excited nerves. Three days of weakness intervened, and my first visit was with Miss Partington to ask after Mary. We drew near the little cottage as it stood brightly in the sunshine, and stopped at the wicket of its gay and neatly-arranged flower-garden. The door and lattice were closed, but the widow had seen us and came forward with streaming eyes to give us admission; I saw all was not right.

"My good Mrs. Pearson," said Miss Par-

tington, “we are come to ask after your daughter, and offer any little comfort she may require—how is Mary?”

“Please to walk in,” was the widow’s simple reply, as she attempted to dry her swollen eyes with her clean check apron. We entered, and on the little pallet-bed lay the still existing form of Mary—but how three days had changed her! there was breath and warmth, but not a vestige of consciousness. She lay like the marble figures on Chantrey’s monuments, pale and motionless.

“Here, madam, my child has laid ever since we brought her from the hill; and I get no words from her but that heartbreaking ‘too late,’ which she repeats when she has strength to utter, or when I moisten her lips with brandy. She eats nothing.”

“What has brought her to this, Mrs. Pearson?”

“Why, madam, she took on sadly after the death of Robert Saunders, who was her sweetheart, and a good lad he was; always kind-tempered and hard-working. My husband loved him, and took him into his fishing business, and he was to have married Mary as soon as he could afford to buy a boat; but one stormy night they were out, and the wind blew

off shore, and I was a widow in the morning. I bowed to the will of God—it was his will, you know, miss—and I could have got on for my poor girl's sake; but she was never right after, and spent every moonlight night watching and watching at the tower, for she always fancied Robert was alive and would come back; and when a vessel could be seen she was just wild, thinking it was him; yet it made her worse to keep her at home, and now it's come to this." Mrs. Pearson burst into tears as she ended her sad tale.

Mary, who had been perfectly still, seemed roused by her mother's accents of complaint, or perhaps by the repetition of her lover's name; for she rose slowly in her bed, and looking wildly around, cried in feeble accents,

“Mother, the sea! the sea!”

“And what will the sea do, my pearl?” said her mother, trying to soothe her to rest; but Mary was not to be turned from the idea which alone occupied her.

“Mother, I will look on the sea—the sea! the sea!” she repeated, her eyes becoming very wild in their expression.

“The sea is rough to-day, Mary,” replied her mother, “and to-night it will be calmer—sleep, Mary, bud.” She endeavoured to place

her again in bed. Miss Partington saw it was useless contending with the present state of her mind, and was prompt in an instant. "Let her rise Mrs. Pearson; do not hold her down;—can you see the water from your garden?"

"Just behind the house, ma'am, there is a good peep of the sea, but—"

"Oh! the sea! the sea!" repeated Mary; "I must look on the sea!"

Miss Partington calmly desired us to raise her from the bed, and place her in a chair; the poor girl breathed with difficulty.

"And now wrap her round in her cloak, and we will carry her into the garden." It was done. As we set down her chair in the air, the invalid's colour seemed to return into her pallid cheeks. She gazed steadfastly at the waves, as they swelled and deepened under an autumn breeze, and her eyes sought some object anxiously on the world of waters. It was a disappointed gaze—her cheek grew paler and paler. "And now take me in," she faintly whispered. We did so, and laid her once more on the bed; but it was only her earthly part, for her spirit had flown ere we reached the door of her little apartment.

Mrs. Pearson had many friends, and was kindly assisted in her trouble. In that line of

life the feeling of religion is certainly more stirring; it is an active principle more deeply engraven in their hearts than in ours; for they patiently bear their lowly, and often unhappy destiny, while we, amidst numerous and unmerited comforts, repine. In a fortnight subsequent to the death of Mary, Mrs. Pearson was seated at her door making fishing-nets; and though the tears burst forth at the mention of her daughter, she was often chatting contentedly, nay, even cheerfully, with her neighbours.

“And which character,” observed Miss Partington, “most imposes upon our understanding?—the love, the sorrow, the selfish grief of the daughter, or the aged parent, in her trials, her self-command, and humble resignation? Doubtless the daughter. We feel the poetry of her situation, and rally round the victim of a passion we have all probably endured. We perceive the situation of Mary, so favourable to the poet, the painter, or the novelist; but we will not see the distempered selfishness which must have been allowed to gain strength, ere her mind broke down under a fiat from her Maker. In Mary, passion is clothed in the garish drapery which deceives the eye; but our reason, if we will employ it,

must, however reluctantly, give exclusive homage to religion, faith, and hope, in the tried patience of Mrs. Pearson.”

My friend was right ; but my judgment did not go with her. The fate of Mary Pearson, her wasted form and pathetic voice, pursued me to madness. She was in my dreams by night, and in my visions by day : I sat silently pondering her attenuated figure, instead of applying the strong moral deduced by Miss Partington ; and the wailing of the wind was, in my distempered imagination, the groans and cry of Mary Pearson. Miss Partington observed my mind unstrung, and judged it prudent to remove where livelier scenes might dissipate the remembrance of the melancholy event. In my restless mood, I was nothing loath again to change our residence ; and we removed to Ryde.

It was late in the season for visiting watering places ; but we had the comforts which only towns command, and which amount to luxuries, when they have been long withheld. The library proved a fund of amusement in Ryde, and I could command the benefit of warm bathing, so essential to a state of health like mine. Many families yet lingered in its beautiful scenery, and some few had made it their

wintering residence: it was, at any rate, a great change from the extreme retirement of St. Catharine's, and I felt my spirits expanding rapidly. Wherever Miss Partington shaped her course, she met friends. We had not been two days in Ryde before she was claimed with smiles of pleasure by a little couple, whom I fancied must be coeval with the island itself, if manner could fix a date for their birth: they were visiters like ourselves, and, like ourselves, were intending to winter in Ryde. Mr. and Miss Turner Ellis, of all people in this wide world, were born to live in the heart of Cader Idris, or on the peak of Snowdon, instead of fluttering in the elements of gaiety at Ryde. What they came there for, except to enjoy constant petty miseries, I was at a loss to conceive; for, after the pleasure of renewing their acquaintance with Miss Partington, all else was a blank. They did not visit; for very retired habits, and shyness produced by retirement, unfitted them for mixing with their fellow-creatures: they merely walked up and down the pier daily from twelve till one o'clock, and in the afternoon the old gentleman rode softly on his long-tailed pony, while his sister drove one hour dreamily on the Cowes road. After these two peregrinations, the history of

their day closed ; it was silence and singleness to both, for they did not even sit together. I inquired touching these things of Miss Partington. “Tell me,” I said, “the mystery of your fascinations : wheresoever we alight, nods and winks and smiles await you : here are the Turner Ellises, who even quit their ark to welcome you ; and here am I, the wild, the turbulent, chained by your side :—unriddle me these matters.”

“It is easily done,” replied my friend, with one of her gentle laughs, which I once feared and disliked so causelessly ; “it is but doing as you would be done by—bearing and forbearing—thinking sometimes of others, and forgetting sometimes oneself.”

“Ah, what hard doctrines !”

“Perhaps to you, my dear ; but not to one, brought up as I have been. I have, as an orphan, had much to endure, and I have learned the sad art of enduring all things patiently.”

“Patiently ! I should say you enjoyed trials. You never frown, or shew even distaste to dulness or wickedness.”

My dear Louisa !”

“Well, dulness then, which I think the worst of the two ; but don’t frown at me for saying so.

You even smile upon Miss Ellis, who is most tasteless matter.”

“ I knew her in former days, a dependent upon the bounty of others. I knew her shut out from society, and debarred the enjoyment of forming intimate ties with companions of her own age. Mr. Turner Ellis led the same melancholy life; and now they have succeeded to large property, they are too old to enjoy it. Without connexions or friendships, you cannot feel surprise at their secluded habits; without knowledge of a world they have but lately entered, you cannot expect them to be amused by its gaieties.”

“ I shall certainly teach little Turner Ellis to flirt. Cannot you fancy him bowing his little frizzle head to a new and incomprehensible passion, and riding the long-tailed pony to meditate upon its effects?”

Miss Partington smiled at the idea of Mr. Turner Ellis and the new passion; but she felt aware also, few objects could escape a coquette. She allowed the subject to drop; but it was an idea which never lost ground in my mind. I affected to forget the conversation, but I internally resolved—to use the technical phrase—to make Mr. Ellis in love with me. Miss Par-

tington likewise avoided the subject, but she was a close observer. I cared not. Ellis for ever!

In consequence of my scheme for amusement, I paid gentle attentions to the brother, while Miss Partington drove out occasionally with the sister. I saw her fairly seated in the warm-cushioned carriage, drawn by two slow fat coach-horses, bade her adieu, as she sat condemned to listen to Miss Ellis's complaints of her coachman; and then I returned to my victim, whom I took infinite pains to amuse, by listening to, and entering into, his primitive notions of men and things, and gently implying compliments to all his crude fancies and simple tastes. I had soon the pleasure which anglers enjoy, when they perceive a rise, and find the bait has taken. Mr. Ellis gradually preferred accompanying me in my walks, to his solitary ride on "Silver Tail;" and he even learned to know deceitful things, and remove all beholders, by securing Miss Partington as his sister's regular companion in her drive. In those hours of *tête-à-tête*, Mr. Ellis seemed inspired with a new existence, and, from becoming a little deceitful, he became very bold, and effected a movement which, in no instance as yet, had he ever succeeded in. He actually

insisted upon giving a dinner. Miss Ellis was struck all of a heap. She represented to her brother their having never done such a thing in their lives—her utter ignorance of knowing what to order—the trouble it would be to the servants, and dreadful effort to themselves; she had been unable to arrange even a tea-drinking—a dinner was entirely out of the question!

It was canvassed warmly on both sides; it was referred to Miss Partington, and we held a committee on the important subject. The brother and sister, who never held a parley before, now verged towards a quarrel. Mr. Ellis grew warm, and assured Miss Partington it was a cruel thing not to be allowed to say, he thought a dinner was requisite to compliment two friends; “and, indeed,” he added with emphasis, “if I did not fear a world to come, I could say a great deal.”

Miss Ellis was equally hurt and offended. “My brother, Miss Partington, he is so ill-tempered, it’s quite uncomfortable to live with him! How I am to manage a dinner, I know no more than the dead!”

But poor Miss Ellis was only beginning to taste the disagreeables of my acquaintance; the dinner was a decided thing, and it was a preliminary to many other breaches in her esta-

blished order of things. To shorten her sufferings, only two days were allowed between the verdict and execution of this formidable event, and on the third we presented ourselves in form at — Cottage. The door opened, and a chorus of spaniels gave notice of our approach. Mr. Ellis was in advance, to take each lady's hand, and bow over it, in most approved form of respect; while his sister's time was busily occupied in whipping five spaniels under different chairs, to quiet their astonishment at seeing company. All was effected in due time, and the five brief minutes before the announcement of dinner was passed in attending to Mr. Ellis, and his compliments upon the honour we had conferred on him and his. Poor Miss Ellis had done her "possible" in ordering dinner, and whipping the lapdogs; she sat down in her morning-dress, enlivened by a large shawl, only exchanging her bonnet for an indescribable thing perched on her crisp rough flaxen frontlet, and prepared to meet the storm in silence.

We were ushered by two stylish footmen into the dining-room, and I glanced my eye over the delicacies which had borne so heavily on our hostess's invention. There was fish and soup, removed by boiled chickens and bacon, and

we had an aftermath of custard-pudding and apple-tart. This, then, was the immense affair which had destroyed her peace, and our welcome! Mr. Ellis flavoured the whole, with all that kind politeness and civility of the heart, which was natural to his gentle nature, and which proclaimed him a truly-bred gentleman of the olden time—a race long gone by, or lost in the republican tone and liberal principles of our modern days. I was highly amused with his endeavours to sparkle down the gloom on his sister's countenance. The conversation must emanate from his resources, and, such as they were, he freely lent them for our edification. He did himself honour by their exhibition; for more innocent motives, more harmless politics, more guileless sentiments, were never laid open from the heart of man. I was a ready receiver of his commodities, and smiled agreeably upon his little conceits. The dinner terminated with a dessert of figs and raisins, which, of course, had been part of Miss Ellis's efforts. Mr. Ellis could not help commenting upon this.

“I think, sister, if you had sent, or allowed me to send to Southampton for grapes, it would have been a more propitious offering to these ladies, than common raisins; I wish this had been put into my hands.”

Miss Ellis addressed her remarks entirely to Miss Partington.

“My brother is getting so particular about his eating it is quite overpowering! I knew no more than the dead how to send to Southampton, I have been so hurried.”

Poor Mr. Ellis was silent, and distressed; but he resigned himself to his fate, and we assured him figs and raisins were the good old English confections, and fruits every one was sure to like. It had no effect upon his feelings, however; he was sorely discomposed at the indolent nature of his sister, and hurt at her complaints of bustle, when their family dinner alone was set before us. Miss Partington gently changed the conversation to more lively topics, and we ladies shortly retired into the drawing-room. Miss Ellis had no powers to amuse even in her own bower, but she rang instantly for the “tea-drinking,” which might haply give employment, till her brother returned to us. Miss Partington endeavoured to do away some recollections of past grievances, by lauding her cook, and admiring her style of sending up dinner. This subject is a never-failing one. It opens all the avenues to intimacy, and in Miss Ellis’s case it happened, luckily, that her very few ideas were bound up in her kitchen.

“Indeed, my cook complained of being extremely hurried as well as myself. It was altogether a sad piece of business, but my brother he is so determined !”

“I am sure everything passed off extremely well, my dear Miss Ellis, and a few more such entertainments would make you *au fait* at the art.”

“It would hurry me to death, Miss Partington, and I should be under the necessity of leaving my brother. The cook quite flurried me this morning, about butter.”

“But you have three cows in your little paddock.”

“Yes, but we only make two pounds of butter a week, and I had to send a long way for more this morning. I am sure my servants must cheat me. They don’t use me well, Miss Partington, they don’t indeed.”

Miss Partington had no comfort to offer in this particular ; but the fat butler entering with the tea, she escaped the subject, and Mr. Ellis joined us.

He took his seat by me with an air of respect ; and his little red smiling face looked unutterable complaisance. We fell into a conversation something between liveliness and flirtation, and a glance from Miss Partington’s eye,

and a slight shake of her head, warned me she had read my intentions. But I was no longer afraid of her. I had too often felt her kindness was without end, to fear any sudden explosion of displeasure; and I pursued my way, assuring myself I was only just amusing the passing moment, and was only just going to see how little Mr. Ellis would look, in love.

On I went, chatting to my companion; examining a paper of dead flies and beetles, which he had collected, and assuring him “my delight was extreme, when receiving information from well-informed and gifted people:” I was in a thousand ways extremely agreeable, and before poor Miss Ellis had *congéed* the “tea-drinking” apparatus, I was engaged to go with her brother in his curricule the very next morning to Newport.

Another extraordinary movement was also made. Mr. Ellis offered his carriage to take us home, but Miss Ellis was horror-struck. The coachman, she said, had never done such a thing in his life, as move out after nine in the evening, and she was sure nothing would induce him to stir. How these things were all to be done, was past her comprehension,—it was a dreadful piece of business,—but her brother, he was so obstinate! Of course we could not allow such an innovation upon settled habits; but the allusion

to such changes made Miss Ellis ill. We were glad to retire early and leave her at rest ; but Mr. Ellis insisted upon bowing us out of the grounds, and he kissed my hand with the most grateful devotion at parting, as I bade him not forget our engagement.

“ Of course, Louisa,” said Miss Partington, rather drily, as we walked home, “ you mean to marry Mr. Ellis ?”

“ Indeed I have no such intention.”

“ Then why drive out with him ?”

“ To amuse myself, and see how he looks under *la belle passion*.”

“ For shame ! for shame ! Are your talents and appearance bestowed upon you, as instruments of destruction for others, or a trial for yourself ? Be not deceived, Louisa ; you will bring down accumulated reproach on your head, with all this ungenerous and silly trifling.”

“ Now, pray Miss Partington, let me have my innocent amusements, and don't call them by so harsh a name. I promise to be very good.”

“ I have no right to interfere in your affairs, my dear ; but remember, I warn you you are going to lose your good name in a useless flirtation with Mr. Turner Ellis. I shall now say no more upon the subject ; you are your own mistress.”

Precisely as the clock struck twelve, Mr. Ellis drove to the door on the appointed morning. I was in high spirits, and gratified at the very elegant taste of the equipage in all its parts. Mr. Turner Ellis had certainly excellent taste in his arrangements; everything round his establishment was in good keeping; it was only to be regretted his own person proved an exception to the rule, at ——— Cottage. A woman of taste could scarcely endure being seated by the side of harmless smiling Mr. Ellis; but I waived the idea, in consideration of his happy silly expression, his delicate white reins, and bright blue cravat; all of which was ultimately to be laid at my feet. I sprang up light as the gossamer, radiant in smiles and determined to please, and away we drove to talk of scenery, and sentiment. The drive was lovely in the extreme, but my forte was sentiment, *without* scenery. I could be very sentimental; and my remarks, delivered with pathos, went at once to the heart of the simple-minded Ellis. How could he suppose I played at untruths, and jested with sacred and honourable things?"

We were nearly three hours absent, and I had already effected one material change: the quiet curricula-horses were to be exchanged for a pair of sprightly bloods; and in return for so much

gallantry, I was to allow him to drive me every morning to some point of scenery, while Miss Partington accompanied his sister in a dreamy drive. I could have better borne the airings, had not Mr. Ellis offended my very nice organs of hearing, with his quaint phraseology. I was very well satisfied with the matter, but the manner sometimes irritated my politeness, into something like rudeness.

“ And now, my dear Miss Louisa, where shall we drive unto ? ”

“ Where you please, Mr. Ellis—never appeal to me, for I am a perfect stranger here ;—anywhere—drive towards Cowes.”

“ You are not aware, possibly, my dear young lady, that we shall meet some awful declivities.”

“ Never mind declivities, Mr. Ellis—drive to Newport again.”

“ I confess I am attached to a drive upon equalized plains.”

“ Attached to a fiddlestick, pray drive whichever way you prefer.”

I confess that this sort of colloquy does not sound well ; yet there was very little else in the flow of conversation between Mr. Ellis and myself, after the first half-dozen drives. I became tyrannical, as he grew devoted ; and, but for his

small knowledge of woman-kind, I might have lost caste in his esteem. He could, however, only compare me with his plain dull sister, and I gained by that comparison. I might be haughty and insolent, but I was handsome and lively: and, besides, the discovery came too late, for I was to him the day-dream of his soul. I queened it properly.

One morning Mr. Ellis walked into our lodgings with more than usual courtesy, his respectful bows more prolonged than ordinary, and his little person filled with mighty thoughts. I was alone.

“Mr. Ellis, what request are you going to make now? am I to pass judgment on your new purchase, or are the horses yet at Portsmouth?”

Mr. Ellis stammered.

“Well, never mind, let us be content with the old ones; where are we to drive to-day?”

Mr. Ellis was still unprepared to reply, his hesitation increased, and he kept drawing a thin paper parcel from his pocket with trembling hands.

It was one of my gentle mood days, therefore I gaily rallied him upon his agitation:—at last the secret was disclosed. He had sent to town for a magnificent Brussels lace veil, “just,” as he

termed it, "to save my beautiful complexion from the sun, when I drove 'unto' Newport with him."

I was really startled at the beauty and size of the gift, and I paused some moments to reflect upon the line of conduct I ought to pursue; but I do not know how it happened, I was fairly caught; and half reluctantly, half willingly, I accepted the veil; and with its acceptance rose the hopes which were now warming the existence of poor Ellis. Of course we drove out that day, and I wore his splendid present. The winter had commenced, and again the liberal heart and purse of Mr. Ellis prompted him to add a "pendant" to his former gift, and I was enrolled in a cashmere of immense value. Heavens and earth! what with the curricule, the cashmere, and the veil,—what with my indiscreet acceptance of presents, and my observation of Miss Partington's pointed silence—my love of show, and my ignorance of my own nature—what with each and all of these conflicting elements, I did a deed without a name—I committed a mistake I could not repair—I was caught in my own toils—I—I positively accepted Mr. Turner Ellis! Ay, I accepted him! but as a fixture which must be transferred with his worldly goods—as a casket which enclosed a

mine—as a bank bill which was only valuable from its endorsement.

And now to tell my destiny to Miss Partington!—I never in my life felt so dissatisfied. To inform her of what she probably foresaw, and own myself a child in conduct! no—I would die first. And Miss Ellis, what would she say?

Miss Partington found me in a kind of trance, which I quickly threw off, and in sprightly accents begged her to be seated and hear my long history.

“I have done wonderful things this morning, Miss P. I have been driven half round the island; we have been up and down some of Mr. Ellis’s ‘awful declivities,’ and I have descended the worst of all declivities, in positively engaging myself to Mr. Ellis himself; to enter the state of matrimony, and take his sister’s ‘tea-drinkings’ off her hands. Congratulate me!”

“I will do so most willingly, my dear, because you have accepted a really worthy and valuable man. Of course you understand your own heart, and have prepared it to receive his affection with fidelity and kindness.”

“Indeed I have prepared no such thing,” I exclaimed, cut to the soul at her remark, and bursting into a flood of tears.

Miss Partington looked aghast.

“ Surely, Louisa, you have not sold yourself to vain idols? Surely you have not given yourself to Mr. Ellis without affection and without thought, to buy a silken gown with a poor broken heart? Oh! surely you have not done this?”

“ Don’t drive me to madness, Miss Partington, don’t terrify me with an action I shall repent to my dying day! I have rushed into this engagement as I have done into every event of my life, without considering its consequences or thinking of its horrors. When shall I ever think! I don’t know how to think, and now I cannot, will not think!”

“ Listen to me,” said Miss Partington, mildly, seating herself near me and holding my hand affectionately in hers; listen to me, dearest girl, and let me place everything in its proper light, before you give way to these impetuous feelings. Attend to me, and for one moment stifle those sobs which subdue my courage: pray, pray restrain this violent misery!”

Alas, I could not obey her wishes, for grief broke down the slight barriers which stood between my stormy nature and self-control. My friend allowed the paroxysm to exhaust itself; and when she had applied the usual restoratives of hartshorn and ether, and soothing words, she resumed her task.

“ In marrying Mr. Ellis, you select a man

whose excellence and gentleness would give way to your more impetuous nature. His religious and strictly honourable conduct assures you he is indulgent and sincere, and his large fortune secures you the luxuries and elegancies of life. Can you be really grateful for these things? and will you endeavour to make him happy, who only lives to increase yours as far as he is able?"

"No, Miss Partington, I shall not make him happy! I shall be wretched myself, and shall never be able to endure his little red face. I would rather be ill-treated by a man I loved, than submit to the fondness of that smirking little Ellis!" I tore the cashmere from my shoulders, and threw it across the room.—"I will not bear his presents; fool that I was to accept them!"

"Is this the state of mind, then, in which you have deliberately drawn Mr. Ellis into a proposal, Louisa? Oh! for the honour of human nature, say you are speaking at random: for the honour of our sex, Louisa, unsay those words!" Miss Partington gazed steadfastly upon me; and there was such a look of offended virtue in her face, so mild, yet so sorrowing, that I did feel ashamed of my mercenary, heartless conduct. "I believe I have done foolishly, Miss

Partington, and acted like a madwoman ; but I never could dissemble long, and then I wake up to bitterness and distraction ; but it is too late to retract now. My family have had much to endure from me, and I will vex them no more. I will marry Ellis ; and, though the thought is wormwood, I will for once endure my own burden.”

“ If you *would* but feel assured the burden is only heavy, through your way of putting it on, my dear Louisa !”

“ Say no more, Miss Partington ; the pack is slung across my poor shoulders, and there it must swing for ever. My spirits are very good ; and when this spasm is over, I shall be better. I shall then give my mind to satins and silks, and endeavour to find comfort in goodly show.”

“ Louisa—hush !” cried Miss Partington. “ I will not hear you : you shock my principles and my taste.”

“ I cannot help it. If you only knew how Mr. Ellis, with his miniature face, shocks *me* !”

“ Then refuse him : it is not yet too late.”

“ I cannot now—I cannot confess myself a wretch.”

“ Then do not feel like one. Do not turn a man of honour, and a gentleman, into ridicule ; but, if you mean to become his wife, surround

him with that consequence which will increase your own; and act with principle towards a man who puts riches and power into your hands to do good, and enlarge your sphere of action. Be humble and grateful."

"Riches" and "power" sounded well; it gave a new colouring to my reflections. I wish Miss Partington had not used the words "humble" and "grateful" to lower their tone. She had unwittingly, however, touched a concealed spring.

"I will try to use my power moderately," I replied; "but I shall certainly make his money fly."

A knock at the street-door startled me. I knew, by its three regular strokes, it was Mr. Ellis.

"Can't the man be quiet, without coming twice in one day? Look at my eyes; and there is the shawl, and the veil—what am I to do? Oh! Miss Partington, do not leave me with him!"

Mr. Ellis entered an altered man; his smirk had vanished, and he was the *beau-idéal* of hushed and happy gravity. He bowed to me, his sovereign lady, more respectfully and lowly than before our engagement; he then advanced in order towards Miss Partington, and politely asked for congratulations on his happiness.

Miss Partington readily offered her sincere wishes for his happy prospects. “As an old and kind friend,” said she, “you must command my warmest prayers for happiness: but, as a man of universal charity, and a benefactor to the poor and unhappy, may the woman you marry deserve you, Mr. Ellis.” Her eyes filled with tears—tears which arose from a source I well understood. Mr. Ellis made his third bow, and seated himself.

“I think it necessary, my dear Miss Partington, to enter upon the subject of my projected marriage before you, that you may judge of my candour and sincerity touching this amiable lady, and also communicate unto Mrs. Vansittart the arrangements I feel able to make, with respect to her fair daughter. As you may be considered her guardian at this present time, allow me to say my wife will be entitled to five hundred per annum pin-money, and at my death, without issue, she becomes possessed of my whole fortune. Should I have issue, however, the lady will command a jointure of two thousand pounds. Any communication with Mrs. Vansittart by letter, or personally, shall meet my earliest attention.”

What could man say more, to win the heart — no, not the heart — but the attention of

woman? I was silent, through inability to utter a word. Mr. Ellis continued. "The splendid diamonds belonging unto my family must also belong unto the lady who does me the honour of bearing my name; and, setting aside these worldly toys, I will endeavour to make the lady happy by studying her wishes in everything upon which she sets her heart."

Again and again he bowed low, and then awaited Miss Partington's reply.

I never beheld my friend so completely affected; she struggled evidently for composure, and regained it by a strong effort. She addressed herself exclusively to him in her answering sentences.

"In Mrs. Vansittart's name, I receive your statement of private affairs, and it will be Louisa's duty and mine to inform her of all that has occurred. In my own name, my long and tried friend, I pray for your being rewarded as you deserve; and I shall love your wife only in proportion to her veneration for your character."

And what did I say? Surrounded by the perfume of Miss Partington's sentiments, and overcome by the sound of settlements and jewels, I behaved with great suavity, and suffered my respectful lover to kiss my hand with-

out actually shuddering. I even went greater lengths, for I allowed him to retain the hand in his possession, and sweetly inquired after the health of my future sister.

“I have another boon to ask,” was his reply. “My sister and myself request the pleasure of your company to dinner to-morrow.”

“Of course we cannot refuse,” I said in a sprightly tone, which captivated my bridegroom elect, and I suffered another obeisance over my poor hand.

I thought the interview had now lasted sufficiently long, and I began to be somewhat restless for his departure ; but Mr. Ellis had a new object to concentrate his affections upon, and the temple of Hymen stood pre-eminently forward in the landscape of his mind. I must now listen to his hopes and wishes that a very short period should put an end to his dreary bachelorship, and that he might speedily carry me from my family to be a shining light, and a lamp, in his own home. Ah, if such entreaty had been spoken by other lips! Had gladness and love beamed from other eyes, they would not have been vain offerings: but oh! the disgust of looking down upon such a man as Ellis!—oh, the effort of acting a part, when affection is promised, yet will not obey our calling!

In all these matters I referred him at once to Miss Partington; and promised to fulfil any engagement countenanced and approved by her. Let me hasten through this part of an affair so repugnant to my feelings then—so painful in retrospect now.—It was finally concluded, that, should my mother offer no opposition, the match was to be concluded in as short a period as settlements, dress, &c. would allow. I was to remain another month with Miss Partington and then return into Gloucestershire, where Mr. Ellis would speedily follow to claim me. I was then to change my name, and, if possible, my nature! I was to appear the fashionable, dashing Mrs. Ellis, with outward blessings and a canker at my heart, which only Lady Anne O'Brien could cauterize with her lively ridicule and example:—every one else would pity or despise me. I was now, then, the acknowledged *affiancée* of Turner Ellis.

There was one point on which my inestimable and undeserved friend rested with energy in private. She counselled me by my hopes of present and future respectability, to meet Brereton no more. She implored me, as I valued the wellbeing of myself and my innocent Charlotte, to avoid, for some years at least, the society of a man who had cost me so much unhappiness;

and from whose idea I was not sufficiently guarded, by attachment to the man I was going to marry. It was a cruel scene ; for her double anxiety including Charlotte and Mr. Ellis's peace of mind, led her to probe me to the quick, and fulfil the duty imposed upon her as guardian, sister, friend—and woman.

If I had reflected upon all that fell from her lips that evening, I should have amended my conduct, and turned to prayer for grace in the conflict ; but my heart was too stubborn to ask for support, or acknowledge its weakness. My only escape from self-reproach was to dwell upon the “ five hundred per annum pin-money.” the diamonds belonging “ unto ” his family, and the many modes of amusing or destroying recollection, in expensive pursuits. My senses were indeed completely dazzled by the brilliant visions of gaiety which wealth could command ; and its paralyzing effects were more easily discerned in the torpor of my manners and mind. From this period I ceased to alternate from passion to fits of repentance. I was wholly subdued by the extraordinary and sudden event which was raising me to affluence, and changing my very being ; almost without my consent, and certainly without my heart concurring in the change. Every one might consider me improved under

my new auspices, did they judge from outward appearances, except Mr. Ellis. He was doomed to endure the whole brunt of my ill-concealed contempt and stinging replies. Poor man!—he knew so little of the world—so very little of woman's ways, that he bore all my ungenerous conduct with meekness. Sometimes he was too single-hearted to understand an implication—sometimes he hoped I was only witty—and at other times he sighed because he felt it impossible to please me two minutes together.

Our dinner at —— Cottage the day following my engagement was of course intended to compliment me as the future sovereign. Nothing could exceed the ceremony of my inauguration. The carriage was sent in due form; the fat coachman had a bunch of holly in his bosom,—and as if intuitively aware of the change which must take place in every department when his future mistress arrived, the heavy horses were urged beyond their usual pace. The veranda appeared illuminated, so brilliantly did additional lamps light up its generally gloomy outside: and there stood Mr. Ellis “mild as the moonbeams,” to hand me from the chariot into the very arm-chair which was set apart for my particular use in the drawing-room. My installation took place there, with a bow and a set

speech which covered Miss Ellis's little flagellation of her five spaniels,—and proved himself the kindest-hearted and most polite of all unsufferable, antiquated beings. Miss Ellis then came forward to speak her congratulations.

“I am glad to see you, Miss Vansittart, though I must say I think you too young for my brother. I may be wrong.”

“I hope you will find me older in manner, than my appearance leads you to suppose, Miss Ellis,” I answered with suavity, and what I intended for obliging condescension.

“What I am to do now my brother is going to be married, I don't know, Miss Partington!”

“I trust, Miss Ellis,” I rejoined, I shall not in any way interfere with your comforts; pray consider me only anxious to add to them.”

I was rewarded for this expression of politeness by a look of approbation from Miss Partington which went to my heart. Miss Ellis was propitiated by it; and her brother stood like a dove by the side of its mate, bowing and cooing, strutting a few yards and returning with upreared head, as my courtesy affected him with pride and pleasure. Miss Ellis told me her mind in few words.

“I don't think, Miss Vansittart, any one should stay with married people—therefore, I

shall go—but where, I'm sure I don't know. I have never had a day's quiet since here I've been." Her poor head began shaking.

Miss Partington talked of Glamorganshire, her native county, to lead her thoughts in that direction, and it was happily devised. Miss Ellis leaned very much towards Swansea, and it was at any rate a fixed point for her thoughts to contemplate. Whatever her determinations might be, she would be some weeks chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy. A removal to America, or Cowes, would be of equal importance. She must have precisely the same time to contemplate her arrangements for either place.

Mr. Ellis suggested her remaining in the Isle of Wight for a year or two, and making any excursion from thence she liked.

"Allow me, sister, to propose your acceptance of this cottage for an unlimited time; perhaps, my bride—"

I shuddered at the expression from his lips; but, Miss Partington's eye resting upon me, I was silent and quiet.

"—Perhaps, my bride may wish to travel for some time after our nuptials; and any wish expressed by her in that particular will meet my perfect approbation."

“Nay, Mr. Ellis,” said Miss Partington, “do not be too indulgent; many gentlemen have rued the day their young wives became acquainted with foreign manners. You must mean scenes at home, not vice abroad—beware!”

“I confess, Miss Partington, I do not advocate levity of manner in the female character, and should strongly regret to witness unbecoming imprudence in the conduct of my wife; yet I am proud to think my choice secures me from any fears you allude unto.”

“If Mr. Ellis doubts the principles of a woman he wishes to marry,” I observed, “he is rightly served in proceeding to the altar with her, by her disdain and indifference afterwards. I should scorn a man who doubted, and married me.”

“I should, indeed, be wretched if I suspected the virtue of the lady I espoused,” returned Mr. Ellis, bowing low; “I am truly happy in possessing the sincerest faith in her unquestionable honour and prudence.”

A deep sigh escaped Miss Partington, and it was echoed from my own bosom, but I glided to her side as she stood apparently studying a Landscape Annual. “Fear not for your friend’s honour, Miss Partington,” I whispered; “I am reckless and self-willed, but I surely am not wicked.”

“I trust I hope all things, Louisa,” was her evasive reply. I know she felt assured temptation would find me wanting; and something within me intimated she knew me better than I knew myself. I was glad to escape the subject by the folding-doors being thrown open.

The ceremony of dinner was equal to the rest of the ceremonial supposed to be proper on this exciting occasion. The servants' eyes were upon us, or I would fain have been saucy. The watchful attention—the anticipated wish—every observance minutely followed up—oh, it was an effort to appear the thing I was not! Yet, all was so devoted and well-meant! This sort of devotion would have gratified many women—in itself only, it might have won the attachment of a disengaged heart—as many of our sex delight in multiplied small attentions, and love observance. Unfortunately, I detested it—my love must be spontaneous—flung, as it were, towards an object. If it fell wide of the mark, and reached not the heart at which it was aimed, I mourned like a child, and refused to be comforted. It was all selfishness—I prized the fruit my hand could not reach, and trod on the windfalls, with a spurning foot.

Considering all things, I behaved extremely

well at dinner. If lightning flashed occasionally from my eyes, at least no thunder followed from my tongue. I bore all my betrothed's quaint and polite attacks with magnanimity and courtesy, I thought; and our meal glided by in exquisite dulness, relieved by tiresome compliments. But the climax of elegant attention was to come. Mr. Ellis, with the pink of knight-errantry, led me in equal state back to the drawing-room, and seated me in my chair of state; but when I looked for his withdrawal, and hoped for some little interval of peace, behold he was a fixture among us! This was disgusting—and he paid for it. I tried to fancy the air blew somewhat roughly on my left cheek, and, taking a screen, which I held immediately before him, I chatted exclusively to Miss Partington. I returned no answer to his anxious attempt to become a party in our conversation.

In a few minutes Miss Partington drew her chair towards Miss Ellis, and left me to the mercy of my lover, and my own temper. His crest-fallen and wobegone face somewhat softened me, as coffee made its appearance, and I condescended to reply to his twice-repeated question of interest, as to my feeling ill.

“Yes, thank you, I am tolerably well—pray don't make yourself and me uncomfortable.”

“But, dear lady, your spirits are not so serene as they were at dinner.”

“One can't be always in the same humour, Mr. Ellis.”

“Is there anything my sister can lend or offer, my dearest lady—perhaps her salts or *eau de Cologne* may relieve you?”

“I hate smells, thank you. Be so kind as to pour me out another cup of coffee, and let us drop the subject.”

“But, why, dear lady, are you so short—have I in any wise offended you?”

“Pray don't ask questions, Mr. Ellis—one can't always be talking.”

“But, my dearest Miss Louisa—”

“Drink your coffee, Mr. Ellis, if you please—I am extremely well at present—how long I may continue so will depend upon my not being worried.”

Poor Mr. Ellis could not touch his coffee. He was sure in his own mind I could not be well; illness must be the cause of my abruptness—ill-temper never came within the range of his conclusions. He tried once more to address me—was indignant.

“Mr. Ellis, if you trouble me with so many questions, I shall be extremely ill,—if you knew how I dislike twaddle!”

“Twaddle is a term, my dear madam, I really do not comprehend.”

“Twaddle, then, is teasing one about nothing, and sometimes you are very twaddling, Mr. Ellis—you will excuse me.”

“I am miserable in causing you vexation, Miss Louisa. I wish—”

“I wish you would amuse me with something more lively. Have you had books from town lately, or any new trifle from Southampton?”

This led to pleasanter matter. Mr. Ellis had, in compliment to his youthful bride elect, ordered his jewel-case from the Bank, and he now exhibited them to my attention—in point of fact, he presented them for my acceptance. A suit of diamonds, which any duchess might envy, greeted my eye, as he unfastened the case, and displayed its contents before me. The glittering contents brought an exclamation of delight to lips which had but just closed the utterance of harsh words to the donor. *Now* I was all smiles and courtesy.

“How magnificent! how beautiful!” burst from me, as each ornament was taken up, inspected, and again deposited on its velvet bed. Mr. Ellis was charmed by my expressions of delight; and all happiness at having procured my smiles, his wish was strongly expressed to be indulged in

seeing me wear them. Miss Partington assisted in adorning me, and fastened a superb tiara in my hair. Necklace, armlets, earrings, followed—I was a blaze of jewels. I was electrified at my own appearance, as I approached the glass and gazed at my changed attire. I was overcome with my own radiant person, and dazzled by the brightness of my own eyes. Mr. Ellis, awed and agitated by the “foreign aid of ornament,” knelt before me, and stammered forth his admiration.

“Dearest of dear ladies, all these are your own; and though they cannot raise your virtues in my eyes, yet they seem to make you too beautiful to look upon. It is, indeed, presumption in me to approach unto you, but I may be allowed to salute my lady wife with proper decorum and profound respect.”

Mr. Ellis rose, and the diamonds won the day. I allowed his first kiss to be impressed upon my lips; and received the first salutation ever offered me by a man, unconnected with my own family.

And this must end. The diamonds lay again enclosed in their place of rest, and with their splendour did my spirits recede. Would I had fairy power to deposit my betrothed also in the jewel-case—to have worn them and himself together only—and consigned the whole under lock and key, when weary!

The evening had passed away before my display concluded, and the carriage waited our pleasure, in defiance of the coachman's objection to night air. I had now concluded that display in excellent temper of mind. I had said some pleasing nothings to Miss Ellis on the subject of our future relationship, and smiled at several quaintly expressed, but not particularly interesting, remarks from her brother. I was amiable at all points; but Mr. Ellis never knew how to restrain the overflowings of his respect.

We were shawled, and proceeding to take our leave, when Mr. Ellis ordered the servant to bring down his travelling-cap and surtout. I turned hastily towards him.

“Are you going up to London to-night, Mr. Ellis?”

“I am going to have the honour of escorting you home,” was his reply.

“Do not think of such a thing, Mr. Ellis—Miss Partington, do not allow him to come with us—it is but a mile; no, Mr. Ellis, we will not trouble you for so short a distance.”

Mr. Ellis was flattered by my anxiety. He considered me all alarm, lest he should take cold, moving out beyond his usual hours. His smiling face attested his gratified feelings.

“I should never forgive myself, dear ladies, if

I allowed you to return home without me—allow me one moment to adjust my travelling-cap.”

If ever woman's patience was tried, I was that suffering individual. I only refer to any handsome sprightly girl of two-and-twenty, and let my readers of that age answer the question truly—could they endure the escort of such a man as Mr. Ellis, wrapped in a surtout, and extinguished by a fur cap, when the distance of one mile in a warm carriage was to be the extent of his labours; and escorting, too, a young creature—his betrothed wife! Let them be true to themselves, and confess their offended taste. It was not pardonable. If I had to endure much, he should have abated somewhat; for disgust is a greater foe to love than vice, I am sorry to say; and a feeling much less under control than offended virtue. I could have forgiven a fault, but I sickened under the sensation of disgust.

Mr. Ellis offered me his hand. I withdrew mine.

“Have the goodness to take charge of Miss Partington, she is my senior.”

Miss Partington passed close by me. ‘Louisa, recollect yourself!’

“Well, take me to the carriage, Mr. Ellis, but any one would suppose you were just going

to join an expedition to the North Pole. That cap would have been a very valuable present to Captain Back, but I think it is useless in the Isle of Wight."

It was in vain to talk in metaphor to Mr. Ellis—he only comprehended plain matter of fact. He began the history of his extinguisher, and named the street and hatter where it was purchased—I cut him very short.

"Never mind where it was bought, Mr. Ellis—I cannot compliment the cap, or its wearer. Have the kindness not to sit here by me. Miss Partington is in the hall, not a soul to hand her in, and I cannot allow that cap to sit bodkin. Pray Mr. Ellis descend again, I cannot allow this."

He had actually followed me into the carriage, and expected me, no doubt, to image—

"The lovely Thais at his side
Sat like a blooming eastern bride."

He attempted to remonstrate, but I was not to be overruled. I grew angry at his pertinacity, and would have been most inconveniently saucy, had not the servant still held the carriage-door open; it was not fit at any rate he should be made a party in his master's affairs; therefore I repressed my pertness, and sat in determined silence till Miss Partington entered.

“Don't move, Mr. Ellis, your carriage holds three most conveniently; don't fancy you incommode us.—Louisa, do not move.”

“But indeed I must; Mr. Ellis will smother us both in that enormous cap and cloak, and I am very much heated. Miss Partington, pray take Mr. Ellis's place, and let me have your cool silk dress near me.”

“Not now, Louisa, the distance is so trifling; pray drive on.”

The carriage moved forward. Mr. Ellis attempted again to take my poor luckless hand, but I was imperious and concealed it in the folds of my cashmere.

“I am extremely sorry, dear lady, my cloak discomposes you; but after sunset I am subject to take little colds, which greatly disturb me, and bring on little grips.”

“Grips, Mr. Ellis! what sort of disorder is that?”

“A little hacking in my throat, which causes difficulty in breathing.”

Miss Partington hoped his politeness would not cause a renewal of such annoying symptoms. I was not so courteous.

“I entreated you to remain at home, Mr. Ellis; therefore you deserve no pity. You

would be so very obstinate ;—men are so extremely wilful ?”

“ Had I known your wishes were so seriously in favour of my not taking cold, I would have forborne this pleasure of escorting you home, dear lady : yet such kind care is too indulgent—how I admire you for it !”

“ I am sorry, Mr. Ellis, you misunderstand my solicitude, which is in reality for Miss Partington and myself ; I can have none for a person muffled up in furs as you are at this moment ; since it defies a Lapland winter, besides being very unbecoming.”

Mr. Ellis doffed his extinguisher, and laid the bone of contention at my feet ; but I continued gazing at the stars through the carriage window, and would not heed his pantomime. I was not to be entreated till we alighted at our own door.

“ Shall I bring the curricle to-morrow, or would you prefer a walk ?” asked my lover, in that tone of anxiety and unbroken forbearance, which marks so strongly a heart deeply attached, yet ill at ease.

“ Oh ! bring the open carriage, in case I am in a humour to drive ; there, good night !” I gave him my long-withheld hand, and Mr.

Ellis returned home happy, for I had smiled and spoken, though ungraciously. It was a straw caught eagerly by a drowning wretch.

“You have not then discarded Mr. Ellis, Louisa?” said my friend, as she lighted the chamber candles.

“Discarded him!—no. I must take him, of course, now.”

“Why so?—It is far wiser, and more merciful, to release him at this early time, than to break his heart by slow degrees.”

“I am particularly polite, Miss Partington; and I have just complimented myself upon extreme forbearance, and command of temper.”

“In what respect?”

“Oh! why, in tolerating his hideous cap, and complaint called ‘grips.’ One would think him a hundred and fifty.”

“You are marrying a very elderly man, Louisa; and you accepted him under all circumstances. Now it is incumbent upon you to act kindly and dutifully, or release him from the engagement.”

“You wish for him yourself, Miss P.!”

“I do not; but I wish you to make him happy.”

“Does he not say he is the happiest man alive?”

“ At present, I grant you, because he does not see beyond his wishes ; but what will he be hereafter ? ”

“ The greatest nuisance in the world, of course ; but I can't help it now—*bon soir !* ”

“ My dear Louisa, do not be deceived. You are preparing a fund of misery for yourself, and trifling with the happiness of others. You have not yet received the congratulations of your family, yet you are giving pain to Mr. Ellis at this early stage. I warn you he is a man of strong feeling, but with very decided opinions on some points ; and should you draw the rein too tightly, he will snap it with his own hand, and for ever.”

“ I fancy I see Mr. Ellis acting with firmness, and rejecting my hand ; the tables would be indeed turned, and my lover would be then at least, entertaining : he has not been so yet. I should like to behold him in a fit of real *bonâ fide* anger.”

“ I have warned you of your danger, and can do no more ; therefore I echo your salutation, ‘ *bon soir !* ’ ”

CHAPTER V.

SUCH was my treatment of Mr. Ellis the first time I entered his house as its destined mistress, and yet it was but the commencement of his troubles. Often and often I agonized his feelings by estranged looks, and *as* often, I insulted the dignity of his nature by expressions of contempt, directed towards his unceasing efforts to create satisfaction. It is true a word, a smile, a look, threw oblivion over the past; but a repetition of this ungenerous conduct affected his peace, and gradually operated upon his mind and appearance. Mr. Ellis never relaxed in his devotion, for he was truly and for ever mine in heart and soul; but he was a slave writhing under the domination of a tyrant; and his affection was alloyed by the terror of giving offence. It was surely destined that Mr Ellis should prove his principles through suffering;

and trials can only really proceed from those we love. It is through their hand we receive the bitter cup, and I had indeed brimmed it high, for one who loved me to the death.

Letters from Gloucestershire brought me an accession of pride and gratified vanity. I was congratulated as the source of all future comforts, and as a woman to whom the things of this world were paying tribute. My excellent mother's sentiments were truly parental: let me give her own words.

“ You are now placed on a high pedestal to ornament or disgrace the principles I have ever instilled into your mind. You are called to riches and power, which open a wide field for charity and noble actions. You are to be the wife of an excellent and devoted husband; let me be proud in my honourable and prudent daughter. We look for your return with anxious tenderness, and Mr. Ellis will be welcomed to our hearts and home, with the sincere esteem his reputation and liberality must ever ensure him. Already I boast of my sons-in-law, and as I cannot believe a child of mine will ever disgrace their education as a Christian, my heart is at rest upon the subject of their happiness. I have suffered much on your account, Louisa. You will one day, perhaps, comprehend the

nature of a mother's fears—and I trembled for the uncertainty of your peace of mind, which seemed ever pursuing a shadowy brilliancy. I now resign myself to a future of happy thoughts on the security of my child's welfare. Miss Partington has redeemed her charge, and her own heart will reward her. I can but bless her, and pray for her. In a month's time I shall embrace you both !”

How much occurred in that month !

Mr. Ellis was extremely gratified by his letters from my family. All recognised in him the friend so extolled by Miss Partington, and the relation to be obtained, through myself. His prospects, once so dark in solitary habits, removed from ties and the society of his fellow-creatures,—had warmed and expanded under domestic comforts into light and life, now that his friendship and affections were claimed by others ; and those claimants, the family of his fianced wife. How moderate were the demands of his gentle unsuspecting heart ! he asked for kind treatment, for a little forbearance from ridicule and contempt ; and he gave in return, affluence,—a devoted heart,—and a soul of honour. How lightly women in general hold the last-named ingredients, as testimonials of value ! I despised intrinsic worth clothed

under homely features, and it passed from me because my eye was evil, and could not detect brilliance in the setting. I might indeed say I was asked for bread, and gave a stone!

The long-expected curricie-horses arrived safely from Tattersall's. They were beautiful animals, and I longed to exhibit them in my daily drives. The weather was unusually mild, and a fine open January allowed us still to enjoy the pleasures of the country *al fresco*, therefore our first trial of their mettle was a drive to Brading Down, to inhale its refreshing breezes. I had some altercation with Miss Ellis on the subject. She was indignant at my display of power over her brother's mind; and her nerves were shaken at hearing his first effort with the new purchase was to take place in a public road, when for years he had been accustomed only to the jog-trot of the worthy long-tails. She appealed to Miss Partington, who I must confess was equally averse to the measure; she appealed to her brother himself, but alas, he was no longer a free agent! I laughed at her fears, and persisted in my triumph, in spite of her very natural alarm, and in defiance of a loud aside to Miss Partington:—"I think she does not care a rush for my brother. I may be wrong."

Off we set. I delighted in volition, and the rapid pace of the new steeds was delightful, compared with the measured tread of the discarded old favourites. I was in excellent spirits; the air, the novelty, the excitement of laughing down Miss Ellis's fears, and proving my power over Mr. Ellis, increased my good humour, and I amused myself and charmed my companion, by inventing an appellation for our steeds. At length I named one "Stanhope," which was to denote a fidget, and which was suggested by sundry restless startings. Mr. Ellis who wished everything to have reference to myself, insisted upon its companion being called Louisa, in spite of my objections.

"If you call that animal 'Louisa,' Mr. Ellis, she will surely play you some trick. It goes with the name."

"I will answer for her being gentle at heart from that very name, my dear lady; though she may be inconveniently sprightly sometimes."

I could not help fancying, however, that "Stanhope" and "Miss Louisa" went rather uneasily in harness, and the groom several times rode forward with looks of suspicion, as if he feared his master had undertaken a difficult task. I confess I had no fear. If Mr. Ellis deserved any distinction beyond his own high

character, he certainly had claim to reputation as a Jehu : indeed I admired him rather in his curricule, and there he enjoyed the only consideration I ever bestowed upon him ; for I thought he wore a more manly air when holding the reins, and a man loses all his attraction in woman's eye, if he fails to deceive her into a belief that his mind and muscle are nerved to danger. We drove steadily enough the first few miles ; but the rumbling of a carriage in our rear, soon elicited the mettle of our coursers.

“ Mr. Ellis,” I exclaimed, “ see how the horses lay back their ears, pray stop them.”

Mr. Ellis would have reigned them in, according to my wish, but it was too late. The horses sprang forward as the carriage wheels sounded nearer, and it was vain to resist. On they madly sped, and I became fearfully alarmed. Objects flew by with frightful rapidity ; my senses seemed to grow disordered, and I seized the reins from the hand of Mr. Ellis with frantic violence. The sudden movement caused the animals to rush on one side the road, and the curricule was upset in an instant. I was stunned by the fall, but was otherwise unhurt. When I recovered some degree of consciousness, I found myself seated on a bank in the road-side, my head leaning against a stranger, while another gen-

tleman was standing in front intently watching me. Mr. Ellis with agonized solicitude knelt before me, holding both my hands. The cur-ricule had recovered its equilibrium, and the horses stood quietly beside the groom : a cabrio-let was near, guarded by a smart little "tiger ;" and though the objects brought the accident to my mind, I was yet somewhat confused, and looked round with astonishment.

"What is the matter with me, have I been ill?" I asked, "and what are we all here for?—am I hurt?"

"Only discomfited, madam," replied the gentleman on whom I had been reposing. "I have had the honour of picking you up, and my friend has raised your excellent father; both, I trust, without injury."

I looked at Mr. Ellis; he was very pale. Why did the stranger call him my excellent 'father?' It chilled the solicitude I was really going to express, and I was not willing to un-derceive him. Mr. Ellis was, however, not un-hurt; for his arm hung powerless by his side. He had received a severe strain.

"Captain Thelwal," said my supporter, "this gentleman has received some hurt, and we must think what is to be done."

"Oh! let us return," I exclaimed, eagerly;

“let me return Mr. Turner Ellis to his sister. I was very wrong in driving out with these horses, and Mr. Ellis is certainly fainting. What can we do? Pray, think for me; I am quite bewildered yet!”

Mr. Ellis had sunk down overpowered with sufferings, external and internal. He had received also a contusion on the head, which might prove serious, and we were seven miles from Ryde. I looked in despair towards my protectors, who were raising my betrothed from the ground, and my look was answered by the former speaker.

“Fear not, madam, we are at your service; and, if you will allow me to act for you, we shall soon be on our way to Ryde. Lift the gentleman into the cabriolet; and do you, Thelwal, drive him quietly to Ryde, while his groom rides before you. I will drive the lady rapidly home, to enable her to make preparations for her father—he may be very ill. You, sir,” addressing the tiger, “cling to the curricule as you can; and, as we enter Ryde, dart off to the surgeon, and send him to meet the cab.”

It was a blessing to have some one who could meet all difficulties, and point out every one's path. I saw them lift Mr. Ellis almost senseless into the cabriolet, and in an instant the

vehicle passed on. I was placed again in the curricle, almost stupified with astonishment and grief. I scarcely knew where I was, or how I came there, till I beheld the stranger by my side, and felt the motion of the carriage, as we turned again to retrace our steps.

“ Oh !” I cried, bursting into a passion of tears, “ I have killed Mr. Ellis, and his sister will never forgive me !”

“ Do not be alarmed, madam. I think your friend may be in more pain than actual danger. As far as I can judge, he has received a pretty severe strain in the right wrist or shoulder. He is not, then, your father ?”

“ No relation,” I stammered forth ; “ but he has a very affectionate sister, who will suffer cruelly, and reproach me for my obstinacy in driving out with these horses.”

“ They are too hot for the old gentleman’s hand, certainly ; but they are excellent goers. I wish they were mine. So he has an excellent sister ? I wish *I* had such a piece of jewellery ; but how came you to trust your precious self with the old man ? My dear madam, you should have had a couple of steady old dowagers to draw you along. It was sure to end in discomfiture. Bless the old soul, what was he about ?”

There was something familiar in the tone and manner of my companion which might have displeased my taste, had it not been accompanied with perfect respect of look, which forbade my taking offence. He was remarkably handsome, and agreeable withal in the *tout ensemble*. His very cool and masterly style of driving was irresistible too in my eyes, so completely and tranquilly did he manage the impatience of animals which had, indeed, proved too powerful for Mr. Ellis. They were as lambs under the guidance of my present protector. I turned in thought to the invalid who was returning, perhaps dangerously hurt, to his nervous and affectionate sister; and I dwelt, with real contrition, on the misery I had ensured for her. Her head would shake now with anxiety for him, and anger towards me. She would be a perfect Mandarin. But my companion left me little time for reflection.

“I dare say you wish to know who and what I am, don't you? It is very natural, and I am somewhat curious to know also what fair lady I have the honour to escort. I am Sir James Langham, Baronet and bachelor, a catch among young ladies, and, I am told, a desperate favourite with their mothers; but a more harmless, philanthropic creature never paced the

world. I have recently returned from Rome, and Thelwal and myself are preparing to visit Russia. You are thoroughly acquainted now with me; be as candid yourself, and tell me what you are doing with the old gentleman who is ‘no relation,’ yet has the privilege of upsetting you, in spite of his very excellent sister?”

I was confused. My situation must appear extraordinary, yet I allowed him not to guess the truth. I stated the intimacy of our families, but I dropped the intended connexion. He was quite satisfied.

“I shall be at Cowes for a month or so, therefore you will often see me. I shall pay you and the old gentleman some philanthropic visits, and pay my compliments to Miss Packington. I dare say she is a good soul.”

“Miss Partington, I am sure, will be anxious to thank you for this assistance to her friends.”

“Partington, is it? but I seldom quite pronounce a name. She shall thank me to-morrow. Here we are, in Ryde—where do you live? Where’s the young rascal? Oh! I remember, gone to the apothecary; it does not matter. Hoy! young man, knock at that door, I’ll be obliged to you.”

A mercer’s boy did as he was requested, and rang the bell; for knocker there was none.

“One more obligation, dear sir. Just step to the horses’ heads, while I—thank ye, very good.—Now, madam, don’t say a word; but allow me to act. I will find out Mr. Turner Ellis, and return his carriage all safe. Go to your friend, and explain these things, and take rest. I will see the sister myself. The step, mind—I wish you good morning.”

Sir James Langham bowed politely, as he led me to the opened door, and again sprang into the curricule. In one minute, he was out of my sight. “Ah!” thought I, “if Mr. Ellis had but the air and manner of Sir James Langham, how differently I should feel towards him!”

I never was more ill and distressed in my life than at the moment in which I stammered forth to Miss Partington the adventures of our drive. My agitation proved how deeply I suffered in conscience, and that was enough for her kind heart. She soothed me into composure, and stilled my trembling; but not till she had promised to accompany me instantly to attend Mr. Ellis. Let me say this in justice to myself: I was horrified at reflecting upon Miss Ellis—her agony at seeing her brother brought home by strangers—her anxiety that he should not undertake the drive—her sorrow—her suffering :

—all this accumulated in my mind, and really superseded selfish indulgence. I was wretched till we could reach the Cottage, and Miss Partington instantly ordered horses to her carriage, to prevent loss of time. I flew into it with eager rapidity, and my spirit burst with impatience to know the worst, and implore the forgiveness of Miss Ellis. Miss Partington conjured me to restrain my feelings, and not alarm her poor friend by my energy.

“Pray, my love, be careful of expressing yourself with vehemence, to alarm her nerves: let me insist on your calm approach, to break to her gradually Mr. Ellis’s accident.”

“I will, I will, Miss Partington. You shall see how very calm I can be upon such an occasion as this.” Yet I was eagerly looking for the cabriolet; and terrified lest it should have arrived before us, I could scarcely command myself. It had not arrived as we drew up to the door. I sprang out of the carriage into the hall. Miss Partington held my arm, as she quickly followed me.

“Be tranquil, Louisa, or you will do some mischief to Miss Ellis. Remember her nervous state.”

“I do, I do. Now, then, let me see her, or the cabriolet will be here.”

We entered the room, and found Miss Ellis combing and brushing her lapdogs. All five flew barking towards us, but I saw and heard nothing but poor Miss Ellis, innocent of danger, who, on seeing me, asked immediately where her brother was. I fell on my knees before her, all caution forsaking me. "I know he is hurt, Miss Ellis; but, oh! forgive me all this, for I did not mean to injure him!"

Miss Ellis sat down and quietly put her hand before her eyes.

"Oh! Miss Ellis," I cried, frantically, "have mercy upon me, if I have killed him; for I shall never be happy again!"

Miss Ellis made no reply; but her head began shaking violently. I seized her hands—I implored her, to speak one word, though it should be in anger; but to let me hear her voice, even if she could not articulate distinctly. The poor woman raised her head to utter, if possible, the word I so earnestly implored; but increased shaking compelled her, mechanically, to rest it again upon her hand. I stood up, gazing upon her like a creature bereft of sense.

Miss Partington feared for us both. She expected frantic ebullitions of terror from me, and she saw Miss Ellis had been struck with the most horrible suspicions by my incautious

manner of addressing her. This was to be met in some way, and Miss Partington was never at a loss for expedients in the hour of need. Miss Ellis was carried up-stairs by the housekeeper and cook, and deposited, yet speechless, in her bed, while the coachman was despatched to Cowes for the best medical adviser. I was not able to assist any one; I could only weep violently. Miss Partington, seeing nature was relieved by tears, laid me on the sofa, and gave her exclusive attention to Miss Ellis. I cannot express the misery I endured for some length of time. Solitary misery stretched moments into hours, and the deep silence seemed eternal. At last the door-bell rang, and I started from my own thoughts. I heard a confused noise in the hall, and, rushing to the door, beheld Sir James Langham and Captain Thelwal bearing Mr. Ellis in their arms. The five dogs flew yelling under their different chairs.

“Here we are,” exclaimed Sir James; “nothing much the matter, except a strained wrist and a few thumps. Mercy on us, five dogs! Well, that’s just better than so many cats—hold your devil’s tongues, all of ye. Miss Vansittart, you here! God bless my soul!”

“Put him down on this sofa, Sir James. I

will tell you all things in time ; but are you sure Mr. Ellis is not in danger? Only assure me he is not very ill, that I may comfort his poor sister."

Mr. Ellis himself replied, and quieted all my fears as to his own injuries. His faintness had been from pain, and his present weakness from a powerful strain in the wrist and ankle, which had been bound up by Mr. Ray on the instant: he was, in other respects, perfectly comfortable. Luckily, Mr. Ellis's very polite speeches never gave one the least idea that they could be meant as lover-like effusions ; so they passed muster in the present instance.

" I am most flattered, dear lady, by this kindness, and I beg you to accept my most grateful acknowledgments. Unto our friends here, what can we say sufficiently demonstrative of our gratitude ?"

" Oh, say nothing, Mr. Ellis—say nothing ! Silence, you know, is expressive. We will call to-morrow to be thanked in form—Thelwal and myself will be off now—but, Mr. Ellis, I never trust my own servants, so, of course, I sha'n't put faith in other people's. I saw your curricule put up myself, and read your horses a lecture—begged them in future to be more philanthropic."

“Allow me, dear gentleman, to send word unto my sister.”

“No, no! Miss Vansittart says she is poorly, and I won’t allow her to be disturbed—allow me to act. Come, Thelwal, let us to the wars—the devil take the lapdogs—whack ’em, Thelwal, whack ’em well—that’s right, my boys, hark away!”

Captain Thelwal obeyed orders, and the noise was terrific. I could not resist the scene of uproar; Sir James commanding the onslaught, and his friend caning away in silence. I burst into an immoderate fit of laughter. Mr. Ellis was not heard imploring mercy for his sister’s pets, yet there was something so agreeable in the manner of both gentlemen, it was impossible to feel offended at the cool *air de famille* with which they undertook the task of reforming the manners of Clorinda and her tribe. It was evident how much a masterly hand could effect; a few strokes from Captain Thelwal, laid on with precision and resolution, soon silenced the enemy, and Clorinda retired to her basket, followed in dismay by her unruly puppies.

“Peace is declared at last,” cried Sir James, advancing towards Mr. Ellis; “nothing like having one’s establishment in order, my dear sir, and you will find your account in it. I

hate what they call ‘reform in church and state,’ but I always silence barking dogs with a touch of it. Well, and so you are easy now?—very good—expect us to-morrow to make our bow, as we are now doing—good morning, Miss Vansittart, and though Thelwal has not spoken a word yet, he can talk when he pleases. He thinks I talk enough for both, but I like a little chat in a philanthropic way:—no scandal—hate it—but just as we are chatting now, it’s very pleasant.”

I thought so too, and regretted their departure, as Sir James bowed himself out with good-natured ease, and his friend quietly and silently followed, leaving me to a *tête-à-tête* with Mr. Ellis. I never could endure it before; but now I felt sorrow for poor, unoffending Miss Ellis and her shaking head, which extended to her brother. I sat by him, and told him of her sudden illness.

“Poor Priscilla, she will be glad to hear I am arrived safely—but, dearest lady, how good is this! How could I dream of your excellent kindness in attending me on the couch of pain—how exceedingly grateful I consider myself!”

“Why, indeed, Mr. Ellis, I am alone to blame, if anything should happen to your poor sister. I cannot forget her nervous excitation

—it makes me wretched when I think I was the cause of it by my impetuosity. I would do anything to relieve her from such nervousness.”

Miss Partington came down to us, and expressed her deep concern at the situation of both her friends. “Here,” said she, “I leave you not, till Miss Ellis is equal to return down-stairs; and I have taken upon me to order beds for both. I shall not quit my poor friend till I have seen the gentleman from Cowes, though Mr. Ray has been with her, and speaks favourably of her attack; but Louisa will cheerfully and anxiously attend to you, Mr. Ellis, and you cannot be solaced more agreeably—I have sent for everything in the way of clothes.”

Mr. Ellis almost rose from his recumbent position, pleasure sparkling in his eyes, and words of affection bursting from his lips.

“Dear, kind ladies—admirable friends—how I thank you—how I love you! What can I say unto you to express my high consideration?”

“Say it all to Louisa,” replied Miss Partington, “for I am on the wing again. I will bring you the opinion of the medical gentleman, but excuse me to dinner—perhaps at tea we may have pleasant things to tell each other.” And I was again left with Mr. Ellis.

There is no woman on earth so completely lost to kindness and sympathy, but she will have a heart, alive to sorrowing illness. It is woman's part to nurse and console—it is her nature to soothe the bed of sickness, and I believe it to be the last feeling which deserts her. In my own case I felt it so. When I beheld Mr. Ellis—my contempt when in health—laid before me helpless and restless, I forgot, for the time, all my disgusts and prejudices. We had changed situations:—I was no longer to be waited upon as an Eastern Begum, full of pride and power. He who spoiled me by indulgence, was powerless and weak; and the queen subsided into the woman, when circumstance demanded the change. My feelings were roused into action—my importance increased—and my energies nerved into usefulness, by feeling necessary to the comfort of any one; and I owed much to the two invalids who were both suffering through my own selfishness.

Miss Ellis was not so much injured by her attack as my terror had apprehended. Dr. Hartshorn believed her to be in no danger, though she had some little fever; and he considered her mind being at rest on her brother's safety, would soon restore her tone of general health. He left us with satisfaction, and pro-

mised to renew his visit, making us over to the tender mercies of Mr. Ray. Mr. Ellis was requested to keep very quiet for some time—the wrist and ankle were strained, and would require rest and patience, but in material points all was going on well. Poor Miss Ellis would remain in her own chamber for a day or two, and the curricule was to be a sealed book for some weeks. I thought myself let off very easily, since I had no death to answer for; but how Miss Ellis would rue the day she first beheld me doomed ever since our short acquaintance to discomfiture and alarms, and not possessing the same high opinion of my moral virtues, which blinded her brother's vision!

Miss Partington took her tea with us according to her promise, and brought us good accounts of her patient. She was in a tranquil sleep, and easy in her mind; we therefore turned our attention to the adventure of the day, and discussed our new acquaintance. We had some dispute about Captain Thelwal, and Miss Partington was puzzled to judge between our expressed opinions.

“Captain Thelwal,” said Mr. Ellis, “is a most charitable conversable gentleman, and I should be disposed to think a very good man also.”

“Of all the silent stupes, commend me to Captain Thelwal;” I cried almost in the same breath.

“What am I to think when doctors disagree?” said Miss Partington, laughing

“No doubt Miss Louisa has more penetration than I have,” returned Mr. Ellis, so humbly and gently it would have tamed a hyena—“I know she is right in everything, only it seemed unto me the captain was very kind.”

“Oh yes, Mr. Ellis, he put you into the cabriolet, and did as he was bid; but I assure you he would not have stirred if Sir James had not ordered every one to his post. As it was, he appeared but little interested, and I am sure it was not a voluntary action. Sir James managed everything. I am sorry to differ with you about Captain Thelwal, but I think him very disagreeable.”

“Well, dear lady, I will not contend; I am sure you are right, but he discoursed I thought very pleasingly in the carriage.”

“Yes; he just asked how you were, and if you were in pain, I dare say; but anyone would have done that—you fancy such things, Mr. Ellis!”

“I shall judge between you to-morrow,” said Miss Partington, “but I mean to admire both.”

“You will certainly admire Sir James—he has quite the air of fashion, but Captain Thelwal is a perfect iceberg. Did you see his unmoved countenance when he was whipping those disagreeable dogs? not a muscle altered, though we all enjoyed the scene.”

“I cannot say I admire Clorinda or her family,” said Mr. Ellis softly, “nevertheless they are my poor sister’s pets, and in that light respectable to me

“They have behaved much better since, however, Mr. Ellis, and kept in their baskets, which you must acknowledge is a wonderful benefit to the public.”

Mr. Ellis resigned the contest. I had words *ad infinitum* at my disposal, and reasons incalculable for every position of my arguments, which bore down all opposition. Mr. Ellis was, moreover, getting used to my manner; and such is the effect of habit, that he failed not upon every question to turn instinctively towards me as the leader of his thoughts. He had relinquished Captain Thelwal to my opinion, and even Clorinda was abandoned. I mowed down all his long-fostered oddities, and he was like a general who sees his troops deserting around him, and remains alone on the battle-field. Poor Mr. Ellis was not the first individual who

hugged a chain of iron, and admired its links because they were slightly gilded. Thousands of men who rated themselves at a far higher intellectual mark than Mr. Ellis ever rated himself, have undergone the same intoxicating ruin. Many a hero, blazing in the glare of public applause, has sunk enervated with the same sparkling draught. They have quenched their light as surely and as suddenly, through the same baneful influence—an artful woman’s smile—but with less dignity; for they belonged to the world, and well understood its fashions and its follies. Mr. Ellis was the child of nature, and had never learned by experience that hearts could invent a lacker, and offer it for pure metal.

When Miss Partington retired to her patient, I brought forward the chess-board, and we were deep in its combinations till the hour for rest arrived. I did not like Mr. Ellis’s style of game;—his perceptions in chess, like his moves through life, were slow and cautious—save and except his proposal to myself—and I had scarcely patience to wait till each arrangement was concluded in his mind.

“Pray, Mr. Ellis, be a little more sprightly, you are so very dilatory in your moves, it tires me to death.”

“ My dear lady, I consider it most judicious to pause before I take a step of any moment, and mistakes are seldom to be rectified in this game of judgment.”

“ Some people are mighty cautious when it is not of material consequence, Mr. Ellis.”

“ My dearest lady, I will endeavour to play somewhat more vivaciously, but your clever moves compel me to think very deeply.”

“ I advise you to dash on without giving it so much thought; you have gone too far now, and the deeper you reflect the more you will bewilder yourself—in two moves you will get checked.”

“ As how, dear lady?”

“ Look at those two knights immediately before you; in two moves your queen is lost, in spite of your immense thought.”

“ I confess I was not aware of your quickness,” replied Mr. Ellis, striving in vain to save his piece by some grand manœuvre. “ I perceive I am nearly overcome, but, perhaps, something may yet be effected.”

I waited patiently while Mr. Ellis looked here and there for some mode of escape for his piece: I looked into the fire and into the annual, which formed the whole of the Ellis library; I then

looked at Clorinda, whose offended feelings kept her silent and sulky in her basket ; I looked at the puppies—they were also fatigued from the events of the day, and laid at rest. I turned my eyes again to Mr. Ellis, and beheld him dreaming over and contemplating his queen, as she stood before the threatening position of my knights. I began to lose patience—going—going—gone ! I overturned the chess-board with the greatest unconcern imaginable, and its contents flew to all parts of the room:

“ Heavens and earth, Mr. Ellis, you would weary an angel’s patience with your dead marches !”

Mr. Ellis looked up in amazement.

“ You may well stare,” I exclaimed, trying to laugh off my violent exhibition of temper ; “ the game is mine, and I have saved you an actual defeat by this bright manœuvre.”

“ I confess I was much astonished, but do not hurt yourself in stooping unto those pieces ; let my servant do all that, dear lady, I am shocked at my own inability to rise.”

“ No, no ; your servant need not know that one of us has been very awkward or very angry. Sit still, Mr. Ellis, what are you poking there about ?”

“I cannot see you picking up the chess-men while I am unemployed, my dear Miss Louisa, it seems unmanly and ungallant.”

“Nonsense, Mr. Ellis, there is a wide difference between want of gallantry and being finicking: both extremes are unmanly.”

Luckily Mr. Ellis did not understand the sting of my speeches, though the tone in which I replied to his remarks upon any subject betrayed indifference. His own nature was too gentle to mean offence towards a worm, therefore he never comprehended my waspish remarks as bearing an implied insult. He only judged from the look which accompanied the words that something was wrong, but he always sought its cause in the wrong direction, by accusing himself, in lieu of detecting my infirmity of temper. I was sorry at this moment to vex him, considering he was ill and uncomfortable, and my temper having had its fling, I soon made a small reparation.

“Now, Mr. Ellis, you must be assisted by your servant and go to your repose, or Miss Ellis will blame me to-morrow; so shut your eyes, as the children say, and see what fate will send you.”

Mr. Ellis closed his eyes as he was bid, and I kissed his forehead. The blood rushed to his

temples with surprise and pleasure. He made an attempt to seize my hand, but I was yards distant in a moment,—he was quite overpowered with his feelings.

“There, Mr. Ellis, you have been rewarded for losing your game so patiently, and invalids have always allowance made for their sufferings. I am now going to ring for Richard.”

“But, dear Miss Louisa, I beseech you—listen to me for one moment—let me speak my thoughts—”

“I have rung now—don’t try to monopolize civilities. Good night; I trust you will be easy in every respect to-morrow.” I nodded to him once more as his servant entered, and by these acts of grace left him the happiest of human beings.

The morrow opened in loveliness, and brought access of health to all. Miss Ellis was materially better, and appeared happy in having an excuse to keep in the quietude of her own chamber. She told Miss Partington it was “a dreadful piece of business;” but, as her brother’s lady was in the house, it would relieve herself from the cares of household affairs. She might be wrong, but she did not think Miss Vansittart at all suited to her poor brother; and nothing but misfortunes had happened since here she

had been, and she saw no end to them, for Miss Vansittart never thought before she spoke or reflected before she acted.

Mr. Ellis had almost fattened upon his salutation the preceding night ; he was in excellent spirits, and scarcely susceptible of the weakness in his ankle and wrist. He was so recovered in appearance, that any other woman would have wielded her power gently, in the very knowledge of its potency over the object ; but as the traces of illness vanished from Mr. Ellis, so did my attentions disappear, and I was again the self-willed mistress, the wayward and unreflecting Louisa Vansittart.

Miss Partington was with us, seated at a huge worsted frame, when Sir James Langham and Captain Thelwal were announced. “ Now, Miss Partington,” I cried, “ do note Captain Dummy, Mr. Ellis’s very chatty friend, and don’t be influenced.” The entrance of the gentlemen precluded further speech.

Sir James entered as usual before his companion, and advanced with the air and address of a very old and intimate friend.

“ How very comfortable you all look !—Ah ! you radicals [addressing the dogs], so my reform bill has quieted you ; not one cares to look at you, Thelwal—begin to think better of reform

than I did.—I need not ask how you all are. How do you do—Miss Packington, I believe?”

I introduced them to each other; Dummy bowing in silence, as a matter of course.

“This has been a lovely morning, ma’am, and we are come to see how you all get on. Mr. Ellis, I offer myself to drive you out while your wrist is weak; you must not lay up all day;—air, my dear sir, air!”

Mr. Ellis began a fine-spun harangue about his grateful feelings; but I caught up the thread of his discourse, and explained everything in half the time he would have employed in seeking quaint expressions. Sir James passed on to Miss Partington,—“Ladies are always busy with worsted-work, and when it is finished, the effect is not worth the trouble.”

“I differ with you, Sir James; the effect obtained, you know, is employing the mind in sorting colours, and representing objects, instead of inventing mischief.”

“Very good, Miss Packington, you are a very clever woman.—Miss Vansittart, do you hear your aunt?—she is very perspicuous, but not so philanthropic as I was. I did not allude to such an inference.”

Captain Thelwal had seated himself by me, and for some time remained perfectly silent;

but as the conversation became animated between Sir James and Miss Partington, he turned gently towards me.

“You walk sometimes, do you not, Miss Vansittart?”

I met Captain Thelwal's eye for the first time upon this address; and for the first time I heard his low and rich tone of voice. I was confused by its unexpected effect, and I blushed. Again his eye rested upon me, and increased my confusion: it was an expression of deep tenderness—a something not to be described—something I had never yet seen or felt;—it was an eye which, having once read its expression, possesses a power over the imagination for ever. I did not again raise my eyes to Captain Thelwal's face, though we conversed on many subjects. His peculiar tones stole on my ear in soft harmonious flow, as he slowly delivered his sentiments; but I felt the power of his glance upon my mind. It was a glance not obtrusive, for it was gradual, and slowly raised; neither was it offensive, for it was mild in tenderness; but it was not to be endured like the expression of common eyes, and its effect was overwhelming. I felt its spell was upon me, and my own eyes sought the ground, as

my cheeks burned with blushes I could not command. Such was "Captain Dummy's" power, and such my situation during a quarter of an hour's dialogue. Sir James Langham and Miss Partington were in high playful conversation when I turned from Captain Thelwal to recover my composure; but I did not think Mr. Ellis quite approved our close and almost whispered intercourse. I guessed it by his silent and discomposed air; for his manner never lost its polite gentleness. Sir James Langham's voice now rolled on its course undisturbed.

"Well, you are all very pleasant people, I declare, and our accident has turned out a Godsend. I like Ryde better than Cowes, and we wont go to Russia yet, Thelwal. Mr. Ellis, what do you say to a sail, if to-morrow or next day shall be like this? Allow me to act, and we will take you up as cleverly as possible;—air, my dear sir, air!"

"Oh! yes, Mr. Ellis," I exclaimed, exchanging my seat for one near him; "it would refresh you so!"

"If you think so, my dear lady,—"

"I certainly do think you ought to take some exercise, Mr. Ellis; and if Miss Parting-

ton and your sister will join the party, we shall enjoy a little water excursion; don't you think so, Miss P.?"

"My dear Louisa, we have had one accident already, and I should advise caution."

Sir James boldly interfered:

"I have sailed over leagues of sea, ladies, so be not afraid of a dip; and as to Thelwal, he is as perfect a sailor, as he is a soldier;—no resisting Thelwal if he undertakes an affair."

Captain Thelwal fixed his extraordinary eyes again upon me, as he gently assented to the plan, and assured Mr. Ellis of its practicability; but Mr. Ellis had no negative to offer; for my eyes, smiling acquiescence upon him, were never opposed, and the sail was to be undertaken, in spite of Miss Partington's better judgment.

"Very good," cried Sir James; "allow me to act, and think no more of it till we call for you on Thursday morning. Don't injure yourself by speaking, my dear sir; I have arranged everything in my own mind. Nothing like deciding quickly, Miss Vansittart, and acting promptly, except in matrimony—don't blush—but every lady blushes upon that subject, though I think there is no necessity, unless they are going to do a foolish thing. I knew a young

girl once, who was engaged to a tough old fellow—Eh! what's the matter?"

I was scarlet to the tips of my fingers.

Miss Partington flew to the rescue. "We will not keep you waiting on Thursday, Sir James; but remember you are responsible for our safety. I scarcely know how to trust you. You may be bribed to commit murder by some lover of my young friend."

"I tell you I am the soul of philanthropy—harmless as a sucking dove! I will take you under my especial protection, Miss Packington. Thelwal shall convoy our friend and his lovely niece; and Mrs. Ellis will be quite able to join the group by Thursday—very good—that's a decided thing, then, and we wont detain your time any longer. Come, Thelwal. Well then, God bless you all; keep up your spirits, and don't get alarmed like my old mother—never could keep her to anything for an hour together. Nothing like keeping dogs in order. I can hear myself speak now. You see how soon people and things are managed by prompt measures. Once more, good bye!"

Sir James talked himself out of the room; and as the hall-door closed, he was still talking on to his companion.

CHAPTER VI.

“AND now, Louisa,” said Miss Partington, as we resumed our seats, “I have noticed your friend, Captain Thelwal, and will not be influenced according to your wish. Shall I give you my opinion of him, or shall I say it only to Mr. Ellis?”

I tried to avoid the subject, by opening another more distant and less exciting.

“The gentlemen remained so much longer than I expected, Miss Partington, I am afraid I shall lose this day’s post. Had I not better hurry off a letter to Mary, to state Mr. Ellis’s accident?”

“I have done so already, my dear. I wrote while I was in attendance yesterday up-stairs; but still do not let me prevent you writing also. I can postpone my opinion of Captain Thelwal, no longer ‘Dummy,’ to a more fitting time.”

“Am I to say we shall still be in Gloucestershire at the period fixed upon?”

“Our movements now,” returned Miss Partington, “will depend upon the nature of Mr. Ellis’s confinement. We will not leave him till he is able to follow us. I have also named that matter to Mary. Come and hear my opinion of Sir James Langham.”

“Well, what is your opinion of Sir James? you had him all to yourself—he scarcely spoke to me.” I was glad Sir James was under discussion; I felt no annoyance there, and could freely rally my friend, while the captain remained unnoticed.

“Sir James is one of those rare characters who take forcible possession of our hearts, without being aware he is captivating us. Sir James is kind-hearted, candid, and honourable, and all our best feelings are roused in our admiration. We feel we are conversing with a guileless being, whose study is to give and receive kindness upon equal terms; and we take him to our hearts without offering or asking conditions. Such is my opinion of your new friend, Louisa. You said I should admire him, and I do so most heartily.”

“I also prefer him to the other young gentleman,” said Mr. Ellis; “although he was very pleasant in some respects.”

“Very well, Miss Partington,” I cried, laugh-

ingly; “your time is come at last!—Mr. Ellis, we shall dance at our friend’s wedding yet; she is certainly over head and ears with Sir James.—Miss Partington, you have snatched him from me, and he is to be your swain you know on Thursday. This will be a fine episode for Mary.”

“Sir James,” continued my friend, more seriously, “is unlike those deep and heartless minds, whose most exciting amusement consists in creating pain, and wounding the unsuspecting: he is unlike the man who would repay obligation by treachery, or turn affection into bitterness. Yet such a man as this do I fancy in Captain Thelwal.”

At this back stroke I crimsoned, and let fall the writing materials. I was extremely provoked at my awkwardness, just at the very moment too I wished and intended to be utterly indifferent,—and my countenance playing me false at the hour of need. Nothing could be so foolish and unfortunate. I gathered up the implements quickly, and struck a bold stroke to carry off my conscious looks; but, like many other bold strokes, it recoiled upon myself, and deceived no one.

“Come now, Miss Partington, a truce with your violent admiration of Sir James, or else

share your hopes with me fairly. You know he belongs exclusively to me, and I ask fair play."

"Granted, my dear Louisa, you shall now have your turn. Tell us your opinion of the two gentlemen this morning, now that a longer period of chatting acquaintance has drawn each further under observation."

"I like Sir James Langham extremely," I replied, to her close interrogation. "I think him all you say. I have seldom seen a person who fixes himself so ably and innocently in one's opinion."

"And Captain Thelwal?"

"Talks more than I gave him credit for, and is rather better-looking than I imagined; but every one must prefer Sir James." I coloured again, and hesitated; for Miss Partington fixed her eyes upon me, and her eyes were as powerful as Captain Thelwal's in their effect upon myself. I never could get away from their spell, or recover my composure, while they rested upon me. Hers were searching, sorrowing, intellectual eyes, which seemed to detect weakness and wickedness at a glance, and yet pity the sinner, and forgive the error. Hers were the eyes of virtue apostrophizing the seven deadly sins, and commanding them to depart.

Captain Thelwal's eyes were incomprehensibly bewitching, and yet terrific in their expression, if roused into strong feeling. I stood like a culprit, however, at this moment, beneath the acute glance of my friend, trying, uselessly, to deceive her with false lights. She was more deeply versed in human nature, and I never piqued myself upon powers of dissembling. She saw I understood her purpose, and she adverted no more to our new acquaintance. Mr. Ellis was not anxious to renew the subject either, and it was curious to observe how cautiously we all avoided the repetition of either of those names which had, for two days, been our hourly theme.

Miss Ellis was prevailed upon to return to the sitting-room on the following morning. She was loath to reappear among us, but she submitted to annoyances it was out of her power to resist. She had entreated Miss Partington to remain for some days longer at the Cottage. It was impossible to deny her request, from the very nature of her reasoning. "I may be wrong, Miss Partington, but I am bewildered and worried to death. My brother, he is so determined, and Miss Vansittart, she is so fond of company! I know no more than the dead what to order; and as to the servants, they cheat me—I know they do, Miss Partington. I shall be

quite happy when my brother is married, and I am quiet at Swansea; but what he will do with a gay wife, I am sure I don't know."

Our meeting passed off tolerably well—her head shook as I approached her, but she felt it was vain to expect peace during my reign of terror. She only silently contrived to be as little in my way as possible,—and as an invalid, her escapes were often and easily effected. The addition of Miss Ellis to our little party was not an improvement to its flavour. I could tolerate Mr. Ellis, because he never interfered with my plans or sentiments, and he was moreover bound to admire the bonds which sometimes galled him; but Miss Ellis, whose ideas were concentrated in her lapdogs and servants, added nothing to our stock in conversation, and offended me by some of her sturdy remarks. This day, therefore, I resolved to steal forth and breathe the sea air, and for an hour at least enjoy my own reflections. I did not name my intention lest Mr. Ellis should be anxious, and offer me the surveillance of his fat coachman in a dull drive, the very thought of which drove me stealthily from the Cottage. I walked quickly to the pier, transported to find myself free from disturbance, and refreshed by the exhilarating breeze which blew softly from the

west. The sun was shining gloriously; not a footfall of winter had yet marked his heavy and gloomy approach—all was mild and genial as the early spring. The sea was still as a lake, and the boats near the pier lay in perfect repose upon its waters. Here I ruminated on many subjects, and thought with terror of the fate I had drawn and accepted. I might be happy—I must be respectable, if I valued excellence, and was willing to struggle with my own rebellious fancy—if I could only believe what others had experienced, and forewarned me, and be content to know that life was not a chain of pleasures, a tale of romance! If I could but think it was a trial of human nature from the beginning to its close, and that all we despise and ridicule in youth, becomes our dependence and hope in age; if I could feel sure the manner and appearance of Mr. Ellis would fade by habitude, and leave only his worth stamped upon my mind! But no, that would never be. Once separated from the strong and kind guardianship of Miss Partington, or even removed with her into scenes of temptation, I felt assured my nature would resume itself, and I should loathe instead of honour the man I had taken such ungenerous pains to attract. My mind flew back to past scenes,—scenes in which I had given all my heart

to Brereton. I had indeed loved him, and mourned him; yet was I sacrificing his very remembrance to wealth, if, indeed, my love had been anything but ungratified selfishness, or my mourning anything beyond angry disappointment. Then did the image of Captain Thelwal obtrude itself—those deeply-speaking eyes—that voice of tenderness—that quick yet seductive manner. Why was not Mr. Ellis like him, even in the evening of his days? but it was vain to contemplate or reflect, for my doom was sealed, and “to it with what appetite I may.” I turned from the pier to retrace my steps homeward, and met Captain Thelwal at the very instant my thoughts were upon him. I met the expression of those dangerous eyes, and I heard the musical tones of his voice, as he told me he had long been watching my meditations, but had not dared intrude upon them. My surprise was great; shall I say my pleasure was greater!—Ah! my fluttering unsettled mind,—ah, my unfix'd wavering principles!

I turned again upon the pier, and we walked for another hour together. Captain Thelwal did not talk much, but he was the cause of it in others. There was that very marked attention to all I said, and that apparent interest in all I said, which flatters so much the addressed

object. I forgot my meditations, my engagement, and my depression, and I was flirting with all my early zest upon the pier at Ryde, with my acquaintance of a day, the dangerously-agreeable Captain Thelwal. We talked of the following morning, and the pleasures of sailing; we discussed people and things, and we defined flirtation and love. The last theme was dangerous ground, and I was treading on a concealed volcano. Captain Thelwal spoke with deep feeling; his sentiments appeared my own, though upon reflection I remember but little to repeat. I was very brilliant upon the subject myself, and spoke with energy, which he echoed, perhaps, and elicited, by his address in leading me to express my sentiments. I was not aware how rapidly time flew by,—and before our discussions ended, the sun was dipping below the horizon. Captain Thelwal accompanied me to our gate.

“I must not ask you in, I fear,” I said, as we paused ere I entered the little paddock.

“Yet you can do what you please with its owner, Miss Vansittart.”

“If I had the power you name, I should certainly ask you in,” I replied, colouring at his observation.

“You really would?” he asked, bending his

eyes upon me with a peculiar expression, which instantly brought a deeper suffusion.

“ I should be very discourteous if I did not do so after your polite escort, Captain Thelwal.”

“ Then it would be a mere matter of courtesy only, and not a sentiment of kindness,” replied he, in a tone of disappointment.

“ Don't fancy things, and get out of temper, Captain Thelwal, otherwise our expedition to-morrow will be dismal. You have yet to be introduced to Miss Ellis, and what kind of impression will you make with that face of discontent, think you? I would you could see it!”

“ I would you were in the humour to dispel it!”

“ I can do nothing, Captain Thelwal.” Yet, instead of ending the dialogue by departing, I still lingered to hear his reply.

“ Yes you may, Miss Vansittart; instead of turning from me, as you seem inclined to do, you might say something gentle and courteous for me to live upon till to-morrow.”

I began to tremble for myself, yet how could I avoid replying to this compliment. It was *but* a compliment, and that coin was of easy circulation, and possessed no real value. I retorted; Captain Thelwal rejoined; and the coin was passed and repassed till it *did* become im-

portant, for I was not allowed to depart till my hand had been pressed, and my cheeks crimsoned with implied love avowals, and when I entered the house, my aim was to avoid any suspicion of my having met and walked with Captain Thelwal. One foolish step must involve another, and I had better have stated my adventure openly, but conscience forbade my alluding to the circumstance, and my own confusion defied all power to enter upon it. In this frame of mind I went to my room, and only appeared among my party, as we assembled in the drawing-room before dinner. I had dressed with particular care this evening, and, conscious of my demerits, I attacked Mr. Ellis with something like playfulness, and charged him with looking better and appearing livelier after an absence, than when in my presence. Mr. Ellis, all happy in my notice, repelled the charge in his usual quaint and respectful style.

“I have been,” I said, “enjoying sea breezes and meditations, and taking in pure draughts of wholesome air upon the pier, while you, Mr. Ellis, have rested from my exactions, and enjoyed your ease in tranquillity.”

“My dearest lady, far from me are those accusations; for when it grew dusk, I sent Richard to meet you.”

I started. Good heavens! how lucky the rencounter did not take place! It would have been all over the house in five minutes, that I was walking with Captain Thelwal! The very fright made me loquacious. "I met no one. I think you fib Mr. Ellis, but don't let that incommode you. I am going to tell you how lovely the weather was, and how comfortably I could have thrown aside my cashmere. Miss Partington, you would have revelled in the tranquil scene, and I am sure Miss Ellis would have been greatly recovered by a breeze so soft and sweet as the pier received all this day. We shall really enjoy our sail to-morrow, if it keeps fine."

"You are yourself a specimen of the exhilarating power of the air, Louisa," said Miss Partington; "you look blooming and you are quite brilliant!"

"A walk is a bewitching thing. I saw Mrs. Rodd, the mercer's lady, and there was Mr. Ray on the pier, and everything was so still, the earth so completely at rest, and the heavens so smiling; indeed you should all have been there—And your wrist is quite free from pain, Mr. Ellis? I am very glad; you will soon be quite well again."

Agitation kept me talking, and agitation

enabled me to banter with Mr. Ellis by way of staving inquiries which I did not intend to satisfy. I was even more *spirituelle* than I had been since my engagement with Mr. Ellis had weighed down my heart and spirits. Miss Ellis I thought looked at me in astonishment, but in the eyes of Miss Partington, and in my lover's eyes, I read undisguised admiration. How happy they were, enjoying my nonsense, while I chatted away, in pure alarm of being asked questions!

Dinner interrupted our harmony, but did not check its current. I still amused and charmed my audience with a thousand sportive fancies. Miss Partington thought they proceeded from an amended heart, and Mr. Ellis hoped they flowed from a happy one. At last, Richard made his appearance with mince-pies, and Mr. Ellis, who always had something gentle to say when he thought he had given trouble, spoke to his old servant.

“Richard, you did not meet Miss Vansittart; you must have gone to Ryde some short way.”

“Yes, sir, I saw Miss Vansittart, but I did not proceed, as Captain Thelwal was with her, sir.”

No—if a water-spout had burst and poured its contents upon us—if a park of artillery had

fired simultaneously and suddenly under the windows, the shock would not have paralyzed us more than did Richard's one sentence. It was followed by a profound silence. The thing was done, and could neither be denied nor rebutted, therefore my part must be taken on the instant, and I must brave it out, or succumb for ever. I braved it. "Ah! I forgot one part of my sight-seeing to-day: Captain Thelwal overtook me, and by-the-bye, I was to say you were all to be punctually ready at eleven, on account of the tide to-morrow."

I received neither comment or reply; never mind, my skiff was on the waters, and I must breast the waves. I broke the appalling silence once more.

"I asked, too, where Sir James Langham had hid himself, that he was not on the pier; but I fancy he was at Cowes, preparing some little *divertissement* for to-morrow: I hope it may prove a little music. Mr. Ellis, did you ever hear the brass band at St. James's? but I think you said you never would go through the ceremony of being presented."

"I did certainly say so, Miss Louisa," replied Mr. Ellis, in gentle tones, but so changed! so mild, and yet so cold! I was horrified.

Another silence ensued, which I did not at-

tempt to interfere with while the servants remained. I glanced at Mr. Ellis, who sat resigned and pale; the happy expression of his countenance departed. My eye passed over Miss Partington: she was affecting to eat, and her attention was fixed upon her plate. Miss Ellis, alone, was composedly watching me. I was aware I had made a mystery of an event unimportant in itself, but hydra-headed when masked by concealment, and accompanied by evasion. All this I knew, and lamented when too late, but surely the little nonsensical circumstance, I thought, need not be swelled into a crime, or visited by such silence. I might as well live in a monastery of La Trappe. I worked myself into resentment, and expended it the moment we were left to the desert.

“If, Mr. Ellis, all this silent indignation occurs simply because I met Captain Thelwal, I am very sorry, particularly as it offers a poor prospect for future content. If I am to be met in silence for such a trivial cause, I have little hope for happiness when we are condemned to live together.”

I concluded my anger would subdue Mr. Ellis into instant acquiescences. No such thing. I never saw him look so dignified as at the moment he calmly replied to my attack.

“If your fears, madam, are aroused at my silent rebuke, what must I feel when your conduct tells me at once how little I must be cared for. My good young lady, I have had much contention in my own mind, and have sometimes thought it not altogether natural that you should care much for my age and habits, yet it seemed unto me that one so kind and good would surely not betray me. That I have ever done my utmost to win your regard, I am sure you feel; yet there is something in this conduct which, I think, I have not—” Mr. Ellis paused, he was unable to proceed.

I grew more indignant as I felt the truth of this mild rebuke, and my old enemy was ever at hand to choke reason and deny repentance. I became unwarrantably impertinent, and added bitterness to sorrow in the heart of the gentlest of human beings.

“I think I understand you, Mr. Ellis, pray do not mince the matter; if you insinuate want of confidence, let me release you from thralldom, and from this moment you are free, Mr. Ellis. I will bind myself to no man who doubts me.”

“I am willing—nay, anxious to hear why you should meet a gentleman privately, and then suppress the circumstance.”

“I tell you I did *not* meet a gentleman, Mr. Ellis.”

“You were then not met with Captain Thelwal?” returned Mr. Ellis, calmly.

“Yes, I was with Captain Thelwal; but I insist upon the meeting being considered accidental, and let me tell you, Mr. Ellis, before your sister and Miss Partington, I will not bear suspicion, nor will I bear these interrogations, sir. If I am to be cross-questioned every time a gentleman walks with me, a wretchedly dull life is before me.”

“Your own conduct has caused this conversation, Miss Vansittart,” replied Mr. Ellis, with something like spirit. “I could never suspect you—I never have suspected you of wrong; but methinks I have a right to inquire into a mysterious transaction, and lament the displeasing light in which you view a matter that concerns my quiet. Had *I* done so, you would have had a right to question me, and I think I should have felt grateful for the interest so expressed.”

“You might have walked all day and all night too, with all the women in Ryde, Mr. Ellis—it never would have concerned me. I am sure it would have given me little uneasiness, and I should certainly not have persecuted you with a single question.”

Mr. Ellis bowed, but made no reply to a

speech which betrayed such total disregard to his "whereabout:" it was, in sooth, a heartless exposition of my want of feeling; but when did I ever consider time, place, or propriety? My temper was now chafed with anger at perceiving Mr. Ellis had that in his character which looked very like offended pride, or, speaking of his gentle mind, I should rather say offended delicacy. I never studied character; therefore I had yet to learn that Mr. Ellis, humble in his own opinion, was particularly nice on some points relative to the woman he was going to marry. For his own peace' sake, it was of consequence to believe in the strict regard and faith of his future wife. He was aware his outward and visible signs were not powerfully prepossessing, and therefore he must firmly believe in the steadiness of her principles and her nature's susceptibility of kindness, to make him happy in marriage. How far he could rest secure in my display of insolence and indifference, was now the point at issue.

What an evening of annoyance I passed upon our return to the drawing-room! Mr. Ellis did not rejoin us, which inclined me to think he was either sulky, or trying to alarm, so I had one resource cut off; for I could have played at vexing him. Miss Partington was polite, but

not entertaining, or even disposed to lecture. I could see she was displeased with me. Miss Ellis sat with Clorinda in her lap, but did not address her, or the puppies which gathered round her. She was preparing, by repose now, for the whirlwind to come. Coffee came in, and passed away: it was dull continued silence still, and my own reflections were never good company. I therefore pleaded a headache, and retired.

We met next morning with feelings but ill adapted for a party of pleasure. Mr. Ellis was just the same polite host, and passed, as usual, through the forms of the breakfast-table, which, with him, carried all the attentions of the olden time; but he was very pale, and his manners towards myself were frigid and more ceremonious, if possible, than ever. I was high, not in innocence, but in indignation at his absence the preceding evening. It was such a marked display of being able to resist my society, that I judged it quite worthy of resentment; therefore, I simply bowed my morning salutation, and addressed my remarks to Miss Partington. It was a glorious day for our sail, which was to take place under such adverse circumstances, and so I implied in one of my observations.

“ It is just such a day, Miss Partington, one

would pray for upon such an occasion, and how disagreeable to be told by our poet, in describing such a climate as he described,

‘ That all, save the spirit of *man*, is divine.’

One fancies all should be in unison. I am resolved to be happy to-day, like Seged; therefore, I have left all disagreeable thoughts up stairs.”

“ I hope you will not, like Seged, find that happiness will not come upon command,” said Miss Partington, quietly. “ There is a deep moral in Seged’s search.”

“ I don’t think I am quick in detecting morals and motives,” I replied. “ I just act to the moment, and never reflect. I should be worried to death unravelling motives, and anatomising morals; life would roll on very heavily.”

“ Then you prefer being spurred on over mountains and precipices by accidents. You may, for a time, like the excitement; but you must be sorely wounded in the fray at last. Better reflect now, that your future may be without repentance.”

“ You put one’s ideas in such a strong light, Miss Partington! I thought of nothing but having a pleasant day, when I began this conversation, and here you have summed up a serious charge and a lecture. Breakfast will

scarcely be concluded, before our summons arrives."

"We shall proceed again to our lodgings," continued Miss Partington, "when our sail is concluded. Miss Ellis is so materially better, we can now resume our old station, and hope to find our friends daily improving. I have ordered Jones to pack our few things, and deposit them in Ryde, while we are absent."

Mr. and Miss Ellis did not object to this arrangement, so I concluded it a settled plan, concocted, in my absence, by Miss Partington, and signed in spirit by themselves. I was a little surprised, but I would not be daunted by the signs of the times. I bowed to my host and hostess with provoking ease.

"I am at your disposal, Miss Partington, and I trust our friends will resume their usual tranquillity, which has been broken through of late. Mr. Ellis will, at least, be spared the pangs of suspicion, and I shall escape giving offence."

Mr. Ellis tried to reply to this uncalled-for exhibition of temper. His lips moved, but the endeavour was useless, and he was silent. He was strongly agitated. How could I tamper with such a heart?

Miss Ellis felt this scene in the only way in

which her emotions ever transpired: her head shook perceptibly, and she looked at her dogs for comfortable thought. It was in this dismal interregnum the gentlemen arrived.

Mr. Ellis commanded his feelings sufficiently to receive his friends with hospitality and long speeches, almost *comme à l'ordinaire*. Sir James advanced in his usual open unreserved manner to receive our compliments, but Captain Thelwal had a subdued and conscious air which kept him lingering behind his friend.

“Rear-guard, advance!” cried Sir James, looking back for him. “Forward, and do your duty, sir!”

Captain Thelwal, of course, was obliged to obey so imperious an order; he did advance, but not quite in good order; and our salutation took place under the eyes of the whole garrison. Captain Thelwal looked modest submission as he bowed low to the company, and then particularly addressed myself. He hoped my walk had not fatigued me from its length; he trusted our lingering on the pier had given no cold: to himself it had been a most pleasurable and lovely walk, and one which he trusted might occur again.

“To be sure,” cried Sir James, “to be sure it will occur again. Where there is the will

the way will be found. I should like to have been of the party; but sometimes, you know, a *tête-à-tête* is to be desired; I like it myself; I always feel of some consequence, holding forth to a chatty listener; but somehow fathers and mothers or lovers catch one, and then it's all over till the next time."

I was almost frantic with these accumulated notices of my delinquency; but what was to be done? I must rally and dare all things. I was desperate, so I entered into a flirty dialogue with both gentlemen, till Sir James was introduced to Miss Ellis. A glance of his eye told me his thoughts of the pretty woman I had promised to his admiring view. While Captain Thelwal underwent the ceremony, Sir James returned gaily to the attack.

"If I do not repay you some day for this trick, may I be snowed up in Russia, Miss Vansittart."

"Nay, Sir James, we seldom find two people agree in taste. Our opinions may differ, but no harm is done."

"I was envying Ellis this sister," continued Sir James, lowering his tone; "but I wont covet her any longer. I dare say she's a very nice old lady though; not extremely lively, but, as times go, I dare say a very careful housewife

—upon my honour, I respect her very much. Do you think she means to have these dogs of the party?”

On he moved towards Miss Partington, and Captain Thelwal glided to his vacated chair.

“Why did you name our walking so publicly?” I asked, incautiously.

“Was there any harm having an escort?” replied Captain Thelwal. “If you are allowed to move out unattended, no one can be surprised at your finding admirers at every corner.”

“Nonsense; but never allude to anything of the sort in future.”

“Rest assured I am dumb; and let me often prove my caution.—Is that gentleman your guardian?”

“Oh! no, no.”

“The lady your duenna, perhaps?”

“No one rules my conduct, I assure you.”

“Then why are you so alarmed?”

“Never mind; it is sufficient I request it.”

“You will find me all obedience, only signify your pleasure:—what have I to do but wait upon your looks?”

What was Mr. Ellis doing while this half-whispering dialogue took place? He was seated at the foot of his own table, in a situation to

claim pity from a fiend. He was enduring all things with outward calmness, and trying to smile complacently, while his heart was labouring with wretched thoughts. He had to endure the remembrance of my duplicity, and the sting of my heartless reproaches upon his well-grounded alarm, which one gentle word, or candid explanation, had dissipated for ever. He had to endure my neglect and unconcern at breakfast, though his absence the preceding evening declared his writhing but uncomplaining spirit. He was at this moment enduring my conversation with Captain Thelwal, held in low tones, apparently confidential, and certainly unregardful of his presence and claim upon my attention and conduct—Captain Thelwal, too, the acquaintance of an hour!

Miss Ellis declined the water-party: her spirits were not equal to the thing, and strangers were her aversion. Mr. Ellis was drawn in a Bath-chair to the pier by Richard, as his sprain precluded any attempts to walk. Miss Partington tried one last effort to make an impression upon me, as we retired to cloak and shawl ourselves. She besought me earnestly to walk by Mr. Ellis to Ryde, and endeavour, by penitent withdrawal from Captain Thelwal, to soothe the misery he was enduring, and

which I had no right to inflict, or he to tolerate.

“If Mr. Ellis chooses to encourage jealousy, Miss Partington, I will not submit to its caprices. Let him repent its admission; I will not bear his suspicions.”

“Unreflecting girl,” cried Miss Partington, “listen to me.—Mr. Ellis bears no jealousy towards Captain Thelwal. You did wrong yesterday, very wrong, and you must be well aware of it, since you descended to evasion, or at least a wish to conceal the fact. Mr. Ellis can only suspect from such evasion that he was to be kept in ignorance of it, and why was that to be? Had anything transpired in conversation to make you feel conscious of its impropriety, or were you tempted to behave unbecoming the affianced wife of Mr. Ellis from a proud and determined resolution never to confess an error? I beseech you for your own sake, and for the sake of those dear to you, to stop while it is yet possible to redeem your character. Let me implore you to believe Mr. Ellis has no touch of jealousy or rancour in his nature; his most horribly awakened suspicion is, that you have undertaken that which you cannot perform, and will sacrifice his peace to selfish and unhonoured principles. Have you,

in one instance, ever treated him kindly since your engagement? You have raised serious fears, not easily to be dispelled in a man of his age; and you may deeply regret your position when you cannot rectify it. I will never more address you upon this subject. I have acted for the benefit of both parties, but henceforth I am silent."

Here was a goodly tirade! I thought my friend quite "Bathy" again; and I fancied she looked as in the days of Lady Anne. I had a great deal to say for myself, however, and I despatched it as I put on my very becoming velvet hat.

"If Mr. Ellis has any wish to regret his engagement, I beg to release him at any moment. I cannot see how any little innocent chat with other men should be considered so unpardonable; and as to my concealment of so trifling a circumstance, I really did not think it worth noticing."

"But you named equally trifling incidents; you mentioned Mrs. Rodd and Mr. Ray walking upon the pier."

"Perhaps I did, but I really cannot bear all this lecturing about nothing. Miss Ellis looks so cross and ugly, it is an effort to speak to her, and Mr. Ellis looks as if I had com-

mitted murder, and you lecture me as if I had been detected swindling. I wish I had never seen the little man."

"For shame, Louisa: will you never see your dangerous path?"

"I am very glad we return here no more. I suppose Miss Ellis hinted our return to Ryde?"

"Pardon me: I judged it myself a necessary measure. Your unkind conduct to Mr. Ellis was ill-calculated to cause her pleasure in your society, and it was not fair to attack Mr. Ellis in his own house. I do not choose to witness that indignity offered my long and kind friend. If he is to be made unhappy, let his own house be a sanctuary from insult. Excuse me, Louisa, I must speak unreservedly."

This added fuel to the fire; indeed in my aroused temper, what would not have turned into hot burning coals? Conscious of having done wrong, detected in its commission, selfish and impetuous, I flew from the correction of my best friend, and rushed down stairs with flushed cheeks and a heart of ice.

Sir James was in the act of assisting Mr. Ellis into the Bath-chair when I entered the hall.

"Now, my dear sir, are you nicely tucked

in? Good people are scarce! Have you no comforter, or something of that kind, to tie round your neck? You have a mile to sit jumbling—no wind up—but still one feels cold, I believe, after a certain age.”

Mr. Ellis felt disconcerted at this allusion made in my presence; he mildly assured Sir James he felt no disposition to take cold, and an anxious expression of eye denoted his interest in our order of going. Miss Partington descended as we moved towards the door. The Bath-chair must take precedence, and at one moment I had nearly accompanied its exit as it slowly passed before us, but Sir James arrested me.”

“There; I think the old gentleman is as neatly packed for exportation as human foresight can devise. I believe the old lady does not go with us. Well, that’s no offence—on the contrary. Nevertheless, I respect quiet old maids—got three old aunts of my own in Berkeley-square. Miss Partington, you promised to have me, you know, yesterday—can’t let you off, so Miss Vansittart will make the best of Thelwal. He is a desperate, love-making fellow, Miss Vansittart; don’t mind one half he says.”

“A pretty character of you, Captain Thel-

wal," I observed, as I fell quietly into Sir James's arrangement.

"You do not believe it," replied he, fixing his terrible eyes upon my face; "you do not believe it, therefore I do not care for it."

There was a tone in all this—there had been a tone in yesterday's conversation that was indecorous on my part. It was a very fitting proem to a flirtation, or even a growing admiration, if I had been free to allow of such, but it was highly improper in my situation; one word would end it, but I could not speak it. I could not allow either of the gentlemen to suspect the nature of my connexion with the Ellis family. I felt it impossible to acknowledge I was nearer to the "old gentleman" than a friend; and, of course, in utter ignorance of such engagement, every remark of theirs enlarged my disgust to the object, and increased my repugnance to its disclosure.

Once or twice, during our walk, did Miss Partington look beseechingly at me, as if to implore me to respect myself, and cease giving Mr. Ellis occasion of offence, by deliberately allowing Captain Thelwal to monopolize my attention. It was in vain. I seemed bent upon ruin, and the evil one, in the guise of obstinacy,

entered my heart, taking seven worse spirits than himself. We found a six-oared boat waiting our arrival at the pier. Sir James had equipped the sailors in fancy jackets, and decorated the interior of the boat with cushions and carpet. It was a perfectly bright and lovely morning to give zest and animation to the amusement, and I was all spirits and flutter. How differently I felt the present scene, contrasted with my excursion to Netley!

Sir James had thought of every polite accommodation and refreshment. "Now, my dear sir, we will take care of you in the first instance, and you shall feel more comfortable, if possible, than at home. Miss Partington shall be your next neighbour, and here I am quite snug at her elbow. The young people will take care of themselves, and be sentimental anywhere. We will go towards Portsmouth, and scud about for a couple of hours before the breeze, if there is one, and Thelwal will give us a song in due time—when he has said all his sugared thoughts to Miss Vansittart."

I was placed close to the boatman, and Captain Thelwal separated me from Mr. Ellis. I made no resistance. Sir James and Miss Partington were seated opposite, while Mr. Ellis

sat the figure-head, upon a thorny bench, if I might judge by his looks, which would not rest upon me, or appear to notice the existence of a person who was to him the breath of his nostrils—the arcanum of life. This apparent defiance of my power drew down all my ire, and ended even a wish to redeem my folly—I plunged into deeper evil.

We glided on our course in silence for some little way—the splash of the oars, the gay dress of the boatmen, the volition, and the scene, inclining the mind to repose and passive enjoyment. Sir James Langham was the first who broke the spell.

“ Well! we have had a meditation, so now we can chat a little, to change the grave to gay. I wonder what we have all been thinking of! I can be very sentimental sometimes, but not long together—I don’t think it proper to continue sentimental beyond a certain time.”

“ I cannot fancy you at all inclined to sentiment, Sir James; your forte is good humour and lively enjoyment of society. I could fancy your sentimental half hour was synonymous with a nap, which we will not indulge you in,” quoth Miss Partington.

“ A true bill, Langham,” said Captain Thelwal.

“Is it?—Oh, I dare say it is,” replied Sir James. “I dream I am sentimental—that’s it, and very glad I am to wake again. Mr. Ellis, were you sentimental once—how did it go with you, my dear sir?”

Mr. Ellis made some effort to reply calmly, and his lip quivered.

“I have had calls unto suffering, sir, which in its nature destroys sentiment. I should presume to think sentiment belongs to the young and happy.”

A little pause succeeded this remark, for it was spoken in a tone which evinced strong feeling, and startled the attention of his auditor. Sir James, however, made another diversion.

“I don’t quite understand what sentiment means. My sentiment, which people consider my dream, is only wishing I was not a bachelor.”

“And then you are glad to wake up and find it a dream, by your own confession,” said Miss Partington.

“No, indeed! no, indeed! you are too quick. I never wish to wake from such a comfortable thought, but other images come with it. I often fancy myself snug with a nice rational wife, but one is unfortunately drawn to pretty faces and

lively manners, and then there is reason to fear money or some devilry has bought their good graces. I mean to marry, if I can find such a being, a well-informed, quiet, nice-looking, lady-like—”

“ Hold, Sir James; you are rashly naming a list of qualities difficult to combine. Say at once you are seeking a prodigy, and we will drink to your success.” Miss Partington gaily dipped her ungloved hand in the water, and touched her lips.

Sir James smiled at her speech and movement.

“ I shall not be depressed by your ill-natured implication, drank in salt water. I shall hope on, and make my remarks. Remember, I shall have nothing to do with pretty girls; they are mere moonshine, bright and cold. I like agreeable women who are old enough to know their own minds.”

“ What do you consider old, Langham,” asked Captain Thelwal, “ and what do you consider young ?”

“ Why I should not fancy a woman settled in her opinions before seven-and-twenty; before that age they think of nothing but spending money and running about, and elderly men are

never pitied when they run into mistakes. I am turned thirty, and mean to be wary if I can."

I did not dare look towards Mr. Ellis while this dialogue was in progress, but I felt many twitches of conscience, and was anxious to change the subject, in spite of my amusement at beholding Miss Partington sprightly, and at play with Sir James Langham. Whether I had never before observed her in any character less grave than a mentor, or never attended to her when she was among characters to her taste, I know not, but I fancied her this morning extremely attractive. She liked Sir James. His open manner and harmless sentiments pleased her taste, and she gave way to her natural bent of mind in his company. They were excellent friends, and he always looked to her for ready repartee, and as a person who was sure to throw back the ball of lively chat. The conversation at this moment, however, was of a nature too poignant for some of the party; I therefore remarked the present day had a Venetian aspect, and if we had but a guitar amongst us I should fancy myself in a gondola.

"You are fond of music, Miss Vansittart?" asked Captain Thelwal, "what is your favourite style?"

"I think I like gentle airs and ballads—

Moore's melodies, or Swiss airs belong to the water."

"Oh! Thelwal is all things to all men," exclaimed Sir James, "he has abundance of songs to suit all conditions. Never saw such a fellow as Thelwal; he captivated all the long-haired Italian girls with his serenades."

"Oh! give me a sernenade, Captain Thelwal; I never have heard one in our cold latitude—oh! for a guitar."

Captain Thelwal beckoned one of the boatmen, who immediately handed over a guitar case.

"There," cried Sir James, "heigh presto, a fiddle-case; if any one wishes the double drum, Thelwal will produce it."

This was a delightful surprise. Captain Thelwal only whisperingly observed, the serenade would be extempore, and begged me to attend to its purport. I coloured and yet gave my closest attention. He gently tried the strings, and began singing with a voice low, deep, and never to be forgotten. I could not wonder at the long-haired Italian girls.

Softly o'er the water stealing
I am come from far
To thy gentle soul appealing
With my light guitar.
Dost thou hear, love?

Ere thy starry eyes in slumbers
Close their brilliant beam,
Listen to my breathing numbers,
Hear a lover's dream.
Dost thou hear, love?

Visions in the night come o'er me,
Scenes of light and mirth,
All was bright that passed before me,
Far too bright for earth.
Dost thou hear, love?

Forms of beauty stole around me,
Thou wert there mine own—
Oh, those starry eyes have bound me
Thine, and thine alone.
Dost thou hear, love?

The voice ceased, but not its powerful effect. Now I had indeed heard a serenade and felt its attraction! I felt the attention to my wishes, the sentiment it conveyed, the manner, the intention, the delight, the misery. Long after it ended, I remained in the attitude of one who still listens. An oppression at my heart became intolerable. "Once more," I cried, "oh, sing once more!" Again the melody was resumed. I cannot express what I felt: it was a chaos of conflicting emotions, the most appalling and most delightful. I felt I could not—would not—chain my existence to the side of Mr. Ellis; and I dreamt of passion, music, and those eyes of fire which, from time to time, were turned

upon me. His last words, "Dost thou hear, love?" were spoken almost *sotto voce*, and addressed to me with that look and air of abandonment which is irresistible to an object too willing to be captivated, and powerfully alive to admiration. How Sir James could hear such music unmoved was a mystery.

"That's a very pretty thing, and very well sung—sung in character, too, Thelwal. Miss Vansittart in her shawl looks exactly like a Florentine. We are all delighted; now Thelwal let us have something lively, but first we will eat to live. That love-song requires a glass of champagne to keep up our spirits, and then we will have a sort of chorus. Now, boys, hand the basket there."

The unsentimental, happy baronet did honour to a collation which he spread before us, seasoning his polite offer with careless pleasantry.

"A little elegant merry-thought, Miss Vansittart, will be proper after your serenade, therefore I place it before you, perhaps you will halve it with Thelwal. Miss Partington, you have been hard upon me and my dreams of matrimony, allow me to propose a sandwich—a tongue-sandwich, Miss Partington, with its proper accompaniment, salt and mustard. You will find it more tasty than most things of the

sort. My dear sir, I want to offer you some refreshment, and except brawn and Yorkshire goose-pie, your luncheon is before you."

Mr. Ellis declined any refreshment, and my eye caught his as I was receiving a sprig of laurestinas from Captain Thelwal. What a glance of misery it was! His whole face seemed to have undergone a change: it was lengthened, spiritless, and pale as a corpse. I was really alarmed. I forgot for a moment all my disgusts. "Good God!—Mr. Ellis is seriously ill; see how he changes colour," I exclaimed.

Attention was directed towards him. He was indeed scarcely equal to reply to our inquiries, and pleaded sudden and severe illness—it was illness of the heart. He had borne up against my inattention, and witnessed my pantomime with Captain Thelwal in silent despair, till human nature could bear no more, and the conflict had exhausted him. The boatmen were ordered to make immediately for Ryde pier, and to pull on quickly, lest he should become even more disordered, while Sir James endeavoured to assist their labours, proving himself ever forward in time of need. A glass of brandy-and-water offered by Miss Partington roused the spirits and renewed the strength of poor Mr. Ellis: he was enabled to resume his seat and

appeared less ghastly to the eye, but he kept perfectly silent, and pertinaciously avoided my notice. This occurrence damped our return: we were all unhinged and alarmed in different ways, and there was no more animation to restore the song or the intended "chorus." We glided along the water comparatively dejected, and I was too much occupied with the nature of Mr. Ellis's sufferings to resume my flirtation with Captain Thelwal.

Sir James Langham laboured at the oars till fatigue obliged him to relinquish his post, but his gay humour was eclipsed. A certain tact made him feel the hour for mirth was over, and his own excellent nature could not sport while a fellow-creature was in pain. We therefore landed far less gaily than we embarked. Such are indeed the accidents of life. Miss Partington rejoiced all was ended: her heart and head had surmised the cause of her friend's attack, and she was providing herself with fortitude to sustain a painful part. At present she had to think for herself and for me. When Mr. Ellis was removed from the boat into the Bath-chair, I approached him to bid farewell for the present, and to hope that his ailment was but a temporary indisposition. I expressed myself anxious to hear how he got home, and begged he would

allow his servant to come towards evening to give us news of his health. He gave me a look of piercing woe, but he only bowed. I held out my hand to him: he took it in his, and pressed it gently, but his hand was cold as marble. I was resolved to walk up to the Cottage early next day, and restore him to more composure. I knew I had power to charm away his anger, and I was half sorry now, I had proceeded to such extremity with his feelings. Sir James Langham insisted upon being allowed to attend him home, and would suffer no denial. I saw Miss Partington bend over Mr. Ellis, and he spoke to her in low and trembling tones. I saw her press his hand, and I heard her bid God bless him. Captain Thelwal was to attend us to our lodgings, and he proffered an arm to each, at the instant the chair was put in motion. I had just accepted it and was proceeding homewards, when I turned again to behold Mr. Ellis: he had also followed me with his eyes, and saw me calmly leaning upon the stranger's arm. Our eyes met—I bowed and kissed my hand—he bowed slightly in return. It was the last time I ever beheld Mr. Turner Ellis.

CHAPTER VII.

IT was late in the evening ere a messenger brought tidings of our friends. A letter was delivered to Miss Partington, enclosing a note for me, as we sat silently by the fire, each pondering over the events of the day. They were both from Mr. Ellis. I saw Miss Partington's hand tremble as she broke the seal, and her countenance changed as she handed me the enclosure. I smiled triumphantly, for I believed it to be a lover's impatient wish to be reconciled, and I held it some moments before I condescended to glance at its contents. The matter was most unexpected.—

“ Believe me, dear Miss Vansittart, impelled by a sense of justice to you and myself, to break the bonds we have so rashly entered into. I feel the error of our engagement, and believe me

also, dear madam, free from bitter or angry feelings, in lamenting it was ever thought of. I ought to have remembered it was unnatural for youth to love age and habits long fixed by seclusion, and I was wrong in believing it was in my power to make you happy. After the trials of misery I have endured, I am content to resign my shadow of happiness, and may *your* life be happy, and *your* comforts secured, far from the sight of my wretchedness. I shall leave this place to-morrow for London, and try to resume the resignation of a man who submits to the chastisement of his own vain folly. In all kind feelings, and with sincere wishes for your being happier in your freedom than I can ever be, believe me, madam,

“Most respectfully and obediently,

“JOHN TURNER ELLIS.”

I stared at the characters upon the paper after its perusal, till they appeared to enlarge and diminish by turns under my fixed gaze. I looked here and there as if for escape from my situation, and felt the paper to ascertain its identity. My proud heart swelled under the idea of being resigned by Mr. Ellis; my conscience galled me in allowing no possible excuse for my own conduct, and my brain fired at the

thought of meeting my mother's eye in a fresh and deeper sorrow. Every passion was at war with its usual vehemence. I threw myself on my knees before Miss Partington, and clasping my hands I wildly shrieked, "Oh, save me! save me!" What consolation could she offer me? Her own tears fell fast, as she took my hands in hers, and prayed over them that my heart might become humbled at last, but she had no comfort to give; I had destroyed every one's comfort in advancing the ruin of my own.

What torture of spirit did I not endure under this stroke, as sudden as it was wholly unexpected! How little had I calculated that my power was finite, or that feelings strained beyond power of endurance, must snap or expire! I felt disgraced and conscience-struck in reflecting that in one hour I had been cast down from my high estate, and was no longer the "prudent and honourable daughter" who was to heal the wounds caused by former misconduct. I was no longer the engaged wife of Mr. Turner Ellis, whose fault was alone "loving not wisely, but too well," and the disgust I felt so strongly towards him during my engagement, faded under the respectability, the luxuries, the elevation I had forfeited. Yet to own myself penitent, to sue for reconciliation, would have been

worse than death. My spirit would have scorned to supplicate for life, had that life been forfeited to the laws of my country, and a pardon to be won by entreaty—to a man who dared to disapprove of my conduct and dissolve his engagement, never! I would have begged my bread in every corner of Europe first.

But no such situation was before me, nor was I advised or expected to make apology for the past. Miss Partington had ever believed my character so perfectly opposed to happiness with Mr. Ellis, that she conceived he had acted most wisely in relinquishing the unhappy connexion; and my own peace of mind was so lightly prized in my own estimation, that she felt assured it would be crushed and trodden under my own feet. I had no principles of action, no generous feelings to lead me right, and what signified counsel, when it was thrown aside in the hour of temptation? To Miss Partington, Mr. Ellis addressed himself with the spirit of an injured man, and the gentleness of a patient Christian. “When,” to use his own words,—“when I first suffered myself to be overcome with feelings which were unsuited to the calmness of my age, my habits, and my humble appearance, you, my dear friend, witnessed the fascinations which surrounded me. You witnessed those attractive

attentions which bewildered me into vanity, and made me blindly fancy I was a companion meet for youth and beauty. I should have studied her happiness and indulged her least wish, only too grateful to have received kind treatment for idolatry, and to have met gentleness in return for devoted attachment. That is now ended; but let me tell you,—you who feel for me, and understand my agony, let me tell you what I have suffered before my broken heart yielded up for ever its fondest and only affection. I have borne indifference, silence, and contempt unmurmuring. I fancied time and unvarying attention might win a heart which I thought only too thoughtless, and felt so beloved. But when I saw her attention was given to another—a stranger—one who could not love her as I have done, and my feelings so disregarded, our engagement so unable to procure me the attention I had a right to expect—my weakness unheeded— spare me, Miss Partington, I must not dwell upon it.—I have one request to make. The trifles once received from me, do not let them be returned I beseech you. I could not bear it. I trust we shall all be tranquil in time. My prayers will ever be for *her* happiness. My poor sister will accompany me to town: it is a very great effort for

her, but she offers it, and it may be for the best. You will be less annoyed, and have fewer friends to distress your kind heart. Be a friend to *her* who will always be the first object in my remembrance and my prayers.”

And this was the man I had thrown from me for ever! Oh, my sex, beware how you trifle with the serious concerns of another!—Beware how you suffer yourselves to enter lightly into bonds which you may throw from you in sport, but which lacerates a valuable heart, and tears in pieces the bright hope of a soul trusting and believing in your proffered faith. It is never effected without degradation, and must eventually meet severe retribution. We are not placed here to prey upon each other and darken the path of life. Oh, women, born with gentle natures, and nursed in principles of religion more carefully than men can be—you who feel the holiness of doing by others as you would they should do unto you—who know the bitterness of suffering, and the repentance doomed to those who break their vow to their God and to their neighbour—reflect in time, and lay not up for yourselves hours of remorse and a dishonoured old age. Be wise, and know that nothing is in itself lasting, but the remembrance of good and evil committed. The latter will

haunt us in the midst of enjoyment, and call aloud in the courtly festival. The former will soothe the bed of pain and extract the thorn of bitterness from trial. Would I had considered these truths while life and hope was young, ere I added to the number of those who taste the cup of sorrowful experience, and vainly point its mistaken course to others! Who listens to the warning voice?

It was some days before I was fit to be seen, after reading the contents of Mr. Ellis's letter. I wept constantly and abundantly, not with contrition, but in pure anger and mortification. I was humbled to the earth to find my prey had burst his fetters, and left me to deplore my impolitic line of conduct. I did not cease to shed tears at the very sudden termination of a connexion which I had never honoured, but which stung my pride by its defiance of my power. I was pale with fasting, and my face swelled with passionate weeping. Miss Partington left me to myself, and allowed the turbulence of my grief to pass by in my own chamber. I did not see her for two days, which I dedicated to bursts of passion. I believe she had an interview with her friend, but that interview was never alluded to. It was, doubtless, a painful one to her excellent na-

ture, placed between friends she dearly loved, and a guest whose charge she had undertaken. Sir James Langham called every day, and once he had been accompanied by Captain Thelwal to inquire after my health, but I was invisible. Sir James could not make out what was going on. He was surprised to find the Cottage suddenly closed and its inmates departed; he had not alluded to their intended transit, and it puzzled him to account for such sudden flights. "Old people," he said, "were so mighty difficult to set a going, witness his three old aunts, that he could not understand such rapidity. The elderly lady, he was sure, had not time to call over the puppies, and pack them up; and Mr. Ellis looked as if his only journey was to be to the other world."

Miss Partington easily calmed his astonishment: "The accident required the best advice, and his illness on the water accelerated Mr. Ellis's intention of visiting town as speedily as possible. Miss Ellis must be his attendant. Miss Vansittart was not well, but would soon reappear as usual." This was quite sufficient to compose the mind of Sir James in that particular.

"Well, then, I shall come to see you and

Miss Vansittart. I don't like people going away. You remain the winter, I think you said. Thelwal and myself have every intention of staying this month at Cowes. Thelwal is carrying on two or three flirtations just at present, and he won't move till some of his bubbles burst."

"Captain Thelwal," observed Miss Partington, "is a dangerous character."

"Why, yes, so I tell him. I don't approve those kind of things myself: it's not philanthropic by any means; but those guitar fellows are always in request, and thrumming generally leads to whispering and love-making. I wish I played the guitar!"

"Pray withdraw your wish; plain speaking is so natural to you, a whisper would change your character. Leave the guitar to Captain Thelwal."

"You think so? But Thelwal is a happy dog; the girls run after him as the animals pursued Orpheus, only I don't mean to say a rude thing; it's only the mammas who pursue me—women in frontlets, and old dowagers who scent rent-rolls, and hunt down the landed interest. But when will Miss Vansittart be visible?"

"Very soon, I hope, as I am now anxious to

return into Gloucestershire. Circumstances have arisen which make our presence there needful. I hope next week will end our stay here."

"What, you off too? I never saw such people for moving, why you go in flights. Some one told me in Ryde, to-day, old Ellis was engaged to Miss Vansittart. No, no, I said, Thelwal is guitaring Miss Vansittart,—nothing there. Perhaps though she may have refused him,—can't say. I told Thelwal to look sharp, as the old boys bought up the prime beauties with a good settlement, but Thelwal takes all those things coolly. And you go next week?"

"I hope so, certainly."

"Then I shall come and just see how you are going on every day. If I plague you, don't admit me."

And Sir James Langham did come every day, and was each day admitted. I was ill from wounded pride, and languid with mortified vanity, which produced exhausting fits of weeping, and made me unfit to join in conversation. I walked listlessly from room to room, or sat silently pondering in fits of abstraction. I was precisely the same selfish unemployed creature that distressed my family when the blow of Brereton's marriage first fell upon me.

Yet Sir James visited on, always happy, and chatty, and amusing. Captain Thelwal, he said, was under an eclipse for the present; he had guitarred too loud one evening, and the lady was carried into the "North Countrie" by her father, and Thelwal was huffed and rather disconsolate.

This was the man to whom I had sacrificed wealth and excellence. This was the dangerous creature "whose eyes were loadstones, and his tongue sweet air," whom long-haired girls worshipped, and whom his own companion only designated a guitar fellow.

Even the knowledge of Captain Thelwal's versatile powers in love-making could not rouse or depress me. I was dead to excitation. I listened to the conversations between Sir James and Miss Partington, without feeling their purport, or taking part in their remarks. I sat bewildered in a large shawl, and my ringlets were combed into quiet braids. Sir James said I looked more like a Florentine than before, and if Thelwal saw me, he would guitar worse than ever.

But an event which I had never contemplated befel Miss Partington the last days of our sojourn at Ryde, and irritated my nerves almost to

madness. It was one of my invisible days the morning previous to our leaving the Isle of Wight: I had not appeared at breakfast, or at luncheon: I only sat in my own room meditating upon disagreeables, with my eyes fixed on vacuum, and my thoughts confusedly recalling and repenting the past. Beyond a certain point of misery I always sought for refuge in locomotion, and this day I silently strolled into the inner sitting-room and seated my poor frame in a lounging chair for a few moments. My step was not heard in the drawing-room though its door was considerably ajar, and there Miss Partington was engaged making her travelling arrangements. I heard Sir James Langham's step ascending the stairs at his usual hour, though I was not aware of any bell having announced him. His entrance was also unexpected by Miss Partington, but she received him with her usual pleasure, accusing him of a design to try how noiselessly he could enter a dwelling-house. Sir James laughed with all his accustomed heartiness.

“I got in quietly enough, certainly; but I really don't mean to quit it again without trying to abstract some of the property.”

“Take your choice then, Sir James, here is a

screen rather the worse for wear, or the large arm-chair, or the heavy fender, which do you covet of all these valuable articles?"

"Not those exactly," replied Sir James;—"but," after a momentary pause, "can you give me your attention for a few minutes?"

"Willingly," observed Miss Partington, "I have always pleasure in listening to you."

I heard a little movement as though a formal *sederunt* was affected, after which Sir James spoke again.

"I am come boldly to make you a proposal, Miss Partington."

"Let me hear it, Sir James."

"I see you do not understand me: well we shall soon be better acquainted, though I feel rather awkward, but don't you always advise candour in stating one's opinions and wishes?"

"Indeed I do. Tell me your intended proposal."

"Why, Miss Partington, you have pleased me more than any woman I ever saw, and if you have no objection I am just come to ask you if you will be my wife."

Miss Partington, was silent for a moment, as though some powerful feeling disturbed her prompt mind: at last she spoke.

“Sir James, you astonish me beyond expression. I am quite unprepared for this extraordinary request—pray—”

“I perceive you are unprepared, Miss Partington, for which I admire you still more, because you laid no trap for me; but I don't think it at all extraordinary to wish you to be my wife, unless doing a rational thing is extraordinary. However now I have spoken my wishes, let me explain my intentions more fully: the worst is over, and I am quite relieved. Making an offer after all is not so frightful as I fancied.”

“But stop, Sir James—pray let me speak before you continue. Allow me to say this is quite out of the question. We know very little of each other, and I feel sure a thousand things upon examination will prove you very rash in this affair. Pray do not recur to this conversation.”

“Indeed you must excuse me.” Sir James Langham's voice grew stronger, and his manner acquired more ease as he proceeded.—“When a man makes a purchase, or wishes to procure his own advancement in worldly matters, nothing is left undone or unsaid to effect the matter, and in so very material a point as a companion for life I think every man may be determined

to persevere. I know a lady like yourself is not very easily obtained, but I shall not lose courage. Only answer me one question honourably. Are your affections engaged?"

"Certainly not," replied Miss Partington.

"Then I shall wait for you as Jacob did for Rachel. If you are not prepossessed in favour of any man, I have a right to try my powers in obtaining your good opinion. I don't expect you to like me now, but perhaps you may fancy me some months hence, and as I have spoken in time, it may point your attention my way, you know. I don't say I am in love with *you* at this moment; but I like you so much, that I think it necessary to speak out. When we have continued our acquaintance, we shall improve in each other's opinion, and what I admire now, I shall love then. You have not spread nets for me, and I am not deceiving you. As I only ask for a fair trial, you will not disdain my matter-of-fact way of speaking, but upon my honour I never made an offer before, and don't understand its forms. I only know that I like you very much, Miss Partington, and I wish you to try and like me."

What a situation was I in! Here was a dialogue racy in its nature to the unconcerned, but it grated every feeling in me. Miss Partington

was making a conquest of Sir James Langham without any personal appearance beyond the common expression of "good-looking," and receiving an offer from a wealthy baronet without any trouble, or even triumph! These things were too much for me, but I remained *enfoncee* and listened to Miss Partington's calm reply.

"Your very open expression of good opinion gratifies me, Sir James, and deserves equally open treatment in return. I am so utterly perplexed by this conversation, that I can scarcely rally my astonished ideas, but I will tell you simply my own thoughts as they arise. I cannot be so flattering as to offer you more than my really sincere thanks for your compliment, because I have only known you and received you as a very recent acquaintance, and because I think much may arise to cause repentance on your part. Age, I think, has much to do with private fancies, and I believe I must be your senior. I am thirty-seven years of age."

"I am two years younger," replied Sir James, "but will that small minority influence you against me?"

"I think a lady should be the junior, Sir James, for her own sake. Age is sooner apparent in women than men, and a wife gains

nothing in her husband's opinion by looking ten years older than himself."

"I know it, I know it is so in many cases, but it would have no influence with me. My nature is to be content and happy, and I want a companion who will be kind and agreeable and chatty. I never had a taste for pretty foolish girls. I don't think you in the least handsome, but I am sure you are good-tempered, and would go with me to Russia, if I liked to take such a journey, without sulking, or being bribed. I think your friend Miss Vansittart a very handsome girl, but I would not exchange you for her, with her Florentine air, and love of Moore's melodies, for all the world affords."

"You really flatter very ably, and with more subtlety than I should have given you credit for."

"I never flattered any one before, so it comes naturally in these situations. Well, you have not refused me, therefore I shall come and see you off to-morrow, and I shall follow you into Gloucestershire next week, and see what you are all doing."

"Stay, Sir James, you flurry me with such quick resolutions, really I must consider."

"Oh! well you will have plenty of time to consider: I considered only five minutes, and found out I should be a fool to hesitate. I

shall never tease, so don't be alarmed; but I shall visit you till you decline me plumply, and then I shall vanish. But I know you are above trifling and playing tricks, so I am very tranquil. Mr. Ellis your friend, told me how upright and kind you were to everybody. Thinks I, that's the very wife I want. Well at the proper hour I shall be here to-morrow, to see you off: you will require my help, and you will see what a useful fellow I am, and how impossible it will be to do without me. Is Miss Vansittart better?"

Miss Partington hoped I was, but I had not yet made my appearance.

"Miss Vansittart is a very pretty girl. I thought Thelwal was caught at one time, but he has so many strings to his bow he puzzles his own judgment. He is always carrying on three affairs at once. I have one more request to make. Will you write to me, and say you have arrived safely? Don't be prudish and decline: I ask nothing extraordinary, and if you have no objection to me except our short acquaintance, why a little more intimacy is the very thing to cure that disorder."

"Indeed," said Miss Partington, "I must be allowed to judge for myself in this matter. Excuse my corresponding with you, though I

wish you well. I have surely done much in hearing all you have to say, considering my acquaintance of a fortnight. Allow me to say I must now drop the conversation ; yet believe me flattered by your preference and pleased by your candour."

"I will submit to your better judgment. You have scorned trifling and affectation, and I can trust your judgment safely. I may see you off to-morrow?"

"I cannot wish to decline that politeness ; my friend and myself will be happy to see you."

"Thank you, thank you, I ask no more at present. You will receive me with welcome in Gloucestershire?"

"You said you would ask no more at present, and follow up the sentence with another demand!"

"Shake hands with me then."

"I do most willingly."

Sir James Langham kissed her hand gallantly before he relinquished it.

"If every man could find a kind heart like yours, Miss Partington, they would not feel alarmed at disclosing their sentiments. I wish ladies were always above-board and spoke their minds honestly ; it would prevent a great deal of mischief. I feel extremely grateful for your

attention, and whether you accept me or not, you have secured a friend for ever. I will be here in time to-morrow to see you safely on board."

Sir James bowed low to his lady love, and left the room with the firm step of a man who has acted up to his principles, and leaves no room for self-reproach, if his wishes are doomed to disappointment. I retreated to my apartment, and there I brooded over Miss Partington's fortune. It was wonderful to reflect how many quiet composed mediocre people married well, and how few brilliant handsome women received good offers. There must be a destiny in these things. Who would not have set Miss Partington down as a woman who would have been a treasure to a curate in the Cotswold Hills, but entirely unadapted to win a baronet of large property! My teeth chattered when I took a review of my own spirits wasted in pursuing shadows, and disdaining substantial happiness—of my own folly in losing time and health and character, while "the Partington" was worshipped for all that was desirable in woman, and entreated to marry an agreeable man, with ten thousand per annum—if report spoke truly! It was impossible to meet my friend that evening without betraying my eaves-

dropping, therefore I sent my excuses. They were accepted. She had a fountain of present and future hopes to gild her lonely hours. I had only to conjure up images of gloom and horror.

The day dawned at last which was to convey us from the Isle of Wight, and to which I vowed in my own mind never to return. Sir James Langham joined us before our breakfast was concluded, and the lovers elect met like brother and sister. I never saw such cool wooing: there were neither blushes on one side, nor gallantry on the other. Both chatted in their usual spirits, and neither appeared to remember the conversation of the preceding day. I almost fancied I had dreamt it. Sir James took a cup of tea and talked over it.

“ I have ordered your carriage up in half an hour, so we shall get very comfortably to Cowes in packet time. Thelwal set off for town yesterday, and I shall not remain here. The Hewitts left yesterday also, and as you are taking wing I shall be off to Bath for a few days, to visit my dowager mother-in-law, and tell her my plans. She is a gay old lady and gives rattling parties.”

It was at old Lady Langham's I met my first shock in the knowledge of Sir William de

Burgh's flight, and she was the relative of Sir James. He was amused at Miss Partington's surprised look.

“To be sure, she is my relation, Langham is not a common name. We are better acquainted than I supposed. I was not aware you knew any of my tribe, but so much the better. I was very near being at Bath last season; it was a toss up between Bath and Florence. Thelwal decided me. He had had a flirtation with Lady Anne O'Brien at that time, and did not wish to pursue it, so he had advised cutting Bath for a season.”

“What has become of Lady Anne?” asked Miss Partington.

“Gone to Italy I heard, with an Irish fellow, one Magrath. She was a specimen of Irish impudence, and publicly boasted of living upon her wits. I don't know why she left Bath, but I shall hear all the news from Lady Langham. She hears and knows everything.”

By the Rood! how everything seemed to turn upon me! Sir James would learn all my misdemeanours, my intimacy with Lady Anne, and our joint attack upon Sir William, from his relation, and I should cut a wondrous figure in his opinion. Lucky indeed for himself he had fixed his choice upon my friend and not upon me,

the Bath visit would have decided my fate, and for ever lost my sex in his esteem.

“ There was a Sir William de Burgh,” continued Sir James, “ who was run down for a season, but I forget all the particulars; Lady Langham will be charmed to harp on the old string, and I shall bring you clear intelligence into Gloucestershire.”

Miss Partington kindly waved Bath, and saved me some mortification, for every remark only involved me more deeply in confusion. We made our final dispositions, and in due time prepared to enter the carriage.

“ I am going with you,” cried Sir James, as he handed us to the carriage-door, “ but don’t disturb yourselves, there is comfortable room outside. I take possession of the rumble and play guard, in case the horses run away. I wonder where poor Mr. Ellis has hid himself. You ought to have taken the good old gentleman, Miss Vansittart; he fell in your service, and deserved some reward.”

Sir James never meant anything by his random observations, and never observed the effect of their power, else might he often have been disconcerted by the confusion he caused. He was too much employed in assisting us at this

moment, to notice a flood of tears which deluged my face. He was engaged besides with Miss Partington.

“Ladies always travel as if they were posting to the land’s end, with boxes and cases: here are positively four; where can you stow them? Stay, I will *chaperone* two, to allow you more room—here, just pop these two boxes in the rumble, boy—that’s it.—Now you can breathe. Well, here I am with caps and bonnets as snug as possible—drive on.” The carriage moved forward, and behold us again *en route*.

At Cowes, Sir James Langham was indeed most useful, his cheerful manner and good-humoured ease effecting all our transfers of luggage so agreeably. His manners were perfectly popular with all degrees of men, and it was pleasant to watch his handsome face smiling approbation upon everything. How I envied Miss Partington her brilliant and happy conquest!

We entered the steam-boat, which lay nearly ready for departure. Sir James would not quit us. He would see us safely despatched from the pier at Southampton, and then run down to Bath. His luggage was on board before he joined us at Ryde: he was therefore a passenger like ourselves, and no one could turn him out.

He glanced at Miss Partington, who smiled, but I thought avoided his eye. The smile sufficed to bring Sir James increased spirits. He seated himself between us.

“We are off at last: this is just what I like; now I feel as if I was a family man, quite important. There’s Sir John and Lady Lumsden sitting packed up in their carriage, and Colonel Grant looks dejected, pacing up and down, with nothing to be seen out of his cape but his eyes. They have been staying at Appuldercombe some time. I’ll just go out and shake hands with them—don’t let any one take my seat.”

Sir James was not long paying his respects. He returned in high glee.

“The colonel swears I’m running away with you, Miss Vansittart. The Lumsdens only look sly. Grant has been worsted in some engagement with a widow of property—obliged to raise the siege, and draw off to London, so he attacks me as a diversion—a skirmish, to retreat with dignity.”

In this way Sir James oozed out the joyousness of his spirit: at length his tones gradually abated, and a conversation in subdued accents took place between Miss Partington and himself. It was very interesting in its nature from the deep absorption of the parties, and it continued

till we again glided alongside the pier at Southampton. I was left to my own ruminations as I had often done by others in the plenitude of my power. It certainly was not their fault that I had waged war with pleasant thoughts.

Our carriage being debarked and horses quickly put to, we had only to take our leave of Sir James Langham. He was serious for the first time since our acquaintance commenced. He lingered near Miss Partington.

“I do not fancy myself taking leave of you, we shall meet so soon, but I hate parting with agreeable people. Take care and do not travel late. You will get to your friends by their dinner to-morrow. Of course you sleep at Winchester to-night?”

“I believe so,” was Miss Partington’s reply.

“I remain here till to-morrow—I wish I could be asked to escort you to Newbury.” Sir James gave a beseeching look at my friend.

“We must part here;” said Miss Partington, giving Sir James her hand with agreeable ease and good nature, “we shall have the pleasure of meeting you again.”

Sir James held her hand for some moments, bowing his submission to her mandate. I rather admired his manly courtship. It may be calmly

managed by some men thought I, and yet not be dull or coldly expressed. Miss Partington felt his perfect respect. In spite of her own quiet manner and self-command, I saw her bend forward to meet his eye as the carriage door closed, and by his bright expression I could judge the look had been one of hope and promise. I was sorry to part with a man whose society had been such a pleasing relief, in spite of my own sorrow, and the last wave of his hand was a signal that I was once more alone with Miss Partington. We drove rapidly through Southampton. I would not glance at the house where I had endured such acute dulness above bar, nor could I breathe freely till the buildings, which skirt the road for a mile, were left far behind. I leaned back in the carriage in an excess of grief which defies description. I would have blessed any hand which could at once have ended my life and my regrets. I was returning home as wretched as I left it, full of fresh materials for repentance, and not wiser or better for the experience of the last six months. I was returning a dead weight upon my mother's hands, when a bright prospect had opened before me which my own misconduct had closed for ever, and Miss Partington was seated beside me, as if her prospects were part of, and sprung from, the ashes

of my own downfall. Our visit to the Isle of Wight, her charge of so turbulent a character as mine, our acquaintance with the Ellises—what was all this but accessory to the drama of her conquest of Sir James Langham? It was a doomed fate. Miss Partington was destined to be placed in an exalted situation, and I was but her stepping-stone. Both must proceed in the work allotted them unconsciously but surely, and each must reap the harvest prepared for her. From that moment I became a fatalist.

I must pause to moralize. I became a fatalist, because I would not take conviction to my heart, or argue the matter mentally. It was easier to think I was fulfilling the dictum of fate, than to own myself weak and wicked. It was less fatiguing to accuse a wise Providence of injustice, than to look into the depths of my own heart and correct its ignorance. Had I reflected how evil ways produce evil consequences I should have reached the solution of my misery. Unholy causes create unholy effects, and the cockatrice egg must warm into a serpent. I could not forget Miss Partington's prophecy, "If you tighten the reins, Mr. Ellis's own hand will snap them for ever," nor her admonition not to lay up for myself a miserable futurity, but at this moment of time all was

chaos in my mind, and in my agony, as contending thoughts and recollections shot across my memory, I uttered "Alas! alas!"

Miss Partington turned to me. "My dear Louisa, you are ill."

"Ill! oh I am dying with grief and envy, and remorse, and mortification. Miss Partington, I was within hearing of Sir James Langham's address to you at Ryde, but I could not help it at first, and afterwards my curiosity chained me to the spot. Can you wonder at my envying you such a man? Can you wonder at my envying your prospects, obtained without an effort, and even gained through my sufferings. Can you wonder at my dreading to meet my family, while you will receive congratulations and smiles? Oh! no, no—it is dreadful!"

"Look calmly back upon events, Louisa, and judge between us. Have you condescended to follow my counsel for your own happiness since we left Gloucestershire? Have you not rushed boldly into the very snares I warned you to avoid? Did you not freely enter into engagements with Mr. Ellis, and with equal indifference trifle cruelly with his feelings? I feel sensibly the indignity offered my friends, and the misery you lavished upon them, there-

fore do not envy me, for my feelings are not to be envied. If you envy me the notice of Sir James Langham, you can only envy its apparent worldly advantages, and that is a sordid and unjust feeling. I despair of your recovering self-approbation till you can cleanse your heart from a selfishness which chokes every virtue. You have never prayed, Louisa.”

I writhed under this speech. It was more severe than any I had received from Miss Partington. She had been to me all gentleness and extenuation, but this was a reproof boldly applied and unanswerable.

“You may well upbraid me, for you are happy and I am too miserable to defend myself Oh! if I was but in my grave!”

“How unfit to die!” exclaimed Miss Partington with a stern look of offended principles, “how unfit are you to die with a hardened and selfish heart to present to your Maker, and a catalogue of deeds ungraced by a single kind action.”

I sat staring and stupified by the sudden tone of Miss Partington’s reproaches.

“You are surprised, Louisa, but since you have entered into conversation with me for the first time since Mr. Ellis left Ryde, let me say

here, how painfully disgusting has been your conduct to my mind. I did hope the event which you forced onwards with daring rapidity would have at last struck home and brought humility and a chastened spirit by the blow. Such a spirit would even then be dearly bought by the peace of a noble and affectionate heart ; but when I could only perceive listless indifference struggling with mortified vanity, careless of my own pained heart, and utterly averse to my society—and now when I hear only accents of despair and envy at the welfare of another—oh ! Louisa, I cease to hope, and cannot feel for you.”

“ It is my fate !” I cried with vehemence, “ it is my fate to become everybody’s hatred, and I cannot help myself.”

“ Do not scoff, Louisa. You have broken the ties of faith, and unloosed the cord of friendship such as I could have offered you, but do not mistake the purport of your existence, and add to misery by the determination to persist, and call it destiny. If by destiny you mean the word of God, we are warned to struggle with temptation and it will depart from us, but we must pray for strength. To talk of destiny is folly ; to believe in its existence is atheistical.”

I had too often felt the edge of Miss Partington's argument to volunteer entering on theological points. I was silent. It was late when we arrived at Winchester, and we retired to our respective chambers.

What a night I spent there !

The next day we were early on the road, and travelled with speed. We entered Gloucestershire and my heart sank. We reached H— as the church clock struck eight. A bright moon was up, and I saw lights gliding in my home. They had heard our carriage-wheels. I struggled hard to appear the thing I was not, but how would my mother receive her recusant daughter? I was in her arms ere I could think the question. Her embrace was the same parental embrace I had ever received, her eyes sparkled with the same parental affection I had ever called forth. I passed on to Mary—the same Mary threw her arms around me and welcomed me home. A hand was still held out which I thought in my flurry must be Charles returned. I turned to embrace him; it was Dr. Drinkwater.

I heard my mother's salutation to Miss Partington. "Thanks, heartfelt thanks for your kindness to my child. May you never want

the friendship you have shewn to others, or require the kind offices you have undertaken for me and mine." A fervent embrace followed, and I saw my mother's eyes suffused in tears of gratitude—and I fear regret.

Tea was grateful after our journey, and much was to be told as we enjoyed the refreshing meal. Charlotte and Brereton were settled at the curacy of Bradford only twelve miles distant, which was almost within reach. Alfred Jones had written home a captivating account of Spain—he was rapidly striding towards a captaincy—if he lived—if he got paid—if he succeeded, he might return a "bold dragoon, with his long sword, saddle, bridle, &c." Captain and Miss Bates were going on as usual. The Selwyns meant to leave the Hermitage and that pretty place was to be sold. Charles was with his regiment at Fermoy, but every day they were expecting to be recalled. Dr. Drinkwater was there to answer for himself, but Mary affirmed he had only suffered two little relapses since our departure. Dr. Drinkwater did not consider them of so slight a nature: one of his attacks had kept him at "what's-his-name?" nearly a week.

All the conversation turned exclusively on

events connected with home. I was not asked to add my mite, or questioned upon the gaieties of the Isle of Wight. I felt the implied consciousness that all recent events must be avoided, and my once brilliant prospects consigned to oblivion, if we hoped for a family re-union. Any reference to past errors would but renew disquietude on both sides, and for the sake of harmony, the silence of the grave rested upon the past.

When Dr. Drinkwater had sat his usual time by Mary's side, he was deposited in his old fashioned whisky and consigned to his factotum John Jenkins, who commanded in chief the whole detail of the Grange establishment. John Jenkins also took the thinking department for his master, and recruited his exhausted treasury of names and places. Dr. Drinkwater was nothing without his brains-carrier, as the Irish have it, and in the country he rarely moved without the surveillance of John Jenkins. To the trusty John he was now resigned after Mary's careful inspection that cape and cloak were not forgotten, and then our little quartette again drew to the fire to discuss more interesting matter. And now for some time I cease to talk of my own affairs. Others must

come forward to observation, more interesting and more worthy of attention. With pleasure my pen traces events unconnected with myself. It is the only portion of my labour which repays me for the retrospective glance of my youth.

CHAPTER VIII.

DR. DRINKWATER had sat down before Mary at least two years. He had confided all his gouty feelings to her indulgent ear, and had informed her regularly of the fluctuations of his malady from the knee to the foot, from the shoulder to the hand, but he had never ventured to discourse about his heart. Time had so accustomed him to Mary's gentle attention that it had become as necessary to him as his daily meals. It was the want of that aliment which carried him to Bath, and which again seated him at the Grange when my family returned to H—. Mary did not think with the rest of our little world as to the conclusion of the drama. She believed the doctor simply pleased with an auditor who would listen to, and feel interested in, his gouty sensations, and while public opinion prophesied a certain and curious *dé-*

nouement, Mary sat profoundly ignorant of the mine which must explode to enlighten her understanding.

Dr. Drinkwater had called every morning since my departure to inquire after the absentees, and when Charlotte married, it was but neighbourly to look in upon the two desolate ladies, so that he was gradually installed as part of the family, and quite enough of importance to make one of our circle the evening we returned from the Isle of Wight. Love has extraordinary ways of developing his presence. Sometimes he appears in sighs and tears, sometimes in smiles and vivacity. Again he will disguise himself in silence and apparent indifference, and anon he starts forth in invective and abuse. He has unlimited power over all minds, and delights in teaching the upright to speak falsely, and compelling the false heart to utter truth. Dr. Drinkwater stood apart from each and all of these. I believe truly that he was ignorant of the power which Mary wielded so gently over his heart, and she was innocent of the cause which drew her to listen to his bulletins of health. Both walked softly in the path marked out by Cupid, treading their way so noiselessly, they knew not it was his directing hand that led them forward. My mother did not object to the

aspect of things. Dr. Drinkwater was younger in years than in looks or feelings, therefore if Mary could fancy him, the world would not point at such an amazing disparity of years. He looked sixty-five, it's true, but everybody knew the doctor had not reached fifty, and the Grange was a very comfortable place, some said a handsome place, but that was mere matter of opinion. The Grange was considered too small for beauty by the proprietor, therefore rooms had been added *de tems en tems*, under the architectural skill of Jenkins and the village carpenter, consequently the effect was, as Robins would write it, commensurate to the undertaking. The dining-room must be ascended by three narrow steps, and the sitting-room was underground; the windows were at irregular distances, and the approach was villanous; but the doctor received all his friends' congratulations on the comforts of the Grange, and was well pleased to think he had secured all opinions in his favour. "It was a rare thing," he told Mary, "to please everybody, and he never knew any one who began building give general satisfaction; but he had luckily a man of taste in Jenkins, who understood almost everything. He sometimes felt those steps inconvenient when he had twinges in his foot, but he would not find fault

with improvements.”—If Mary liked Dr. Drinkwater, and admired the Grange, who could object to the match except Miss Bates, who never liked anything but her own wretched domicile.

All was calm and quiet for some days after our return to H—. Charlotte and Henry could not yet quit their home for even a day; there was so much to be done in a new situation, and so many people to attend in sickness. Miss Partington had confided her tale to my mother and Mary, and both approved and delighted in her prospects. My mother, anxious to shew her gratitude for favours sincerely and excellently shewn to herself, insisted that Miss Partington should receive Sir James Langham’s visits at her house, and marry from her protection, like her own daughter. “To me,” were her words, “you have been a real child in affection, and I will be a parent in this act of your life. You have none to control you—you are independent in fortune and action. My home is therefore your home, and you shall marry from my house. You gave up your lodgings in Bath, and you have no property that requires your presence. Here you remain till I make you over to Sir James.”

“And, dear Anne,” cried the delighted Mary, “Sir James will purchase the Hermitage, that you may be near us some part of the year, to

make us happy; oh! I know he will bid for it if you express a wish."

Miss Partington smiled, but shook her head.

"My dear friends, your goodness makes you suppose all things concluded as if by a fairy's wand, but my own mind is not decided. Mrs. Vansittart, I accept your home and protection; it is most valuable to a woman who possesses no claims upon any one. I accept it with eager gratitude, but as far as Sir James Langham is concerned, I am not decided. I am not able to plead youth in extenuation of folly, and I must be cautious. I do not think our acquaintance warrants anything beyond not exactly declining him at present."

"That is enough, Anne," said Mary, embracing her friend with energy, "I know Sir James already by your description; I am sure I could point him out amidst a crowd. Tall, open-hearted, handsome, easy in address, oh! I know him perfectly. Dr. Drinkwater says he has seen him at Cheltenham, and thought him very good-looking. I only asked if he knew such a person by name."

"If he pleases me," said my mother, smiling, "I shall at once declare for him; do not invent objections, for I shall disperse them. Your situation and fortune require a protector, and I

wish it was my own daughter, only you are such in heart and affection.”

A warm pressure of the hand gave force to her expressions of warm interest. Miss Partington was overcome. “If such is your kindness to me, I shall never leave you. To give a stranger favour in my eyes, you must not say these agreeable things. I shall be loath to quit certainty for speculation.”

“And then, Anne,” continued Mary, who had seated herself at Miss Partington’s feet, “and then, Anne, I shall see you Lady Langham, just the situation you ought to fill; and I shall hear you respected and commended, with a kind good man to take care of you. Such very open rational sentiments do Sir James great honour. He never pretends to swear he can’t live without you, but hopes to make you like him by his perseverance—oh! I think him a paragon!”

“It is very pleasing to my feelings to hear you say such kind things, Mary, but I know your affection enlarges your mental vision, though I can scarcely wish it diminished. Tell me, have you seen the Breretons very lately?”

“No; not since their marriage. They have a very large parish, and so many claims upon them, they will be engaged for weeks to come. Charlotte’s marriage was a very quiet affair.

Old Mr. Brereton came down, and behaved very well; he presented Charlotte with a pony-carriage, and gave them several useful things in the way of furniture. Mr. Brereton is a very abrupt sort of person. What do you think he said to mamma after breakfast?—‘Madam, I like my daughter-in-law—a very steady, good-looking young woman, madam, but that’s the only Vansittart I shall receive into my family. They tell me your son fancies my daughter Emma. He wont get her; I don’t approve of intermarriages, so you will excuse my plain dealing, and tell your son my determination, which will be unchangeable, madam.’—Mamma disclaimed, of course, any knowledge of Charles being attached to any one.

“Oh! very well, madam, I dare say it’s a mistake, but I have spoken my mind, and so we understand one another. I have a living in my eye for my son, and I hope the young people will be good and happy, madam.” I can’t tell you how oddly he behaved, but he acted very handsomely by my sister. Do you think Charles cared for Emma?”

“He danced with her at Bath, but I did not observe them together. Charles left England in very good spirits, and Emma did not appear

concerned—no, I should say all was safe as yet.”

“I hope so,” replied Mary, “I am sure Mr. Brereton would never change an opinion once formed: he is just the person to be as obstinate and violent as he is plain-speaking, if he were offended.”

“Well, tell me something more of Charlotte’s marriage.”

“Oh, Emma and myself were bridesmaids as you knew it was decided. Mr. Jones looked very imposing in his spectacles, but Mrs. Jones could not attend. She was sitting in a green shade, with inflamed eyes, and said it was impossible to attend a wedding when she could not see the pips of the cards, and had not played quadrille for a fortnight.”

“And the Bateses?”

“Yes, both father and daughter were there. Miss Bates settled the matter speedily afterwards with Mrs. Jones. They thought it folly to marry unless the match promised a good income, and Miss Bates declared her own home, with its cat and canary-bird, was paradise to marrying a poor curate. Captain Bates was quite alive, and regretted when all was concluded, because, he says, man is made to mourn,

and he is always miserable when not actually excited. There is Sir James Langham," continued Mary, springing to her feet, "if I have seen mortal man; Sir James has passed the window—listen."

It was indeed Sir James Langham. He entered with the same agreeable air, the same pleasant smile which he wore in the Isle of Wight. Miss Partington looked surprised and pleased: who would have looked otherwise? What woman ever yet resisted *empressement* in a handsome lover. Sir James was introduced to my mother and Mary, who piqued herself on her power of recognising a person by their description only, but few men of fashion visited H—, and Sir James eclipsed them by many degrees. Mary could not err in recognising the stranger.

"Here I am, you see, rather sooner than you expected, but I am going to give you my reasons. I saw in the Bath Chronicle a place called the Hermitage to be sold hereabouts, and as I mean to bid for it, I am come to take a view of the premises, but that will do another day, as I shall be a week at least at the George. Mrs. Vansittart, you appear to me an old acquaintance, and I have great pleasure in being introduced to you and Miss Vansittart. In you,"

he gallantly turned to me bowing, "I see a beaming face which says, 'You are welcome.' In Miss Partington's demure expression I fancy I read, 'You impudent scoundrel!'"

Miss Partington did not long affect a feeling foreign to her heart: she welcomed her agreeable suitor with looks and expressions of gladness, which delighted Mary and captivated Sir James. He fell instantly into his usual strain of chat.

"Miss Vansittart, I left your old beau at Bath. I was walking up Milsom-street, and I almost ran against Mr. Ellis. He was in a Bath-chair you know at Ryde, and he was still unable to walk. I thought him very much changed—feeble as a child, and his sister did not look much better, she was toddling by his side. I was so sorry to find him worse in his looks, I really forgot to ask him his address, and I did not meet him again to say I was setting off to his old friends. Poor old gentleman, he seemed very ill."

I rushed out of the room.

"Eh what, have I said anything wrong? Upon my soul I am sorry. I dare say Miss Vansittart is sorry for her friend, but I did not think it would affect her so much."

I did feel distressed, but it was the sudden mention of a name which we had all avoided,

that drove me to my chamber. There I remained till the dressing-bell warned me to rouse from tears and misery: when I again made my appearance in the drawing-room, Sir James Langham was seated as composedly as if he had been our neighbour for years, and Dr. Drinkwater had called, and was detained prisoner to do the honours to our new friend. The doctor was nothing loath: he was holding forth as I entered, upon *eau medicinale*. Sir James had a happy flow of ideas upon all subjects: he handled *eau medicinale* very ably.

“My dear sir, if you take that medicine you are a dead man. An uncle of mine took it in quantities, but he went off in a fit; and an old aunt had an attack of palsy a month after she began *eau medicinale*. I do not think it a wholesome medicine; gout will have its way. Did you ever try a season at Cheltenham?”

“I was there once,” replied the doctor, “but I received no benefit, though what’s-his-name persuaded me to give it a trial.”

Sir James was surprised at that; he had known the waters there of great service. The doctor persisted what’s-his-name sent him there to get rid of him, and his complaints. He had not touched the waters, to be sure, but he had walked up and down as everybody else did.

He was certain the water would have effected nothing, therefore he abstained, for he heard they were very nauseous.

“Your physician, I think you say, is—I beg pardon, but I have not caught the name—”

“I never remember names,” replied the doctor with good humour, “therefore I have a trick of calling everybody what’s-his-name, otherwise my conversation would halt. Vance is my medical man, but I never can think of his name in time.”

Mary was not yet down, or she would have expounded the doctor’s riddles. He was nothing without her: he was valueless in his own eyes unless Mary was near to give him importance. His eyes always sparkled at her approach, though his tongue was mute and never expressed his pleasurable sensations.

Miss Partington was certainly dressed with greater care this day, or her countenance of heightened expression gave unusual lustre to her appearance, but I thought her almost handsome. I could trace no change in the quality or quantity of her arrangements. She wore the same silk dress, the same canzous of the former day: the long gold earnnigs, the chain, were worn daily: there was nothing added or withdrawn, yet she certainly looked improved in

appearance and manner. Could it be love which was working insensibly such a change in the “discreet Miss Partington!” Was love stealing into the very “sit” of her sleeves, and her waist-ribbon becoming the girdle of Venus?

What a happy party sat down to dinner this day! and how I envied the pleasure which glowed in each countenance! Dr. Drinkwater took his place at the bottom of the table, where Mary supported him in his attentions and remarks. Sir James Langham insisted upon relieving my mother, who gladly relinquished her seat. He chatted away between her and Miss Partington. I alone belonged to none, and sat alone in my glory, without an eye to watch my wishes, or a heart to interest itself in my wants. I remembered how Mr. Ellis had bowed down before me, waiting patiently and anxiously for an ungracious word. I remembered how he had borne my slights, and existed upon my bitter and transient notice. He was at Bath now, seeking balm for a broken heart, and I was a millstone round the happy feelings of my family, bankrupt in everything most lovely and sacred in woman, bankrupt in faith, in reputation, and in hope. I could not remain long at the table: the compliment, the pleasant retort,

the lively and harmless joke was dissonance to my ear. I felt with Lady Macbeth, when her deed of dreadful note was done, that there was no rest. I was obliged to plead illness and retire.

The evening was to me long and tedious, but the hours flew on butterfly-wings to my party. A plan was arranged for the following morning to look over the Hermitage, and drive to Bradford. Sir James Langham was to drive the doctor in his curricule. We ladies could accompany Miss Partington in her carriage. I should certainly have declined the party had not Bradford been included in the arrangement. I wished to see Charlotte much, but still more I longed to see her husband. I could not resist the temptation. The idea of seeing Brereton again was exciting, and see him I must and would: why did Miss Partington glance at me, and propose my taking a morning's complete rest at home? Did she suppose I might not see my sister's husband without alarm?—Did she conclude me wicked because I had been weak?—I should walk with pleasure, but to Bradford I would infallibly go on foot or in the carriage. When was I ever known to relinquish a determination?

My mother was much pleased with her new acquaintance, and she gave her opinion freely to Miss Partington as we took our coffee.

“If I am ever deceived in Sir James Langham’s character I will never more pass judgment upon a face. My dear friend, he will repay all my acknowledgments to you, and I shall see you rewarded for your kindness and consideration to every being who comes within your notice. Virtue is never long without some recompence even upon this earth.”

Everything prospered with Miss Partington. Sir James had delivered a letter from old Lady Langham into her hands before dinner: its contents were gratifying. The old lady expressed her hopes her excellent son-in-law would meet a lady who could value his worth. She doubted it, but she could congratulate his future wife on *her* prospects, if she did not contribute to brighten his. She thought no woman could deserve her son, for such he had been to her, but she hoped much from the lady’s high character. She trusted no trifling might be attempted with James, but implored the lady to give him as little unnecessary delay as possible. James wished so much to settle, and she was so glad he had not fixed upon a young Bath miss, with bare shoulders and a bold face.

So wrote Lady Langham, and so echoed my mother. Miss Partington was entreated to be happy, and as far as I could guess she had no wish to throw it from her. Mary was eager to have her friend happily settled: “And think, Anne, of the Hermitage having caught his eye, as if all was to happen as I wished! now you will be near us for ever. I could not bear the idea of his carrying you into Kent, to a large rambling place, without a friend to welcome you. How delighted our dear Charlotte and Henry will be!”

Dr. Drinkwater soon appeared with Sir James. The latter took immediate possession of my mother and Miss Partington, and by their close conference it was evident he was resolved to lose no time in speeding his wooing. I heard one of his remarks as I passed within hearing.

“I always think, Mrs. Vansittart, if people will speak their honest sentiments, there would not be so much time lost in finding doubts and difficulties. Lady Langham calls me a good boy, and you, neither of you, can prove to the contrary; why then cannot Miss Partington say at once, ‘I will marry you when you have bought and furnished the Hermitage and settled it upon me?’”

“That would sound unpleasing and selfish to ears polite.”

“Not at all. Every widow should have a handsome allowance, and be independent of the world, and as you have no one to say so for you, I shall suppose you have said so yourself. I shall not delay about the Hermitage : it is mine, and will be yours if you survive me, which I hope will be the case, with all my heart. I should not like to be left alone, but ladies don't mind, what with children and servants, and finery, and carpet-work. Have you finished your carpet-work, Miss Partington?”

Dr. Drinkwater was canvassing Mary's opinion about the Grange, on a far-off sofa. “Surely,” thought I, “the mountain must at last produce the mouse ; what an immense time he is labouring to be agreeable, and with what patience he is undermining Mary's heart ! Cupid's Neophites—both in love, and neither aware of the circumstance !” Mary did not know it, but love alone could produce her calmness under a *tête-à-tête* with a middle-aged gentleman, gouty, *sans* memory, and with cotton in his ears. Charles would have it the doctor always forgot his love from one interview to another, which kept him so long silent.

When our little party broke up, my mother addressed Sir James Langham :

“ We shall expect you every morning after your breakfast to attend to us till this hour of the evening. We promise in return to be very agreeable and very good-natured : mind, I answer for *all* under my care, Sir James.”

Sir James bowed his silent but impressive thanks and acquiescence. He turned to Miss Partington. “ Mrs. Vansittart represents you all, I see ; I shall know what to do, and where to enforce my requests. Mrs. Vansittart is ‘ all charming.’ ”

Sir James was delighted.

“ Nothing like a little jealousy, but I wont go too far this time. Whenever you offend me I shall flirt with Mrs. Vansittart, but not till then. I don’t approve of flirting.”

Miss Partington gave her hand with the gentle goodness which characterized her in everything : she never played the tyrant. Sir James pressed it closely, and spoke words of fond compliment, but I did not hear them ; my attention was called towards Dr. Drinkwater, who was affected by the force of example, and was literally addressing Mary in something like a flirty tone. My eye caught his, and he

shrank into himself. "His what's-his-name was at the door, and Jenkins in the cold:"—he therefore departed first. Sir James, after he was gone, spoke very favourably of him.

"I like your friend Drinkwater very much. He is a gentlemanly man. Scandal defies him to add to her stock of events, for he forgets names, dates, and places; I am glad he lives near the Hermitage; I shall like my neighbour."

The first sounds which addressed themselves to our ears the next morning, as we lingered over our breakfast-table, were the cheerful tones of Sir James Langham. He was talking outside the hall-door, and he was still talking as he entered.

"I thought I was early this morning, but I see the doctor puffing and blowing at the church gate: I would have driven down to him with pleasure—how far off does he hang out? a mile?—oh, I would have sent the curriele. How do you all do?"

Every one was well, every one was happy to see him. My mother already made room for him in her heart and at her side, but there was metal more attractive; he stood behind Miss Partington's chair.

"Mrs. Vansittart, I don't like driving a man when I can drive a lady. *Must* I drive the

doctor? He is just the thing for a bodkin. ask your opinion, because you are the Lady Paramount.”

My mother urged the propriety of the original plan. She could not accompany us, and there could be no change. Sir James bowed.

“ When I marry, Mrs. Vansittart, I will drive no one but my wife. Not a man, upon any consideration, enters my curricie then. Miss Louisa, what a pleasant drive we had together from Brading! Since that day, I have never fancied my curricie without a lady: but I shall drive Dr. Drinkwater with great pleasure, since I cannot help myself.”

Mary was radiant in smiles and good-humour: her affectionate heart expanded under the happiness of her friend, and her own favourable impression of Sir James; she hardly remarked the doctor's heated complexion when he joined the party. She was soon at her post, however, to inquire the bulletin for the day. Dr. Drinkwater was better—very warm from his walk, which did him good—would have rode the what's-his-name, but Jenkins thought a walk more useful.

Mary had a cup of hot coffee to offer the doctor; it was silently given; it was received as silently. He sat down by Mary, and naturally

took the comfortable things provided by her. Dr. Drinkwater was soon making a very sufficient breakfast, and telling Mary his dream. He had dreamt Jenkins was pulling down the Grange, and all the what's-his-names were laughing at him. Mary, *sotto voce*, advised him to leave off suppers. A word of hers was law. He would eat no more, though he generally took soda after any excess. That point was settled.

We were off as soon as the refecton ended. Sir James saw us properly adjusted in the carriage, and maintained it was a disgusting monopoly. Both gentlemen blamed the disposition of affairs, but it was in the fitness of things. Dr. Drinkwater tried to mount the curricle without assistance, and was obliged to give up the rash intention. Sir James and his servant lent their hands, and behold the doctor high in air, seated in a fashionable curricle! I saw Mary's eyes resting complacently on his middle-aged person, comparing in her mind the advantageous position he now held with his own tiresome whisky.

A drive of two miles was not a very long affair; we soon entered the Hermitage lodge, and left the carriages, to walk round the grounds. Miss Partington and myself fell to the lot of Sir James Langham; it would have been inhuman

to separate the doctor from Mary. They followed with as much despatch as circumstances would admit, and as the doctor considered this one of his "well days," he contrived just to keep in sight.

Sir James was pleased with the Hermitage ; its shady walks, its tasteful disposition of grounds and its ample mansion. He was so cheerful and happy, so talkative and gallant, that I craved permission to sit in the hall during their tour of the rooms. It was a public viewing-day, so every one came to walk and talk through the house and gardens, and I sat watching the different groups as they passed and repassed the hall before me. I heard Sir James holding forth in all directions ; his voice of glee distinctly distinguished amid the general hum. Captain Bates and his daughter were near me : Miss Bates in her ten-year-old pelisse, trimmed with rabbit-fur, and the equally antique beaver bonnet with a small feather on one side. Captain Bates hated to hear of any one being happy. To look it was very offensive, but to *be* happy, when man was made to mourn, was an unnatural and disgusting sight. He was indignant at the continued cheerful remarks of Sir James Langham. "To think," he said to his dowdy daughter, "that any one beyond the age of fifteen

should be talking and laughing as if he was out of the world, instead of being in an existence of trial and misery! That man, whoever he is, must be mad, and unfit to be at large!—who the devil is he, grinning and chattering?”

Sir James at this moment brought his party into the hall, and chatted on as if none but ourselves were present.

“I am very much pleased with this Hermitage, all but the name is really in elegant taste; next to a convent a hermitage sounds very gloomy—however, any place may contain happy spirits. I think you might be very happy here.”

His speech was addressed to Miss Partington, but Captain Bates annotated upon it, as Sir James passed on to another suite of apartments.

“Happy! a man talking of being happy! What the devil is to make a man happy? Can he have what he wishes for here? Can he be young, can he be prosperous? What the devil does he use such words for? It makes one sick!”

Miss Bates recognised me and bowed, but did not attempt to enter into conversation. The Clifdens and Walkers had also bowed, but avoided further communication with me. I saw at once I had not recovered the general ban

which fell upon me after my delinquency with Messrs. Jones and Dyneton. My own indolent insufferable manners, too, would not fascinate any one into forgetfulness of the past, and Miss Bates would gladly witness my wounded vanity for the double crime of being young and handsome. I sat in perfect unconcern.

The hall was cleared of its first burst of visitors when my party returned. They had examined, concluded, and decided everything. All was well arranged, everything in excellent repair, and the fixtures elegant. Marble slabs complete—it was a jewel of value, and Sir James would have it, *coute qui coute*. We chatted a little upon its beauties, and again commenced our walk. I found myself unaccountably belonging to Dr. Drinkwater's sinister arm as we retraced our steps: Sir James had contrived to monopolize Miss Partington, and they were already beyond our reach. I took the good the gods provided, and hung upon Mary's *tête-à-tête*. I must necessarily be in some one's way—Heaven knows I had long stood in my own.

Mary had an infinity of remarks to make as we proceeded towards Bradford. She had quite arranged the different apartments in her own mind. The lovely little room facing the flower-garden was to be Miss Partington's boudoir.

There she would be found so comfortable, so happy, it would make even Captain Bates a convert to earthly happiness, and the room leading from it was to be appropriated to Sir James, because he never could exist long without a chat, and there he might have his lady at hand to indulge him. Miss Partington laughed at Mary's fanciful arrangements, but pondered them in her heart, for she was silent and meditative during the remainder of the drive: Sir James had probably been urging her during their walk, and her spirits, always serene, rarely mounted to vivacity: under present circumstances she was perhaps depressed. She did not deceive herself by a false computation in her chance for peace as a wife. She passed by the title, the glare of matrimony—she was debating her power to make a happy and agreeable companion to the man she vowed to honour. She was considering things I never dreamed of.

At last Bradford lay before us, and we drew near its lovely, rich seclusion. It was a peaceful place: the cottages were neat, and each in summer could display its roses and its vine. The church rose its spire above the elms which bounded its little sanctuary, and the vicarage casements peeped through the

laurels which decorated its lawn. My heart throbbed with intense anxiety. I was to see Brereton again and in a new light—my face became cold, and my hands clammy as we drew up to the door. They were both out; in the village only, and we would seek them. It was a fine morning in February, the primroses were shewing their yellow buds, and the air was calm and fresh when we sallied forth to surprise Charlotte and Brereton. I saw my sister issuing from a cottage, and my heart at once woke to the sight. I ran towards her. “Charlotte, my dear Charlotte!” I exclaimed, “what I have endured since I saw you!” the tears burst from my eyes as we embraced. She was the same kind, attentive, winning sister. “You are returned to us, Louisa, and we will think of pleasant things!” I clung to her with real and strong affection; had she not ministered to a mind diseased? She was the only being who truly and really possessed my love: I felt she might mould me to her wishes by her captivating manners and endearments, and I was for the moment happy. We turned to meet those I had quitted, and the meeting was—oh, how joyful! It was Charlotte’s first meeting since her marriage, and her happy face beamed with brilliant joy at this reunion: Dr. Drink-

water too, her kind neighbour to join the party! It was altogether one of those rare occurrences that flash like a meteor in life and pass for ever: its very unexpectedness increased its enjoyment. We returned with Charlotte to the vicarage: we examined her habitation, we commented, and we approved. Everything was so comfortable, so economically arranged, yet so liberal. Mary whispered the state of things at H— before we had well got out of the gentleman's hearing; Charlotte was overpowered. It was impossible to think of so many agreeable things at once, but she would reflect upon every article separately when she was alone; at present she wished for Henry to enjoy this delicious hour, to see all his friends round him again—happy Charlotte!

Brereton was not long absent; he was with the gentlemen when we returned to the sitting-room, and I felt at the first glance my heart was free. This was not the Brereton of my Bath fancy. How oddly taste changes, and objects alter!—but I had seen Captain Thelwal and Sir James Langham, and they were far removed from Henry Brereton in mild grey pantaloons, thick gaiters, and a quiet soberized look. Was this the dancing Brereton—so soon and completely changed into a half dismal-

looking curate—so unlike the sentimental Thelwal, the complete antipodes to the easy and lively Sir James Langham—so unlike my notions of a lovely and beloved one? Farewell for ever the alarms of Miss Partington: farewell for ever qualms and future fears: I should as easily fall in love with long Philpot the dissenting minister.

We wore away our short visit in wondering and exclaiming, but we agreed to spend another day together in thinking and conversing. It was altogether impossible to think, when seven old friends got together for a couple of hours after a long absence; it could only be confusion of tongues. My head already ached, and we had twelve miles to drive before dark. Sir James Langham, as the most disengaged person, attended to time, and ordering the carriages; till he gave the word of command we all talked on, and I believe, together. We parted with mutual regret, and with strong resolutions to meet again. I was very reluctant to quit Charlotte, but I held her hand to the last moment, and only quitted it to enter the carriage.

Sir James was in the highest possible spirits at dinner. He loved, he said, people to be happy together, and families on good terms. He

had never enjoyed himself so much—plenty of talking, and great hospitality, delightful people, and good-humoured chat—it was just the society most delightful to him.

Dr. Drinkwater did not remain to dine with us; a glass of Madeira at “what’s-his-name” had unhinged him, and he felt a twinge in his elbow—he therefore was driven to the Grange, strictly charged by Mary not to omit a double proportion of soda.

Our morning’s entertainment was recapitulated to my mother, both at and after dinner. She urged Miss Partington again to lay aside doubts and fears, and accept at once the hand of Sir James Langham; so many things occurred between the cup and the lip; so many chances and changes arose in unlooked-for quarters! Miss Partington fought her battle with unshrinking steadiness. She contended for time to study well each side of the picture, and steadily behold the person with whom she was to pass her life, while it could yet be within her power to accept or reject the proffered good or evil. Mary folded her hands and only looked beseechingly at her friend. I confess Miss Partington had difficult cards to play; she struggled with the repeated entreaties of those

she esteemed, and she wrestled with her own rapidly-increasing attachment. It was vain to deny her heart was completely taken captive; affection played in her eyes, and overflowed in her manner, however anxiously she concealed its energy from the object. She was no longer within her own power. It is true Sir James gave up the reins, and allowed her to appear the director of her own destiny, but one hour of alarm would have torn the veil from her eyes, and betrayed the dismantled state of her heart. It was then all over with Miss Partington, and I had lived to see her succumb to the lot of all, when I long believed her invulnerable.

A severe contest was renewed when Sir James returned to us, and there was no Dr. Drinkwater to interfere with his attention. He walked boldly up to my mother.

“ Mrs. Vansittart, if I am to be carried about to hermitages, and snug little vicarage-houses, it will only increase my disorder, which is a longing to be happy and snug myself. I have nothing now to say which may not be said in public, and publicly I shall hold forth till Miss Partington declines me. I wrote to my agent, when I left you to dress, and he is commissioned to close immediately for the Hermitage at any

price, so I consider that affair finished. It shall belong to Miss Partington with a suitable income in case of my death, and as to her own fortune she may keep it to buy rings and brooches with. What can a man do more than offer a lady a seat among her friends, plenty of money, and her own way?"

Miss Partington was very much agitated; Mary clasped her white hands in a phrensy of delight; my mother held out her hand, which was politely pressed by Sir James. He continued:

"If I felt myself uncertain upon any point, I would ask time to reconcile the matter, and decide slowly and to the best of my power; but as my age has given me knowledge of my real tastes—since my affection is grafted upon character and not a pretty face alone—since I have comforts to bestow upon a wife, and an anxiety to promote her happiness—why is Miss Partington to snub me, Mrs. Vansittart?"

"Do not say I snub you, Sir James!" said Miss Partington, gaining strength to speak. "Have I not said all I could say upon so short an acquaintance?"

"No. Mrs. Vansittart has been much kinder to me upon a still shorter knowledge of each other, only we have the acuteness to distinguish each other's value, and the wisdom to enjoy it.

Have you not inhumanly contrived to place obstacles always in my way?"

"Not one," replied Miss Partington. "I had none to produce, only—"

"Only what then?" asked Sir James. "Say what you only *did* produce, when you laughed at my misery at the Hermitage, and are looking at this moment so resolute to be unkind."

Poor Miss Partington! it was only the flickering of the candle ere it fell in the socket, one little blaze more and it expired.

"You deserve to be driven from the haunts of men with your ambiguous speeches.—I only said you were a tyrant, and so you are. Pray, Mrs. Vansittart, remove him."

"Nay, Anne, he stirs not; let me hear both sides fairly. Did she really call you a tyrant, Sir James?"

"And I was asking her opinion at the very moment upon the way she would like to have the drawing-room decorated—was that tyrannical?"

"Certainly not. Anne, *you* are guilty of tyranny."

"Thank you, Mrs. Vansittart, you have a just and proper view of things; you shall always be my judge. Miss Partington is declared guilty; let me pronounce judgment."

“I will not hear the sentence,” exclaimed Miss Partington, rising, “you are Judge Jeffries; I will fly.”

“But stay one moment,” cried Sir James, gently detaining her; “stay and hear me promise to forget and forgive all injuries. I have been used ill, but I do not resent your treatment; it is passed—but now, in return, tell me you will allow me to prepare the Hermitage, and do not keep a poor man in misery for wishing to make you and himself happy!”

“Let me speak for Anne, Sir James,” said my mother, solemnly. “Prepare the Hermitage, furnish it, and then come and ask me for your wife.”

Miss Partington trembled perceptibly, but she rejected affectation.

“My friends are very hurrying, but I know their kindness, and I do not doubt your sincerity. I am unequal to offer strong objections, since I really—”

“Say to the end; do not withdraw a kind remark, but let me finish the sentence for you:” Sir James knelt quite humbly before her. “Say, then, I have no objection since I really love you!”

“Since I love you!” repeated Miss Partington, half under her breath, but distinctly.

There were too many witnesses to allow Sir

James Langham to express his joy otherwise than by looks. He rose taller and livelier than ever. He asked and received all our congratulations. He assured Miss Partington her behaviour had been that of an angel, in spite of his charge against her. Mrs. Vansittart was the unwise judge, nevertheless he was everlastingly obliged to her, and should never forget Miss Vansittart's eyes supplicating in his favour. She should control the fitting-up of the Hermitage, and he hoped would often be happy there with her friend. He left us intoxicated with joy, and wondering bachelors could ever shew their faces in society—how infinitely happier to marry out of hand than to be vexing the drowsy ear of night guitaring silly girls, as Thelwal did.

News circulates in a country place with singular rapidity. Every one knew Sir James Langham was paying his addresses to one of Mrs. Vansittart's party, but which lady was for some time a riddle. Miss Vansittart he had never seen—Miss Louisa was very handsome, therefore to the mind of the majority, he was going to marry "that horrid flirt," only the servants reported for a fact it was quiet Miss Partington. Whoever it might be, one thing was certain; the Hermitage was bought by private contract, and Sir James Langham was the acknowledged

purchaser. Miss Bates and Mrs. Jones decided Miss Louisa's character would never attract a man with common sense, and as to good looks alone, that was a poor boast. Every one was good-looking after a fashion. Captain Bates objected to any match taking place, but on another count; "If there was to be a wedding, what with bellringing and favours, the place would go mad, and people would fancy themselves happy, because they were drunk. He hated grinning faces—who ever laughed after fifteen years of age!"

But my mother's fiat had gone forth: when Sir James had furnished the Hermitage he was to ask her for his wife, and he was not a man to pause on his road to matrimony, so a wedding there would be, and Captain Bates would be one of the attendants, and as usual in company he would be one of the merriest of the group, though four "fifteen years" had passed by, and thinned his flowing hair, and his daughter's hopes of changing her situation and pelisse with them.

After the scene of this momentous evening, Sir James disappeared from H—. He called the next morning to ask our commands, but he was off to London in an hour to transact a world of affairs. He deputed Mary to act in every way

connected with the Hermitage in his name, to watch over Miss Partington, and engage her to begin her operations. If he could act for them in choosing hats—bonnets—ribbons—nothing was out of his line—but he prayed for one quarter of an hour to be allowed a *tête-à-tête* with his own Anne, for such she knew she was, before he quitted the house. Mary smilingly pointed to the drawing-room; Sir James darted towards it, and the quarter of an hour became rather extended. When he rejoined us, he was full of gratitude for Miss Partington's affectionate manners.

“If women would only be natural and speak the real feelings of their minds when they are asked a plain question, how much they would honour themselves. Anne has been quite free from nonsense and trifling, and if I never loved her before, I worship her now.”

“Return soon,” said my mother, shaking hands.

“I will put a belt across the earth in forty minutes,” was his reply; “but Anne will write, and I shall write, so you will hear all my proceedings. Miss Vansittart, take care of Anne, and urge her to be alert in her preparations: there must be white silk, and blue silk, and those kind of things, I know, but I don't wait an

instant beyond the time appointed. When the Hermitage is furnished I come for my wife, and Mrs. Vansittart stands pledged to produce her.”

“I will, I certainly will,” said my mother.

“Then farewell.” Sir James Langham courteously expressed his obligations for our hospitable attentions, and left us looking after him. Whenever Sir James quitted us, it would be comparative gloom. His temper was so yielding and cheerful, it gladdened one’s heart to listen to his eager flow of agreeable thoughts. My mother was in love with him, which proved his power over all sorts and conditions of women. I missed him most cruelly myself, for he often betrayed me into something like conversation, without attempting to coquette. I certainly envied Miss Partington such a lover, but I concurred in the justice of fortune. He was a most excellent *partie*, but what a wife *she* would make!

CHAPTER IX.

OF all matter-of-fact, straightforward people, Dr. Drinkwater was the most obtuse. In spite of all that was going on, in defiance of looks and compliments and hints, the Doctor neither saw nor heard anything extraordinary, and was quite surprised when his neighbours asked information from him, upon the match Miss Partington was going to make. It never occurred to his unsuspecting soul, that Sir James Langham's sudden visit could be connected with matrimony. "To be sure Sir James dined there every day and so on," he told Miss Bates, "but he saw nothing, and thought nothing: if he gave the subject any consideration at all, he supposed it might be one of Miss Louisa's flirtations, but he had no right to say even that."

Yet Sir James Langham's courtship had to

effect a powerful event, and carry fire and sword into the Doctor's heart—The moment he was completely assured Miss Partington was engaged, and Sir James off to town to complete arrangements for his marriage—that moment changed the aspect of things to Mary and Dr. Drinkwater. He had severe twitches of gout in every limb: his knee grew stiff, his elbows were all pulsation, and his right hand was consigned to its flannel bag. Miss Bates heard the whole business from Jenkins; his master, he thought, would be a week in his room, for the attack was sharper than usual. Miss Bates had a remark for every one. “A pretty beau to dangle after Miss Vansittart, when he was one day alive, and dead the next.”

Dr. Drinkwater came to life again, however, and was “dangling after Miss Vansittart,” before Miss Bates was aware of it. He came in two days to his arm-chair close by Mary's work-table, and though he was in my eyes a “sad sober dog” after the discipline of the two previous days, he was to marry an object of powerful interest, and she sat well pleased to listen to that voice which had not soothed her ear for many hours.

I was glad to drive with Miss Partington to Gloucester and dissipate my dulness among the hats and caps in Miss Lovel's show-rooms. During our drive much was transpiring at home.

Dr. Drinkwater sat in silence for some time,

pondering things in his inmost soul. His long meditation struck Mary as something singular.

“You are still poorly, I fear, doctor?”

“I have had a severe attack, Miss Mary, and I feel as if I should be worse shortly.”

“Oh, I hope not.”

“Any mental agitation is sure to bring on gout, and I have been disturbed lately a good deal.”

Mary looked at him in pity. “Nothing, I hope, of consequence: you must not allow yourself to be disturbed: nothing wrong at the Grange, surely, with Jenkins in the midst.”

“Is not Miss Partington engaged to Sir James Langham?”

“To be sure; surely, doctor, you found that out the first day Sir James dined here, you who are generally so quick at making discoveries.”

Poor Mary! she had made a surprising discovery herself: she had found out the doctor's quickness, when no mole could be more blind to what was passing round him.

“Indeed I did not suspect anything; but he has managed it very quietly, as those things *should* be managed. He is a very happy man.”

“Any one must be happy with dear Anne, she is so kind and good.”

“He has no gout to plague her with.” Dr. Drinkwater's cheeks became scarlet as the words escaped him.

“Nay, doctor, you don't suppose *that* had any influence upon Anne. You don't do her the

injustice to think a little gout would have altered her sentiments. You don't know Anne, Dr. Drinkwater."

"I should think gout was very disagreeable to ladies," said the doctor, softly approaching his chair somewhat nearer to Mary.

"Not the least," replied Mary, with warmth: "do you think women so lost to pity and kindness, as to object to a good man because he has a little gout? The very reason why he has greater claims upon their affection. No, Dr. Drinkwater, you do injustice to Anne in supposing she would have objected to a little gout in Sir James."

"All ladies may not think with her, Miss Mary," sighed the doctor.

"You are alluding to foolish gadflies," said Mary with increasing warmth, "not to really rational women. Look at Lady Morton; does she ever treat Sir William as if she considered him a nuisance? Are they not laughing always together most good-humouredly? A woman of principle never finds a man she loves less agreeable because he cannot hop about like a monkey."

"You would be patient and forbearing with a husband, Miss Mary, should he prove gouty?" This was pronounced in accents of humblest harmony.

"I would not marry if I did not love him,

and gout is surely no crime. A man cannot be less upright or worthy because he has attacks of gout. No—that would tell very ill for a woman's affection.”

“ Then, Miss Mary, will you scorn *me* if I say I love you, and ask you to—marry—a gouty man ?”

The doctor had done his “ possible,” and sat aghast at his own boldness.

Mary was caught in the trap. She had defended her own position most innocently ; what had she to say in reply to the doctor's home question ? Mary was not a timid person : your quiet ones have generally a fund of philosophy to assist them in emergencies. Mary was taken by surprise, it's true, but she felt her own sentiments had drawn the proposal. She fairly laughed.

“ What makes you think of matrimony so suddenly, Dr. Drinkwater ?”

Her playful laugh and gentle tone did not drive her lover to extremity. He coloured most deep crimson, but he also smiled.

“ I envied Sir James Langham, Miss Mary, and when I saw he had won a wife so quietly, I thought I would try my luck ; but I don't think I could have ventured to offer myself, if you had not spoken kindly of gout.

“ When did you first think of me, Dr. Drinkwater ?”

“Four years ago I wished to have you for my wife, but I thought you would be disgusted, therefore while I was silent I could enjoy your society. I don’t know now how I came to propose: it was yourself who led me on, Miss Mary.”

“For shame, doctor! you have been trifling four years with me, and then assert I propose to you, or something very like it.”

“I am sure we shall be very comfortable at the Grange,” said her lover, “and we have managed it so quietly, not a soul will suspect us.”

“Excuse me,” replied Mary, smiling. “What do you fancy people have been saying and thinking these two years while you have seated yourself in silence at our fireside?”

“God bless me!” said the doctor, “they must have thought it strange, but Jenkins never said a word to me, and I was so sure you would refuse me, I forgot remarks would occur. Perhaps we shall marry this spring, Mary. How pleasant it is to call you Mary comfortably—*Miss Mary* was so very precise.”

Mary and Dr. Drinkwater sat chatting together like man and wife. After the dreadful words had been spoken, and not received disdainfully, they sat together exactly as they had been long accustomed to sit.

Mary netted, and the doctor talked of the Grange “and the pleasure of being a Benedict,

just to sit comfortably together as they were now doing.”

The poor doctor must suffer for his extraordinary success. The fear, the effort, the flurry of being extremely happy must tell upon his constitution. He returned to the Grange to dress and join us at dinner; but Jenkins was despatched to inform us his master was attacked violently in his shoulder and both feet. He had gone to bed, but hoped to be out next day. Poor Mary, how provoking! It was exactly as Miss Bates said—one day alive and dead the next.

We had now to sit in judgment upon Mary's case: it seemed to rain marriages, though this latter transaction had been long anticipated: sooner or later it was evident Mary was born to be Mrs. Drinkwater; it only astonished the doctor and Mary themselves.

Our evening produced a fresh discussion. Now the offer was actually made and tacitly accepted, we probed Mary upon the state of her feelings. I say *we*, because it sounds better; but as I never took advice, I had the discretion to withhold offering the article to others. My mother confessed some few scruples. There was something to her awful in the idea of consigning a fine young woman to the care of an elderly invalid, though she was aware the doctor was a good man and Mary very domestic. As

far as character and fortune went, there could be no objection, it must rest with Mary to decide how far she was willing to submit to confinement, and the close air of a sick room. She must reflect seriously, and judge the circumstances for herself, as her future comfort, and even health, might be sacrificed.

Mary had never considered, and could not bring her mind to dwell upon the objectionable part of the matter. She was so used to the society of Dr. Drinkwater, so completely trained by time and usages to study his ways and consult his whims, that tears rose to her eyes at having any scruples to contend with.

“ You know, my dear mother, I have always liked Dr. Drinkwater, and his malady never annoyed *me*. I certainly was not expecting an offer when I spoke so openly to him about gout, I was only advocating Anne in his opinion ; but still when he *did* propose, I felt I should have been miserable if he had proposed to any other woman. My dear Anne, *you* know I am never disquieted by his odd way in forgetting names ; and as to his gout, I really think I liked him for it. I pitied him at first, and then I—pray, dear mother, don’t advise me to give him up.”

“ I only advise you, my love, to reflect. I have no objections but to his health, and that concerns only yourself.”

“ Oh ! he will be much improved when he has

some one to cheer him. It is a sad lonely life at the Grange; none to amuse his solitary hours—no sister or mother to think for him—he has long complained of his cheerless hours.”

Miss Partington had not yet spoken, but she smiled at Mary's sturdy defence of her own predilection for a gouty husband: beyond that one objection, there was certainly nothing to interfere with Mary's wishes. If she did not fear the seclusion, and the trials of temper connected with an invalid, no one could offer another reason why the match should not take place. My mother spread all the disagreeables before Mary's inspection.

“Of course, my love, you are prepared to meet many discomforts: you will be called upon sometimes to quit your friends, and be immured in a sick room; you will be obliged to relinquish pleasant parties, in order to keep watch and ward; you must exchange lively chat with your family, for the querulous complaints of illness: you must have windows kept down, when you are wishing them thrown up, and you must remain in doors, when you are sighing for fresh air. Have all these little vexations escaped your notice? Remember the happiness of life is closely connected with them!”

“Oh! those are really trifles!” exclaimed Mary, energetically: “I cannot see anything very alarming in staying at home with my hus-

band when he is ill. It must be a heartless person, indeed, who would wish to leave an invalid, and selfishly consult her own inclinations at the expense of the suffering. Anne will be at the Hermitage, and you and Louisa here, and Charlotte close by—I must think very differently, before I could renounce Dr. Drinkwater on the simple plea of gout. I feel assured I shall find my happiness in dedicating my time and energies to soothe his painful moments. You have often yourself, mother, remarked how patiently he bears his terrible spasms.”

“ I think very highly of his character, my love ; I shall like my sons-in-law with equal affection : consult your own heart. Illness often changes the temper.”

“ But it would not change Dr. Drinkwater,” cried Mary, bursting into tears. “ It would never cause *him* to be unkind : we have known him so many years, and yet never once has he given way to temper ; no, that is really doing him injustice. Was he ever out of temper, Louisa ?— Anne, you never saw him cross, did you ?”

My mother could say nothing more : Mary was becoming quite nervous, and surely if her heart was set upon Dr. Drinkwater, it was a pity to withhold the boon. I thought many disagreeable professions required willing minds to struggle against the hardships they presented, and the wife of a regular invalid must enter her vocation

with fearlessness and spirit. My mother, I fancy, saw this matter in the same light, since she brought forward no more alarming remarks.

“ My dear Mary, when Dr. Drinkwater comes to us again, I shall only see him with your eyes ; do not think I wish to give you pain.”

“ When did you ever give us pain, dear mother ?” said Mary, rushing to her arms, and there sobbing hysterically : she was unnerved by her little contest, but soon resumed her smiles under our soothing treatment. “ I am very silly,” she remarked, as she recovered her composure, “ I know this is very silly. Who would have thought I should care so much about Dr. Drinkwater ?”

The “ accepted one,” meanwhile, was restless on his couch. Jenkins made two journeys each day, to allay Mary’s perturbed spirit, and be the medium of communication between the parties. Jenkins divined by his position how things were going on, and his remarks in the servants’ hall grew loquacious. It was evident his old master was going to marry, in which case the Grange would be no place for him ; all was not gold that glittered, and though he could manage his master sometimes, a mistress was another thing. The ladies always peeped and pried into things, and never rested till they had routed out the old servants, and put in their own : he should not wait to be “ *congeed.*”

And so Miss Vansittart was going off as well as Miss Partington! The parish was all alive again—and Miss Louisa, with all her flirtations, on hand still! A whole season at Bath, and yet Miss Vansittart returned to marry her next-door neighbour; and a remarkably gouty person. Fortune of course was the object.

“Let the spice work, let the spice work,” observed Miss Bates, when she learned the new event, “a young woman and a gouty man can never draw together. We shall have rare work at the Grange.”

“More happiness!” exclaimed Captain Bates, “the people are all going mad. I shall not stir out till it is all over. I hate meeting folks all looking as if they were hired to grin through a horse-collar.”

In four days after this momentous offer, Dr. Drinkwater resumed his station in our large lounging-chair, and Mary was now authorized to be his nurse. How her eyes sparkled when she again beheld him, and how endearingly she attended to his little comforts! She was convinced, in her own mind, all happiness upon earth centred in watching Dr. Drinkwater, accommodating the cushion and stool, and hearing him describe his sufferings after their last interview! Affectionate and fond woman! It is not you who decline in gentle attentions—it is not you who fail in performing the duties

you engage in so fondly! Alas! the long trials which harass you, the irritation, the passions of the man you love, press strongly and deeply upon the deceived heart, before you sink into indifference, or are roused into repentance.

Sir James Langham was not idle. The Hermitage was thronged with workmen, and his own agent was superintending the arrangements—everything was hurrying rapidly forward. Mary was to have exerted her taste in its decoration, but times were changed. Mary remained *perdue* with the doctor, whose daily efforts could not reach beyond a slow drive to our house, early after breakfast, and a dead march at night, returning home with Jenkins. Mary never quitted him; her cheek paled a little with the confinement, but she was so happy, and the dear doctor was recovering so fast, nothing could induce her to move. I, therefore, accompanied Miss Partington in her frequent visits to Miss Lovel. Her wardrobe was completed—her wedding-pelisse on the stocks: it was pale green silk, which never became Miss Partington; but very few understand the secret of dress. A rosy lady often wears scarlet, and pale women insist generally upon choosing a green hat. Miss Partington looked ladylike and agreeable in all costumes. I undertook Mary's arrangements, and amused myself in selecting her bridal habiliments, while she sat careless of everything but

Dr. Drinkwater. It was an enigma I never could solve, that she should be so exclusively devoted to a man possessing so few attractions for women. It was one of those freaks by which nature is distinguished, and which sets at nought all speculation upon human actions. Ah, if nature had but extended her frolics towards myself when Mr. Turner Ellis sought my love!

Charles was duly informed of the changes which were about to take place. His regiment was arrived at Portsmouth, and he hoped to obtain leave to visit home in time for the august ceremony which was to bestow Mary on her slow but sure lover. "As the doctor," he observed, "had long put on his considering-cap, and had studied the subject for four years, he must have nicely balanced all matrimonial hopes and fears, and the residue of his life, which might not be destined to be bedridden, would pass happily in the certainty of having done nothing rashly. Miss Partington deserved her brilliant fortune, but what was his sister Louisa about—was she destined to hang on the tree? He feared she would bolt the course at last—better take old Bates, and give up the turf!" Charles must be sarcastic, but none feared him save the weak. He was loved by everybody who knew his real worth, and was valued above price at home.

Emma Brereton was to spend some weeks at Bradford. She would add to the bridal party, and visit among her newly married friends. Whenever Charlotte could spare her, she was to be either at the Grange or the Hermitage—so liked, and so esteemed, every one contended for her company.

Mary had fixed her mind upon being a bride with her friend, provided Dr. Drinkwater had no indications of gout; if he was tolerably free from pain, she would not postpone her marriage; she knew while his mind was agitated, he was liable to sudden attacks, and she would now be wretched if any illness confined him to the Grange, while propriety forbade her nursing him. In short, she could not endure that

“She should dine at Edmonton
While he should dine at Ware.”

But her fears were so real, her affection was so energetic, her manners so irresistibly gentle in her anxiety, we felt only respect and strong interest, unmixed with ridicule, for her situation. Happily, the doctor rallied, and fulfilled Mary's prediction: he appeared to enjoy recruited nerve and vigour from his prospects, and the pleasant vision of a wife to cheer the silent, melancholy Grange, threw back a portion of his youth. Dr. Drinkwater's memory improved by the aroused state of his mind, he was no longer the quiet,

silent, suffering man, who shrunk from notice and avoided society. He was now a bridegroom, his foot was on the threshold of Hymen's temple, and he wrote himself down a man full of hope, holding a position among his fellows. He could now look forward with the anxieties and interest which made Sir James Langham so happy and so full of employment; he had also authority to express his sentiments upon family matters, and offer opinions upon family men: a world of ideas had opened upon the doctor, and he felt he had ascended in the scale of public utility. There were, he assured Mary, a thousand anxieties connected with the idea of matrimony, and a thousand things to be done in preparing for a wife's reception, which he had never contemplated, but which roused and employed his mind. He was pulling down the pigeon-house which stood in the drive, and he had thoughts of enlarging the pond: anything she might advise in the way of alteration should be instantly begun upon. Mary required nothing beyond the alteration which had taken place in himself. There would be plenty of time to effect a redress of grievances when she should become mistress of the Grange and could ascertain her real wants: all was sunshine now.

We all paid a visit in form to the Grange, soon after Mary's acceptance of its occupant. The doctor was ready to receive us with smiles

and courtesy, and did the honours of his anomalous place with real pleasure. It is impossible to describe the pride and pleasure with which he pointed our attention to the improvements which had elicited so much and such general commendation, or the gravity with which his *homme d'affaires*, Jenkins, attended, to give explanations when his master required a prompter. We were taken up into the dining-room, and down into the cell called the sitting-room, which to me wore the appearance of melancholy gloom. I saw, in my mind's eye, Mary doomed to expiate her sins of omission, in many solitary days' imprisonment in this dull chamber, and I could fancy her sweet face growing careworn as she might exclaim, with Sterne's captive starling, "I cannot get out, I cannot get out."

A passage led to one room, an alley conveyed us to a second; we had steps to go up, and steps to go down, and it required a clue to wind through the house and reach the hall again in safety. I do not think the doctor at all understood his own territory, since his reference to Jenkins was momentary.

"Here, Jenkins, what's this place for?"

"That's a storeroom, sir, however."

We went on examining and approving. Another apartment opened to our view just completed with a window looking against a dead wall.

"Here, Jenkins, what room is this?"

“ We have not settled what that room is to be, sir, yet however.”

“ What did you build it for then ?” exclaimed his master.

“ However, sir, we thought it filled up a space that was doing nothing.”

Mary saw it all *couleur de rose*. A sunbeam from her heart gilded the desolate chamber, and enlightened its darksome approach. We passed on : there were closets of all sizes and denominations, some dark, some allowed to receive the sun, but even Jenkins could not ascertain their intention ; “ however,” they were built upon his plan of filling up space, and it was hoped they would turn to account some time or other, but they looked like condemned cells—how Mary could live in such a place !

The fatigue of threading the labyrinth of the Grange was repaid by the good humour of Dr. Drinkwater, and the perfect enjoyment of Mary. To her it was fairy-land, a Utopian scene, from which vision I could only hope she might never wake. We had a splendid collation to recruit our energies, before we attacked the pond, which was gradually widening into a sheet of water, and before we disported in the gardens. Bachelorship had closed the doctor’s eyes to improvements : there were no shrubberies, no bowers, no serpentine walks, or “ delightful places” to gladden the senses, as we toiled towards the

large empty kitchen-garden ; a straight walk, a door through a wall, *et nous voilà*. There was great "capability" about the Grange : it might be made a delectable place if it were all pulled down and the ground cleared ; but as it was, the Grange looked like a manufactory, and its construction internally was Bridewell.

Mary spent a very happy day : she was examining the mansion of a man she loved, and the arrangements assented to by him were holy things in her eyes. She admired the range of dark closets, everything he owned she loved for his sake ; even the disgraced and disgraceful pigeon-house was sacred, and she looked wistfully at its ruins. "How often," she said, "that pigeon-house must have met his eye in his solitary walks and musings !" Men cannot comprehend the intensity of a woman's love, or understand its nature. Like the grasping ivy, her love clings to the object and twines itself round all belonging to that object ; it may be blasted by the storm, or torn from its pedestal by the ragings of passion—one sunny hour renews its vitality. It may trail disregarded and severed from the protecting stem, yet it dies not till the rude hand has uprooted it, and it is cast to wither unheeded and despised. Mary returned home enchanted.

Events now began to crowd fast around us. Sir James Langham had completed all his

affairs, but he could not waste time in giving us notice of his approach. We were talking over dress and the choice of colours, with reference to a purchase of my own, when his voice was heard at the window seconding a tap.

“ Mrs. Vansittart, come and open the door for me yourself.”

My mother rose alertly to obey: she opened the hall-door to her favourite, “ and now, Mrs. Vansittart, where is my wife ?”

“ I am here,” said Miss Partington, advancing, “ but how you frighten the king’s subjects—you are not to come like a thief in the night !”

“ I am here, never mind how or when I come; do you wish me gone again ?”

“ Your hands are quite cold,” replied she, smiling, “ come and enjoy the fire.”

“ I do not stir yet, is this the way you receive a poor chilled wanderer, after his return from troubles and adversity? not one kind word, not one affectionate demonstration ?”

A woman’s heart is metal, which rings at her lover’s stroke. An affectionate embrace closed all complaints on the part of Sir James, and the embrace went round the circle: it was an hour of free and exquisite enjoyment.

“ Ah, doctor, we are fellow-sufferers, I hear. I hope you are not obliged to hear half the snubbing I have sustained ?”

The doctor looked foolish, and then looked

pleased, at this address, which proved his secret had crept abroad: a few moments gave him back his happy and dignified manner, and the gentlemen could congratulate each other with well-bred ease and propriety, on their change for the better.

“Every man wonders,” said Sir James, “how they contrived to live single so long the moment matrimony fairly pops into their head. I was very happy and unconcerned once, yet now I look back with horror to my former hermit wanderings.”

The doctor was almost consequential in his new situation; he leaned lightly on his stick, and held forth with the air of one who has a right to lift up his voice and be heard among men.

“A bachelor’s life, Sir James, is a life of misery: we feel it so always, but the cause is scarcely known to ourselves till we are placed in silken fetters, and driven by a wife. It is delightful to be guided by a creature whose interest is to make us happy and respectable, instead of being at the mercy of what’s-his-names.”

Mary smilingly held up her finger. The doctor blushed. “I have called every one by their right names, Mary, lately; you will soon give me a memory: it will be a pleasure to remember your wishes, I have only tried to forget till now.”

Mary accepted the apology, so complimentary in its nature, with a look of delighted affection.

My mother ordered coffee: Sir James was too happy to feel hungry; he would not hear of the delicacies she would fain tempt him to accept: he would only take coffee with them, and hear all that had happened since his departure. When that was discussed he turned to my mother.

“Mrs. Vansittart, Lady Langham hopes to see her daughter-in-law this day week, and I promised to allow her that pleasure.”

“You are in leading-strings yet, remember,” said my mother, laughingly; “you are not a husband, to command and promise with such magnificence. Say this day fortnight, and I will not disappoint her ladyship.”

“A week is the outside,” replied Sir James sturdily; “the doctor is equally concerned in the affair, and ought to support me.”

The doctor's eyes spoke volumes in a look which he cast upon Mary, but his tongue never stood him in good stead when he most required its assistance. Sir James persevered in pressing his wish, and I must admit my mother kept up our sex's privileges with wonderful resolution and dexterity. She pleaded time, propriety, necessity, and the presence of her son, who could not quit Portsmouth at such immediate summons. Sir James argued every proposition

with urbanity, vivacity, but determination : time had been plentifully allowed ; propriety was a matter of opinion which, once entered upon, might lead to endless dispute ; the necessity was all on his side, for he was engaged to be married, and would not remain another week a wretched outcast, belonging to no one. As to Captain Vansittart, nothing was so uncertain as procuring leave of absence ; therefore to postpone the ceremony for an event so little to be calculated upon, was destroying the doctor and himself by inches : “how could any one be assured tampering with the doctor’s feelings might not bring on a severe paroxysm ? Even Miss Vansittart looked alarmed.”

The baronet pleaded powerfully and anxiously. Miss Partington had stolen away at the commencement of the subject. Mary vanished next, and my mother exhausted her opposition upon the unwearied powers of attack which increased in energy as her efforts decreased in force. At last a compromise was effected by myself, in the shape of a third party. Sir James granted three days, and my mother dispensed with the same number. Thursday in the following week should be the day set apart for resigning for ever the society of her eldest daughter, and one who had been to her as a daughter. This was Tuesday. In nine days she must resolve to bestow her favourites on

comparative strangers, and live dependent upon the kind offices of her heartless one. It was a bitter trial when the blow was struck, and the promise gone forth. "Gentlemen," said my mother, and she stood up in matronly dignity, "I am a widow and cannot resent an injury. I bestow a daughter upon each of you, and I believe I am acting according to the best of my judgment. If you are the men of worth I believe you to be, I pray for your happiness and that of my children, in hope and belief it may reach you on earth. Should you deceive me, I am powerless—but it will be recorded in heaven that you betrayed a trusting parent." My mother's agitation overcame her. Dr. Drinkwater looked bewildered: he had so little to do with female solicitude, he was unprepared for any scene, and my mother's burst of tears disordered and stupified him: he sat in a trance. Sir James Langham became seriously affected, but he was alive to all her feelings, and dissipated her sorrow by his gentle and persuasive manners, as far as a mother's fears could be soothed.

"Be not afraid for my wife, my dearest madam: we may have trials, for such is the fate of all, but Anne shall never know sorrow through me, and her virtues will have a worshipper in her husband, though he may not dare presume to equal them."

The manner, the tone of Sir James Langham, spoke balm to my mother's soul. She smiled as he addressed her with that open and artless air which stamps conviction on the mind of that person's honesty. We give the reins at once to our belief, when simplicity of conduct and manly sentiments assure us all is undisguised and uttered in truth, and we feel there is balm in Gilead. My mother was soothed: she regarded with respect and affection the man who promised to act fairly and kindly towards the creature committed to his care, and her heart swelled with gratified tenderness.

Dr. Drinkwater became aware he should add his fraction to the sum total, and his hesitation betrayed his sincerity and nervousness. He did make an effort, however, though he spoke without the least idea of making himself intelligible. His memory was departed for the evening, yet he spoke. "He was extremely anxious—if Mrs. what's-his-name—he meant Miss what's-his-name—he was sure the Grange and Jenkins—that is to say, he hoped all the what's-his-names—"

In vain. The doctor declined public speaking—it was, in the language of the hustings, "no go," and he became more bewildered than ever. My mother relieved his distress. She expressed strong assurance in the worth of each gentleman, and said kind and affectionate things to

her long-valued excellent neighbour and future son. The scene had been very exciting, too much so for my mother's health. It was expedient to end subjects which agitated so materially herself and Dr. Drinkwater. I am quite sure the scene dwelt long upon the doctor's nerves, and in after-years he declared no malefactor under condemnation ever suffered the agony he endured when he spoke his "maiden speech" to Mrs. Vansittart; it was the *alpha*, and should be the *omega* of his speechifying.

A week appeared barely sufficient to make our last preparations. Charlotte and Brereton with Emma were summoned. Miss Brereton and myself were to be bridesmaids. I belonged to Mary, and Emma was to support Miss Partington. Sir James regretted his old aunts were too useless to be of any service, or they would have dignified the procession. Captain and Miss Bates must be asked from the simple fact of their having always been a party in our affairs, but otherwise it would be private, and very quietly arranged. Charles was to fly the instant leave could be obtained, and it was hoped he would arrive to give Mary away; if not, Captain Bates would take his place. Sir James and his bride were to depart for Bath, where old Lady Langham expected to detain them for some time. Dr. Drinkwater and

Mary were to be governed by circumstances. If all went well, they were to tour it for a week; but should the foul fiend attack the doctor, Mary was quite determined "to go quietly home to the Grange, where he would fall into his usual occupations; what could he do travelling from pillar to post? Perhaps he might get improper food, or indifferent wine, at inns, and be laid up—it was impossible to say what might happen."

Mary was absorbed in the delicious contemplation of being a nurse *de jure* and *de facto*: all her actions had reference to that interesting occupation, and never surely did a young bride contemplate matrimony under such ungenial auspices, with purer feelings of unselfish affection. In vain I laid rich silks and patterns of fashionable materials before her, to select a wardrobe which should astonish the Grange: her fancy was entirely for "quiet, stout, good wear:" she wished *this* article to be made up into a dress for walking quietly with Gideon round the garden, and *that* material would form a warm dress, in case Gideon should be very ill, and require her to sit up all night. She disclaimed all gay attire, for she was going to marry an invalid, and the Grange would be the stage on which she would strut her little hour, and be seen no more. The Grange was, in Mary's opinion, the haven where her little

bark was to float in smooth water, sheltered from the gale, and removed from the billows of the ocean.

Charles arrived almost unexpectedly on the Tuesday evening, and his high spirits were never more welcome: his presence broke in some measure the usual grouping, and threw a gay character over our party. My mother had become pensive with contemplating her bereavement; Miss Partington from her age and principles was unequal to be gay, even under the agreeable attentions of Sir James Langham: Mary was the liveliest of us all, but her whole soul was given to the doctor, and her conversation was directed exclusively to him. She did not reflect with her friend that a morning of sunshine might cloud ere its hours had numbered their close — she did not reflect that marriage entailed many changes “from grave to gay, from lively to severe:” while Miss Partington sat deeply revolving her approaching change of situation, Mary only really feared an attack of gout, which might lay the doctor low while she was yet Miss Vansittart—ere those words should be spoken which would give her the world’s sanction to enter the sanctuary of the Grange, and dedicate herself to the Drinkwater dynasty. Charles was amused beyond measure at all he saw and heard: he found a congenial soul in Sir James Langham,

which at once engaged his attachment, and they were intimates long before the conclusion of the evening. He desired to hear all the particulars of his courtship with Miss Partington :

“ You have fallen upon good ground, Sir James, but what have you done to deserve such a jewel? Have you been wiser than any of us, that you have sought our flower in her own little wilderness, or have you been better than any of us that you are so rewarded ?”

“ True merit,” replied Sir James, as his sparkling eyes attested his gratified feelings in the compliment, “ true merit is only concealed for a time : Anne discovered my virtues, which many common observers had overlooked : her piercing eye detected the value which all the world had underrated, and she is going to hold me up to the world as a thing to be envied, if not desired.”

“ Miss Partington, does this gentleman utter truth ?” asked my brother ; “ I am to be your father and guardian till Thursday, therefore do you really subscribe to what is asserted ?”

“ He persecuted me,” replied Miss Partington, “ and, like many of you, has worn peacock’s feathers, while the daw may lurk beneath : how is a poor woman to detect the cheat ?”

“ This must be looked into,” said Charles with mock solemnity ; “ what though the carriage-and-four awaits you, what though poor

Louissette has got her apparel ready to be a poor bewildered bridemaïd instead of a dashing bride?—I maintain the match shall be annulled: Miss Partington pleads persecution—it is enough: I forbid the banns.”

“Then of course I must return from whence I came,” cried Sir James in a piteous tone, “unless your words are made powerless by a recantation.—Anne,” seizing her hand, “by all that is good you must make the *amende honorable*: confess I am the light of your eyes, or I go instantly to Bath to my poor mother-in-law, and end my days with a Bath miss, such as she deprecates; I will select the boldest face I can find, and she shall adorn the Hermitage and glare in your very sight.”

“No, no,” said Miss Partington, blushing beauteously, “I owe much to Lady Langham; I will not have her feelings wounded by a Bath miss, nor will I allow a bold face to enter the Hermitage: for her sake things must remain as they are.”

“Not a bit of it,” cried Charles; “no one shall suffer an indignity for a third person. What signifies a bold face at the Hermitage? You shall not complain of persecution without redress, and I am ready to meet Sir James wherever he may appoint. I prefer pistols, but I am not particular.”

“This is a very serious matter, Captain Van-

sittart : well then, I retract, since a duel is to be the consequence."

"Don't hurry now, and say what you may repent hereafter : you see me quite cool, and firing at a man is a trifle : I often amuse myself hitting cabbages."

"You have advanced an objection, my fair lady," said Sir James, enjoying her confusion, "which must be refuted broadly, or acted upon at once. So you are a persecuted being, Anne, and I am to vanish or be hit like a cabbage?"

"Don't talk in that way."

"I must be the husband of some manœuvring Bath girl for what you will care, or lie bleeding at your feet so"—Sir James was sinking on the ground in perfect melo-dramatic style, when a box on the ear roused him.

"By that token, cried Miss Partington, you shall know I am a true woman, and will not relinquish one hair's breadth of my prerogative : how dare you talk of sacrificing to other idols?"

Sir James sprang to his feet. "You are safe in this company"—

"I am aware of that," replied she, laughing, and positively looking coquettish.

"But you will be richly punished when *my* day of power arrives. If I don't remember this saucy action, may I be henpecked for life—Oh Anne, Anne, you suffer for this—dread my resentment!"

“He threatens! give him up like a woman of spirit,” said Charles, “renounce him for ever!”

“I will take him for the pure pleasure of plaguing his life out! I will take him out of revenge!”

“Poor luckless silly women, how they champ the bit, and cannot free themselves from fetters! You are devoted; your own words have spoken it, and I am to seal your fate.—Now, Mary,” continued Charles, turning to her as she was enjoying the scene, let me hear what *you* have to say, and let me hear what the doctor has to say, while Langham and your friend are *parlez-vous-ing*. How do you fancy the doctor? Come, Mary, no tricks, answer me truly.”

The doctor sat looking unutterably sheepish. Charles revelled in the scene: his spirits were uncontrollable.

“No evasions, my friends; my situation is one of high responsibility, and I must act as becomes a father. I wish to know your sentiments. My dear doctor, if my sister should box *your* ears, discard her by all means; and Mary, beware of the doctor; he is a long time discussing his own mind, but when he arrives at a conclusion he is a devil of a fellow, as you have perhaps discovered.”

The doctor never was playful, and never presented a joke to any one; he started at my

brother's concealed jibe, and looked extremely silly, though he wished to appear a bridegroom. Mary was alive to his situation and feelings, and playfully commenced a counter-attack:

“My dear Charles, we have thoroughly considered what we are about, and with a thousand thanks for your very brotherly anxiety, we will not draw upon its resources; I pray you to allow me to ask *you* a question in return; how do you stand affected towards Emma Brereton?”

The sudden question brought the blood into Charles's face, and for an instant he hesitated.

“What do you mean?” he asked rapidly.

“Only a droll speech of Mr. Brereton's to my mother at Charlotte's marriage; you know his odd abrupt way of speaking, so fancy him pompously addressing her with the intelligence that he had heard you were attached to Emma, and that he never would give his consent to a double connexion.”

“He be d—d!” cried Charles, hastily.

“My mother assured him such an idea had never entered our heads; our only astonishment was how it crept into his brain.”

Charles made no further remark, but I fancied his spirits less high the remainder of the evening, though he affected to be as disengaged as usual.

“And so you are all going to be made April fools of on Thursday! what a devilish hurry-scurry business you have made of it; why,

when I left St. James's-square, you ladies were both looking as demure as nuns. My artless sister here was the only one who appeared openly bound for matrimony. Where is your consort Lady Anne, and that tight fishing-smack Talleyrand?"

A bitter retort rose to my lips, but I controlled my anger, and a desperate effort hurled it back into my heart. I was silent. By the general silence I concluded Sir James knew more of the matter since his engagement, or he would have taken up the subject as copiously as he dilated upon it at Ryde. Since his return from Bath he had doubtless had warning to avoid the subject of Lady Anne.

"No reply?" continued Charles, looking round maliciously, "what a set of dull creatures. I shall go to Bradford to-morrow and fetch Charlotte myself, to enliven my ideas. I am unhappy about Lady Anne; something is concealed from my affectionate heart. I shall ask Charlotte."

"They will all three be here to-morrow," said my mother, "as they mean to be in attendance on Thursday."

"Who are all three?"

"My dear son, you know Emma is with them."

"How could I tell? You have said so for the first time."

"True, I forgot."

“Nevertheless I shall ride over and escort them. You will all be so wrapped up in settling dress, and quarrelling about your wedding-bonnets, it will be impossible to obtain a moment’s attention from any of you; besides Louisa’s silence respecting Lady Anne tortures my poor heart. Suspense kills me. Suspense terminates with you all next Thursday, for life; after which comedy comes dull reality. Who will take a bet with me some of you don’t repent before this day twelvemonth? Mary, you dare not wager?”

“But I will, Charles; I will wager I am happier a twelvemonth hence than you will be.”

“Done.”

“Your fate is uncertain, Charles, you may meet a thousand disasters; my fate is sealed, and I can have but one misery, that of—”

Mary burst into tears.

“Come, Mary, we will not lay wagers; happiness must not be jested with, and here comes Captain Bates to give us his opinion.”

Captain Bates rapped at the door; poor Mary shrunk closer to Dr. Drinkwater, as if happiness was only embodied in his presence, and her lover looked the million things which were never to be uttered by him. Mary understood his telegraphic communications, and was happy.

Charles was distressed at having disturbed

her feelings, for his was not a temper to give umbrage. A kiss was snatched and a smile exchanged ere Captain Bates entered to bring in person the acceptance of our invitation for Thursday. Captain Bates *solus* was always acceptable ; his daughter was a bore. He was detained for the evening, and when Captain Bates had warmed a little under our coffee and chat, he was excellent company. He had one or two theories which his practice disavowed, but his theory was his hobby, and it always proved a fund of amusement. He positively and strenuously insisted upon the non-existence of content—happiness was a term which implied nothing, for though angels might be happy in Heaven, and fish might be happy in the silence of the waters, the word was useless upon earth. If people said they were happy, they were speaking deliberate falsehoods, or talking of what they could not understand. Content might be a term some people embodied in their own minds, but he denied its existence.

“People may not die miserably, sir,” he said to Charles as he sipped his coffee, “people exist going through the common avocations of eating and drinking, therefore they try to persuade you they are content, but, sir, it’s no such thing. Every man preys upon his fellow, and the rich grind the poor. I don’t believe any mortal is content, sir.”

“If such is your theory, Captain Bates,” said Charles, looking at the brides elect, “what are we all going to be at on Thursday? Some of us think we are going to be devilish happy.”

“Life, sir,” replied Captain Bates in a dolorous tone of voice, “is a tangled yarn”—here a recollection was revived in his mind of by-gone hours, for he suddenly held up his coffee-cup, singing, with excellent voice and taste,

“Life’s a bumper, filled by fate.”

“No one of late years, sir, has sung that melody as I have heard it sung by three who have gone to their last home—things are changed; who ever sung like Braham in his younger days, or composed like Callcot, or led like Cramer?”

Captain Bates had mounted hobby the second, and off he trotted to the days of his early love, when music, heavenly maid, was courted by the old school and in the best taste. He warmed under the exhilarating subject, talked of madrigals, glees, and catches, sung snatches of songs long laid at rest with their composers, and looked, as he always did in our lively family circle, like one roused from some deep and melancholy trance. His spirit was bound in icy chains by his dull unfeeling daughter. She had not a sentiment of woman in her nature; but Captain Bates bore his fate uncomplainingly. He had allowed her education to be

unattended to, while he was immersed in musical society: his evenings devoted to harmony stole pleasantly along many years of his early life, and when the flute of one companion was for ever silenced, and the harp of another was hung in "Tara's hall"—as the jovial voices became mute, and the daughters of music were laid low, Captain Bates returned to his own hearth-stone, and beheld the being he had devoted to seclusion and silence, and on whom he had now to depend for consolation and amusement. Time and loneliness had unfitted Miss Bates for society; how could it be otherwise? and her mind, neglected and uninformed, could not give pleasure, or produce flowers which require a soil of culture and the hand of care to watch over their blossoming. It is often so with parents—some will heedlessly and selfishly neglect the source from which should spring the comforts of their old age, and when the hour of retribution arrives, when they would fain reap that which they have not sown, they are prone to exclaim against the bitterness of fate which gave them children.

Captain Bates quitted London, and retired to H——. His society was very acceptable, and his theories gave a racy novelty to his character: Miss Bates was often endured for her father's sake, but his company was hailed with real joy, when he made a visit unattended by her gloomy

spirit. It was the case this evening. Captain Bates sat among us in high spirits, enjoying the desultory chat of our family circle, and interested in all our plans. We produced our purchases, we confided to him our inmost thoughts upon patterns for chair-covers and curtains—he sung melancholy songs and sprightly roundelays, and lingered long over our supper-tray. He loved the gay sallies of youth, and the jest and joke never met a readier hand to bound back its mirth. As the clock struck eleven, Captain Bates paused in “Here’s a health to all good lasses,” in which he was supported by Mary’s silver tones, and Charles bawling with all his might.

“Sir, what are we singing for, and, good God! what are we laughing at? If man for one hour forgets his woe, the clock instantly strikes, to remind him there is no such thing as content; and if human nature smiles under a sunbeam, a cloud instantly succeeds. Good God, what a life this is!”

“Another song, Captain Bates, one more song. ‘Fly not yet!’” exclaimed Sir James, detaining our neighbour, who most willingly answered the appeal by reseating himself—“One more song, and we will adjourn till we renew our festivities at the Hermitage, where I hope to have all your agreeable faces constantly around me. Give us a song of mirth, and let us chorus each

stanza, as an earnest of our future happy meetings.”

“Let it be of joy,” cried Charles, “and tear away, captain; Drinkwater and myself will roar the chorus, if there is one.”

Captain Bates looked upon each of the party as he replenished his glass with negus. He put me strongly in mind of the glee-man of old, as he stood before us with snowy locks, but scintillations of genius still sparkling in his eyes. He drew himself up to his full height, and putting forth his arm began a melody as touching as it was appropriate:—

Mother, I quit thy pious care, the youthful maiden said;
And I am his—the stranger’s now, till numbered with the
dead.

Oh, he has sworn to cherish me, and smooth my path of life,
And, mother, I must leave thee now to be the stranger’s wife.

’Tis even so—my youth was passed so jocund and so free,
I mourned in spirit to believe I might be torn from thee.
Yet now, my mother, willingly I quit thy matron side:
And turn to him who leads me forth—a trembling tearful
bride.

It may be he will never cheer my path as thou hast done—
It may be he will slight at last the being he has won:
But I am his—the stranger’s now—and I am thine no more;
And I must onwards on my path, as thou hast done before.

It may be he will cherish one who leaves her home of rest
To solace him, the one beloved, and she may yet be blest.
I may not think—emotions rise which I must strive to quell;
Another pang and it is o’er—embrace me, and farewell!

The subject was in itself affecting, and must have done its work unaided by the graces of voice and style; but Captain Bates was in his best mood, and when that was the case, his singing was irresistible. In the present instance Miss Partington gently withdrew before the close of the first verse, tears rushing to her eyes, and the heaving of her bosom betokening her agitation. She disappeared for the night. Mary held out with tolerable fortitude to the very end, but the words "embrace me, and farewell," overpowered her. My mother's lip trembled, and she could not articulate her thanks to the musician who had thus unlocked the feelings of her heart. Her eyes and Mary's encountered. Mary rushed to her arms, and fairly wept aloud—mother and daughter embraced in silent agony, for speech was denied to both. Charles quietly and expressively wrung Captain Bates's hand, and both gentlemen respectfully quitted the room, followed by Sir James Langham. The scene was too sacred to interrupt, or profane by commonplace condolence. It was parent and child exchanging the deep feeling of their souls—it was a communion of holy thoughts and holy affection.

The doctor alone remained. He was bewildered, and sat like one recovering from a dream. His excellent heart felt the whole scene, and would have prompted him to join in its effu-

sions, had he known how to give away with ease and without awkwardness: but the doctor's emotions always fell upon his peccant part, and I saw by his amazed look and by his almost unwittingly rubbing his thumb, that agitation would subside in an attack of gout. I rose and whispered him to follow me; he did so with difficulty, and I gave him safely into the care of Charles, who had taken leave of Sir James and the captain. I heard the doctor tell Charles he had a terrible stiffness in his knees and one shoulder, and he wished Captain Bates had not sung such "what's-his-names," to upset the ladies, and make them weep. He had not been so well for some months as he had been lately, and now that "what's-his-name" had quite unhinged him, and distressed Mary, and broke up the party.—Charles was in fits of suppressed laughter, but he comforted the doctor, and assisted him to put on his great coat.

"My dear fellow, don't flurry yourself, all women cry when they are going from home, but they could not cry as heartily if they were compelled to remain there. Captain Bates sang an excellent song, and when we meet in the church, Thursday morning, you will see Mary's face red and white like any doll's, so don't mind your thumb—take a double dose of soda every ten minutes, doctor."

The doctor smiled, and looked grave, and

smiled again, but he was sorely discomposed, and I hoped all would go smoothly the next forty-eight hours, or Captain Bates would have occasion to rue his powers of harmony. The doctor's new green chariot received him in a very unsatisfactory state of mind and body, though Charles besought him to contemplate coming events and not trouble himself with the past. The doctor could not get over the song which had caused such disasters; he persisted, as he seated himself with a plunge which made the carriage swing, that "what's-his-name had much better have sung 'Rule Britannia,' which every one might have joined in, or 'God save the king,' which was a pleasant lively tune, and everybody knew what it was about."

END OF VOL. I.



