

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

"We hold our greyhound in our hand,
Our falcon on our glove;
But where shall we find leash or band
For dame that loves to rove?"—SCOTT.

A JUNE evening shed a slanting light over the greensward of Hiltonbury Holt, and made the western windows glisten like diamonds, as Honora Charlecote slowly walked homewards to her solitary evening meal, alone, except for the nearly blind old pointer who laid his grizzled muzzle upon her knees, gazing wistfully into her face, as seating herself upon the step of the sun-dial, she fondled his smooth, depressed, black head.

"Poor Ponto!" she said, "we are grown old together. Our young ones are all gone!"

Grown old? Less old in proportion than Ponto—still in full vigour of mind and body, but old in disenchantment, and not without the traces of her forty-seven years. The auburn hair was still in rich masses of curl; only on close inspection were silver threads to be detected; the cheek was paler, the brow worn, and the gravely handsome dress was chosen to suit the representative of the Charlecotes, not with regard to lingering youthfulness. The slow movement, subdued tone, and downcast eye, had an air of habitual dejection and patience, as though disappointment had gone deeper, or solitude were telling more on the spirits, than any past blow had done.

She saw the preparations for her tea going on within

the window, but ere going in doors, she took out and re-read two letters.

The first was in the irregular decided characters, affected by young ladies in the reaction from their grandmothers' pointed illegibilities, and bore a scroll at the top, with the word "Cilly," in old English letters of bright blue.

"LOWNDES SQUARE, June 14th.

"MY DEAR HONOR,—Many thanks for wishing for your will-o'-th'-wisp again, but it is going to dance off in another direction. Rashe and I are bound to the west of Ireland, as soon as Charles's inauguration is over at Castle Blanch; an odd jumble of festivities it is to be, but Lolly is just cockney enough to be determinedly rural, and there's sure to be some fun to be got out of it; besides, I am pacified by having my special darling, Edna Murrell, the lovely school-mistress at Wrapworth, to sing to them. How Mr. Calthorpe will admire her, as long as he thinks she is Italian! It will be hard if I can't get a rise out of some of them! This being the case, I have not a second for coming home; but I send some contributions for the prize-giving, some stunning articles from the Lowther Arcade. The gutta-percha face is for Billy Harrison, *whether in disgrace or not*. He deserves compensation for his many weary hours of Sunday School, and it may suggest a new art for beguiling the time. *Mind* you tell him it is from me, with my love; and bestow the rest on all the chief reprobates. I wish I could see them; but you have no loss, you know how unedifying I am. Kiss Ponto for me, and ask Robin for his commands to Connaught. I know his sulkiness will transpire through Phœbe. Love to that dear little Cinderella, and tell her mamma and Juliana, that if she does not come out this winter, Mrs. Fulmort shall have no peace and Juliana no partners. Please to look in my room for my great nailed boots and hedging-gloves, also for the pig's wool in the left-hand drawer of the cabinet, and send them to me before the end of next week. Owen would give his ears to come with us, but gentlemen would only obstruct Irish chivalry; I am only afraid there is no hope of a faction fight. Mr. Saville called yesterday, so I made him dine here, and sung him into raptures. What a dear old Don he is!

"Your affectionate cousin, CILLY."

The second letter stood thus :

“FARRENCE’S HOTEL, June 14th.

“MY DEAR MISS CHARLECOTE,—I have seen Lawrence on your business, and he will prepare the leases for your signature. He suggests that it might be more satisfactory to wait, in case you should be coming to town, so that you might have a personal meeting with the parties; but this will be for you to determine. I came up from — College on Wednesday, having much enjoyed my visit. Oxford is in many respects a changed place, but as long as our old Head remains to us, I am sure of a gratifying welcome, and I saw many old friends. I exchanged cards with Owen Sandbrook, but only saw him as we met in the street, and a very fine-looking youth he is, a perfect Hercules, and the champion of his college in all feats of strength, likely, too, to stand well in the class list. His costume was not what we should once have considered academical; but his is a daring set, intellectual as well as bodily, and the clever young men of the present day are not what they were in my time. It is gratifying to hear how warmly and affectionately he talks of you. I do not know how far you have undertaken the supplies, but I give you a hint that a warning on that subject might not be inappropriate, unless they have come into some great accession of fortune on their uncle’s death. I ventured to call upon the young lady in Lowndes Square, and was most graciously received, and asked to dinner by the young Mrs. Charteris. It was a most *recherché* dinner in the new Italian fashion, which does not quite approve itself to me. “Regardless of expense,” seems to be the family motto. Your pupil sings better than ever, and knew how to keep her hold of my heart, though I suspected her of patronizing the old parson to pique her more brilliant admirers, whom she possesses in plenty; and no wonder, for she is pretty enough to turn any man’s head; and shows to great advantage beside her cousin, Miss Charteris. I hope you will be able to prevent the cousins from really undertaking the wild plan of travelling alone in Ireland, for the sake, they say, of salmon fishing. I should have thought them not in earnest, but girls are as much altered as boys from the days of my experience, and brothers too; for Mr. Charteris seemed to view the scheme very coolly; but as I told my friend

Lucilla, I hope you will bring her to reason. I hope your hay-crop promises favourably.

"Yours sincerely, W. SAVILLE."

No wonder that these letters made loneliness more lonely!

"Oh, that Horatia!" exclaimed she, almost aloud. "Oh, that Captain Charteris were available! No one else ever had any real power with Lucy! It was an unlucky day when he saw that colonial young lady, and settled down in Vancouver's Island! And yet how I used to wish him away, with the surly independence he was always infusing into Owen. Wanting to take him out there indeed! And yet, and yet—I sometimes doubt whether I did right to set my personal influence over my dear affectionate boy so much in opposition to his uncle—Mr. Charteris was on my side though! And I always took care to have it clearly understood that it was his education alone that I undertook. What can Mr. Saville mean?—The supplies? Owen knows what he has to trust to, but I can talk to him. A daring set?—Yes, everything appears daring to an old-world man like Mr. Saville. I am sure of my Owen; with our happy home Sundays. I know I am his sweet Honey still. And yet"—then hastily turning from that dubious "and yet"—Owen is the only chance for his sister. She does care for him; and he will view this mad scheme in the right light. Shall I meet him at the beginning of the vacation, and see what he can do with Lucy? Mr. Saville thinks I ought to be in London, and I think I might be useful to the Parsons-es. I suppose I must; but it is a heart-ache to be at St. Wulstan's. One is used to it here; and there are the poor people, and the farm, and the garden—yes, and those dear nightingales—and you, poor Ponto! One is used to it here, but St. Wulstan's is a fresh pain, and so is coming back. But, if it be in the way of right, and to save poor Lucy, it must be, and it is what life is made of. It is a 'following of the funeral' of the hopes that sprang up after my spring-time. Is it my chastisement or is it my training? Alas! maybe I took those children more for *myself* than for duty's sake! May it all be for their true good in the end; whatever it may be with me. And now I *will* not dream. It is of no use save to unnerve me. Let me go to my book.

It must be a story to-night. I cannot fix my attention yet."

As she rose, however, her face brightened at the sight of two advancing figures, and she went forward to meet them.

One was a long, loosely limbed youth of two-and-twenty, with broad shoulders, a heavy overhanging brow, dark gray serious eyes, and a mouth scarcely curved, and so fast shut as to disclose hardly any lip. The hair was dark and lank; the air was of ungainly force, that had not yet found its purpose, and, therefore, was not at ease; and, but for the educated cast of countenance, he would have had a peasant look, in the brown, homely undress garb, which to most youths of his age would have been becoming.

With him was a girl, tall, slim and lightly made, though of nicely rounded figure. In height she looked like seventeen, but her dress was more childish than usual at that age; and the contour of her smooth cheeks and short rounded chin, her long neck, her happy blue eyes, fully opened like those of a child; her fair rosy skin and fresh simple air, might almost have belonged to seven years old; and there was all the earnestness, innocence, and careless ease of childhood, in her movements and gestures, as she sprang forward to meet Miss Charlecote, exclaiming, "Robin said I might come."

"And very right of him. You are both come to tea?" she added, in affirmative interrogation, as she shook hands with the young man.

"No, thank you," he answered; "at least I only brought Phoebe, having rescued her from Miss Fennimore's clutches. I must be at dinner. But I will come again for her." And he yawned wearily.

"I will drive her back; you are tired."

"No!" he said. "At least the walk is one of the few tolerable things there is. I'll come as soon as I can escape, Phoebe. Past seven—I must go!"

"Can't you stay? I could find some food for you."

"No, thank you," he still said; "I do not know whether Mervyn will come home, and there must not be too many empty chairs. Good-bye!" and he walked off with long strides, but with stooping shoulders, and an air of dejection almost amounting to discontent.

"Poor Robin!" said Honora; "I wish he could have stayed."

"He would have liked it very much," said Phœbe, casting wistful glances toward him.

"What a pity he did not give notice of his intentions at home!"

"He never will. He particularly dislikes"

"What?" as Phœbe paused and coloured.

"Saying anything to anybody," she answered, with a little smile. "He cannot endure remarks."

"I am a very sober old body for a visit to me to be the occasion of remarks!" said Honor, laughing more merrily than perhaps Robert himself could have done; but Phœbe answered with grave, straightforward sincerity, "Yes, but he did not know if Lucy might not be come home."

Honora sighed, but playfully said, "In which case he would have stayed?"

"No," said the still grave girl, "he would have been still less likely to do so."

"Ah! the remarks would have been more pointed! But he has brought you at any rate, and that is something! How did he achieve it?"

"Miss Fennimore is really quite ready to be kind," said Phœbe, earnestly, with an air of defence, "whenever we have finished all that we have to do."

"And when is that?" asked Honor, smiling.

"Now, for once," answered Phœbe, with a bright arch look. "Yes, I sometimes can; and so does Bertha when she tries; and, indeed, Miss Charlecote, I do like Miss Fennimore; she never is hard upon poor Maria. No governess we ever had made her cry so seldom."

Miss Charlecote only said it was a comfort. To herself she hoped that, for Maria's peace and that of all concerned, her deficiency might become an acknowledged fact. She saw that the sparing Maria's tears was such a boon to Phœbe as to make her forgive all overtaking of herself.

"So you get on better," she said.

"Much better than Robin chooses to believe we do," said Phœbe, smiling; "perhaps it seemed hard at first, but it is comfortable to be made to do everything thoroughly, and to be shown a better best than we had ever thought of. I think it ought to be a help in doing the duty of all one's life in a thorough way."

"All that thou hast to do," said Honor, smiling, "the week-day side of the fourth commandment."

"Yes, that is just the reason why I like it," said Phœbe, with bright gladness in her countenance.

"But is that the motive Miss Fennimore puts before you?" said Honor, a little ironically.

"She does not say so," answered Phœbe. "She says that she never interferes with her pupils' religious tenets. But, indeed, I do not think she teaches us anything wrong, and there is always Robert to ask."

This passed as the two ladies were entering the house and preparing for the evening meal. The table was placed in the bay of the open window, and looked very inviting, the little silver tea-pot steaming beside the two quaint china cups, the small crisp twists of bread, the butter cool in ice-plant leaves, and some fresh fruit blushing in a pretty basket. The Holt was a region of Paradise to Phœbe Fulmort; and glee shone upon her sweet face, though it was very quiet enjoyment, as the summer breeze played softly round her cheeks, and danced with a merry little spiral that had detached itself from her glossy folds of light hair.

"How delicious," she said. "How sweet the honeysuckle is, dear old thing! You say you have known it all your life, and yet it is fresh as ever."

"It is a little like you, Phœbe," said Honor, smiling.

"What, because it is not exactly a pretty flower?"

"Partly; and I could tell you of a few other likenesses, such as your being Robert's woodbine, yet with a sort of clinging freedom. Yes, and for the qualities you share with the willow, ready to give thanks and live on the least that Heaven may give."

"But I don't live on the least that Heaven may give," said Phœbe, in such wonder that Honor smiled at the justice of her simile, without impressing it upon Phœbe, only asking—

"Is the Rhine fixed upon, Phœbe?"

"Yes; they start this day fortnight."

"They—not you?"

"No; there would be no room for me," with a small sigh.

"How can that be? Who is going? Papa, mamma, two sisters?"

"Mervyn," added Phœbe, "the courier and the two maids."

"*Two* maids ! Impossible !"

"It is always uncomfortable if mamma and my sisters have only one between them," said Phœbe, in her tone of perfect acquiescence and conviction ; and as her friend could not restrain a gesture of indignation, she added eagerly—"But, indeed, it is not only for that reason, but Miss Fenimore says I am not formed enough to profit by foreign travel."

"She wants you to finish '*Smith's Wealth of Nations*,' eh ?"

"It might be a pity to go away and lose so much of her teaching," said Phœbe, with her persevering contentment. "I dare say I will go to Germany again, and perhaps I shall never have so much time for learning. But, Miss Charlecote, is Lucilla coming home for the Horticultural Show ?"

"I am afraid not, my dear. I think I shall go to London to see about her, among other things. The Charterises seem to have quite taken possession of her, ever since she went to be her cousin Caroline's bridesmaid, and I must try to put in my claim."

"Ah ! Robin so much wished to have seen her," sighed Phœbe. "He says he cannot settle to anything."

"Without seeing her ?" said Honor, amused, though not without pain.

"Yes," said Phœbe, "he has thought so much about Lucilla."

"And he tells you ?"

"Yes," in a voice expressing of course ; while the frank, clear eyes turned full on Miss Charlecote with such honest seriousness, that she thought Phœbe's charms as a confidante might be this absence of romantic consciousness ; and she knew of old that when Robert wanted her opinion or counsel, he spared his own embarrassment by seeking it through his favorite sister. Miss Charlecote's influence had done as much for Robert, as he had done for Phœbe, and Phœbe had become his medium of communication with her in all matters of near and delicate interest. She was not surprised when the maiden proceeded—"Papa wants Robin to attend to the office while he is away."

"Indeed ! Does Robin like it ?"

"He would not mind it for a time ; but papa wants him, besides, to take to the business in earnest. You know, my

great uncle, Robert Mervyn, left Robert all his fortune, quite in his own hands; and papa says that if he were to put that into the distillery it would do the business great good, and that Robert would be one of the richest men in England in ten years' time."

"But that would be a complete change in his views," exclaimed Honor, unable to conceal her disapproval and consternation.

"Just so," answered Phœbe, "and that is the reason why he wants to see Lucy. She always declared that she could not bear people in business, and we always thought of him as likely to be a clergyman; but, on the other hand, she has become used to London society, and it is only by his joining in the distillery that he could give her what she is accustomed to, and that is the reason he is anxious to see her.

"So Lucy is to decide his fate," said Honora. "I am almost sorry to hear it. Surely, he has never spoken to her."

"He never does speak," said Phœbe, with the calm gravity of simplicity which was like a halo of dignity. "There is no need of speaking. Lucilla knows how he feels as well as she knows that she breathes the air."

And regards it as little, perhaps, thought Honor, sadly. "Poor Robin!" she said. "I suppose he had better get his mind settled; but indeed it is a fearful responsibility for my poor foolish Lucy—" and but for the fear of grieving Phœbe, she would have added, that such a purpose as that of entering Holy Orders ought not to have been made dependant upon the fancy of a girl. Possibly her expression betrayed her sentiments, for Phœbe answered—"There can be no doubt that Lucy will set him at rest. I am certain that she would be shocked at the notion that her tastes were making him doubt whether to be a clergyman."

"I hope so! I trust so!" said Honora, almost mournfully. "It may be very good for her, as I believe it is for every woman of any soundness, to be taught that her follies tell upon man's greater aims and purposes. It may be wholesome for her and a check, but. . . ."

Phœbe wondered that her friend paused and looked so sad.

"Oh! Phœbe," said Honora, after a moment's silence,

speaking fervently, "if you can in any way do so, warn your brother against making an idol! Let nothing come between him and the direct devotion of will and affection to the Higher Service. If he decide on the one or the other, let it be from duty, not with respect to anything else. I do not suppose it is of any use," she added, with the tears in her eyes. "Everyone sets the whole soul upon some one object, not the right, and then comes the shipwreck."

"Dear Robin!" said Phœbe. "He is so good! I am sure he always thinks first of what is right. But I think I see what you mean. If he undertakes the business, it should be, if it be a matter of obedience to papa, not to keep Lucy in the great world. And, indeed, I do not think my father does care much, only he would like the additional capital; and Robert is so much more steady than Mervyn, that he would be more useful. Perhaps it would make him more important at home; no one there has any interest in common with him; and I think that moves him a little; but, after all those do not seem reasons for not giving himself to God's service," she finished, reverently and considerately.

"No, indeed!" cried Miss Charlecote.

"Then you think he ought not to change his mind?"

"You have thought so all along," smiled Honor.

"I did not like it," said Phœbe, "but I did not know if I were right. I did tell him that I really believed Lucy would think the more highly of him, if he settled for himself without reference to her."

"You did! You were a capital little adviser, Phœbe! A woman worthy to be loved at all, had always rather to be set second instead of first:—

'I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honour more.'

That is the true spirit, and I am glad you judged Lucy to be capable of it. Keep your brother up to that, and all may be well!"

"I believe Robert knows it all the time," said Phœbe. "He always is right at the bottom; but his feelings get so much tried that he does not know how to bear it! I hope Lucy will be kind to him if they meet in London, for he has been so much harassed that he wants some comfort from her. If she would only be in earnest!"

"Does he go to London at all events?"

"He has promised to attend to the office in Great Whittington Street, for a month, by way of experiment."

"I'll tell you what, Phœbe," cried Honora, radiantly, "you and I will go too! You shall come with me to Woolstone Lane, and Robin shall be with us every day, and we will try and make this silly Lucy into a rational being."

"Oh! Miss Charlecote, thank you, thank you." The quiet girl's face and neck were all one crimson glow of delight.

"If you can sleep in a little brown cupboard of a room in the very core of the city's heart."

"Delightful! I have so wished to see that house. Owen has told me such things about it. Oh, thank you, Miss Charlecote."

"Have you ever seen anything in London?"

"Never; we hardly ever go with the rest; and if we do we only walk in the square. What a holiday it will be!"

"We will see everything, and do it justice. I'll get an order for the print room at the British Museum. I dare say Robin never saw it either; and what a treat it will be to take you to the Egyptian Gallery!" cried Honora, excited into looking at the expedition in the light of a party of pleasure, as she saw happiness beaming in the young face opposite.

They built up their schemes in the open window, pausing to listen to the nightingales, who having ceased for two hours, apparently for supper, were now in full song, echoing each other in all the woods of Hiltonbury, casting over it a net-work of sweet melody. Honora was inclined to regret leaving them in their glory; but Phœbe, with the world before her, was too honest to profess poetry which she did not feel. Nightingales were all very well in their place, but the first real sight of London was more.

The lamp came in, and Phœbe held out her hands for something to do, and was instantly provided with a child's frock, while Miss Charlecote read to her one of Fouqué's shorter tales. A little romance or poetry was one of the refreshments of the Holt to Phœbe, who, though not exactly imaginative herself, had a keen relish for things more beautiful, and less showy or else matter of fact, than those which flourished at home.

So warm was the evening that the window remained open, until Ponto erected his crest as a footfall came steadily along nearer and nearer. Uplifting one of his pendant lips, he gave a low growl through his blunted teeth, and listened again, but apparently satisfied that the step was familiar, he replaced his head on his crossed paws, and presently Robert Fulmort's head and the upper part of his person, in correct evening costume, were thrust in at the window, the moonlight making his face look very white, as he said, "Come, Phœbe, make haste, it is very late."

"Is it?" cried Phœbe, springing up, "I thought I had only been here an hour."

"Three at least," said Robert, yawning. "Six by my feelings. I could not get away, for Mr. Crabbe stayed to dinner, Mervyn absented himself, and my father went to sleep."

"Robin, only think, Miss Charlecote is so kind as to say she will take me to London!"

"It is very kind, said Robert, warmly, his weary face and voice suddenly relieved.

"I shall be delighted to have a companion," said Honora; "and I reckon upon you, too, Robin, whenever you can spare time from your work. Come in, and let us talk it over."

"Thank you, I can't. The dragon will fall on Phœbe if I keep her out too late. Be quick, Phœbe."

While his sister went to fetch her hat, he put his elbows on the sill, and leaning into the room, said, "Thank you again. It will be a wonderful treat to her, and she has never had one in her life."

"I was in hopes she would have gone to Germany."

"It is perfectly abominable! It is all the other's doing! They know that no one would look at them a second time, if anything so much younger and pleasanter was by! They think her coming out would make them look older. I know it would make them look crosser."

Laughing was the only way to treat this tirade, knowing, as Honora did, that there was but too much truth in it. She said, however, "Yet one could hardly wish Phœbe other than she is. The rosebud keeps its charm longer in the shade."

"I like justice," quoth Robert.

"And," she continued, "I really think that she is much benefited by this formidable governess. Accuracy, and solidity, and clearness of head, are worth cultivating."

"Nasty latitudinarian piece of machinery," said Robert, with his fingers over his mouth, like a sulky child.

"May be so, but you guard Phœbe, and she guards Bertha, and whatever your sense of injustice may be, this surely is a better school for her than gaities as yet."

"It will be a more intolerable shame than ever, if they will not let her go with you."

"Too intolerable to be expected," smiled Honora. "I shall come and beg for her to-morrow, and I do not believe I shall be disappointed."

She spoke with the security of one not in the habit of having her patronage obstructed by relations; and Phœbe coming down with renewed thanks, the brother and sister started on their way home, in the moonlight,—the one plodding on moodily, the other unable to repress her glee, bounding on in a succession of little skips, and pirouetting round to clap her hands and exclaim, "Oh! Robin, is it not delightful?"

"If they will let you go," said he, too desponding for hope.

"Do you think they will not?" said Phœbe, with slower and graver steps. "Do you really think so? But no! It can't lead to coming out, and I know they like me to be happy when it interferes with nobody."

"Great generosity," said Robert, drily.

"Oh, but Robin, you know elder ones come first."

"A truth, we are not likely to forget," said Robert. "I wish my uncle had been sensible of it. That legacy of his stands between Mervyn and me, and will never do me any good!"

"I don't understand," said Phœbe; "Mervyn has always been completely the eldest son."

"Ay," returned Robert, "and with the tastes of an eldest son. His allowance does not suffice for them, and he does not like to see me independent! If my uncle had only been contented to let us share and share alike, then my father would have had no interest in drawing me into the precious gin and brandy manufacture."

"You did not think he meant to make it a matter of obedience," said Phœbe.

"No; he could hardly do that after the way he has brought me up, and what we have been taught all our lives about liberty of the individual, absence of control, and the like jargon."

"Then you are not obliged?"

He made no answer, and they walked on in silence across the silvery lawn, the maythorns shining out like flaked towers of snow in the moonlight, and casting abyss-like shadows, the sky of the most deep and intense blue, and the carols of the nightingales ringing around them. Robert paused when he had passed through the gate leading into the dark path down hill through the wood, and setting his elbows on it, leant over it, and looked back at the still and beautiful scene, in all the white mystery of moonlight, enhanced by the white-blossomed trees, and the soft outlines of slumbering sheep. One of the birds in a bush close to them began prolonging its drawn-in notes in a continuous prelude, then breaking forth into a varied complex warbling, so wondrous that there was no moving till the creature paused.

It seemed to have been a song of peace to Robert, for he gave a long but much softer sigh, and pushed back his hat, saying: "All good things dwell on the Holt side of the boundary."

"A sort of Sunday world," said Phœbe.

"Yes, after this wood one is in another atmosphere."

"Yet you have carried your cares there," poor Robin.

"So one does into Sunday, but to get another light thrown on them. The Holt has been the blessing of my life—of both our lives, Phœbe."

She responded with all her heart. "Yes, it has made everything happier, at home and everywhere else; I never can think why Lucilla is not more fond of it."

"You are mistaken," exclaimed Robert, "she loves no place so well; but you don't consider what claims her relations have upon her. That cousin Horatia to whom she is so much attached, losing both her parents, how could she do otherwise than be with her?"

"Miss Charteris does not seem to be in great trouble now," said Phœbe.

"You do not consider; you have never seen grief, and you do not know how much more a sympathizing friend is needed when the world supposes the sorrow to be over, and ordinary habits to be resumed."

Phœbe was willing to believe him right, though considering that Horatia Charteris lived with her brother and his wife, she did not think she could be as lonely as Miss Charlecote.

"We shall see her in London," she said.

Robert again sighed heavily—"Then it will be over," he said. "Did you say anything there?" he pursued, as they plunged into the dark shadows of the woodland path, more congenial to the subject than the light.

"Yes, I did," said Phœbe.

"And she thought me a weak, unworthy wretch for ever dreaming of swerving from my original path."

"No!" said Phœbe, "not if it were your duty."

"I tell you, Phœbe, it is as much my duty to consult Lucilla's happiness as if any words had passed between us. I have never pledged myself to take Orders, it has been only a wish, not a vocation, and if she has become averse to the prospect of a quiet country life, it would not be treating her fairly not to give her the choice of comparative wealth, though procured by means her family might despise."

"Yes, I knew you would put right and duty first, and I suppose by doing so you make it certain to end rightly, one way or other."

"A very few years and I could realize as much as this Calthorpe, the millionaire, whom they talk of so often at the Charterises."

"It will not be so," said Phœbe; "I know what she will say," and as Robert looked anxiously at her, she continued—

"She will say she never dreamt of your being turned from anything so great by any fancies she has seemed to have. She will say so more strongly, for you know her father was a clergyman, and Miss Charlecote brought her up."

Phœbe's certainty made Robert catch something of her hopes.

"In that case," he said, "matters might be soon settled—this fortune of mine would be no misfortune then, and probably, Phœbe, my sisters would have no objection to your being happy with us."

"As soon as you could get a curacy! Oh! how delightful! and Maria and Bertha would come too."

Robert held his peace, not certain whether Lucilla would

consider Maria an embellishment to his ideal parsonage, but they talked on with cheerful schemes while descending through the wood, unlocking a gate that formed the boundary between the Holt and the Beauchamp property, crossing a field or two, and then coming out into the park. Presently they were in sight of the house, rising darkly before them, with many lights shining in the windows behind the blinds.

"They are all gone up stairs!" said Phœbe, dismayed. "How late it must be!"

"There's a light in the smoking-room," said Robert; "we can get in that way."

"No, no! Mervyn may have some one with him. Come in quietly by the servants' entrance."

No danger that people would not be on foot there! As the brother and sister moved along the long stone passage, fringed with labelled bells, one open door showed two weary maidens still toiling over the plates of the late dinner; and another standing ajar, revealed various men servants regaling themselves, and words and tones caught Robert's ear, making his brow lower with sudden pain.

Phœbe was proceeding to mount the stone stairs, when a rustling and chattering, as of maids coming down, caused her and her brother to stand aside to make way, and down came a pair, heads and candles together, over a green handbox, and then voices in vulgar tones half suppressed. "I couldn't venture it not with Miss Juliana—but Miss Fulmort—she never looks over her bills, nor knows what is in her drawers—I told her it was faded, and she had never worn it once!"

And tittering they passed by the brother and sister still unseen; but Robert heaved a sigh, and murmured 'Miserable work!' somewhat to his sister's surprise, for to her the great ill-regulated household was an unquestioned institution, and she did not expect him to bestow so much compassion on Augusta's discarded bonnet. At the top of the steps, they opened a door, and entered a great wide hall. All was exceedingly still. A gas-light was burning over the fire-place, but the corners were in gloom, and the coats and cloaks looked like human figures in the distance. Phœbe waited while Robert lighted her candle for her. Albeit she was not nervous, she started when a door was sharply pushed open, and another figure appeared; but it was nothing worse than her brother Mervyn, in easy costume, and redolent of tobacco.

About three years older than Robert, he was more neatly though less strongly made, less tall, and with more regular features, but much less countenance. If the younger brother had a worn and dejected aspect, the elder, except in moments of excitement, looked *bored*. It was as if Robert really had the advantage of him in knowing what to be out of spirits about.

"Oh! it's you, is it?" said he, coming forward with a sauntering, scuffling movement in his slippers. "You larking, Phœbe? What next?"

"I have been drinking tea with Miss Charlecote," explained Phœbe.

Mervyn slightly shrugged his shoulders, murmuring something about "Lively pastime."

"I could not fetch her sooner," said Robert, "for my father went to sleep, and no one chose to be at the pains of entertaining Crabbe."

"Ay—a prevision of his staying to dinner made me stay and dine with the ——th mess. Very sagacious—ch, Phœbe," said he, turning, as if he liked to look into her fresh face.

"Too sagacious," said she, smiling, "for you left him all to Robert."

Manner and look expressed that this was a matter of no concern, and he said ungraciously, "Nobody detained Robert, it was his own concern."

"Respect to my father and his guests?" said Robert, with downright gravity, that gave it the effect of a reproach.

Mervyn only raised his shoulders up to his ears in contempt, took up his candle, and wished Phœbe good night.

Poor Mervyn Fulmort! Discontent had been his lifelong comrade. He detested his father's occupation, as galling to family pride, yet was greedy both of the profits and the management. He hated country business and country life, yet chafed at not having the control of his mother's estate, and grumbled at all his father's measures. "What should an old distiller know of landed property?" In fact, he saw the same difference between himself and his father, as did the ungracious Plantagenet between the son of a count and the son of a king; and for want of Provençal troubadours with whom to rebel, he supplied their place by the turf and the billiard table. At present he was expiating some heavy debts by a forced residence with his parents, and unwilling attention to the office, a most distasteful position,

which he never attempted to improve, and which permitted him both the tedium of idleness, and complaints against all the employment to which he was necessitated.

The ill-managed brothers were just nearly enough of an age for rivalry, and had never loved one another, even as children. Robert's steadiness had been made a reproach to Mervyn, and his grave, rather surly character, had never been conciliating. The independence left to the younger brother by their mother's relative, was grudged by the elder as an injury to himself, and it was one of the misfortunes of Beauchamp that the two sons had never been upon happy terms together. Indeed, save that Robert's right principles and silent habits hindered him from readily giving or taking offence, there might have been positive outbreaks of a very unbrotherly nature.

"Half-past five, Miss Phœbe."

"Thank you;" and, before her eyes were open, Phœbe was on the floor.

Six was the regulation hour. Systematic education had discovered that half an hour was the maximum allowable for morning toilette, and at half-past six the young ladies must present themselves in the school-room.

The Bible, Prayer Book, and "Daily Meditations" could have been seldom touched, had not Phœbe, ever since Robert had impressed on her the duty of such constant study, made an arrangement for gaining an extra half-hour. Cold mornings and youthful sleepiness had received a daily defeat; and, mayhap, it was such a course of victory that made her frank eyes so blithesome, and her step so free and light.

That bright scheme, too, shone before her, as such a secret of glad hope, that, knowing how uncertain were her changes of pleasure, she prayed that she might not set her heart on it. It was no trifle to her, and her simple spirit ventured to lay her wishes before her loving Father in Heaven, and entreat that she might not be denied, if it were right for her, and would be better for Robert; or, if not, that she might be good under the disappointment.

Her orisons sent her forth all brightness, with her small head raised like that of a young swan, her fresh lips parted by an incipient smile of hope, and her cheeks in a rosy glow of health, a very Hebe, as Mr. Saville had once called her.

Such a morning face as hers was not always met by Miss Fennimore, who, herself able to exist on five hours' sleep, had no mercy on that of her pupils; and she rewarded Phœbe's smiling good-morrow with "This is better than I expected, you returned home so late."

"Robert could not come for me early," said Phœbe.

"How did you spend the evening?"

"Miss Charlecote read aloud to me. It was a delightful German story."

"Miss Charlecote is a very well informed person, and I am glad the time was not absolutely lost. I hope you observed the condensation of the vapours on your way home."

"Robert was talking to me, and the nightingales were singing."

"It is a pity," said Miss Fennimore, not unkindly, "that you should not cultivate the habit of observation. Women can seldom theorize, but they should always observe facts, as these are the very groundwork of discovery, and such a rare opportunity as a walk at night should not be neglected."

It was no use to plead that this was all very well when there was no brother Robert with his destiny in the scales, so Phœbe made a meek assent, and moved to the piano, suppressing a sigh as Miss Fennimore set off on a domiciliary visit to the other sisters.

Mr. Fulmort liked his establishment to prove his consequence, and to the old family mansion of the Mervyns he had added a whole wing for the educational department. Above, there was a passage, with pretty little bed-rooms, opening from it; below, there were two good-sized rooms, with their own door opening into the garden. The elder ones had long ago deserted it, and so completely shut off was it from the rest of the house, that the governess and her pupils were as secluded as though in a separate dwelling. The schoolroom was no repulsive looking abode; it was furnished almost well enough for a drawing-room; and only the easels, globes, and desks, the crayon studies on the walls, and a formidable time-table, showed its real destination. The window looked out into a square parterre, shut in with tall laurel hedges, and filled with the gayest and sweetest blossoms. It was Mrs. Fulmort's garden for cut flowers; supplying the bouquets that decked her tables, or were carried

to wither at balls; and there were three long, narrow beds, that Phoebe and her younger sisters still called theirs, and loved with the pride of property; but, indeed, the bright carpeting of the whole garden was something especially their own, rejoicing their eyes, and unvalued by the rest of the house. On the like liberal scale were the salaries of the educators. Governesses were judged according to their demands; and the highest bidder was supposed to understand her own claims best. Miss Fennimore was a finishing governess of the highest order, thinking it an insult to be offered a pupil below her teens, or to lose one till nearly beyond them; nor was she far from being the treasure that Mrs. Fulmort pronounced her, in gratitude for the absence of all the explosions produced by the various imperfections of her predecessors.

A highly able woman, and perfectly sincere, she possessed the qualities of a ruler, and had long experience in the art. Her discipline was perfect in machinery, and her instructions admirably complete. No one could look at her keen, sensible, self-possessed countenance, her decided mouth, ever busy hands, and unpretending, but well-chosen style of dress, without seeing that her energy and intelligence were of a high order; and there was principle likewise, though no one ever quite penetrated to the foundation of it. Certainly she was not an irreligious person; she conformed, as she said, to the habits of each family she lived with, and she highly estimated moral perfections. Now and then a degree of scorn, for the narrowness of dogma, would appear in reading history, but in general, she was understood to have opinions which she did not obtrude.

As a teacher, she was excellent; but her own strong conformation prevented her from understanding that young girls were incapable of such tension of intellect as an enthusiastic scholar of forty-two, and that what was sport to her was toil to a mind unaccustomed to constant attention. Change of labor is not rest, unless it be through gratification of the will. Her very best pupil she had killed. Finding a very sharp sword, in a very frail scabbard, she had whetted the one, and worn down the other, by every stimulus in her power, till a jury of physicians might have found her guilty of manslaughter; but perfectly unconscious of her own agency in causing the atrophy, her dear Anna Webster lived

foremost in her affections, the model for every subsequent pupil. She seldom remained more than two years in a family. Sometimes the young brains were over-excited; more often they fell into a dreary state of drilled diligence; but she was too much absorbed in the studies to look close into the human beings, and marvelled when the fathers and mothers were blind enough to part with her on the plea of health and need of change.

On the whole, she had never liked any of her charges since the renowned Anna Webster so well as Phœbe Fulmort; although her abilities did not rise above the "very fair," and she was apt to be bewildered in metaphysics and political economy; but then she had none of the eccentricities of will and temper of Miss Fennimore's clever girls, nor was she like most good-humored ones, recklessly *insouciant*e. Her only drawback, in the governess's eyes, was that she never seemed desirous of going beyond what was daily required of her—each study was a duty, and not a subject of zeal.

Presently Miss Fennimore came back, followed by the two sisters, neither of them in the best of tempers. Maria, a stout, clumsily made girl of fifteen, had the same complexion and open eyes as Phœbe, but her colouring was muddled, the gaze full-orbed and vacant, and the lips, always pouting, were just now swelled with the vexation that filled her prominent eyelids with tears. Bertha, two years younger, looked as if nature had designed her for a boy, and the change into a girl was not yet decided. She, too, was very like Maria; but Maria's open nostrils were in her a droll *retroussé*, puggish little nose; her chin had a boyish squareness and decision, her round cheeks had two comical dimples, her eyes were either stretched in defiance or narrowed up with fun; her skin, face, hands, and all, were uniformly pinky; her hair in such obstinate yellow curls, that it was to be hoped, for her sake, that the fashion of being *crépé* might continue. The brow lowered in petulance; and, as she kissed Phœbe, she muttered in her ear a vituperation of the governess in schoolroom *patois*; then began tossing the lesson-books in the air and catching them again, as a preliminary to finding the places, thus drawing on herself a reproof in German. French and German were alternately spoken in lesson hours by Phœbe and Bertha,

who had lived with foreign servants from infancy; but poor Maria had not the faculty of keeping the tongues distinct, and corrections only terrified her into confusion worse confounded, until Miss Fennimore had in despair decided that English was the best alternative.

Phœbe practised vigorously. Aware that nothing pleasant was passing, and that, be it what it might, she could do no good, she was glad to stop her ears with her music, until eight o'clock brought a pause in the shape of breakfast. Formerly the schoolroom party had joined the family meal, but since the two elder girls had been out, and Mervyn's friends had been often in the house, it had been decided that the home circle was too numerous; and what had once been the play-room was allotted to be the eating-room of the younger ones, without passing the red door, on the other side of which lay the world.

Breakfast was announced by the schoolroom maid, and Miss Fennimore rose. No sooner was her back turned, than Bertha indulged in a tremendous writhing yawn, wriggling in her chair, and clenching both fat fists, as she threatened with each, at her governess's retreating figure, so ludicrously, that Phœbe smiled while she shook her head, and an explosive giggle came from Maria, causing the lady to turn and behold Miss Bertha demure as ever, and a look of disconsolate weariness fast settling down on each of the two young faces. The unbroken routine pressed heavily at those fit moments for family greetings and for relaxation, and even Phœbe would gladly have been spared the German account of the Holt and of Miss Charlecote's book, for which she was called upon. Bertha meanwhile, to whom waggishness was existence, was carrying on a silent drama on her plate, her roll being a quarry, and her knife the workmen attacking it. Now she undermined, now acted an explosion, with uplifted eyebrows and an indicated "puff!" with her lips, with constant dumb-show directed to Maria, who, without half understanding, was in a constant suppressed titter, sometimes concealed by her pocket handkerchief.

Quick as Miss Fennimore was, and often as she frowned on Maria's outbreaks, she never could detect their provocative. Over-restraint and want of sympathy were direct instruction in unscrupulous slyness of amusement. A sentence of displeasure on Maria's ill-mannered folly was in

the act of again filling her eyes with tears, when there was a knock at the door, and all the faces beamed with glad expectation.

It was Robert. This was the time of day when he knew Miss Fennimore could best tolerate him, and he seldom failed to make his appearance on his way down stairs, the only one of the privileged race who was a wonted object on this side the baize door. Phœbe thought he looked more cheerful, and indeed gravity could hardly have withstood Bertha's face, as she gave a mischievous tweak to his hair behind, under colour of putting her arm round his neck.

"Well, Curlylocks, how much mischief did you do, yesterday?"

"I'd no spirits for mischief," she answered, with mock pitifulness, twinkling up her eyes, and rubbing them with her knuckles as if she were crying. "You barbarous wretch, taking Phœbe to feast on strawberries and cream with Miss Charlecote, and leaving poor me to poke in that stupid drawing-room with nothing to do but to count the scollops of mamma's flounce!"

"It is your turn. Will Miss Fennimore kindly let you have a walk with me this evening?"

"And me," said Maria.

"You, of course. May I come for them at five o'clock?"

"I can hardly tell what to say about Maria. I do not like to disappoint her, but she knows that nothing displeases me so much as that ill-mannered habit of giggling," said Miss Fennimore, not without concern. Merciful as to Maria's attainments, she was strict as to her manners, and was striving to teach her self-restraint enough to be unobtrusive.

Poor Maria's eyes were glassy with tears, her chest heaved with sobs, and she broke out, "O pray, Miss Fennimore, O pray!" while all the others interceded for her; and Bertha, well knowing that it was all her fault, avoided the humiliation of a confession, by the apparent generosity of exclaiming, "Take us both to-morrow instead, Robin."

Robert's journey was, however, fixed for that day, and on this plea, license was given for the walk. Phœbe smiled congratulation, but Maria was slow in cheering up, and when, on returning to the schoolroom, the three sisters were

left alone together for a few moments, she pressed up to Phœbe's side, and said, "Phœbe, I've not said my prayers. Do you think anything will happen to me?"

Her awfully mysterious tone set Bertha laughing. "Yes, Maria, all the cows in the park will run at you," she was beginning, when the grave rebuke of Phœbe's eyes cut her short.

"How was it, dear?" asked Phœbe, tenderly fondling her sister.

"I was so sleepy, and Bertha would blow soap bubbles in her hands while we were washing, and then Miss Fennimore came, and I've been naughty now, and I know I shall go on, and then Robin won't take me."

"I will ask Miss Fennimore to let you go to your room, dearest," said Phœbe. "You must not play again in dressing time, for there is nothing so sad as to miss our prayers. You are a good girl to care so much. Had you time for your's Bertha?"

"Oh, plenty!" with a toss of her curly head. "I don't take ages about things, like Maria."

"Prayers cannot be hurried," said Phœbe, looking distressed, and she was about to remind Bertha to whom she spoke in prayer, when the child cut her short by the explanation, "Nonsense, Maria, about being naughty. You know I always make you laugh when I please, and that has more to do with it than saying your prayers, I fancy."

"Perhaps," said Phœbe, very sadly, "if you had said your's more in earnest, my poor Bertha, you would either not have made Maria laugh, or would not have left her to bear all the blame."

"Why do you call me poor?" exclaimed Bertha, stretching out her foot, with a half-offended, half-diverted look.

"Because I wish so much that you knew better, or that I could help you better," said Phœbe, gently.

There Miss Fennimore entered, displeased at the English sounds, and at finding them all, as she thought, loitering. Phœbe explained Maria's omission, and Miss Fennimore allowed her five minutes in her own room, saying that this must not become a precedent, though she did not wish to oppress her conscience.

Bertha's eyes glittered with a certain triumph, as she

saw that Miss Fennimore was of her mind, and anticipated no consequences from the neglect, but only made the concession as to a superstition. Without disbelief, the child trained only to reason, and quick to detect fallacy, was blind to all that was not material. And how was the spiritual to be brought before her?

Phœbe might well sigh as she sat down to her abstract of Schlegel's Lectures. "If any one would but teach them," she thought; "but there is no time at all, and I myself do not know half so much of those things as one of Miss Charle-cote's lowest classes."

Phœbe was a little mistaken. An earnest mind taught how to learn, with access to the Bible and Prayer Book, could gain more from these fountain heads than any external teaching could impart; and she could carry her difficulties to Robert. Still it was out of her power to assist her sisters. Surveillance and driving absolutely left no space free from Miss Fennimore's requirements; and all that there was to train those young ones in faith, was the manner in which it lived and worked in her. Nor of this effect could she be conscious.

As to dreams or repinings, or even listening to her hopes and fears for her project of pleasure, they were excluded by the concentrated attention that Miss Fennimore's system enforced. Time and capacity were so much on the stretch, that the habit of doing *what* she was doing, and nothing else, had become second nature to the docile and duteous girl; and she had become little sensible to interruptions, so she went on with her German, her Greek, and her algebra, scarcely hearing the repetitions of the lessons, or the counting as Miss Fennimore presided over Maria's practice, a bit of drudgery detested by the governess, but necessarily persevered in, for Maria loved music, and had just voice and ear sufficient to render this single accomplishment not hopeless, but a certain want of power of sustained effort made her always break down at the moment she seemed to be doing best. Former governesses had lost patience, but Miss Fennimore had early given up the case, and never scolded her for her failures; she made her attempt less, and she was improving more, and shedding fewer tears than under any former dynasty. Even a stern dominion is better for the subjects than an uncertain and weak one; regularity gives a

sense of reliance, and constant occupation leaves so little time for being naughty, that Bertha herself was getting into training, and on the present day her lessons were exemplary; always with a view to the promised walk with her brother, one of the greatest pleasures ever enjoyed by the denizens of the west wing.

Phœbe's pleasure was less certain, and less dependent on her merits, yet it invigorated her efforts to do all she had to do with all her might, even into the statement of the pros and cons of customs and free trade, which she was required to produce as her morning's exercise. In the midst, her ear detected the sound of wheels, and her heart throbbed in the conviction that it was Miss Charlecote's pony carriage; nay, she found her pen had indited "Robin would be so glad," instead of "revenue to the government," and while scratching the words out beyond all legibility, she blamed herself for betraying such want of self-command.

No summons came, no tidings, the wheels went away; her heart sank, and her spirit revolted against an unfeeling, unutterably wearisome captivity, but it was only a moment's fluttering against the bars, the tears were driven back with the thought, "After all the decision is guided from Above. If I stay at home, it *must* be best for me. Let me try to be good!" and she forced her mind back to her exports and customs. It was such discipline as few girls could have exercised, but the conscientious effort was no small assistance in being resigned; and in the precious minutes granted in which to prepare herself for dinner, she found it the less hard task to part with her anticipations of delight and brace herself to quiet contented duty.

The meal was beginning, when, with a very wide expansion of the door, appeared a short, consequential looking personage, of such plump, rounded proportions, that she seemed ready to burst out of her riding habit, and of a broad complacent visage, somewhat overblooming. It was Miss Fulmort, the eldest of the family, a young lady just past thirty, a very awful distance from the school-room party, to whom she nodded with good-natured condescension, saying: "Ah! I thought I should find you at dinner. I'm come for something to sustain nature. The riding party are determined to have me with them, and they won't wait for luncheon. Thank you, yes, a piece of mutton, if there were

any under side. How it reminds me of old times. I used so to look forward to never seeing a loin of mutton again."

"As your chief ambition?" said Miss Fennimore, who, governess as she was, could not help being a little satirical, especially when Bertha's eyes twinkled responsively.

"One does get so tired of mutton and rice pudding," answered the less observant Miss Fulmort, who was but dimly conscious of any one's existence save her own, and could not have credited a governess' laughing at her; "but really this is not so bad after all for a change; and some pale ale. You don't mean that you exist without pale ale?"

"We all drink water by preference," said Miss Fennimore.

"Indeed! Miss Watson, our governess, never drank anything but claret, and she always had little *pâtés*, or fish, or something, because she said her appetite was to be consulted, she was so delicate. She was very thin, I know, and what a figure you have, Phœbe! I suppose that is water drinking. Bridger did say it would reduce me to leave off pale ale, but I can't get on without it, I get so horridly low. Don't you think that's a sign, Miss Fennimore?"

"I beg your pardon, a sign of what?"

"That one can't go on without it. Miss Charlecote said she thought it was all constitution whether one is stout or not, and that nothing made much difference, when I asked her about German wines."

"Oh! Augusta, has Miss Charlecote been here this morning?" exclaimed Phœbe.

"Yes; she came at twelve o'clock, and there was I actually pinned down to entertain her, for mamma was not come down. So I asked her about those light foreign wines, and whether they do really make one thinner; you know one always has them at her house."

"Did mamma see her?" asked poor Phœbe, anxiously.

"Oh yes, she was bent upon it. It was something about you. Oh! she wants to take you to stay with her in that horrid hole of hers in the City; very odd of her. What do you advise me to do, Miss Fennimore; do you think those foreign wines would bring me down a little, or that they would make me low and sinking?"

"Really, I have no experience on the subject!" said Miss Fennimore, loftily.

"What did mamma say?" was poor Phœbe's almost breathless question.

"Oh! it makes no difference to mamma," (Phœbe's heart bounded,) but Augusta went on; "she always has her soda water, you know, but of course I should take a hamper from Bass. I hate being unprovided."

"But about my going to London," humbly murmured Phœbe.

"What *did* she say?" considered the elder sister aloud. "I don't know, I'm sure. I was not attending—the heat does make one so sleepy—but I know we all wondered she should want you at your age. You know some people take a spoonful of vinegar to fine themselves down, and some of those wines *are* very acid," she continued, pressing on with her great subject of consultation.

"If it be an object with you, Miss Fulmort, I should recommend the vinegar," said Miss Fennimore. "There is nothing like doing a thing outright!"

"And, oh! how glorious it would be to see her taking it!" whispered Bertha into Phœbe's ear, unheard by Augusta, who, in her satisfied stolidity, was declaring, "No, I could not undertake that. I am the worst person in the world for taking anything disagreeable."

And having completed her meal, which she had contrived to make out of the heart of the joint, leaving the others little but fat, she walked off to her ride, believing that she had done a gracious and condescending action in making conversation with her inferiors of the west wing.

Yet Augusta Fulmort might have been good for something, if her mind and her affections had not laid fallow ever since she escaped from a series of governesses who taught her self-indulgence by example.

"I wonder what mamma said!" exclaimed Phœbe, in her strong craving for sympathy in her suspense.

"I am sorry the subject has been brought forward, if it is to unsettle you, Phœbe," said Miss Fennimore, not unkindly. "I regret your being twice disappointed; but, if your mother should refer it to me, as I make no doubt she will, I should say that it would be a great pity to break up our course of studies."

"It would only be for a little while," sighed Phœbe, "and Miss Charlecote is to show me all the museums. I

should see more with her than ever I shall when I am come out; and I should be with Robert."

"I intended asking permission to take you through a systematic course of lectures and specimens when the family are next in town," said Miss Fennimore. "Ordinary, desultory sight-seeing leaves few impressions; and though Miss Charlecote is a superior person, her mind is not of a sufficiently scientific turn to make her fully able to direct you. I shall trust to your good sense, Phœbe, for again submitting to defer the pleasure till it can be enhanced."

Good sense had a task imposed on it for which it was quite inadequate; but there was something else in Phœbe which could do the work better than her unconvinced reason. Even had she been sure of the expediency of being condemned to the schoolroom, no good sense would have brought that resolute smile, or drive back the dew in her eyes, or enabled her voice to say, with such sweet meekness, "Very well, Miss Fennimore; I dare say it may be right."

Miss Fennimore was far more concerned than if the submission had been grudging. She debated with herself whether she should consider her resolution irrevocable.

Ten minutes were allowed after dinner in the parterre, and these could only be spent under the laurel hedge; the sun was far too hot everywhere else. Phœbe had here no lack of sympathy, but had to restrain Bertha, who, with angry gestures, was pronouncing the governess a horrid cross-patch, and declaring that no girls ever were used as they were; while Maria observed that if Phœbe went to London, she must go too.

"We shall all go some day," said Phœbe cheerfully, "and we shall enjoy it all the more if we are good now. Never mind, Bertha, we shall have some nice walks."

"Yes, all bothered with botany," murmured Bertha.

"I thought, at least, you would be glad of me," said Phœbe, smiling; "you who stay at home."

"To be sure, I am," said Bertha; "but it is such a shame! I shall tell Robin, and he'll say so too. I shall tell him you nearly cried!"

"Don't vex Robin," said Phœbe. "When you go out you should set yourself to tell him pleasant things."

"So I'm to tell him you wouldn't go on any account. You like your political economy much too well!"

"Suppose you say nothing about it," said Phœbe. "Make yourself merry with him. That's what you've got to do. He takes you out to entertain you, not to worry about grievances."

"Do you never talk about grievances?" asked Bertha, twinkling up her eyes.

Phœbe hesitated. "Not my own," she said, "because I have not got any."

"Has Robert, then?" asked Bertha.

"Nobody has grievances who is out of the schoolroom," opined Maria; and as she uttered this profound sentiment the tinkle of Miss Fennimore's little bell warned the sisters to return to the studies which in the heat of summer were pursued in the afternoon, that the walk might be taken in the cool of the evening. Reading aloud, drawing, and sensible plain needlework, were the avocations till it was time to learn the morrow's lessons. Phœbe being beyond this latter work, drew on, and in the intervals of helping Maria with her geography, had time to prepare a bright face, to make Robert think lightly of her disappointment, and not reckon it as another act of tyranny.

"When he opened the door, however, there was that in his looks which made her spirits leap up like an elastic spring, and his "Well, Phœbe!" was almost triumphant.

"Is it . . . am I . . ." was all she could say.

"Has no one thought it worth while to tell you?"

"Don't you know," interposed Bertha, "you on the other side the red baize door might be all married, or dead and buried, for aught we should hear. But is Phœbe to go?"

"I believe so."

"Are you sure?" asked Phœbe, afraid yet to hope.

"Yes. My father heard the invitation, and said that you were a good girl, and deserved a holiday."

Commendation from that quarter was so rare, that excess of gladness made Phœbe cast down her eyes and colour intensely, a little oppressed by the victory over her governess. But Miss Fennimore spoke warmly: "He cannot think her more deserving than I do. I am rejoiced not to have been consulted, for I could hardly have borne to inflict such a mortification on her, though these interruptions are contrary to my views. As it is, Phœbe, my dear, I wish you joy."

"Thank you," Phœbe managed to say, while the happy

tears fairly started. In that chilly land, the least approach to tenderness was like the gleam in which the hardy woodbine leaflets unfold to sun themselves.

Thankful for small mercies, thought Robert, looking at her with fond pity; but at least the dear child will have one fortnight of a more genial atmosphere, and soon, may be, I shall transplant her to be Lucilla's darling as mine, free from task-work, and doing the labours of love for which she is made!

He was quite in spirits, and able to reply in kind to the freaks and jokes of his little sister, as she started, spinning round him like a humming-top, and singing—

“Will you go to the wood, Robin a Bobbin?”

giving safe vent to an ebullition of spirits that must last her a good while, poor little maiden.

Phœbe took a sober walk with Miss Fennimore, receiving advice on methodically journalizing what she might see, and on the scheme of employments which might prevent her visit from being waste of time. The others would have resented the interference with the holiday, but Phœbe, though a little sorry to find that tasks were not to be off her mind, was too grateful for Miss Fennimore's cordial consent, to entertain any thought except of obedience to the best of her power.

Miss Fennimore was politely summoned to Mrs. Fulmort's dressing-room for the official communication; but this day was no exception to the general custom, that the red baize door was not passed by the young ladies until their evening appearance in the drawing-room. Then the trio descended, all alike in white muslin, made high, and green sashes—a dress carefully distinguishing Phœbe as not introduced, but very becoming to her, with the simple folds and little net ruche, suiting admirably the tall rounded slenderness of her shape, her long neck and short childish contour of face, where now smiled a joy of anticipation almost inappreciable to those who know not what it is to spend day after day with nothing particular to look forward to.

Very grand was the drawing-room, all amber-coloured with satin-wood, satin and gold, and with everything useless and costly encumbering tables that looked as if nothing could

ever be done upon them. Such a room inspired a sense of being in company, and it was no wonder that Mrs. Fulmort and her two elder daughters swept in, in as decidedly procession style as if they had formed part of a train of twenty.

The star that bestowed three female sovereigns to Europe seemed to have had the like influence on Hiltonbury parish, since both its squires were heiresses. Miss Mervyn would have been a happier woman had she married a plain country gentleman like those of her own stock, instead of giving a county position to a man of lower origin and enormous monied wealth. To live up to the claims of that wealth had been her business ever since, and health and enjoyment had been so completely sacrificed to it, that for many years past the greater part of her time was spent in resting and making herself up for her appearance in the evening, or to conduct her elder daughters to their gaieties. Faded and tallowy in complexion, so as to be almost ghastly in her blue brocade and heavy gold ornaments, she reclined languidly on a large easy chair, saying, with half-closed eyes—

"Well, Phœbe, Miss Fennimore has told you of Miss Charlecote's invitation."

"Yes, mamma. I am very, *very* much obliged!"

"You know you are not to fancy yourself come out," said Juliana, the second sister, who had a good tall figure, and features and complexion not far from beauty, but marred by a certain shrewish tone and air.

"Oh no," answered Phœbe; "but with Miss Charlecote that will make no difference."

"Probably not," said Juliana, "for of course you will see nobody but a set of old maids, and clergymen and their wives."

"She need not go far for old maids," whispered Bertha to Maria.

"Pray, in which class do you reckon the Sandbrooks?" said Phœbe, smiling, "for she chiefly goes to meet them!"

"She may go!" said Juliana, scornfully, "but Lucilla Sandbrook is far past attending to her!"

"I wonder whether the Charterises will take any notice of Phœbe?" exclaimed Augusta.

"My dear," said Mrs. Fulmort, waking slowly to another idea, "I will tell Boodle to talk to—what's your maid's name—about your dresses."

"Oh, mamma," interposed Juliana, "it will be only poking about the exhibitions with Miss Charlecote. You may have that plaid silk of mine, that I was going to have worn out in Germany, half price for her."

Bertha fairly made a little stamp at Juliana, and clenched her fist.

If Phœbe dreaded anything in the way of dress it was Juliana's half price.

"My dear, your papa would not like her not to be well fitted out," said her mother, "and Honora Charlecote always has such handsome things. I wish Boodle could put mine on like hers."

"Oh, very well!" said Juliana, rather offended. "Only it should be understood what is to be done if the Charterises ask her to any of their parties. There will be such mistakes and confusion if she meets any one we know, and you particularly objected to having her brought forward."

Phœbe's eye was a little startled, and Bertha set her front teeth together on edge, and looked viciously at Juliana.

"My dear, Honora Charlecote never goes out," said Mrs. Fulmort.

"If she should, you understand, Phœbe," said Juliana.

Coffee came in at the moment, and Augusta criticised the strength of it, which made a diversion, during which Bertha slipped out of the room, with a face replete with mischievous exultation.

"Are not you going to play to-night, my dears?" asked Mrs. Fulmort. "What was that duet I heard you practising?"

"Come, Juliana," said the elder sister, "I meant to go over it again, I am not satisfied with my part."

"I have to write a note," said Juliana, moving off to another table; whereupon Phœbe ventured to propose herself as a substitute, and was accepted.

Maria sat entranced with her mouth open, and presently Mrs. Fulmort looked up from a kind of daze to ask who was playing. For some moments she had no answer; Maria was too much awed for speech in the drawing-room, and though Bertha had come back, she had her back to her mother, and did not hear. Mrs. Fulmort exerted herself to sit up and turn her head.

"Was that Phœbe?" she said. "You have a clear

good touch, my dear, as they used to say I had, when I was at school at Bath. Play another of your pieces, my dear."

"I am ready now, Augusta," said Juliana, advancing.

Little girls were not allowed at the piano when officers might be coming in from the dining-room, so Maria's face became vacant again, for Juliana's music awoke no echoes within her.

Phœbe beckoned her to a remote ottoman, a receptacle for the newspapers of the week, and kept her turning over the *Illustrated News*, an unfailing resource with her, but powerless to occupy Bertha after the first Saturday; and Bertha turning a deaf year to the assurance that there was something very entertaining about a tiger hunt, stood, solely occupied by eyeing Juliana.

Was she studying "come out" life, as she watched her sisters surrounded by the gentlemen who presently herded round the piano?

It was nearly the moment when the young ones were bound to withdraw, when Mervyn, coming hastily up to their ottoman, had almost stumbled over Maria's foot.

"Beg pardon. Oh, it was only you! What a cow it is!" said he, tossing over the papers.

"What are you looking for, Mervyn?" asked Phœbe.

"An advertisement—*Bell's Life* for the 3rd. That rascal, Mears, must have taken it."

She found it for him, and likewise the advertisement, which he, missing once, had given up in despair.

"I say," he observed, while she was searching, "so you are to chip the shell."

"I'm only going to London, I'm not coming out."

"Gammon!" he said, with an odd wink. "You need never go in again, like the what's his name in the fairy tale, or you are a sillier child than I take you for. They"—nodding at the piano—"are getting a terrible pair of old cats, and we want something young and pretty about."

With this unusual compliment, Phœbe, seeing the way clear to the door, rose to depart, most reluctantly followed by Bertha, and more willingly by Maria, who began the moment they were in the hall—

"Phœbe, why do they get a couple of terrible old cats? I don't like them; I shall be afraid."

"Mervyn didn't mean. . . ." began perplexed Phœbe, cut short by Bertha's boisterous laughter. "Oh, Maria, what a goose you are! You'll be the death of me some day! Why, Juliana and Augusta are the cats themselves. Oh, dear! I wanted to kiss Mervyn for saying so. Oh! wasn't it fun; and now, Maria—oh! if I could have stayed a moment longer."

"Bertha, Bertha, not such a noise in the hall. Come Maria, mind you must not tell anybody. Bertha, come," expostulated Phœbe, trying to drag her sister to the red baize door; but Bertha stood, bending nearly double, exaggerating the helplessness of her paroxysms of laughter.

"Well, at least the cat will have something to scratch her," she gasped out. "Oh, I did so want to stay and see!"

"Have you been playing any tricks?" exclaimed Phœbe, with consternation, as Bertha's deportment recurred to her.

"Tricks?—I couldn't help it. Oh, listen, Phœbe!" cried Bertha, with her wicked look of triumph. "I brought home such a lovely sting-nettle for Miss Fennimore's peacock caterpillar; and when I heard how kind dear Juliana was to you, about your visit to London, I thought she really must have it for a reward; so I ran away, and slyly tucked it into her bouquet, and I did so hope she would take it up to fiddle with when the gentlemen talk to her," said the elf, with an irresistibly comic imitation of Juliana's manner towards gentlemen.

"Bertha, this is beyond. . . ." began Phœbe.

"Didn't you sting your fingers?" asked Marie.

Bertha stuck out her fat pink paws, embellished with sundry white lumps. "All pleasure," said she, "thinking of the jump Juliana will give, and how nicely it serves her."

Phœbe was already on her way back to the drawing-rooms, Bertha sprang after, but in vain. Never would she have risked the success of her trick, could she have guessed that Phœbe would have the temerity to return to the company!

Phœbe glided in without waiting for the sense of awkwardness, though she knew she should have to cross the whole room, and she durst not ask any one to bring the dan-

gerous bouquet to her—not even Robert—he must not be stung in her service.

She met her mother's astonished eye as she threaded her way; she wound round a group of gentlemen, and spied the article of which she was in quest, where Juliana had laid it down with her gloves on going to the piano. Actually she had it! She had seized it unperceived! Good little thief, it was a most innocent robbery; she crept away with a sense of guilt and desire to elude observation, positively starting when she encountered her father's portly figure in the anteroom. He stopped her with "Going to bed, eh? So Miss Charlecote has taken a fancy to you, has she? It does you credit. What shall you want for the journey?"

"Boodle is going to see," began Phœbe, but he interrupted.

"Will fifty do? I will have my daughters well turned out. All to be spent upon yourself, mind. Why, you've not a bit of jewellery on! Have you a watch?"

"No, papa."

"Robert shall choose one for you then. Come to my room any time for the cash; and if Miss Charlecote takes you anywhere among her set—good connections she has—and you want to be rigged out extra, send me in the bill—anything rather than be shabby."

"Thank you, papa! Then, if I am asked out anywhere, may I go?"

"Why, what does the child mean? Anywhere that Miss Charlecote likes to take you, of course."

"Only because I am not come out."

"Stuff about coming out! I don't like my girls to be shy and backward. They've a right to show themselves anywhere; and you should be going out with us now, but somehow your poor mother doesn't like the trouble of such a lot of girls. So don't be shy, but make the most of yourself, for you won't meet many better endowed, nor more highly accomplished. Good night, and enjoy yourself."

Palpitating with wonder and pleasure, Phœbe escaped. Such permission, over-riding all Juliana's injunctions, was worth a few nettle stings and a great fright; for Phœbe was not philosopher enough, in spite of Miss Fennimore—ay, and of Robert—not to have a keen desire to see a great party.

Her delay had so much convinced the sisters that her expedition had had some fearful consequences, that Maria was already crying lest dear Phœbe should be in disgrace; and Bertha had seated herself on the balusters, debating with herself whether, if Phœbe were suspected of the trick (a likely story) and condemned to lose her visit to London, she would confess herself the guilty person.

And when Phœbe came back, too much overcome with delight to do anything but to communicate Papa's goodness, and rejoice in the unlimited power of making presents, Bertha triumphantly insisted on her confessing that it been a capital thing that the nettles were in Juliana's nosegay!

Phœbe shook her head; too happy to scold, too humble to draw the moral that the surest way to gratification is to remove the thorns from the path of others.



CHAPTER II.

She gives thee a garland woven fair,
Take care!

It is a fool's-cap for thee to wear,
Beware! Beware!

Trust her not,
She is fooling thee!

LONGFELLOW from MULLER.

BEHOLD Phœbe Fulmort seated in a train on the way to London. She was a very pleasant spectacle to Miss Charle-cote opposite to her, so peacefully joyous was her face, as she sat with the wind breathing in on her, in the calm luxury of contemplating the landscape gliding past the windows in all its summer charms, and the repose of having no one to hunt her into unvaried rationality.

Her eye was the first to detect Robert in waiting at the terminus, but he looked more depressed than ever, and scarcely smiled as he handed them to the carriage.

"Get in, Robert, you are coming home with us," said Honor.

"You have so much to take, I should encumber you."

"No, the sundries go in cabs, with the maids. Jump in."

"Do your friends arrive to-night?"

"Yes; but that is no reason you should look so rueful!

Make the most of Phœbe beforehand. Besides, Mr. Parsons is a Wykehamist."

Robert took his place on the back seat, but still as if he would have preferred walking home. Neither his sister nor his friend dared to ask whether he had seen Lucilla. Could she have refused him? or was her frivolity preying on his spirits?

Phœbe tried to interest him by the account of the family migration, and of Miss Fennimore's promise that Maria and Bertha should have two half hours of real play in the garden on each day when the lessons had been properly done; and how she had been so kind as to let Maria leave off trying to read a French book that had proved too hard for her, not perceiving why this instance of good-nature was not cheering to her brother.

Miss Charlecote's house was a delightful marvel to Phœbe from the moment when she rattled into the paved court, entered upon the fragrant odour of the cedar hall, and saw the Queen of Sheba's golden locks beaming with the evening light. She entered the drawing-room, pleasant-looking already, under the judicious arrangement of the housekeeper, who had set out the Holt flowers and arranged the books, so that it seemed full of welcome.

Phœbe ran from window to mantelpiece, enchanted with the quaint mixture of old and new, admiring carving and stained glass, and declaring that Owen had not prepared her for anything equal to this, until Miss Charlecote, going to arrange matters with her housekeeper, left the brother and sister together.

"Well, Robin?" said Phœbe, coming up to him anxiously.

He only crossed his arms on the mantelpiece, rested his head on them, and sighed.

"Have you seen her?"

"Not to speak to her."

"Have you called?"

"No."

"Then where did you see her?"

"She was riding in the Park. I was on foot."

"She could not have seen you!" exclaimed Phœbe.

"She did," replied Robert; "I was going to tell you. She gave me one of her sweetest, brightest smiles, such as

only she can give. You know them, Phœbe. No assumed welcome, but a sudden flash and sparkle of real gladness."

"But why—what do you mean?" asked Phœbe, "why have you not been to her? I thought she had been neglecting you from your manner, but it seems to be all the other way."

"I cannot, Phœbe. I cannot put my poor pretensions forward in the set she is with. I know they would influence her, and that her decision would not be calm and mature."

"Her decision of what you are to be?"

"That is fixed," said Robert, sighing.

"Indeed! With papa."

"No, in my own mind. I have seen enough of the business to find that I could in ten years quadruple my capital, and in the meantime maintain her in the manner she prefers."

"You are quite sure she prefers it?"

"She has done so ever since she could exercise a choice. I should feel myself doing her an injustice if I were to take advantage of any preference she may entertain for me to condemn her to what would be to her a dreary banishment."

"Not with you," cried Phœbe.

"You know nothing about it, Phœbe. You have never led such a life, and you it would not hurt—attract I mean; but lovely, fascinating, formed for admiration, and craving for excitement as she is, she is a being that can only exist in society. She would be miserable in homely retirement. I mean she would prey on herself—I could not ask it of her—if she consented, it would be without knowing her own tastes. No, all that remains is to find out whether she can submit to owe her wealth to our business."

"And shall you?"

"I could not but defer it till I should meet her here," said Robert. "I shrink from seeing her with those cousins, or hearing her name with theirs. Phœbe, imagine my feelings, when going into Mervyn's club with him, I heard 'Rashe Charteris and Cilly Sandbrook' contemptuously discussed by those very names, and jests passing on their independent ways. I know how it is! Those people work on her spirit of enterprise, and she—too guileless and innocent to heed appearances—Phœbe, you do not wonder that I am nearly mad!"

"Poor Robin!" said Phœbe, affectionately. "But indeed, I am sure if Lucy once had a hint—no, one could not tell her, it would shock her too much; but if she had the least idea that people could be so impertinent," and Phœbe's cheeks glowed with shame and indignation, "she would only wish to go away as far as she could for fear of seeing any of them again. I am sure they were not gentlemen, Robin."

"A man must be supereminently a gentleman to respect a woman who does not *make* him do so," said Robert, mournfully. "That Miss Charteris! Oh! that she were banished to Siberia."

Phœbe meditated a few moments, then looking up, said, "I beg your pardon, Robin, but it does strike me that if you think that this kind of life is not good for Lucilla, it cannot be right to sacrifice your own higher prospects to enable her to continue it."

"I tell you, Phœbe," said he, with some impatience, "I never was pledged. I may be of much more use and influence, and able to effect more extended good as a partner in a concern like this, than as an obscure clergyman. Don't you see?"

Phœbe had only time to utter a somewhat melancholy "Very likely," before Miss Charlecote returned to take her to her room, the promised brown cupboard, all wainscotted with delicious cedar, so deeply and uniformly pannelled, that when shut, the door was not obvious, and it was like being in a box, for there were no wardrobes, only shelves shut by doors into the wall, which the old usage of the household tradition called *awmries* (*armoires*). The furniture was reasonably modern, but not obtrusively so; there was a delicious recess in the deep window, with a seat and a table in it, and a box of mignonette along the sill. It looked out into the little high-walled entrance court, and beyond to the wall of the warehouse opposite, and the roar of the great city thoroughfare came like the distant surging of the ocean. Seldom had young maiden's bower given more satisfaction. Phœbe looked about her as if she hardly knew how to believe in anything so unlike her ordinary life, and she thanked her friend again and again with such enthusiasm, that Miss Charlecote laughed as she told her she liked the old house to be appreciated, since it had, like Pompeii, been potted for posterity.

"And thank you, my dear," she added, with a sigh, "for making my coming home so pleasant. May you never know how I dreaded the finding it full of emptiness."

"Dear Miss Charlecote!" cried Phœbe, venturing upon a warm kiss, and thrilled with sad pleasure as she was pressed in a warm, clinging embrace, and felt tears on her cheek. "You have been so happy here!"

"It is not the past, my dear," said Honora. "I could live peacefully on the thought of that. The shadows that people this house are very gentle ones. It is the present!"

She broke off, for the gates of the court were opening to admit a detachment of cabs, containing the persons and properties of the new incumbent and his wife. He had been a curate of Mr. Charlecote, since whose death he had led a very hardworking life in various towns, and on his recent presentation to the living of St. Wulstan's, Honora had begged him and his wife to make her house their home, while determining on the repairs of the parsonage. She ran down to meet them with gladsome steps; she had never entirely dropped her intercourse with Mr. Parsons though seldom meeting, and he was a relic of the past, one of the very few who still called her by her Christian name, and regarded her more as the clergyman's daughter of St. Wulstan's than as lady of the Holt. Mrs. Parsons was a thorough clergyman's wife, as active as himself, and much loved and esteemed by Honora, with whom in their few meetings, she had "got on" to admiration.

There they were, looking after luggage, and paying cabs so heedfully as not to remark their hostess standing on the stairs, and she had time to survey them with the affectionate curiosity of meeting after long absence, and with pleasure in remarking that there was little change. Perhaps they were rather more grey, and had grown more alike by force of living and thinking together; but they both looked equally alert and cheerful, and as if 50 and 55 were the very prime of years for substantial work.

Their first glances at her were full of the same anxiety for her health and strength, as they heartily shook hands, and accompanied her into the drawing-room, she explaining that Mr. Parsons was to have the study all to himself, and never be disturbed there; then inquiring after the three children, two daughters who were married, and a son lately ordained.

"I thought you would have brought William to see about the curacy," she said.

"He is not strong enough," said his mother; "he wished it, but he is better where he is; he could not bear the work here."

"No, I told him the utmost I should allow would be an exchange now and then, when my curates were overdone," said Mr. Parsons.

"And so you are quite deserted," said Honora, feeling the more drawn towards her friends.

"Starting afresh, with a sort of honeymoon, as I tell Anne," replied Mr. Parsons, and such a bright look passed between them as though they were quite sufficient for each other, that Honor felt there was no parallel between their case and her own.

"Ah! you have not lost your children yet," said Mrs. Parsons.

"They are not with me," said Honor, quickly. "Lucy is with her cousins, and Owen—I don't exactly know how he means to dispose of himself this vacation, but we were all to meet here." Guessing, perhaps, that Mr. Parsons saw into her dissatisfaction, she then assumed their defence. "There is to be a grand affair at Castle Blanch, a celebration of young Charles Charteris's marriage, and Owen and Lucy will be wanted for it."

"Whom has he married?"

"A Miss Mendoza, an immense fortune, something in the stock-broker line. He had spent a good deal, and wanted to repair it, but they tell me she is a very handsome person, very lady-like and agreeable, and Lucy likes her greatly. I am to go to luncheon at their house to-morrow, so I shall treat you as if you were at home."

"I should hope so," quoth Mr. Parsons.

"Yes, or I know you would not stay here properly. I'm not alone, either. Why, where's the boy gone? I thought he was here. I have two young Fulmorts, one staying here, the other looking in from the office."

"Fulmort!" exclaimed Mr. Parsons, with three notes of admiration at least in his voice. "What! the distiller?"

"The enemy himself, the identical lord of gin shops—at least his children. Did you not know that he married my next neighbor, Augusta Mervyn, and that our properties

touch? He is not so bad by way of squire as he is here, and I have known his wife all my life, so we keep up all habits of good neighbourhood, and though they have brought up the elder ones very ill, they have not succeeded in spoiling this son and daughter. She is one of the very nicest girls I ever knew, and he, poor fellow, has a great deal of good in him."

"I think I have heard William speak of a Fulmort," said Mrs. Parsons; "was he at Winchester?"

"Yes, and an infinite help the influences there has been to him. I never saw any one more anxious to do right, often under great disadvantages. I shall be very glad for him to be with you. He was always intended for a clergyman, but now I am afraid there is a notion of putting him into the business, and he is here attending to it for the present while his father and brother are abroad. I am sorry he is gone; I suppose he was seized with a fit of shyness."

However, when all the party had been to their rooms and prepared for dinner, Robert re-appeared, and was asked where he had been.

"I went to dress," he answered.

"Ah! where do you lodge? I asked Phœbe, but she said your letters went to Whittington Street.

"There are two very good rooms at the office which my father sometimes uses."

Phœbe and Miss Charlecote glanced at each other, aware that Mervyn would never have condescended to sleep in Great Whittington Street. Mr. Parsons likewise perceived a straightforwardness in the manner, which made him ready to acknowledge his fellow Wykehamist, and his son's acquaintance; and they quickly became good friends over recollections of Oxford and Winchester, tolerably strong in Mr. Parsons himself, and all the fresher on "William's" account. Phœbe, whose experience of social intercourse was confined to the stately evening hour in the drawing-room, had never listened to anything approaching to this style of conversation, nor seen her brother to so much advantage in society. Hitherto she had only beheld him neglected in his uncongenial home circle, contemning and contemned, or else subjected to the fretting torment of Lucilla's caprice; she had never known what he could be, at his ease, among persons of the same way of thinking. Speaking scarcely ever

herself, and her fingers busy with her needle, she was receiving a better lesson than Miss Fennimore had ever yet been able to give. The acquiring of knowledge is one thing, the putting it out to profit another.

Gradually, from general topics, the conversation contracted to the parish and its affairs, known intimately to Mr. Parsons a quarter of a century ago, but in which Honora was now the best informed, while Robert listened as one who felt as if he might have a considerable stake therein, and indeed looked upon usefulness there as compensation for the schemes he was resigning.

The changes since Mr. Parson's time had not been cheering. The late incumbent had been a man whose trust lay chiefly in preaching, and who, as his health failed, and he became more unable to cope with the crying evils around, had grown despairing, and given way to a sort of dismal callous indifference; not doing a little, because he could not do much, and quashing the plans of others with a nervous dread of innovation. The class of superior persons in trade, and families of professional men, who in Mr. Charlecote's time had filled many a massively built pew, had migrated to the suburbs, and preserved only an office or shop in the parish, an empty pew in the church, where the congregation was to be counted by tens instead of hundreds. Not that the population had fallen off. Certain streets which had been a grief and pain to Mr. Charlecote, but over which he had never entirely lost his hold, had become intolerably worse. Improvements in other parts of London, dislodging the inhabitants, had heaped them in festering masses of corruption in these untouched by-ways and lanes, places where honest men dared not penetrate without a policeman, and report spoke of rooms shared by six families at once.

Mr. Parsons had not taken the cure unknowing of what he should find in it; he said nothing, and looked as simple and cheerful as if his life were not to be a daily course of heroism. His wife gave one long stifled sigh, and looked furtively upon him with her loving eyes, in something of anxious fear, but with far more of exultation.

Yet it was in no dispirited tone that she asked after the respectable poor—there surely must be some employment in small trades, or about the warehouses. She was answered that these were not many in proportion, and that not only

had pew rents kept them out of church, but that they had little disposition to go there. They did send their children to the old endowed charity schools, but as these children grew up, wave after wave lapsed into a smooth, respectable heathen life of Sunday pleasuring. The more religious became dissenters, because the earnest inner life did not approve itself to them in Church teaching as presented to them; the worse sort, by far the most numerous, fell lower and lower, and hovered scarcely above the depths of sin and misery. Drinking was the universal vice, and dragged many a seemingly steady character into every stage of degradation. Men and women alike fell under the temptation, and soon hastened down the descent of corruption and crime.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Parsons, "I observed gin palaces at the corner of every street."

There was a pause. Neither her husband nor Honor made any reply. If they had done so, neither of the young Fulmorts would have perceived any connection between the gin palaces and their father's profession; but the silence caused both to raise their eyes. Phœbe, judging by her sisters' code of the becoming, fancied that their friends supposed their feelings might be hurt by alluding to the distillery, *as a trade*, and cast about for some cheerful observations, which she could not find.

Robert had received a new idea, one that must be put aside till he had time to look at it.

There was a ring at the door. Honor's face lighted up at the tread on the marble pavement of the hall, and without other announcement, a young man entered the room, and as she sprang up to meet him, bent down his lofty head and kissed her with half-filial, half-coaxing tenderness.

"Yes, here I am. They told me I should find you here. Ah! Phœbe, I'm glad to see you. Fulmort, how are you?" and a well-bred shake of the hand to Mr. and Mrs. Parsons, with the ease and air of the young master, returning to his mother's house.

"When did you come?"

"Only to-day. I got away sooner than I expected. I went to Lowndes Square, and they told me I should find you here, so I came away as soon as dinner was over; they were dressing for some grand affair, and wanted me to come

with them, but of course I must come to see if you had really achieved bringing bright Phœbe from her orbit."

His smile conveyed the astronomical compliment at once to Honora and Phœbe, who were content to share it. Honora was in a condition of subdued excitement and anxiety, compared to which all other sensations were tame, chequered as was her felicity, a state well known to mothers and sisters. Intensely gratified at her darling's arrival, gladdened by his presence, rejoicing in his endowments, she yet dreaded every phrase lest some dim misgiving should be deepened, and watched for the impression he made on her friends as though her own depended upon it.

Admiration could not but come foremost. It was pleasant to look upon such a fine specimen of manly beauty and vigour. Of unusual height, his form was so well moulded, that his superior stature was only perceived by comparison with others, and the proportions were those of great strength. The small, well-set head, proudly carried, the short straight features, and the form of the free massive curls might have been a model for the bust of a Greek athlete; the colouring was the fresh, healthy bronzed ruddiness of English youth, and the expression had a certain boldness of good-humoured freedom agreeing with the quiet power of the whole figure. Those bright gray eyes could never have been daunted, those curling merry lips never at a loss, that smooth brow never been unwelcome, those easy movements never cramped, nor the manners restrained by bashfulness.

The contrast was not favourable to Robert. The fair proportions of the one brought out the irregular build of the other; the classical face made the plain one more homely, the erect bearing made the eye turn to the slouching carriage, and the readiness of address provoked comparison with the awkward diffidence of one disregarded at home. Bashfulness and depression had regained their hold of the elder lad almost as the younger one entered, and in the changes of position consequent upon the new arrival, he fell into the background, and stood leaning, caryatid fashion against the mantelshelf, without uttering a word, while Owen, in a half recumbent position on an ottoman, a little in the rear of Miss Charlecote and her tea equipage, and close to Phœbe, indulged in the blithe loquacity of a return home, in a tone of caressing banter towards the first lady, of something be-

tween good nature and attention to the latter, yet without any such exclusiveness as would have been disregard to the other guests.

"Ponto well! Poor old Pon! how does he get on? Was it a very affecting parting, Phœbe?"

"I didn't see. I met Miss Charlecote at the station."

"Not even your eyes might intrude on the sacredness of grief! Well, at least you dried them? But who dried Ponto's?" solemnly turning on Honora.

"Jones, I hope," said she, smiling.

"I knew it! Says I to myself, when Henry opened the door, Jones remains at home for the consolation of Ponto."

"Not entirely." began Honora, laughing; but the boy shook his head, cutting her short with a playful frown.

"Cousin Honor, it grieves me to see a woman of your age and responsibility making false excuses. Mr. Parsons, I appeal to you, as a clergyman of the Church of England, is it not painful to hear her putting forward Jones's asthma, when we all know the true fact is that Ponto's tastes are so aristocratic, that he can't take exercise with an under servant, and the housekeeper is too fat to waddle. By the by, how is the old thing?"

"Much more effective than might be supposed by your account, sir, and probably wishing to know whether to get your room ready."

"My room, thank you, no, not to-night. I've got nothing with me. What are you going to do to-morrow? I know you are to be at Charteris's to luncheon, his Jewess told me so."

"For shame, Owen."

"I don't see any shame if Charles doesn't," said Owen, "only if you don't think yourself at a stall of cheap jewelry at a fair—that's all! Phœbe, take care. You're a learned young lady."

"I!"

"Ah! it's the fashion to deny it, but mind you don't mention Shakespeare."

"Why not?"

"Did you never hear of the *Merchant of Venice*?"

Phœbe, a little startled, wanted to hear whether Mrs. Charteris were really Jewish, and after a little more in this

style, which Honor reasonably feared the Parsons might not consider in good taste, it was explained that her riches were Jewish, though her grandfather had been nothing, and his family Christian. Owen adding, that but for her origin, she would be very good looking, not that he cared for that style, and his manner indicated that such rosy childish charms as were before him had his preference. But though this was evident enough to all the rest of the world, Phœbe did not appear to have the least perception of his personal meaning, and freely, simply answered, that she admired dark eyed people, and should be glad to see Mrs. Charteris.

"You will see her in her glory," said Owen; "Tuesday week the great concern is to come off at Castle Blanch, and a rare sight she'll be! Cilly tells me she is rehearsing her dresses with different sets of jewels all the morning, and for ever coming in to consult her and Rashe."

"That must be rather tiresome," said Honor; "she cannot be much of a companion."

"I don't fancy she gets much satisfaction," said Owen, laughing; "Rashe never uses much 'soft sawder.' It's an easy going place, where you may do just as you choose, and that the young ladies appreciate. By the by, what do you think of this Irish scheme?"

Honora was so much ashamed of it, that she had never mentioned it even to Phœbe, and she was the more sorry it had been thus adverted to, as she saw Robert intent on what Owen let fall. She answered shortly, that she could not suppose it serious.

"Serious as a churchyard," was Owen's answer. "I dare say they will ask Phœbe to join the party. For my own part, I never believed in it till I came up to-day, and found the place full of salmon flies, and the start fixed for Wednesday the 24th."

"Who?" came a voice from the dark mantelshelf.

"Who? Why that's the best of it! Who, but my wise sister and Rashe? Not a soul besides," cried Owen, giving way to laughter, which no one was disposed to echo. "They vow that they will fish all the best streams, do more than any crack fisherman going, and they would like to see who will venture to warn them off. They've tried that already. Last summer, what did Lucy do, but go and fish Sir Harry Bulter's water. You know he's a very tiger about preserving;

well, she fished coolly on in the face of all his keepers, they stood aghast, didn't know what manner of Nixie it was, I suppose, and when Sir Harry came down foaming at the mouth, she just shook her curls, and made him wade in up to his knees to get her fly out of a bramble!"

"That must be exaggerated," said Robert.

"Exaggerated! Not a word! It's not possible to exaggerate Cilly's coolness. I did say something about going with them."

"You must, if they go at all!" exclaimed Honora.

"Out of the question, sweet Honey. They reject me with disdain, declare that I should only render them commonplace, and that 'rich and rare were the gems she wore,' would never have got across Ireland safe if she had a great strapping brother to hamper her. And really, as Charles says, I don't suppose any damage can well happen to them."

Honora would not talk of it, and turned the conversation to what was to be done on the following day. Owen eagerly proffered himself as escort, and suggested all manner of plans, evidently assuming the entire direction and protection of the two ladies, who were to meet him at luncheon in Lowndes Square, and go with him to the Royal Academy, which, as he and Honora agreed, must necessarily be the earliest object for the sake of providing innocent conversation.

As soon as the clock struck ten, Robert took leave, and Owen rose, but instead of going, lingered, talking Oxford with Mr. Parsons and telling good stories, much to the ladies' amusement, though increasing Honora's trepidation by the fear that something in his tone about the authorities, or the slang of his manner might not give her friends a good idea of his set. The constant fear of what might come next, absolutely made her impatient for his departure, and at last she drove him away by begging to know how he was going all that distance, and offering to send Henry to call a cab, a thing he was too good-natured to permit. He bade good night and departed, while Mr. Parsons, in answer to her eager eyes, gratified her by pronouncing him a very fine young man.

"He is very full of spirit," she said. "You must let me tell you a story of him. They have a young new school-mistress at Wrapworth, his father's former living, you know,

close to Castle Blanch. This poor thing was obliged to punish a school-child, the daughter of one of the bargemen on the Thames, a huge ruffianly man. Well, a day or two after, Owen came upon him in a narrow lane, bullying the poor girl almost out of her life, threatening her, and daring her to lay a finger on his children. What do you think Owen did?"

"Fought him, I suppose," said Mr Parsons, "judging by the peculiar delight ladies take in such exploits. Besides, he has sufficiently the air of a hero to make it incumbent on him to 'kill some giant.'"

"We may be content with something short of his killing the giant," said Honor, "but he really did gain the victory. That lad, under nineteen, positively beat this great monster of a man, and made him ask the girl's pardon, knocked him down, and thoroughly mastered him! I should have known nothing of it, though, if Owen had not got a black eye, which made him unpresentable for the Castle Blanch gaieties, so he came down to the Holt to me, knowing I should not mind wounds gained in a good cause."

They wished her good night in her triumph.

The receipt of a letter was rare and supreme felicity to Maria; therefore to indite one was Phœbe's first task on the morrow; after which she took up her book, and was deeply engaged when the door flew back, and the voice of Owen Sandbrook exclaimed, "Goddess of the silver-bow, what, alone?"

"Miss Charlecote is with her lawyer, and Robert at the office."

"The parson and parsoness parsonically gone to study parsonages, schools, and dilapidations, I suppose. What a bore it is having them here; I'd have taken up my quarters here otherwise, but I can't stand parish politics."

"I like them very much," said Phœbe, "and Miss Charlecote seems to be happy with them."

"Just her cut, dear old thing, the same honest, illogical, practical sincerity," said Owen, in a tone of somewhat superior melancholy, but seeing Phœbe about to resent his words as a disrespectful imputation on their friend, he turned the subject, addressing Phœbe in the manner between teasing and flattering, habitual to a big school-boy towards a

younger child, phases of existence which each had not so long outgrown as to have left off the mutual habits thereto belonging. "And what is bright Cynthia doing—writing verses, I declare!—worthy sister of Phœbus Apollo."

"Only notes," said Phœbe, relinquishing her paper, in testimony.

"When found make a note of—Summoned by writ—temp. Ed. III.—burgesses—knights of shire. It reads like an act of parliament. Hallam's English Constitution. My eyes! By way of lighter study. It is quite appalling. Pray what may be the occupation of your more serious moments?"

"You see the worst I have with me."

"Holiday recreation, to which you can just condescend. I say, Phœbe, I have a great curiosity to understand the Zend. I wish you would explain it to me."

"If I ever read it," began Phœbe, laughing.

"What, you pretend to deny? You won't put me off that way. A lady who can only unbend so far as to the English Constitution by way of recreation, must. . . ."

"But it is not by way of recreation."

"Come, I know my respected cousin too well to imagine she would have imposed such a task. That won't do, Phœbe."

"I never said she had, but Miss Fennimore desired me."

"I shall appeal. There's no act of tyranny a woman in authority will not commit. But this is a free country, Phœbe, as may be you have gathered from your author, and unless her trammels have reached to your soul. . . ." and he laid his hand on the book to take it away.

"Perhaps they have," said Phœbe, smiling, but holding it fast, "for I shall be much more comfortable in doing as I was told."

"Indeed!" said Owen, pretending to scrutinize her as if she were something extraordinary (really as an excuse for a good gaze upon her pure complexion and limpid eyes, so steady, childlike, and unabashed, free from all such consciousness as would make them shrink from the playful look). "Indeed! Now, in my experience the comfort would be in the *not* doing as you were told."

"Ah! but you know that I have no spirit."

"I wish to heaven other people had none!" cried Owen,

suddenly changing his tone, and sitting down opposite to Phœbe, his elbow on the table, and speaking earnestly, "I would give the world that my sister were like you. Did you ever hear of anything so preposterous as this Irish business?"

"She cannot think of it, when Miss Charlecote has told her of all the objections," said Phœbe.

"She will go the more," returned Owen; "I say to you Phœbe, what I would say to no one else. Lucilla's treatment of Honora Charlecote is abominable—vexes me more than I can say. They say some nations have no words for gratitude. One would think she had come of them."

Phœbe looked much shocked, but said, "Perhaps Miss Charlecote's kindness has seemed to her like a matter of course, not as it does to us, who have no claim at all."

"We had no claim," said Owen, "the connection is nothing, absolutely nothing. I believe, poor dear, the attraction was that she had once been attached to my father, and he was too popular a preacher to *keep* well as a lover. Well, there were we, a couple of orphans, a nuisance to all our kith and kin—nobody with a bit of mercy for us but that queer old coon, Kit Charteris, when she takes us home, treats us like her own children, feels for us as much as the best mother living could; undertakes to provide for us. Now, I put it to you, Phœbe, has she any right to be cast off in this fashion?"

"I don't know in what fashion you mean."

"Don't you? Haven't you seen how Cilly has run restive from babyhood? A pretty termagant she was, as even I can remember. And how my poor father spoilt her! Any one but Honora would have given her up, rather than have gone through what she did, so firmly and patiently, till she had broken her in fairly well; but then come in these Charterises, and Cilly runs frantic after them, her own *dear* relations. Much they had cared for us when we were troublesome little pests; but it's all the force of blood. Stuff! the whole truth is that they are gay, and Honora quiet; they encourage her to run riot, Honora keeps her in order."

"Have you spoken to her?"

"As well speak to the wind. She thinks it a great favour to run down to Hiltonbury for the Horticultural Show, turn everything topsy-turvy, keep poor dear Sweet

Honey in a perpetual ferment, then come away to Castle Blanch, as if she were rid of a troublesome duty."

"I thought Miss Charlecote sent Lucy to enjoy herself. We always said how kind and self-denying she was."

"Denied, rather," said Owen, "only that's her way of carrying it off. A month or two in the season might be very well, see the world, and get the tone of it, but to racket about with Ratia, and leave Honor alone for months together, is too strong for me."

Honora came in, delighted at her boy's visit, and well pleased at the manner in which he was engrossed. Two such children needed no chaperon, and if that sweet crescent moon were to be his guiding light, so much the better.

"Capital girl, that," he said, as she left the room. "This is a noble achievement of yours."

"In getting my youngest princess out of the castle. Ay! I do feel in a beneficent enchanter's position."

"She has grown up much prettier than she promised to be."

"And far too good for a Fulmort, but that is Robert's doing."

"Poor Robert! how he shows the old distiller in grain. So he is taking to the old shop?—best thing for him."

"Only by way of experiment."

"Pleasant experiment to make as much as old Fulmort! I wish he'd take me into partnership."

"You, Owen?"

"I'm not proud. These aren't the days when it matters how a man gets his tin, so he knows what to do with it. Ay! the world gets beyond the dear old Hiltonbury views, after all, Sweet Honey, and you see what city atmosphere does to me."

"You know I never wished to press any choice on you," she faltered.

"What!" with a good humoured air of affront; "you thought me serious? Don't you know I'm the ninth, instead of the nineteenth, century man under your wing? I'd promise you to be a bishop, only you see, I'm afraid I couldn't be mediocre enough."

"For shame, Owen!" and yet she smiled. That boy's presence and caressing sweetness towards herself were the greatest bliss to her, almost beyond that of a mother with a son because more uncertain, less her right by nature.

Phœbe came down as the carriage was at the door, and they called in Whittington Street for her brother, but he only came out to say he was very busy, and would not intrude on Mrs. Charteris—bashfulness for which he was well abused on the way to Lowndes Square.

Owen, with his air of being at home, put aside the servants as they entered the magnificent house, replete with a display of state and luxury analogous to that of Beauchamp, but with better taste and greater ease. The Fulmorts were in bondage to ostentation, the Charterises were lavish for their own enjoyment, and heedless alike of cost and of appearance.

The great drawing-room was crowded with furniture, and the splendid marqueterie tables and crimson ottomans were piled with a wild confusion of books, prints, periodicals, papers, and caricatures, heaped over ornaments and bijouterie, and beyond, at the doorway of a second room, even more miscellaneously filled, a small creature sprang to meet them, kissing Honora, and exclaiming, "Here you are! Have you brought the pig's wool? Ah! but you've brought something else! No—what's become of that Redbreast?" as she embraced Phœbe.

"He was so busy that he could not come."

"Ill-behaved bird; a whole month without coming near me."

"Only a week," said Phœbe, speaking less freely, as she perceived two strangers in the room, a gentleman in moustaches, who shook hands with Owen, and a lady, whom from her greeting to Miss Charlecote (for introductions were not the way of the house), she concluded to be the formidable Rashe, and therefore regarded with some curiosity.

Phœbe had expected her to be a large masculine woman, and was surprised at her dapper proportions and not ungraceful manner. Her face, neither handsome nor the reverse, was one that neither in features nor complexion revealed her age, and her voice was pitched to the tones of good society, so that but for a certain "don't care" found in her words, and a defiant freedom of address, Phœbe would have set down all she had heard as a mistake, in spite of the table covered with the brilliant appliances of fly making, over which both she and Lucilla were engaged. It was at the period when ladies affected coats and waistcoats, and both

cousins followed the fashion to the utmost; wearing tightly fitting black coats, plain linen collars, and shirt-like under sleeves, with black ties round the neck. Horatia was still in mourning for her mother, and wore a black skirt, but Lucilla's was of rich deep gentianella coloured silk, and the buttons of her white vest were of beautiful coral. The want of drapery gave a harshness to Miss Charteris's appearance, but the little masculine affectations only rendered Lucy's miniature style of feminine beauty still more piquant. Less tall than many girls of fourteen, she was exquisitely formed; the close fitting dress became her taper waist, the ivory fairness of the throat and hands shone out in their boyish setting, and the soft delicacy of feature and complexion were enhanced by the vivid sparkling of those porcelain blue eyes, under the long lashes, still so fair and glossy as to glisten in the light, like her profuse flaxen tresses, arranged in a cunning wilderness of plaits and natural ringlets. The great charm was the minuteness and refinement of the mould containing the energetic spirit that glanced in her eyes, quivered on her lips, and pervaded every movement of the elastic feet and hands, childlike in size, statuelike in symmetry, elfin in quickness and dexterity. "Lucille la Fée," she might well have been called, as she sat manipulating the gorgeous silk and feathers with an essential strength and firmness of hands such as could hardly have been expected from such small members, and producing such lovely specimens that nothing seemed wanting but a touch of her wand to endow them with life. It was fit fairy work, and be it farther known, that few women are capable of it; they seldom have sufficient accuracy of sustained attention and firmness of finger combined, to produce anything artistic or durable, and the accomplishment was therefore Lucilla's pride. Her cousin could prepare materials, but could not finish.

"Have you brought the pig's wool?" repeated Lucy, as they sat down. "No! That is a cruel way of testifying; I can't find a scrap of that shade, though I've nearly broke my heart in the tackle-shops; here's my last fragment, and this butcher will be a wreck for want of it."

"Let me see," quoth the gentleman, bending over with an air of intimacy.

"You may see," returned Lucilla, "but that will do no

good. Owen got this at a little shop at Elverslope, and we can only conclude that the father of orange pigs' wool is dead, for we've tried every maker, and can't hit off the tint."

"I've seen it in a shop in the Strand," he said, with an air of depreciation, such as set both ladies off with an ardour inexplicable to mere spectators, both vehemently defending the peculiarity of their favourite hue, and little personalities passing, exceedingly diverting apparently to both parties, but which vexed Honora and dismayed Phœbe by the coolness of the gentleman, and the ease with which he was treated by the ladies.

Luncheon was announced in the midst, and in the dining-room they found Mrs. Charteris, a dark aquiline beauty of highly-coloured complexion, such as permitted the glowing hues of dress and ornament in which she delighted, and large languid dark eyes of Oriental appearance.

In the scarlet and gold net confining her sable locks, her ponderous ear-rings, her massive chains and bracelets, and gorgeous silk, she was a splendid ornament at the head of the table, but she looked sleepily out from under her black-fringed eyelids, turned over the carving as a matter of course to Owen, and evidently regarded the two young ladies as bound to take all trouble off her hands in talking, arranging or settling what she should do with herself or her carriage.

"Lolly shall take you there," or "Lolly shall call for that," passed between the cousins without the smallest reference to Lolly herself (otherwise Eloïsa), who looked serenely indifferent through all the plans proposed for her, only once exerting her will sufficiently to say "Very well, Rashe dear, you'll tell the coachman—only don't forget that I must go to Storr and Mortimer's."

Honora expressed a hope that Lucilla would come with her party to the Exhibition, and was not pleased that Mr. Calthorp exclaimed that there was another plan.

"No, no, Mr. Calthorp, I never said any such thing!"

"Miss Charteris, is not that a little too strong?"

"You told me of the Dorking," cried Lucilla, "and you said you would not miss the sight for anything, but I never said you should have it."

Rashe meanwhile clapped her hands with exultation, and

there was a regular clatter of eager voices—"I should like to know how you would get the hackles out of a suburban poultry fancier?"

"Out of him—no, out of his best Dorking? Priced at 120*l.* last exhibition—two years old—wouldn't take 200*l.* for him now.

"You don't mean that you've seen him?"

"Hurrah!" Lucilla opened a paper, and waved triumphantly five of the long-tippet plumes of chanticleer.

"You don't mean."

"Mean! I more than mean! Didn't you tell us that you had been to see the old party on business, and had spied the hackles walking about in his yard."

"And I had hoped to introduce you."

"As if we needed that! No, no; Rashe and I started off at six o'clock this morning, to shake off the remains of the ball, rode down to Brompton, and did our work. No, it was not like the macaw business, I declare. The old gentleman held the bird for us himself, and I promised him a dried salmon."

"Well, I had flattered myself—it was an unfair advantage, Miss Sandbrook."

"Not in the least. Had you gone it would have cast a general clumsiness over the whole transaction, and not left the worthy old owner half so well satisfied. I believe you had so little originality as to expect to engage him in conversation while I captured the bird; but once was enough of that."

Phœbe could not help asking what was meant, and it was explained that while a call was being made on a certain old lady with a blue and yellow macaw, Lucilla had contrived to abstract the prime glory of the creature's tail—a blue feather lined with yellow—an irresistible charm to a fisherwoman, but here even the tranquil Eloïsa murmured that Cilly must never do so again when she went out with HER.

"No, Lolly, indeed I won't. I prefer honesty, I assure you, except when it is too commonplace. I'll meddle with nothing at Mde. Sonnini's this afternoon."

"Then you cannot come with us?"

"Why, you see Honor, here have Rashe and I been appointed band-masters, Lord Chamberlains, masters of the

ceremonies, major-domos, and I don't know what, to all the Castle Blanch concern, and as Rashe neither knows nor cares about music, I've got all that on my hands, and I must take Lolly to look on while I manage the programme."

"Are you too busy to find a day to spend with us at St. Wulstan's?"

A discussion of engagements took place, apparently at the rate of five per day, but Mrs. Charteris interposed an invitation to dinner for the next evening, including Robert, and farther it appeared that all the three were expected to take part in the Castle Blanch festivities. Lolly had evidently been told of them as settled certainties among the guests, and Lucilla, Owen, and Rashe, vied with each other in declaring that they had imagined Honor to have brought Phœbe to London with no other intent, and that all was fixed for the ladies to sleep at Castle Blanch the night before, and Robert Fulmort to come down in the morning by train.

Nothing could have been farther from Honora's predilections than such gaieties, but Phœbe's eyes were growing round with eagerness, and there would be unkindness in denying her the pleasure, as well as churlishness in disappointing Lucy and Owen, who had reckoned on her in so gratifying a manner. Without decidedly accepting or refusing, she let the talk go on.

"Miss Fulmort," said Ratia, "I hope you are not too religious to dance."

Much surprised, Phœbe made some reply in the negative.

"Oh, I forgot, that's not your sister's line, but I thought" and she gave an expressive glance to indicate Miss Charlecote.

"Oh, no," again said Phœbe, decidedly.

"Yes, I understand, never mind, I ought to have remembered, but when people are *gone in*, one is apt to forget whether they think 'promiscuous dancing' immoral or praiseworthy. Well, you must know some of my brother's constituents are alarmingly excellent, fat, suburban, and retired, and we have hatched a juvenile hay-making where they may eat and flirt without detriment to decided piety, and when they go off, we dress for a second instalment for an evening party."

To Phœbe it sounded like opening Paradise, and she

listened anxiously for the decision, but nothing appeared certain except the morrow's dinner, and that Lucilla was to come to spend the Sunday at Miss Charlecote's; and this being fixed, the luncheon party broke up, with such pretty bright affection on Lucilla's part, such merry coaxing of Honor, and such orders to Phœbe to "catch that Robin to-morrow," that there was no room left for the sense of disappointment that no rational word had passed.

"Where?" asked Owen, getting into the carriage.

"Henry knows—the Royal Academy."

"Ha! no alteration in consequence of the invitation? no finery required? you must not carry Hiltonbury philosophy too far."

"I have not accepted it."

"That is not required; it is your fate, Phœbe, why don't you speak, or are you under an embargo from any of the wicked enchanters? Even if so you might be got off among the pious juveniles?"

"Papa was so kind as to say I might go wherever Miss Charlecote liked," said Phœbe; "but, indeed, I'd rather do exactly what suits her, I dare say the morning party will suit her best . . ."

"The oily popular preachers!"

"Thank you, Owen," laughed Honor.

"No, now you must accept the whole. There's room to give the preachers a wide berth, even should they insist on 'concluding with prayer,' and it will be a pretty sight. They have the Guard's band coming."

"I never heard a military band," ejaculated Phœbe.

"And there are to be sports for the village children, I believe," added Owen; "besides, you will like to meet some of the lions; the Archdeacon and his wife will be there."

"But how can I think of filling up Mrs. Charteris's house, without the least acquaintance?"

"Honey-sweet philosopher, Eloïsa heeds as little how her house is filled, so it *be* filled, as Jessica did her father's ring. Five dresses a day, with accoutrements to match, and for the rest she is sublimely indifferent. Fortune played her a cruel trick in preventing her from being born a fair sultana."

"Not to be a Mahometan?" said Phœbe.

"I don't imagine she is far removed from one," then as

Phœbe's horror made her look like Maria, he added—"I don't mean that she was not bred a Christian, but the Oriental mind never distinctively embraces tenets contrary to its constitution."

"Miss Charlecote, is he talking in earnest?"

"I hope not," Honora said, a little severely, "for he would be giving a grievous account of the poor lady's faith"

"Faith! no, my dear, she has not reflection enough for faith. All that enters into the Eastern female mind is a little observance."

"And you are not going to leave Phœbe to believe that you think it indifferent whether those observances be Christian or Pagan?" said Honora, earnestly.

There was a little pause, and then Owen rather hesitatingly said—"It is a hard thing to pronounce that three-fifths of one's fellow creatures are on the high road to Erebus, especially when ethnologically we find that certain aspects of doctrine never have approved themselves to certain races, and that climate is stronger than creed. Am I not talking Fennimorically, Phœbe?"

"Much more Fennimorically than I wish her to hear, or you to speak," said Honora, "you talk as if there were no such thing as truth."

"Ah! now comes the question of subjective and objective, and I was as innocent as possible of any intention of plunging into such a sea, or bringing those furrows into your forehead, dear Honor! See what it is to talk to you and Miss Fennimore's pupil. All things, human and divine, have arisen out of my simple endeavour to show you that you must come to Castle Blanch, the planners of the feast having so ordained, and it being good for all parties, due from the fairy godmother to the third princess, and seriously giving Cilly another chance of returning within the bounds of discretion."

Honora thought as much. She hoped that Robert would by that time have assumed his right to plead with Lucilla, and that in such a case she should be a welcome refuge, and Phœbe still more indispensable; so her lips opened in a yielding smile, and Phœbe thanked her rapturously, vague hopes of Robert's bliss adding zest to the anticipation of the lifting of the curtain which hid the world of brightness.

"There's still time," said Owen, with his hand on the check string, "which do you patronise? Redmayne or . . ."

"Nonsense," smiled Honor, "we can't waste our escort upon women's work."

"Ladies never want a gentleman more than when their taste is to be directed."

"He is afraid to trust us, Phœbe!"

"Conscience has spoken," said Owen, "she knows how she would go and disguise herself in an old dowager's gown to try to look like sixty!"

"As for silk gowns"

"I positively forbid it," he cried, cutting her short, "it is five years old!"

"A reason why I should not have another too grand to wear out."

"And you never ought to have had it. Phœbe, it was bought when Lucy was seventeen, on purpose to look as if she was of a fit age for a wall-flower, and so well has the poor thing done its duty, that Lucy hears herself designated as the pretty girl who belongs to the violet and white! If she had known *that* was coming after her, I won't answer for the consequence!"

"If it *does* annoy Lucy—we do not so often go out together—don't, Owen, I never said it was to be now, I am bent on Landseer."

"But I said so," returned Owen, "for Miss Charlecote regards the distressed dress-makers—four dresses—think of the fingers that must ache over them."

"Well, he does what he pleases," sighed Honor, "there's no help for it, you see, Phœbe. Shall you dislike looking on?" For she doubted whether Phœbe had been provided with means for her equipment, and might not require delay and correspondence, but the frank answer was "Thank you, I shall be glad of the opportunity. Papa told me I might fit myself out in case of need."

"And suppose we are too late for the Exhibition."

"I never bought a dress before," quoth Phœbe.

Owen laughed. "That's right, Phœbe! Be strong-minded and original enough to own that some decorations surpass 'Raffaelles, Coreggios and stuff'"

"No," said Phœbe, simply and with no affectation of scorn, "they only interest me more at this moment."

Honor smiled to Owen her love for the honesty that never spoke for effect, nor took what it believed it ought to feel, for what it really felt. Withal, Owen gained his purpose, and conducted the two ladies into one of the great shops of ladies' apparel.

Phœbe followed Miss Charlecote with eyes of lively anticipation. Miss Fennimore had taught her to be *real* when she could not be philosophical, and scruples as to the "vain pomp and glory of the world," had not presented themselves; she only found herself admitted to privileges hitherto so jealously withheld as to endow them with a fictitious value, and in a scene of real beauty. The textures, patterns, and tints were, as Owen observed, such as approved themselves to the æsthetic sense, the miniature embroidery of the brocades was absolute art, and no contemptible taste was displayed in the apparently fortuitous yet really elaborate groupings of rich and delicate hues, fine folds, or ponderous draperies.

"Far from it," said Honor; "the only doubt is whether such be a worthy application of æsthetics. Were they not given us for better uses?"

"To diffuse the widest amount of happiness?"

"That is one purpose."

"And a fair woman well dressed is the sight most delightful to the greatest number of beholders."

Honor made a playful face of utter repudiation of the maxim, but meeting him on his own ground emphasised "FAIR and WELL dressed—that is, appropriately."

"That is what brings me here," said Owen, turning round, as the changeful silks, already asked for, were laid on the counter before them.

It was an amusing shopping. The gentleman's object was to direct the taste of both ladies, but his success was not the same. Honora's first affections fell upon a handsome black, enlivened by beautiful blue flowers in the flounces; but her tyrant scouted it as "a dingy dowager," and overruled her into choosing a delicate lavender, insisting that if it were less durable, so much the better for her friends, and domineering over the black lace accompaniments with a solemn tenderness that made her warn him in a whisper that she should be taken for his ancient bride, thus making him some degrees more drolly attentive; settling her headgear

with the lady of the shop, without reference to her ! After all, it was very charming to be so affectionately made a fool of, and it was better for her children as well as due to the house of Charlecote that she should not be a dowdy country cousin.

Meantime, Phœbe stood by amused, assisting, but not at all bewildered. Miss Fennimore had impressed the maxim : " Always know what you mean to do and do it." She had never chosen a dress before, but that did not hinder her from having a mind and knowing it; she had a reply for each silk that Owen suggested, and the moment her turn came, she desired to see a green glacé. In vain he exclaimed, and drew his favourites in front of her, in vain appealed to Miss Charlecote and the shopman; she laughed him off, took but a moment to reject each proffered green which did not please her, and in as brief a space, had recognised the true delicate pale tint of ocean. It was one that few complexions could have borne, but their connoisseur, with one glance from it to her fresh cheek, owned her right, though much depended on the garniture, and he again brought forward his beloved lilac, insinuating that he should regard her selection of it as a personal attention. No; she laughed and said she had made up her mind and would not change; and while he was presiding over Honora's black lace, she was beforehand with him, and her bill was being made out for her white muslin worked mantle, white bonnet with a tuft of lady grass, white evening dress and wreath of lilies of the valley.

" Green and white, forsaken quite," was the best revenge that occurred to him, and Miss Charlecote declared herself ashamed that the old lady's dress had caused so much more fuss than the young lady's.

It was of course too late for the Exhibition, so they applied themselves to further shopping, until Owen had come to the farthest point whence he could conveniently walk back to dine with his cousins, and go with them to the opera, and he expended some vituperation upon Ratia for an invitation which had prevented Phœbe from being asked to join the party.

Phœbe was happy enough without it, and though not morbidly bashful, felt that at present it was more comfortable to be under Miss Charlecote's wing than that of Lucilla, and that the quiet evening was more composing than fresh scenes of novelty.

The Woolstone Lane world was truly very different from that of which she had had a glimpse, and quite as new to her. Mr. Parsons, after his partial survey, was considering of possibilities, or more truly of endeavours at impossibilities, a mission to that dreadful population, means of discovering their sick, or reclaiming their children, of causing the true Light to shine in that frightful gross darkness that covered the people. She had never heard anything yet discussed save on the principle of self-pleasing or self-aggrandisement; here self-spending was the axiom on which all the problems were worked.

After dinner, Mr. Parsons retired into the study, and while his wife and Miss Charlecote sat down for a friendly gossip over the marriages of the two daughters; Phœbe welcomed an unrestrained *tête-à-tête* with her brother. They were one on either seat of the old oriel window, she, with her work on her lap, full of pleasant things to tell him, but pausing as she looked up, and saw his eyes far far away, as he knelt on the cushion, his elbows on the sill of the open lattice, one hand supporting his chin, the other slowly erecting his hair into the likeness of the fretful porcupine. He had heard of, but barely assented to, the morrow's dinner, or the *fête* at Castle Blanch, he had not even asked her how Lucilla looked; and after waiting for some time, she said as a feeler—"You go with us to-morrow?"

"I suppose I must."

"Lucy said so much in her pretty way about catching the robin, that I am sure she was vexed at your not having called."

No answer: his eyes had not come home.

Presently he mumbled something so much distorted by the compression of his chin, and by his face being out of window that his sister could not make it out. In answer to her sound of inquiry, he took down one hand, removed the other from his temple, and emitting a modicum more voice from between his teeth, said, "It is plain—it can't be. . . ."

"What can't be? Not—Lucy?" gasped Phœbe.

"I can't take shares in the business."

Her look of relief moved him to explain, and drawing himself in, he sat down on his own window seat, stretching a leg across, and resting one foot upon that where she was

placed so as to form a sort of barrier, shutting themselves into a sense of privacy.

"I can't do it," he repeated, "not if my bread depended on it."

"What is the matter?"

"I have looked into the books. I have gone over it with Rawlins."

"You don't mean that we are going to be ruined?"

"Better that we were than to go on as we do! Phœbe, it is wickedness." There was a long pause: Robert rested his brow on his hand, Phœbe gazed intently at him, trying to unravel the idea so suddenly presented. She had reasoned it out before he looked up, and she roused him by softly saying, "You mean that you do not like the manufacture of spirits because they produce so much evil."

Though he did not raise his head, she understood his affirmation and went on with her quiet logic, for poor girl, hers was not the happy maiden's defence—"What my father does cannot be wrong." Without condemning her father, she instinctively knew that weapon was not in her armoury, and could only betake herself to the merits of the case. "You know how much rather I would see you a clergyman, dear Robin;" she said, "but I do not understand why you change your mind. We always knew that spirits were improperly used, but that is no reason why none should be made, and they are often necessary."

"Yes," he answered, "but, Phœbe, I have learned to-day that our trade is not supported by the lawful use of spirits. It is the ministry of hell."

Phœbe raised her startled eyes in astonished inquiry.

"I would have credited nothing short of the books, but there I find that not above a fifth part of our manufacture goes to respectable houses, where it is applied properly. The profitable traffic, which it is the object to extend, is the supply of the gin palaces of the City. The leases of most of those you see about here belong to the firm, it supplies them, and gains enormously on their receipts. It is to extend the dealings in this way that my legacy is demanded."

The enormity only gradually beginning to dawn upon Phœbe, all she said was a meditative—"You would not like that."

"You do not realize it," he said, nettling at her quiet

tone. "Do not you understand? You and I, and all of us, have eaten and drunk, been taught more than we could learn, lived in a fine house, and been made into ladies and gentlemen, all by battenning on the vice and misery of this wretched population. Those unhappy men and women are lured into the gaudy palaces at the corners of the streets to purchase a moment's oblivion of conscience, by stinting their children of bread, that we may wear fine clothes, and call ourselves country people."

"Do not talk so, Robert," she exclaimed, trembling; "it cannot be right to say such things. . . . :"

"It is only the bare fact! it is no pleasure to me to accuse my own father, I assure you, Phœbe, but I cannot blind myself to the simple truth."

"He cannot see it in that light."

"He *will* not."

"Surely," faltered Phœbe, "it cannot be so bad when one does not know it is"

"So far true. The conscience does not waken quickly to evils with which our lives have been long familiar."

"And Mervyn was brought up to it."

"That is not my concern," said Robert, too much in the tone of "Am I my brother's keeper?"

"You will at least tell your reasons for refusing."

"Yes, and much I shall be heeded! However, my own hands shall be pure from the wages of iniquity. I am thankful that all I have comes from the Mervyns."

"It is a comfort, at least, that you see your way."

"I suppose it is; " but he sighed heavily, with a sense that it was almost profanation to have set such a profession in the balance against the sacred ministry.

"I know *she* will like it best."

Dear Phœbe! in spite of Miss Fennimore, faith must still have been much stronger than reason if she could detect the model parsoness in yonder firefly.

Poor child, she went to bed, pondering over her brother's terrible discoveries, and feeling as though she had suddenly awakened to find herself implicated in a web of iniquity; her delightful parcel of purchases lost their charms, and oppressed her as she thought of them in connection with the rags of the squalid children the Rector described, and she felt as if there were no escape, and she could never be happy

again under the knowledge of the price of her luxuries, and the dread of judgment. "Much good had their wealth done them," as Robert truly said. The house of Beauchamp had never been nearly so happy as if their means had been moderate. Always paying court to their own station, or they were disunited among themselves, and not yet amalgamated with the society to which they had attained, the younger ones passing their elders in cultivation, and every discomfort of change of position felt, though not acknowledged. Even the mother, lady as she was by birth, had only belonged to the second-rate class of gentry, and while elevated by wealth was lowered by connection, and not having either mind or strength enough to stand on her own ground, trod with an ill-assured foot on that to which she aspired.

Not that all this crossed Phœbe's mind. There was merely a dreary sense of depression, and of living in the midst of a grievous mistake, from which Robert alone had the power of disentangling himself, and she fell asleep sadly enough; but, fortunately, sins, neither of her own nor of those for whom we are responsible, have not a lasting power of paining; and she rose up in due time to her own calm, sunshiny spirit of anticipation of the evening's meeting between Robin and Lucy—to say nothing of her own first dinner party.

The ladies of the house were going to a ball, and were in full costume: Eloïsa a study for the Arabian Nights, and Lucilla in an azure gossamer-like texture surrounding her like a cloud, turquoises on her arms, and blue and silver ribbons mingled with her blonde tresses.

Very like the clergyman's wife!

O, sage Honor! were you not provoked with yourself for being so old as to regard that bewitching sprite, and marvel whence comes the cost of those robes of the woof of Faerie?

Let Oberon pay Titania's bills.

That must depend on who Oberon is to be.

Phœbe, to whom a doubt on that score would have appeared high treason, nevertheless hated the presence of Mr. Calthorp as much as she could hate anything, and was in restless anxiety as to Titania's behaviour. She herself had no cause to complain, for she was at once singled out

and led away from Miss Charlecote, to be shown some photographic performances, in which Lucy and her cousin had been dabbling.

"There, that horrid monster is Owen—he never will come out respectable. Mr. Prendergast, he is better, because you don't see his face. There's our school, Edna Murrell and all; I flatter myself that *is* a work of art: only this little wretch fidgetted, and muddled himself."

"Is that the mistress? she does not look like one."

"Not like Sally Page? No; she would bewilder the Hiltonbury mind. I mean you to see her; I would not miss the shock to Honor. No, don't show it to her! I won't have any preparation."

"Do you call that preparation?" said Owen, coming up, and taking up the photograph indignantly. "You should not do such things, Cilly!"

"'Tis n't I that do them—it's Phœbe's brother—the one in the sky I mean, Dan Phœbus, and if he won't flatter, I can't help it. No, no, I'll not have it broken; it is an exact likeness of all the children's spotted frocks, and if it be not of Edna, it ought to be."

"Look, Robert," said Phœbe, as she saw him standing shy, grave, and monumental, with nervous hands clasped over the back of a chair, neither advancing nor retreating, "what a beautiful place this is!"

"Oh! that's from a print—Glendalough! I mean to bring you plenty of the real place."

"Kathleen's Cave," said the unwelcome millionaire.

"Yes, with a comment on Kathleen's awkwardness! I should like to see the hermit who could push me down."

"You! You'll never tread in Kathleen's steps!"

"Because I shan't find a hermit in the cave?"

"Talk of skylarking on 'the lake whose gloomy shore'—They all laughed except the two Fulmorts."

"There's a simpler reason," said one of the Guardsmen, "namely, that neither party will be there at all."

"No, not the saint—"

"Nor the lady. Miss Charteris tells me all the maiden aunts are come up from the country." (How angry Phœbe was!)

"Happily, it is an article I don't possess."

"Well, we will not differ about technicalities, as long as

the fact is the same. You'll remember my words when you are kept on a diet of Hannah Moor and Miss Edgeworth till you shall have abjured hounds, balls, and salmon-flies."

"The woman lives not who has the power!"

"What bet will you take, Miss Sandbrook?"

"What bet will you take, Lord William, that, maiden aunts and all, I appear on the 3d, in a dress of salmon flies?"

"A hat trimmed with goose feathers to a pocket-handkerchief, that by that time you are in the family mansion, repenting of your sins."

Phœbe looked on like one in a dream, while the terms of the wager were arranged with playful precision. She did not know that dinner had been announced, till she found people moving, and in spite of her antipathy to Mr. Calthorp, she rejoiced to find him assigned to herself—dear, good Lucy must have done it to keep Robin to herself, and dear, good Lucy she shall be, in spite of the salmon, since in the progress downstairs she has cleared the cloud from his brow.

It was done by a confiding, caressing clasp on his arm, and the few words, "Now for old friends! How charming little Phœbe looks!"

How different were his massive brow and deep-set eyes without their usual load, and how sweet his gratified smile!

"Where have you been, you Robin? If I had not passed you in the Park, I should never have guessed there was such a bird in London. I began to change my mind, like Christiana—I thought Robins were harmless and gentle birds, wont to hop about men's doors, and feed on crumbs, and such-like harmless food."

"And have you seen me eating worms?"

"I've not seen you at all."

"I did not think you had leisure—I did not believe I should be welcome."

"The cruellest cut of all; positive irony."

"No, indeed! I am not so conceited as."

"As what?"

"As to suppose you could want me."

"And there was I longing to hear about Phœbe! If you had only come, I could have contrived her going to the *Zauberflote* with us last night, but I didn't know the length of her tether."

"I did not know you were so kind."

"Be kinder yourself another time. Don't I know how I have been torn to pieces at Hiltonbury, without a friend to say one word for the poor little morsel!" she said piteously.

He was impelled to an eager "No, no!" but recalling facts, he modified his reply into, "Friends enough, but very anxious!"

"There, I knew none of you trusted me," she said, pretending to pout.

"When play is so like earnest. . . ."

"Slow people are taken in! That's the fun! I like to show that I can walk alone sometimes, and not be snatched up the moment I pop my head from under my leading strings."

Her pretty gay toss of the head prevented Robert from thinking whether woman is meant to be without leading strings.

"And it was to avoid countenancing my vagaries that you stayed away?" she said, with a look of injured innocence.

"I was very much occupied," answered Robert, feeling himself in the wrong.

"That horrid office! You aren't thinking of becoming a Clarence to drown yourself in brandy—that would never do."

"No, I have given up all thoughts of that!"

"You *thought*, you wretched Redbreast! I *thought* you knew better."

"So I ought," said Robert, gravely, "but my father wished me to make the experiment, and I must own, that before I looked into the details, there were considerations which—which. . . ."

"Such considerations as *l. s. d.*? For shame!"

"For shame, indeed," said the happy Robert. "Phœbe judged you truly. I did not know what might be the effect of habit. . . ." and he became embarrassed, doubtful whether she would accept the assumption on which she spoke; but she went beyond his hopes.

"The only place I ever cared for is a very small old parsonage," she said, with feeling in her tone.

"Wrapworth? that is near Castle Blanch."

"Yes! I must show it you. You shall come with Honor and Phœbe on Monday, and I will show you everything."

"I should be delighted—but is it not arranged?"

"I'll take care of that. Mr. Prendergast shall take you in, as he would a newly arrived rhinoceros, if I told him. He was our curate, and used to live in the house even in our time. Don't say a word, Robin, it is to be. I must have you see my river, and the stile where my father used to sit when he was tired. I've never told any one which that is."

Ordinarily Lucilla never seemed to think of her father, never named him, and her outpouring was doubly prized by Robert, whose listening face drew her on.

"I was too much of a child to understand how fearfully weak he must have been, for he could not come home after service without a rest on that stile, and we used to play round him, and bring him flowers. My best recollections are all of that last summer—it seems like my whole life at home, and much longer than it could really have been. We were all in all to one another. How different it would have been if he had lived! I think no one has believed in me since."

There was something ineffably soft and sad in the last words, as the beautiful, petted, but still lonely orphan, cast down her eyelids with a low, long sigh, as though owning her errors, but pleading this extenuation. Robert, much moved, was murmuring something incoherent, but she went on. "Rashe does, perhaps. Can't you see how it is a part of the general disbelief in me to suppose that I come here only for London seasons, and such like? I must live where I have what the dear old soul there has not got to give."

"You cannot doubt of her affection. I am sure there is nothing she would not do for you."

"'Do!' that is not what I want. It can't be done, it must be *felt*, and that it never will be. When there's a mutual antagonism, gratitude becomes a fetter, intolerable when it is strained."

"I cannot bear to hear you talk so; revering Miss Charlecote, as I do, and feeling that I owe everything to her notice."

"O I find no fault, I reverence her too! It was only the nature of things, not her intentions, nor her kindness that was to blame. She meant to be justice and mercy combined towards us, but I had all the one, and Owen all the other. Not that I am jealous! Oh, no! Not that she could help it; but no woman can help being hard on her rival's daughter."

Nothing but the sweet tone and sad arch smile could have made this speech endurable to Robert, even though he remembered many times when the trembling of the scale in Miss Charlecote's hands had filled him with indignation.

"You allow that it was justice," he said smiling.

"No doubt of that," she laughed. "Poor Honor! I must have been a grievous visitation, but I am very good now; I shall come and spend Sunday as gravely as a judge, and when you come to Wrapworth, you shall see how I can go to the school when it is not forced down my throat—no merit either, for our mistress is perfectly charming, with *such* a voice! If I were Phœbe I would look out, for Owen is desperately smitten."

"Phœbe!" repeated Robert, with a startled look.

"Owen and Phœbe! I considered it *une affaire arrangée* as much as" She had almost said you and me: Robert could supply the omission, but he was only blind of *one* eye, and gravely said, "It is well there is plenty of time before Owen to tame him down."

"Oney," laughed Lucilla; "yes, he has a good deal to do in that line, with his opinions in such a mess that I really don't know what he does believe."

Though the information was not new to Robert, her levity dismayed him, and he gravely began, "If you have such fears," but she cut him off short.

"Did you ever play at bagatelle?"

He stared in displeased surprise.

"Did you never see the ball go joggling about before it could settle into its hole, and yet abiding there very steadily at last? Look on quietly and you will see the poor fellow as sober a parish-priest as yourself."

"You are a very philosophical spectator of the process," Robert said, still displeased.

"Just consider what a capacious swallow the poor boy had in his tender infancy, and how hard it was crammed with legends, hymns, and allegories, with so many scruples bound down on his poor little conscience that no wonder, when the time of expansion came, the whole concern should give way with a jerk."

"I thought Miss Charlecote's education had been most anxiously admirable."

"Precisely so! Don't you see? Why, how dull you are for a man who has been to Oxford!"

"I should seriously be glad to hear your view, for Owen's course has always been inexplicable to me."

"To you, poor Robin, who lived gratefully on the crumbs of our advantages! The point was that to you they were crumbs, while we had a surfeit."

"Owen never seemed overdone. I used rather to hate him for his faultlessness, and his familiarity with what awed my ignorance."

"The worse for him! He was too apt a scholar, and received all unresisting, unsifting—Anglo-Catholicism, slightly touched with sentiment, enthusiasm for the Crusades, passive obedience—acted faithfully up to it; imagined that to be 'not a good Churchman,' as he told Charles, expressed the seven deadly sins, and that reasoning was the deadliest of all!"

"As far as I understand you, you mean that there was not sufficient distinction between proven and non-proven—important and unimportant."

"You begin to perceive. If Faith be overworked, reason kicks; and, of course, when Owen found the Holt was not the world; that thinking was not the exclusive privilege of demons; that habits he considered as imperative duties were inconvenient, not to say impracticable; that his articles of faith included much of the apocryphal,—why there was a general downfall!"

"Poor Miss Charlecote," sighed Robert, "it is a disheartening effect of so much care."

"She should have let him alone, then, for uncle Kit to make a sailor of. Then he would have had something better to do than to *think*!"

"Then you are distressed about him?" said Robin, wistfully.

"Thank you," said she, laughing; "but you see I am too wise ever to think or distress myself. He'll think himself straight in time, and begin a reconstruction from his scattered materials, I suppose, and meantime he is a very comfortable brother, as such things go; but it is one of the grudges I can't help owing to Honora, that such a fine fellow as that is not an independent sailor or soldier, able to have some fun, and not looked on as a mere dangler after the Holt."

"I thought the reverse was clearly understood?"

"She ought to have 'acted as sich.' How my relatives, and yours too, would laugh if you told them so! Not that I think, like them, that it is Elizabethan dislike to naming a successor, nor to keep him on his good behaviour; she is far above that, but it is plain how it will be. The only other relation she knows in the world is farther off than we are—not a bit more of a Charlecote, and twice her age; and when she has waited twenty or thirty years longer for the auburn-haired lady my father saw in a chapel at Toronto, she will bethink herself that Owen, or Owen's eldest son, had better have it than the Queen. That's the sense of it; but I hate the hanger-on position it keeps him in."

"It is a misfortune," said Robert. "People treat him as a man of expectations, and at his age, it would not be easy to disown them, even to himself. He has an eldest son air about him, which makes people impose on him the belief that he is one; and yet who could have guarded against the notion more carefully than Miss Charlecote?"

"I'm of Uncle Kit's mind," said Lucilla, "that children should be left to their natural guardians. What! is Lolly really moving before I have softened down the edge of my ingratitude?"

"So!" said Miss Charteris, as she brought up the rear of the procession of ladies on the stairs.

Lucilla faced about on the step above, with a face where interrogation was mingled with merry defiance.

"So that is why the Calthorp could not get a word all the livelong dinner-time!"

"Ah! I used you ill; I promised you an opportunity of studying 'Cock Robin,' but you see I could not help keeping him myself, I had not seen him for so long."

"You were very welcome! It looks exactly what baffles me. I can talk to any creature in the world except an incipient parson."

"Owen for instance?"

"Oh! if people choose to put a force on nature there can be no general rules. But Cilly, you know I've always said you should marry whoever you liked; but I require another assurance—on your word and honour—that you are not irrevocably Jenny Wren as yet?"

"Did you not see the currant wine?" said Cilly, pulling

leaves off a myrtle in a tub on the stairs, and scattering them over her cousin.

"Seriously, Cilly! Ah, I see now—your exclusive attention to him entirely reassures me. You would never have served him so, if you had meant it."

"It was commonplace in me," said Lucilla, gravely, "but I could not help it; he made me feel so good—or so bad—that I believe I shall. . . ."

"Not give up the salmon," cried Horatia. "Cilly, you will drive me to commit matrimony on the spot."

"Do," said Lucilla, running lightly up, and dancing into the drawing-room, where the ladies were so much at their ease, on low couches and ottomans, that Phœbe stood transfixed by the novelty of a drawing-room treated with such freedom, as was seldom permitted in even the schoolroom at Beauchamp when Miss Fennimore was in presence.

"Phœbe, bright Phœbe!" cried Lucilla, pouncing on both her hands, and drawing her towards the other room, "it is ten ages since I saw you, and you must bring your taste to aid my choice of the fly costume. Did you hear, Rashe? I've a bet with Lord William that I appear at the ball all in flies. Isn't it fun?"

"O jolly!" cried Horatia. "Make yourself a pike-fly."

"No no, not a guy for any one. Only wear a trimming of salmon flies, which will be lovely."

"You do not really mean it?" said Phœbe.

"Mean it? With all my heart, in spite of the tremendous sacrifice of good flies. Where honour is concerned. . . ."

"There I knew you would not shirk."

"Did I ever say so?"—in a whisper, not unheard by Phœbe, and affording her so much satisfaction that she only said, in a grave puzzled voice, "The hooks?"

"Hooks and all," was the answer; "I do nothing by halves."

"What a state of mind the fishermen will be in!" proceeded Horatia; "you'll have every one of them at your feet."

"I shall tell them that two of a trade never agree. Come and let us choose," and opening a drawer, Lucilla took out her long parchment book, and was soon eloquent on the merits of the doctor, the butcher, the duchess, and all her other radiant fabrications of gold pheasant's feathers, parrot

plumes, jay's wings, and the like. Phœbe could not help admiring their beauty, though she was perplexed all the while, uncomfortable on Robert's account, and yet not enough assured of the usages of the London world to be certain whether this were unsuitable. The Charteris family, though not of the most *élite* circles of all, were in one to which the Fulmorts had barely the *entrée*, and the ease and dash of the young ladies, Lucilla's superior age, and caressing patronage, all made Phœbe in her own eyes too young and ignorant to pass an opinion. She would have known more about the properties of a rectangle or the dangers of a paper currency.

Longing to know what Miss Charlecote thought, she stood answering as little as possible until Rashe had been summoned to the party in the outer room, and Cilly said laughing, "Well, does she astonish your infant mind?"

"I do not quite enter into her," said Phœbe doubtfully.

"The best natured, and most unappreciated girl in the world! Up to anything, and only a victim to prejudice. You, who have a strong-minded governess, ought to be superior to the delusion that it is interesting to be stupid and helpless."

"I never thought so," said Phœbe, feeling for a moment in the wrong, as Lucilla always managed to make her antagonists do.

"Yes, you do, or why look at me in that pleading, perplexed fashion, save that you have become possessed with the general prejudice. Weigh it, by the light of Wheatley's logic, and own candidly wherefore Rashe and I should be more liable to come to grief, travelling alone, than two men of the same ages."

"I have not grounds enough to judge," said Phœbe, beginning as though Miss Fennimore were giving an exercise to her reasoning powers, then, continuing with her girlish eagerness of entreaty, "I only know that it cannot be right since it grieves Robin and Miss Charlecote so much."

"And all that grieves Robin and Miss Charlecote must be shocking, eh? Oh! Phœbe, what very women all the Miss Fennimores in the world leaves us, and how lucky it is!"

"But I don't think you are going to grieve them," said Phœbe, earnestly.

"I hate the word!" said Lucilla. "Plaguing is only fun, but grieving, that is serious."

"I do believe this is only plaguing!" cried Phœbe, "and that this is your way of disposing of all the flies. I shall tell Robin so!"

"To spoil all my fun," exclaimed Lucilla. "No, indeed!"

Phœbe only gave a nod and smile of supreme satisfaction.

"Ah! but Phœbe, if I'm to grieve nobody, what's to become of poor Rashe, you little selfish woman?"

"Selfish, no!" sturdily said Phœbe. "If it be wrong for you, it must be equally wrong for her, and perhaps," she added slowly, "you would both be glad of some good reason for giving it up. Lucy, dear, do tell me whether you really like it, for I cannot fancy you do."

"Like it? Well yes! I like the salmons, and I dote on the fun and the fuss. I say, Phœbe, can you bear the burden of a secret? Well—only mind, if you tell Robin or Honor, I shall certainly go; we never would have taken it up in earnest if such a rout had not been made about it, that we were driven to show we did not care, and could be trusted with ourselves."

"Then you don't mean it?"

"That's as people behave themselves. Hush! Here comes Honor. Look here, Sweet Honey, I am in a process of selection. I am pledged to come out at the ball in a unique trimming of salmon flies."

"My dear!" cried poor Honor, in consternation. "You can't be so absurd."

"It is so slow not to be absurd."

"At fit times, yes; but to make yourself so conspicuous."

"They say I can't help that," returned Lucy, in a tone of comical melancholy.

"Well, my dear, we will talk it over on Sunday, when I hope you may be in a rational mood."

"Don't say so," implored Lucilla, "or I shan't have the courage to come. A rational mood—it is enough to frighten one away—and really I do want very much to come. I've not heard a word yet about the Holt. How is the old dame this summer?"

And Lucy went on with unceasing interest about all Hiltonbury matters, great and small, bewitching Honora more than would have seemed possible under the circumstances. She was such a winning fairy that it was hardly possible to treat her seriously, or to recollect causes of displeasure, when under the spell of her caressing vivacity, and unruffled, audacious fun.

So impregnable was her gracious good humour, so untameable her high spirits, that it was only by remembering the little spitting fire of twelve or fourteen years ago that it was credible that she had a temper at all; the temper, erst wont to exhale in chamois bounds and dervish pirouettes, had apparently left not a trace behind, and the sullen ungraciousness to those who offended her had become the sunniest sweetness, impossible to disturb. Was it real improvement? Concealment it was not, for Lucilla had always been transparently true. Was it not more probably connected with that strange levity, almost insensibility, that had apparently indurated feelings which in early childhood had seemed sensitive even to the extent of violence. Was she only good-humoured because nothing touched her? Had that agony of parting with her gentle father seared her affections, till she had become like a polished gem, all bright glancing beauty, but utterly unfeeling?



CHAPTER III.

"Reproof falleth on the saucy as water."

FEEJEE PROVERB.

CONSIDERATE of the slender purses of her children, Honora had devoted her carriage to fetch them to St. Wulstan's on the Sunday morning, but her offer had been declined, on the ground that the Charteris conveyances were free to them, and that it was better to make use of an establishment to which Sunday was no object than to cloud the honest face of the Hiltonbury coachman by depriving his horses of their day of rest. Owen would far rather take a cab than so affront Grey! Pleased with his bright manner,

Honora had yet reason to fear that expense was too indifferent to both brother and sister, and that the Charteris household only encouraged recklessness. Wherever she went, she heard of the extravagance of the family, and in the shops the most costly wares were recommended as the choice of Mrs. Charteris. Formerly, though Honor had equipped Lucilla handsomely for visits to Castle Branch, she had always found her wardrobe increased by the gifts of her uncle and aunt. The girl had been of age more than a year, and in the present state of the family, it was impossible that her dress could be still provided at their expense, yet it was manifestly far beyond her means, and what could be the result? She would certainly brook no interference, and would cast advice to the winds. Poor Honor could only hope for a crash that would bring her to reason, and devise schemes for forcing her from the effects of her own imprudence without breaking into her small portion. The great fear was lest false pride, and Charteris influence, should lead her to pay her debts at the cost of a marriage with the millionaire; and Honor could take little comfort in Owen's assurance that the Calthorp had too much sense to think of Cilly Sandbrook, and only promoted and watched her vagaries for the sake of amusement and curiosity. There was small satisfaction to her well-wishes in hearing that no sensible man could think seriously of her.

Anxiously was that Sunday awaited in Wulstone Lane, the whole party feeling that this was the best chance of seeing Lucilla in a reasonable light, and coming to an understanding with her. Owen was often enough visible in the interim, and always extremely agreeable; but Lucilla, never, and he only brought an account of her gaieties, shrugging his shoulders over them.

The day came, the bells began, they chimed, they changed, but still no Sandbrooks appeared. Mr. Parsons set off, and Robert made an excursion to the corner of the street. In vain Miss Charlecote still lingered; Mrs. Parsons, in despair, called Phœbe on with her as the single bell rang, and Honor and Robert presently started with heads turned over their shoulders, and lips laying all blame on Charteris' delays of breakfast. A last wistful look, and the church porch engulfed them; but even when enclosed in the polished square pew, they could not resign hope at every

tread on the matted floor, and finally subsided into a trust that the truants might after service emerge from a seat near the door. There were only too many to choose from.

That hope baffled, Honora still manufactured excuses which Phoebe greedily seized and offered to her brother, but she read his rejection of them in his face, and to her conviction that it was all accident, he answered, as she took his arm, "A small accident would suffice for Sandbrook."

"You don't think he is hindering his sister!"

"I can't tell. I only know that he is one of the many stumbling blocks in her way. He can do no good to any one with whom he associates intimately. I hate to see him reading poetry with you."

"Why did you never tell me so!" asked the startled Phoebe.

"You are so much taken up with him that I can never get at you, when I am not devoured by that office."

"I am sure I did not know it," humbly answered Phoebe. "He is very kind and amusing, and Miss Charlecote is so fond of him that, of course, we must be together; but I never meant to neglect you, Robin, dear."

"No, no, nonsense, it is no paltry jealousy; only now I can speak to you, I must," said Robert, who had been in vain craving for this opportunity of getting his sister alone, ever since the alarm excited by Lucilla's words.

"What is this harm, Robin?"

"Say not a word of it. Miss Charlecote's heart must not be broken before its time, and at any rate it shall not come through me."

"What, Robert?"

"The knowledge of what he is. Don't say it is prejudice. I know I never liked him, but you shall hear why. You ought now. . . ."

Robert's mind had often of late glanced back to the childish days when, with their present opinions reversed, he thought Owen a muff, and Owen thought him a reprobate. To his own blunt and reserved nature—the expressions, so charming to poor Miss Charlecote, had been painfully distasteful. Sentiment, profession, obtrusive reverence, and fault-finding scruples had revolted him, even when he thought it a proof of his own irreligion to be provoked. Afterwards, when both were school-boys, Robert had yearly increased in

conscientiousness under good discipline and training, but, in their holiday meetings, had found Owen's standard receding as his own advanced, and heard the once-deficient manly spirit asserted by boasts of exploits and deceptions repugnant to a well-conditioned lad. He saw Miss Charlecote's perfect confidence abused and trifled with, and the more he grew in a sense of honour, the more he disliked Owen Sandbrook.

At the University, while Robert's career was respectable and commonplace, Owen was at once a man of mark. Mental and physical powers alike rendered him foremost among his compeers; he could compete with the fast, and surpass the slow on their own ground; and his talents, ready celerity, good-humoured audacity and quick resource had always borne him through with the authorities, though there was scarcely an excess or irregularity in which he was not a partaker; and stories of Sandbrook's daring were always circulating among the undergraduates. But though Robert could have scared Phœbe with many a history of lawless pranks, yet these were not his chief cause for dreading Owen's intimacy with her. It was that he was one of the youths on whom the spirit of the day had most influence, one of the most adventurous thinkers and boldest talkers: wild in habits, not merely from ebullition of spirits, but from want of faith in the restraining power.

All this Robert briefly expressed in the words, "Phœbe, it is not that his habits are irregular and unsteady; many are so whose hearts are sound. But he is not sound—his opinions are loose, and he only respects and patronizes Divine Truth as what has approved itself to so many good, great, and beloved human creatures. It is not denial—it is patronage. It is the common-sense heresy."

"I thought we all ought to learn common sense."

"Yes, in things human, but with things Divine it is the subtle English form of rationalism. This is no time to explain, Phœbe, but human sense and intellect are made the test, and what surpasses them is only admired as long as its stringent rules do not fetter the practice."

"I am sorry you told me," said Phœbe, thoughtfully, "for I always liked him; he is so kind to me."

Had not Robert been full of his own troubles he would have been reassured, but he only gave a contemptuous groan.

"Does Lucy know this?" she asked.

"She told me herself what I well knew before. She does not reflect enough to take it seriously, and contrives to lay the blame upon the narrowness of Miss Charlecote's training."

"Oh, Robin! When all our best knowledge came from the Holt!"

"She says, perhaps not unjustly, that Miss Charlecote overdid things with him, and that this is reaction. She observes keenly. If she would only *think*! She would have been perfect had her father lived, to work on her by affection."

"The time for that is coming."

Robert checked her, saying, "Stay, Phœbe. The other night I was fooled by her engaging ways, but each day since I have become more convinced that I must learn whether she be only using me like the rest. I want you to be a witness of my resolution, lest I should be tempted to fail. I came to town, hesitating whether to enter the business for her sake. I found that this could not be done without a great sin. I look on myself as dedicated to the ministry, and thus bound to have a household suited to my vocation. All must turn on her willingness to conform to this standard. I shall lay it before her. I can bear the suspense no longer. My temper and resolution are going, and I am good for nothing. Let the touchstone be whether she will resign her expedition to Ireland, and go quietly home with Miss Charlecote. If she will so do, there is surely that within her that will shine out brighter when removed from irritation on the one side, or folly on the other. If she will not, I have no weight with her; and it is due to the service I am to undertake, to force myself away from a pursuit that could only distract me. I have no right to be a clergyman and choose a hindrance not a help—one whose tastes would lead back to the world, instead of to my work!"

As he spoke, in stern, rigid resolution—only allowing himself one long, deep, heavy sigh at the end—he stood still at the gates of the court, which were opened as the rest of the party came up; and as they crossed and entered the hall, they beheld, through the open door of the drawing-room, two figures in the window—one a dark torso, perched outside on the sill; the other, in blue skirt and boy-like bodice, negligently reposing on one side of the window-seat, her dainty little boots on the other; her coarse straw bonnet,

has been proclaimed for every pun upon sisters of the angle and sisters of the angels! So beware, Robin!"—and the comical audacity with which she turned on him, won a smile from the grave lips, that had lately seemed so remote from all peril of complimenting her whimsies.

Even Mr. Parsons said "the fun was tempting."

"Come and get ready for luncheon," said the less fascinated Honora, moving away.

"Come and catch it!" cried the elf, skipping up stairs before her, and facing round her "Dear old Honeyseed. "I honour your motives; but wouldn't it be for the convenience of all parties, if you took Punch's celebrated advice—don't."

"How am I to speak, Lucy," said Honora, "if you come with the avowed intention of disregarding what I say?"

"Then hadn't you better not?" murmured the girl, in the lowest tone, drooping her head, and peeping under her eyelashes, as she sat with a hand on each elbow of her arm-chair, as though in the stocks.

"I would not, my child," was the mournful answer, "if I could help caring for you."

Lucilla sprang up and kissed her. "Don't then; I don't like anybody to be sorry," she said. "I'm sure I'm not worth it."

"How can I help it, when I see you throwing away happiness—welfare—the good opinion of all your friends!"

"My dear Honora, you taught me yourself not to mind Mrs. Grundy! Come, never mind, the reasonable world has found out that women are less dependent than they used to be."

"It is not what the world thinks, but what is really decorous."

Lucilla laughed—though with some temper—"I wonder what we are going to do otherwise!"

"You are going beyond the ordinary restraints of women in your station; and a person who does so, can never tell to what she may expose herself. Liberties are taken when people come out to meet them."

"That's as they choose!" cried Lucilla, with such a gesture of her hand, such a flash of her blue eyes, that she seemed trebly the woman, and it would have been boldness indeed to presume with her.

"Yes; but a person who has even had to protect herself from incivility, to which she has wilfully exposed herself, does not remain what she might be behind her screen."

"*Omne ignotum pro terribili*," laughed Lucilla, still not to be made serious. "Now, I don't believe that the world is so flagrantly bent on annoying every pretty girl. People call me vain, but I never was so vain as that. I've always found them very civil; and Ireland is the land of civility. Now, seriously, my good cousin Honor, do you candidly expect any harm to befall us?"

"I do not think you likely to meet with absolute injury." Lucilla clapped her hands, and cried, "An admission, an admission! I told Rashe you were a sincere woman." But Miss Charlecote went on, "But there is harm to yourself in the affectation of masculine habits; it is a blunting of the delicacy suited to a Christian maiden, and not like the women whom St. Paul and St. Peter describe. You would find that you had forfeited the esteem—not only of ordinary society—but of persons whose opinion you do value; and in both these respects you would suffer harm. You, my poor child, who have no one to control you, or claim your obedience as a right, are doubly bound to be circumspect. I have no power over you; but if you have any regard for her to whom your father confided you; nay, if you consult what you know would have been his wishes, you will give up this project."

The luncheon bell had already rung, and consideration for the busy clergyman compelled her to go down with these last words, feeling as if there were a leaden weight at her heart.

Lucilla remained standing before the glass, arranging her wind-tossed hair; and, in her vehemence, tearing out combfuls, as she pulled petulantly against the tangled curls. "Her old way—to come over me with my father! Ha!—I love him too well, to let him be Miss Charlecote's engine for managing me!—her *dernier ressort* to play on my feelings. Nor will I have Robin set at me! Whether I go or not, shall be as I please, not as any one else does; and if I stay at home, Rashe shall own it is not for the sake of the conclave here. I told her she might trust me."

Down she went, and at luncheon devoted herself to the

captivation of Mr. Parsons; afterwards insisting on going to the schools—she, whose aversion to them was Honora's vexation at home. Strangers to make a sensation, were contrary to the views of the Parsons; but the wife found her husband inconsistent—"one lady, more or less, could make no difference on this first Sunday; and, by and by, Mrs. Parsons found a set of little formal white-capped faces, so beaming with entertainment at the young ladies' stories, and the young lady herself looking so charming, that she, too, fell under the enchantment.

After church, Miss Charlecote proposed a few turns in the garden; dingy enough, but a marvel for the situation: and here the tacit object of herself and Phœbe was to afford Robert an opportunity for the interview on which so much depended. But it was like trying to catch a butterfly; Lucilla was here, there, everywhere; and an excuse was hardly made for leaving her beside the grave, silent young man, ere her merry tones were heard chattering to some one else. Perhaps Robert, heart-sick and oppressed with the importance of what trembled on his tongue, was not ready in seizing the moment; perhaps she would not let him speak; at any rate she was aware of some design; since, baffling Phœbe's last attempt, she danced up to her bedroom after her, and throwing herself into a chair, in a paroxysm of laughter, cried, "You abominable little pussycat of a manœuverer, I thought you were in a better school for the proprieties! No, don't make your round eyes, and look so dismayed, or you'll kill me with laughing! Cooking *tête-à-têtes*, Phœbe—I thought better of you. Oh, fie!" and holding up her finger, as if in displeasure, she hid her face in ecstasies of mirth at Phœbe's bewildered simplicity.

"Robert wanted to speak to you," she said with puzzled gravity.

"And you would have set us together by the ears! No, no, thank you, I've had enough of that sort of thing for one day. And what shallow excuses. Oh! what fun to hear your pretexts. Wanting to see what Mrs. Parsons was doing, when you knew perfectly well she was deep in a sermon, and wished you at the antipodes. And blushing all the time like a full blown poppy!" and off she went on a fresh score—but, Phœbe, though disconcerted for a moment, was not to be put out of countenance when she understood

her ground, and she continued with earnestness, undesired by her companion—"Very likely I managed badly, but I know you do not really think it improper to see Robert alone, and it is very important that you should do so. Indeed it is, Lucy," she added—the youthful candour and seriousness of her pleading, in strong contrast to the flighty, mocking carelessness of Lucilla's manner; "do pray see him, I know he would make you listen. Will you be so very kind? If you would go into the little cedar room, I could call him at once."

"Point blank! Sitting in my cedar parlour! Phœbe, you'll be the death of me," cried Cilly, between peals of merriment. "Do you think I have nerves of brass?"

"You would not laugh, if you knew how much he feels."

"A very good thing for people to feel! It saves them from torpor."

"Lucy, it is not kind to laugh when I tell you he is miserable."

"That's only proper, my dear," said Lucilla, entertained by teasing.

"Not miserable from doubt," answered Phœbe, disconcerting in her turn. "We know you too well for that;" and as an expression amused, indignant, but far from favourable, came over the fair face she was watching, she added in haste, "It is this project; he thought you had said it was given up."

"I am much indebted," said Lucilla, haughtily, but again relapsing into laughter, "but to find myself so easily disposed of. Oh! Phœbe, there's no scolding such a baby as you, but if it were not so absurd."

"Lucy, Lucy, I beg your pardon; is it all a mistake, or have I said what was wrong? Poor Robin will be so unhappy."

Phœbe's distress touched Lucilla.

"Nonsense, you little goose, aren't you woman enough yet to know that one flashes out at finding oneself labelled, and made over before one's time."

"I'm glad if it was all my blundering," said Phœbe. "Dear Lucy, I was very wrong, but you see I always was so happy in believing it was understood!"

"How stupid," cried Lucilla, "one would never have any fun; no, you haven't tasted the sweets yet, or you would

know one has no notion of being make sure of till one chooses! Yes, yes, I saw he was primed and cocked, but I'm not going to let him go off."

"Lucy, have you no pity?"

"Not a bit! Don't talk commonplaces, my dear!"

"If you knew how much depends upon it."

"My dear, I know that," with an arch smile.

"No, you do not!" said Phœbe, so stoutly that Lucilla looked at her in some surprise.

"You think," said honest Phœbe, in her extremity, "that he only wants to make . . . to propose to you! Now, it is not only that, Lucilla," and her voice sank, as she could hardly keep from crying, "he will never do that if you go on as you are doing now; he does not think it would be right for a clergyman."

"Oh, I daresay!" quoth Lucilla, and then a silence.

"Did Honor tell him so, Phœbe?"

"Never, never," cried Phœbe; "no one has said a word against you! only don't you know how quiet and good anyone belonging to a clergymen should be?"

"Well, I've heard a great deal of news to-day, and it is all my own fault, for indulging in sentiment on Wednesday. I shall know better another time."

"Then you don't care!" cried Phœbe, turning round with eyes flashing as Lucilla did not know they could lighten. "Very well! if you don't think Robert worth it, I suppose I ought not to grieve, for you can't be what I used to think you; and it will be better for him when he once has settled his mind—than if—if afterwards you disappointed him and were a fine lady—but oh! he will be so unhappy," her tears were coming fast; "and, Lucy, I did like you so much!"

"Well, this is the funniest thing of all," cried Lucilla, by way of braving her own emotion, "little Miss Phœbe gone into the heroics!" and she caught her two hands, and holding her fast, kissed her on both cheeks, "a gone coon am I, Phœbe, no better than one of the wicked; and Robin, he grew angry, hopped upon a twig, did he! I beg your pardon, my dear, but it makes me laugh to think of his dignified settling of his mind. Oh! how soon it could be unsettled again! Come, I won't have any more of this; let it alone, Phœbe, and trust me that things will adjust themselves all

the better for letting them have their swing. Don't you look prematurely uneasy; and don't go and make Robin think that I have immolated him at the altar of the salmon. Say nothing of all this; you will only make a mess in narrating it."

"Very likely I may," said Phœbe; "but if you will not speak to him yourself, I shall tell him how you feel."

"If you can," laughed Lucilla.

"I mean, how you receive what I have told you of his views. I do not think it would be fair or kind to keep him in ignorance."

"Much good may it do him," said Lucy; "but I fancy you will tell him, whether I give you leave or not, and it can't make much difference; I'll tackle him, as the old woman say, when I please, and the madder he may choose to go, the better fun it will be."

"I believe you are saying so to tease me," said Phœbe; "but as I know you don't mean it, I shall wait till after the party, and then, unless you have had it out with him, I shall tell him what you have said."

"Thank you," said Lucilla, ironically, conveying to Phœbe's mind the conviction that she did not believe that Robert's attachment could suffer from what had here passed. Either she meant to grant the decisive interview, or else she was too confident in her own power to believe that he could relinquish her; at all events, Phœbe had sagacity enough to infer that she was not indifferent to him, though, as the provoking damsel ran down stairs, Phœbe's loyal spirit first admitted a doubt whether the tricky sprite might not prove as great a torment as a delight to Robin. "However," reflected she, "I shall make the less mischief, if I set it down while I remember it."

Not much like romance, but practical sense was both native and cultivated in Miss Fennimore's pupil. Yet as she recorded the sentences, and read them over bereft of the speaker's caressing grace, she blamed herself as unkind, and making the worst of gay retorts which had been provoked by her own home thrusts. "At least," she thought, "he will be glad to see that it was partly my fault, and he need never see it at all if Lucy will let him speak to her himself."

Meantime, Honora had found from Owen that the young

ladies had accepted an invitation to a very gay house in Cheshire, so that their movements would for a fortnight remain doubtful. She recurred to her view that the only measure to be taken was for him to follow them, so as to be able to interpose in any emergency, and she anxiously pressed on him the funds required.

"Shouldn't I catch it if they found me out?" said Owen, shrugging his shoulders. "No, but indeed, sweet Honey, I meant to have made up for this naughty girl's desertion. You and I would have had such rides and readings together: I want you to put me on good terms with myself."

"My dear boy! But won't that best be done by mind-ing your sister? She does want it, Owen; the less she will be prudent for herself, the more we must think for her!"

"She can do better for herself than you imagine," said Owen. "Men say, with all her free ways, they could not go the least bit farther with her than she pleases. You wouldn't suppose it, but she can keep out of scrapes better than Rashe can—never has been in one yet, and Rashe in twenty. Never mind, your Honor, there's sound stuff in the bonny scapegrace; all the better for being free and unconventional. The world owes a great deal to those who dare to act for themselves; though, I own, it is a trial when one's own domestic womankind take thereto."

"Or one's mankind to encouraging it," said Honor, smiling, but showing that she was hurt.

"I don't encourage it, I am only too wise to give it the zest of opposition. Was Lucy ever bent upon a naughty trick without being doubly incited by the pleasure of showing that she cared not for her younger brother?"

"I believe you are only too lazy! But, will you go? I don't think it can be a penance. You would see new country, and get plenty of sport."

"Come with me, Honey," said he, with the most insinuating manner, which almost moved her. "How jolly it would be!"

"Nonsense! an elderly spinster," she said, really pleased, though knowing it impossible.

"Stuff!" he returned, in the same tone. "Make it as good as a honeymoon. Think of Killarney, Honor!"

"You silly boy, I can't. There's harvest at home; besides, it would only aggravate that mad girl doubly to have me coming after her."

"Well, if you will not take care of me on a literal wild goose chase," said Owen, with playful disconsolateness, "I'll not answer for the consequences."

"But, you go?"

"Vacation rambles are too tempting to be resisted; but, mind, I don't promise to act good genius save at the last extremity, or else I shall never get forgiven, and I shall keep some way in the rear."

So closed the consultation; and after an evening which Lucilla perforce rendered lively, she and her brother took their leave. The next day they were to accompany the Charterises to Castle Blanch to prepare for the festivities; Honor and her two young friends following on the Wednesday afternoon.

CHAPTER IV.

"He who sits by haunted well
Is subject to the Nixie's spell;
He who walks on lonely beach
To the mermaid's charmed speech;
He who walks round ring of green
Offends the peevish Fairy Queen."—SCOTT.

At the station nearest to Castle Blanch stood the tall form of Owen Sandbrook, telling Honor that he and his sister had brought the boat—the river was the longer way, but they would prefer it to the road, and so indeed they did, for Phœbe herself had had enough of the City to appreciate the cool verdure and calm stillness of the meadow pathway, by which they descended to the majestic river, smoothly sleeping in glassy quiet, or stealing along in complacently dimpling ripples.

On the opposite bank, shading off the sun, an oak copse sloped steeply towards the river, painting upon the surface a still shimmering likeness of the summit of the wood, every mass of foliage, every blushing spray receiving a perfect

counterpart, and full in the midst of the magic mirror floated what might have been compared to the roseate queen lily of the waters on her leaf.

There, in the flat, shallow boat, reclined the maiden, leaning over the gunwale, gazing into the summer wavelets with which one bare pinkly-tinted hand was toying, and her silken ringlets all but dipping in, from beneath the round, black hat, archly looped up on one side by a carnation bow, and encircled by a series of the twin jetty curls of the mallard; while the fresh rose colour of the spreading muslin dress was enhanced by the black scarf that hung carelessly over it. There was a moment's pause, as if no one could break the spell, but Owen, striding on from behind, quickly dissolved the enchantment.

"You monkey, you've cast off. You may float on to Greenwich next!" he indignantly shouted.

She started, shaking her head saucily. "'Twas so slow there, and so broiling," she called back, "and I knew I should only drift down to meet you, and could put in when I pleased."

Therewith she took the sculls and began rowing towards the bank, but without force sufficient to prevent herself from being borne further down than she intended.

"I can't help it," she exclaimed, fearlessly laughing as she passed them.

Robert was ready to plunge in to stem her progress, lest she should meet with some perilous eddy, but Owen laid hold on him, saying, "Don't be nervous, she's all right, only giving trouble after the nature of women. There; are you satisfied?" he called to her, as she came to a stop against a reed bed, with a tall fence interposed between boat and passengers. "A nice ferry-woman you."

"Come and get me up again," was all her answer.

"Serve you right if I never picked you up till London Bridge," he answered "Stand clear, Fulmort," and with a run and a bound, he vaulted over the high hedge, and went crackling through the nodding bulrushes and reed-maces; while Lucy, having accomplished pulling up one of the latter, was pointing it lancewise at him, singing,

"With a bulrush for a spear, and a thimble for a hat
Wilt thou fight a traverse with the castle cat."

"Come, come; 'tis too squashy here for larking," he said authoritatively, stepping into the boat, and bringing it up with such absence of effort that when a few minutes after he had brought it to the landing-place, and the freight was seated, Robert had no sooner taken the other oar than he exclaimed at the force of the stream with which Owen had dealt so easily, and Lucilla so coolly.

"It really was a fearful risk," he said reproachfully to her.

"Oh!" she said; "I know my Thames, and my Thames knows me!"

"Now's the time to improve it," said Owen; "one or other should preach about young ladies getting loose, and not knowing where they may be brought up."

"But you see I did know; besides Phœbe's news from Paris will be better worth hearing," said Lucilla, tickling her friend's face with the soft long point of her dark velvety mace.

"My news from Paris?"

"For shame, Phœbe! Your face betrays you."

"Lucy; how could you know? I had not even told Miss Charlecote!"

"It's true! it's true!" cried Lucilla. "That's just what I wanted to know!"

"Lucy, then it was not fair," said Phœbe, much discomposed. "I was desired to tell no one, and you should not have betrayed me into doing so."

"Phœbe, you always were a green oasis in a wicked world!"

"And now let me hear?" said Miss Charlecote. "I can't flatter you, Phœbe; I thought you were labouring under a suppressed secret."

"Only since this morning," pleaded Phœbe earnestly, "and we were expressly forbidden to mention it; I cannot imagine how Lucy knows."

"By telegraph!"

Phœbe's face assumed an expression of immeasurable wonder.

"I almost hope to find you at cross purposes after all," said Honora.

"No such good luck," laughed Lucilla. "Cinderella's seniors could never go off two at a time. Ah! there's the name, I beg your pardon, Phœbe."

"But Lucy what can you mean? Who can have telegraphed about Augusta?"

"Ah! you knew not the important interests involved, nor Augusta, how much depended on her keeping the worthy Admiral in play. It was the nearest thing—had she only consented at the end of the evening instead of the beginning, poor Lord William would have had the five guineas that he wants so much more than Mr. Calthorp."

"Lucy!"

"It was a bet that Sir Nicholas would take six calendar months to supply the place of Lady Bannerman. It was the very last day, if Augusta had only waited till twelve!"

"You don't mean that he has been married before. I thought he was such an excellent man!" said Phœbe, in a voice that set others besides Lucilla off into irresistible mirth.

"Once, twice, thrice!" cried Lucilla. "Catch her, Honor, before she sinks into the river in disgust with this treacherous world."

"Do you know him, Lucy!" earnestly said Phœbe.

"Yes, and two of the wives; we used to visit them because he was an old captain of Uncle Kit's."

"I would not believe in Number Three, Phœbe, if I were you," said Owen, consolingly, "she wants confirmation."

"Two are as bad as three," sighed Phœbe, "and Augusta did not even call him a widower."

"Cupid bandaged! It was a case of love at first sight. Met at the *Trois Frères Provençaux*, heard each other's critical remarks, sought an introduction, compared notes, he discovered her foresight with regard to pale ale, each felt that here was a kindred soul!"

"That could not have been telegraphed!" said Phœbe, recovering spirit and incredulity.

"No; the telegraph was simply 'Bannerman, Miss Fulmort. 8.30 p.m., July 10th.' The other particulars followed by letter this morning."

"How old is he?" asked Phœbe, with resignation.

"Any age above sixty. What, Phœbe taking it to heart? I was prepared with congratulations. It is only second best to be sure, but don't you see your own emancipation?"

"I believe that had never occurred to Phœbe!" said Owen.

"I beg your pardon, Lucy," said Phœbe, thinking that she had appeared out of temper, "only it had sounded so nice in Augusta's letter, and she was so kind, and somehow it jars that there should have been that sort of talk."

Cilly was checked. In her utter want of thought it had not occurred to her that Augusta Fulmort could be other than a laughing stock, or that any bright anticipations could have been spent by any reasonable person on her marriage. Perhaps the companionship of Rashe and the satirical outspoken tone of her associates had somewhat blunted her perception of what might be offensive to the sensitive delicacy of a young sister, but she instantly perceived her mistake, and the carnation deepened in her cheek, at having distressed Phœbe, and Not that she had deigned any notice of Robert after the first cold shake of the hand, and he sat rowing with vigorous strokes, and a countenance of set gravity, more as if he were a boatman than one of the party; Lucilla could not even meet his eye when she peeped under her eyelashes to recover defiance by the sight of his displeasure.

It was a relief to all when Honora exclaimed, "Wrap-worth; how pretty it looks."

It was indeed pretty, seen through the archway of the handsome stone bridge. The church tower and picturesque village were set off by the frame that closed them in, and though they lost somewhat of the enchantment when the boat shot from under the arch, they were still a fair and goodly English scene.

Lucilla steered towards the steps leading to a smooth shaven lawn, shaded by a weeping willow, well known to Honor.

"Here we land you and your bag, Robert," said Owen, as he put in. "Cilly, have a little sense, do."

But Lucilla, to the alarm of all, was already on her feet, skipped like a chamois to the steps, and flew dancing up the sward. Ere Owen and Robert had helped the other two ladies to land in a more rational manner, she was shaking her mischievous head at a window, and thrusting in her scap-tral reed-mace.

"Neighbour, oh neighbour, I'm come to torment you! Yes, here we are in full force, ladies and all, and you must come out and behave pretty. Never mind your slippers, you ought

to be proud of the only thing I ever worked. Come out, I say, here's your guest, and you must be civil to him."

"I am very glad to see Mr. Fulmort," said Mr Prendergast, his only answer in words to all this, though while it was going on, as if she were pulling him by wires, as she imperiously waved her bulrush, he had struck his pen into the inkstand, run his fingers in desperation through his hair, risen from his seat, gazed about in vain for his boots, and felt as fruitlessly on the back of the door for a coat to replace the loose alpaca article that hung on his shoulders.

"There. You've gone through all the motions," said Cilly, "that'll do; now, come out and receive them."

Accordingly, he issued from the door, shy and slouching; rusty where he wore cloth, shiny where he wore alapaca, wild as to his hair, gay as to his feet, but, withal, the scholarly gentleman complete, and not a day older or younger, apparently, than when Honor had last seen him, nine years since, in bondage then to the child playing at coquetry, as now to the coquette playing at childhood. It was curious, Honor thought, to see how, though so much more uncouth and negligent than Robert, the indefinable signs of good blood made themselves visible, while they were wanting in one, as truly the Christian gentleman in spirit and in education.

Mr. Prendergast bowed to Miss Charlecote, and shook hands with his guest, welcoming him kindly; but the two shy men grew more bashful by contact, and Honor found herself, Owen, and Lucilla sustaining the chief of the conversation, the curate apparently looking to the young lady to protect him and do the honours, as she did by making him pull down a cluster of his roses for her companions, and conducting them to eat his strawberries, which she treated as her own, flitting, butterfly like, over the beds, selecting the largest and ruddiest specimens, while her slave plodded diligently to fill cabbage leaves, and present them to the party in due gradation.

Owen stood by amused, and silencing the scruples of his companions.

"He is in Elysium," he said; "he had rather be plagued by Cilly than receive a mitre! Don't hinder him, Honey; it is his pride to treat us as if we were at home and he our guest."

"Wrapworth has not been without Edna Murrell," said Lucilla, flinging the stem of her last strawberry at her brother, "and Miss Charleccote is a woman of schools. What, aren't we to go, Mr. Prendergast?"

"I beg your pardon. I do not know."

"Well; what is it?"

"I do sometimes wish Miss Murrell were not such an attraction."

"You did not think that of yourself."

"Well, I don't know; Miss Murrell is a very nice young woman," he hesitated, as Cilly seemed about to thrust him through with her reed; "but couldn't you, Cilly, now give her a hint that it would be better if she would associate more with Mrs. Jenkyns, and."

"Couldn't, Mr. Prendergast; I've more regard for doing as I would be done by. When you see Edna, Honor."

"They are very respectable women," said the curate, standing his ground; "and it would be much better for her than letting it be said she gives herself airs."

"That's all because we have had her up to the castle to sing."

"Well, so it is, I believe. They do say, too—I don't know whether it is so—that the work has not been so well attended to, nor the children so orderly."

"Spite, spite, Mr. Prendergast; I had a better opinion of you than to think you could be taken in by the tongues of Wrapworth."

"Well, certainly I did hear a great noise the other day."

"I see how it is! This is a systematic attempt to destroy the impression I wished to produce."

He tried to argue that he thought very well of Miss Murrell, but she would not hear; and she went on with her pretty, saucy abuse, in her gayest tones, as she tripped along the churchyard path, now, doubtless, too familiar to renew the associations that might have tamed her spirits. Perhaps the shock her vivacity gave to the feelings of her friends was hardly reasonable, but it was not the less real; though, even in passing, Honora could not but note the improved condition of the two graves, now carefully tended, and with a lovely white rose budding between them.

A few more steps, and from the open window of the school-house there was heard a buzz and hum, not outrageous,

but which might have caused the item of discipline not to figure well in an inspector's report; but Mr. Prendergast and Lucilla appeared habituated to the like, for they proceeded without apology.

It was a handsome gable-ended building, Elizabethan enough to testify to the taste that had designed it, and with a deep porch, where Honor had advanced, under Lucilla's guidance, so as to have a moment's view of the whole scene before their arrival had disturbed it.

The children's backs were towards the door, as they sat on their forms at work. Close to the oriel window, the only person facing the door, with a table in front of her, there sat, in a slightly reclining attitude, a figure such as all reports of the new race of schoolmistresses had hardly led Honor to imagine to be the *bonâ fide* mistress. Yet the dress was perfectly quiet, merely lilac cotton, with no ornament save the small bow of the same colour at the throat, and the hair was simply folded round the head, but it was magnificent raven hair; the head and neck were grandly made; the form finely proportioned, on a large scale; the face really beautiful, in a pale, dark, Italian style; the complexion of the clearest olive, but as she became aware of the presence of the visitors it became overspread with a lovely hue of red; while the eyelids revealed a superb pair of eyes, liquid depths of rich brown, soft and languid, and befitting the calm dignity with which she rose, curtsied, and signed to her scholars to do the same; the deepening colour alone betraying any sense of being taken by surprise.

Lucilla danced up to her, chattering with her usual familiar, airy grace. "Well, Edna, how are you getting on? Have I brought a tremendous host to invade you? I wanted Miss Charlecote to see you, for she is a perfect connoisseur in schools."

Edna's blush grew more carnation, and the fingers shook so visibly with which she held the work, that Honor was provoked with Lucy for embarrassing the poor young thing by treating her as an exhibition, especially as the two young gentlemen were present, Robert with his back against the door-post in a state of resignation, Owen drawing Phœbe's attention to the little ones whom he was puzzling with incomprehensible remarks and questions. Hoping to end the scene, Honor made a few commonplace inquiries as to the

numbers and the habits of the school, but the mistress, though preserving her dignity of attitude, seemed hardly able to speak, and the curate replied for her.

"I see," said Lucilla, "your eye keeps roaming to the mischief my naughty brother is doing among the fry down there."

"Oh, no! ma'am. I beg your pardon."

"Never mind, I'll remove the whole concern in a moment, only we must have some singing first."

"Don't, Lucy," whispered Honor, looking up from an inspection of some not first-rate needle-work; "it is distressing her, and displays are contrary to all rules of discipline."

"Oh! but you must," cried Cilly. "You have not seen Wrapworth without. Come, Edna, my bonnie-bell," and she held out her hand in that semi-imperious, semi-caressing manner, which very few had ever withstood.

"One song," echoed Owen, turning towards the elder girls. "I know you'll oblige me, eh, Fanny Blake?"

To the scholars the request was evidently not distasteful; the more tuneful were gathering together, and the mistress took her station amongst them, all as if the exhibition were no novelty. Lucilla laying her hand on the victim's arm, said, "Come, don't be nervous, or what will you do to-morrow. Come."

"'Goddess of the silver bow,'" suggested Owen. "Wasn't it that your mother disapproved, Fanny, because it was worshipping idols to sing about great Diana of the Ephesians?"

"Yes, sir," said rather a conceited voice from the prettiest of the elder girls; "and you told us it was about Phœbe Bright, and gave her the blue and silver ribbon."

"And please, sir," said another less prepossessing damsel, "Mrs. Jenkins took it away, and I said I'd tell you."

Owen shrugged up his shoulders with a comical look, saying, as he threw her a shilling, "Never mind, there's a silver circle instead of a bow, that will do as well. Here's a rival goddess for you, Phœbe, two moons in a system."

The girls were in a universal titter, the mistress with her eyes cast down, blushing more than ever. Lucilla muttered an amused but indignant, "For shame, Owen," and herself gave the key-note. The performance was not above the average of National school melody, but no sooner was it

over, than Owen named in an under tone, another song, which was instantly commenced, and in which there joined a voice that had been still during the first, but which soon completely took the lead. And such a voice, coming as easily as the notes of the nightingale from the nobly formed throat, and seeming to fill the room with its sweet power! Lucilla's triumph was complete, Honor's scruples were silenced by the admiring enjoyment, and Phœbe was in a state of rapture. The nervous reluctance had given way to the artistic delight in her own power, and she readily sang all that was asked for, latterly such peices as needed little or no support from the children—the "Three Fisher's Wives" coming last, and thrilling every one with the wondrous pathos and sadness of the tones that seemed to come from her very heart.

It seemed as if they would never have come away, had not Mr. Prendergast taken pity on the restless movements of some of the younglings who, taking no part in the display, had leisure to perceive that the clock had struck their hour of release, and at the close of "The Fisher's Wives," he signed to Lucilla to look at the hour.

"Poor little things!" said she, turning round to the gaping and discontented collection "have we used you so ill? Never mind." And again using her bulrush to tickle the faces that looked most injured and waken them into smiles—"here's the prison house open," and she sprang out. Now—come with a whoop and come with a call—I'll give my club to anybody that can catch me before I get down to the vicarage garden."

Light as the wind, she went bounding, flying across the churchyard like a butterfly, ever and anon pausing to look round, nod, and shake her sceptre, as the urchins tumbled, confusedly after, far behind, till closing the gate, she turned, poised the reed javelin-wise in the air, and launched it among them.

"It is vain to try to collect them again," sighed Mr. Prendergast, "we must shut up. Good night, Miss Murrell," and therewith he turned back to his garden where the freakish sprite, feigning flight, took refuge in the boat, cowering down and playfully hiding her face in deprecation of rebuke, but all she received was a meekly melancholy, "O Cilla! prayers."

"One day's less loathing of compulsory devotion," was her answer, in saucy defiance. "I owed it to them for the weariness of listening for ten minutes to the 'Three Fish-er's Wives' which they appreciated as little as their pastor did!"

"I know nothing about songs, but when one wants them—poor things—to look to something better than sleep."

"O hush! Here are Miss Charlecote and Mr. Fulmort on your side, and I can't be crushed with united morality in revenge for the tears Edna caused you all to shed. There, help Miss Charlecote in; where can Owen be dawdling? You can't pull, Phœbe, or we would put off without him. Ah, there!" as he came bounding down, "you intolerable loiterer, I was just going to leave you behind."

"The train starting without the engine," he said, getting into his place; "yes, take an oar if you like, little gnat, and fancy yourself helping."

The gay warfare, accompanied by a few perilous tricks on Lucilla's part, lasted through the further voyage, Honora guessed at a purpose of staving off graver remonstrance, but Phœbe looked on in astonishment. Seventeen is often a more serious time of life than two-and-twenty, and the damsel could not comprehend the possibility of thoughtlessness when there was anything to think about. The ass's bridge was nothing compared with Lucy! Moreover the habits of persiflage of a lively family often are confusing to one not used to the tone of jest and repartee, and Phœbe had as little power as will to take part in what was passing between the brother and sister; she sat like the spectator of a farce in a foreign tongue till the boat had arrived at the broad open extent of park gently sweeping down towards the river, the masses of trees kept on either side so as to leave the space open where the castle towered in pretentious grandeur with a flag slowly swaying in the summer wind on the top of the tallest turret.

The trees made cool reaches of shade, varied by intervals of hot sunshine, and much longer did the way appear, creeping onward in the heat, than it had looked when the eye only took in the simple expanse of turf, from river to castle, Phœbe looked to her arrival there, and to bedroom conferences as the moment of recovering a reasonable Lucy, but as they neared the house, there was a shout from the wire fence

enclosing the shrubbery on the eastern side, and Horatio was seen standing at the gate, calling them to come into the cloisters and have some sustenance.

Passing the screen of shrubs, a scene lay before them, almost fit for the gardens of Seville. Three sides of an extensive square were enclosed by the semi-gothic buildings, floridly decorated with stone carving, one consisted of the main edifice, the lower windows tented with striped projecting blinds, a second of the wing, containing the reception rooms, fronted by the imitative cloister, which was continued and faced with glass on the third side, each supporting column covered with climbing plants, the passion flower, the tropæolum, the trumpet honeysuckle, or even the pomegranate opening their gay blooms on every side. The close shaven turf was broken by small patches of gorgeously tinted flowerbeds, diversified by vases filled with trailing plants, and lines of orange trees and fuschias, with here and there a deep-bellied datura, all converging towards the central marble fountain, where the water played high, and tinkled coolly in sparkling jets. Between it and the house, there were placed in the shade some brightly-tinted cushions and draperies, lounging chairs, and a low table, bearing an oriental looking service of tiny cups of all kinds of bright and fantastic hues, no two alike. Near it, reclined on her cushions, a figure in perfect keeping with the scene, her jetty hair contrasting with her gold and coral net, her scarlet gold embroidered slipper peeping out from her pale buff coloured dress; deeply edged with rich purple, and partly concealed by a mantle of the unapproachable pink which suggests Persia, all as gorgeous in apparel as the blue and yellow macaw on his pole, and the green and scarlet lories in their cage. Owen made a motion of smoking with Honor's parasol, whispering "Fair Fatima! what more is wanting?"

"There! I've got Lolly out!" cried Horatia, advancing with her vehement cordiality, and grasping their hands with all her might, "I would have come and pulled you up the river, Miss Charlecote, but for imperative claims. Here's some tea for you, I know you must be parched."

And while Mrs. Charteris, scarcely rising, held out her ring-encrusted fingers, and murmured a greeting, Ratia settled them all, pushed a chair behind Miss Charlecote, almost threw Phœbe on a cushion, handed tea, scolded Owen, and

rattled away to Lucilla with an impetus that kept Phœbe in increased wonder. It was all about the arrangements for the morrow, full of the utmost good nature and desire to secure everyone's pleasure, but all discussed in a broad outspoken way, with a liberal use of slang phrases, and of unprefaced surnames, a freedom of manner and jovial carelessness of voice that specially marked Rashe Charteris at home.

Phœbe had a good deal of opportunity for these observations, for as soon as her stream of information was exhausted, Rashe jumped up and insisted on conducting the guests round the hot houses and pleasure grounds, she knew Miss Charlecote was a famous hand at such things. Lucilla remained on the grass, softly teasing Lolly about the exertions of the morrow, and Owen applying himself to the care of Honor, Rashe took possession of Phœbe with all the tyrannous good nature, that had in baby days, rendered her hateful to Lucilla. She showed off the parrots and gold fish as to a child, she teased the sensitive plant, and explained curiosities down to the level of the youthful intellect; and Phœbe, scientific enough to know if she went wrong in botany or locality, began a word or two of modest suggestion, only to be patronizingly enlightened and stop short, in the fear of pedantry. Phœbe had yet to learn the ignorance of the world.

At last with a huge torrent of explanations and excuses, Ratia consigned the two guests to share the same bedroom and dressing-room; the number of gentlemen visitors had necessitated close packing, and Cilly, she said, had come to sleep in her room. Another hope had failed! But at the moment, when the door was shut, Phœbe could only sink into a chair, untie her bonnet and fan herself. Such oppressive good nature was more fatiguing than a ten miles walk, or than the toughest lesson in political economy.

"If nature have her own ladies," was Honor's comment on her young friend's exhaustion, "she likewise has her own dairy maids!"

"Miss Charteris is a lady," said Phœbe, her sense of the intended kindness of her hostess calling her to speak in vindication.

"Yes," said Honor, hesitating; "it is station that emboldens her. If she had been a dairy maid, she would have been a bouncing rude girl; if a farmer's daughter, she would

be hearty and useful; if one of the boasters of gentility, she would think it worth while to restrain herself; as she is, her acknowledged birth and breeding enable her to follow her inclinations without fear of opinion."

"I thought refinement was one great characteristic of a lady," said Phœbe.

"So it is, but affectation and false shame are the contrary. Refinement was rather overworked, and there has been a reaction of late, simplicity and unconstraint have been the fashion, but unfortunately some dispositions are not made to be unconstrained."

"Lucy is just as little unrestrained as her cousin," said Phœbe "but she never seems like her. She offends one's judgment sometimes, but never one's taste—at least hardly ever," and Phœbe blushed as she thought of what had passed about her sister that day.

"Poor Lucy! it is one misfortune of pretty people, that they can seldom do what is taken amiss. She is small and feminine too, and essentially refined in whatever she can do. But I was very sorry for you to day, Phœbe. Tell me all about your sister, my dear."

"They knew more than I did, if all that is true," said Phœbe, "Augusta wrote—oh! so kindly—and seemed so glad that it made me very happy. And Papa gave his consent readily to Robert's doing as he pleased, and almost said something about his taking me to the wedding at Paris. If Lucy should—should accept Robin, I wonder if she would go too and be bridesmaid!"

So they comforted themselves with a few pretty auguries, dressed and went down to dinner, where Phœbe had made sure, that as before, Lucy would sit next Robin and be subdued.

Alas, no! Ladies were far too scarce articles for even the last but one to be the prize of a mere B. A. To know who were Phœbe's own neighbours would have been distraction to Juliana, but they were lost on one in whom the art of conversation was yet undeveloped, and who was chiefly intent on reading her brother's face, and catching what Lucy was saying. She had nearly given up listening in despair, when she heard "Pistols? oh, of course. Rashe has gone to the expense of a revolver, but I extracted grandpapa's from the family armoury—such little darlings—I'm strongly

tempted to send a challenge just to keep them in use—that's because you despise me—I'm a crack shot—we practiced every day last winter—women shoot much better than men, because they don't make their hands unsteady—what can be better than the guidance of Ratia, the feminine of Ratio, reason isn't it.

It is not quite certain that this horrible Latinity did not shock Miss Fennimore's discreet pupil more than all the rest, as a wilful insult to Miss Charlecote's education!

She herself was not to escape "the guidance of Ratia," after dinner. Her silence had been an additional proof to the good-natured Rashe, that she was a child to be protected and entertained, so she paraded her through the rooms, coaxed her to play when no one was listening, showed her illustrated books, and new fashioned puzzles, and domineered over her so closely, that she had not a moment in which to speak a word to her brother, whom she saw disconsolately watching the hedge of gentlemen round Lucy. Was it wrong to feel so ungrateful to a person exclusively devoted to her entertainment for that entire evening?

Phœbe had never known a room-mate nor the solace of a bed time gossip, and by the time Miss Charlecote began to think of opening the door between their rooms and discussing the disgusts of the day, the sounds of moving about had ceased. Honor looked in, and could not help advancing to the bedside to enjoy the sight of the rosy face in the sound healthful sleep, the lips unclosed, and the silken brown hair wound plainly across the round brow, the childish outline and expression of the features even sweeter in sleep than awake. It rested Honora's wearied anxious spirit to watch the perfect repose of that innocent young face, and she stood still for some minutes, breathing an ejaculation that the child might ever be as guileless and peaceful as now, and then, sighing at the thought of other young sleepers, beside whose couches even fonder prayers had been uttered, only as it seemed to be blown aside.

She was turning away, when Phœbe suddenly awoke, and was for a moment startled, half rising, asking if anything were the matter.

"No, my dear; only I did not think you would have been in bed so quickly, I came to wish you good night, and found you asleep." And with the strong tender impulse

of a gentle wounded spirit, Honor hung over the maiden, recomposing the clothes, and fondling her, with a murmured blessing.

"Dear Miss Charlecote," whispered Phœbe, "how nice it is! I have so often wondered what it would be like, if any one came in to pet us at night, as they do in books, and oh! it is so nice! Say *that* again please."

That was the blessing which would have made Lucilla in angry reserve, hide her head in the clothes! It was murmured now with rising tears, but Honora and Phœbe slept the more softly for it, and awoke in the morning closely knit together. Had but Lucy been such as this! thought Honor as Phœbe so gladly shared her morning's reading, gratefully storing hints for her own future use.

Breakfast was late, and lengthened out by the greater lateness of many of the guests, and the superlative tardiness of the lady of the house, who had repudiated the cares of the hostess, and left the tea equipage to her sister-in-law. Lucilla had been down stairs among the first, and hurried away again after a rapid meal, forbidding anyone to follow her, she had so much to do, and on entering the drawing-room she was found with a wilderness of flowers around her, filling vases and making last arrangements.

Honora and Phœbe were glad to be occupied, and Phœbe almost hoped to escape from Rashe. Speaking to Lucilla was not possible, for Eloïsa had been placed by Rashe in a low chair, with a saucer before her, which she was directed to fill with verbenas, while the other four ladies, with Owen, whom his cousin had called to their aid, were putting last touches to wreaths, and giving the final festal air to the rooms.

Presently Robert made his appearance as the bearer of Mr. Prendergast's flowers, and setting his back against a shutter, in his favorite attitude stood looking as if he wanted to help but knew not how. Phœbe, at least was vividly conscious of his presence, but she was supporting a long festoon with which Owen was adorning a pier glass, and could hardly even turn her head to watch him.

"Oh! horrid," cried Lucilla, retreating backwards to look at Ratia's performance, "for love or money, a bit of clematis!"

"Where shall I find one?" said Robert, unseeing the

masses waving on the cloister, if, good youth, he even knew what clematis was.

"You there, Mr. Fulmort," exclaimed Rashe; "for goodness gracious sake, go out to tennis or something with the other men. I've ordered them all out, or there'll be no good to be got out of Cilly."

Phœbe flashed out in his defence, "You are letting Owen alone."

"Ah! by the by, that wreath of yours has taken an unconscionable time!" said Miss Charteris, begining to laugh; but Phœbe's grave straightforward eyes met her with such a look as absolutely silenced her merriment into a mere mutter of "What a little chit it is!" Honora, who was about indignantly to assume the protection of her charge, recognised in her what was fully competent to take care of herself.

"Away with both of you," said Lucilla; "here is Edna come for a last rehearsal, and I won't have you making her nervous. Take away that Robin, will you, Owen?"

Horatia flew gustily to greet and reassure the school mistress as she entered, trembling although moving with the dignity that seemed to be her form of embarrassment. Lucilla meanwhile sped to the others near the window. "You must go," she said, "or I shall never screw her up, it is a sudden access of stage fright. She is as pale as death."

Owen stepped back to judge of the paleness, and Robert contrived to say "Cannot you grant me a few words, Lucy."

"The most impossible thing you could have asked," she replied. "There's Rashe's encouragement quite done for her now!"

She bounded back to the much-overcome Edna, while Phœbe herself perceiving how ill-advised an opportunity Robert had chosen, stepped out with him into the cloister, saying "She can't help it, dear Robin, she cannot think just now."

"When can she?" he asked almost with asperity.

"Think how full her hands are, how much excited she is," pleaded Phœbe, feeling that this was no fair moment for the crisis

"Ireland?" almost groaned Robert, but at the same

moment grasped her roughly to hinder her from relpying, for Owen was close upon them, and he was the person to whom Robert would have been most reluctant to display his feelings.

Catching intuitively at his meaning, Phœbe directed her attention to some clematis on the opposite side of the cloister, and called both her companions to gather it for her, glad to be with Robert and to relieve Miss Murrell of the presence of another spectator. Charles Charteris coming up, carried the two young men to inspect some of his doings out of doors and Phœbe returned with her wreaths of creepers to find that the poor schoolmistress had become quite hysterical, and had been taken away by Lucilla.

Rashe summoned her at the same time to the decoration of the music room, and on entering, stopped in amusement, and made her a sign in silence to look into a large pier glass, which stood so as to reflect through an open door what was passing in the little fanciful boudoir beyond, a place fitted like a tent, and full of quaint Dresden china and toys of *bijouterie*. There was a complete picture within the glass. Lucilla, her fair face seen in profile, more soft and gentle, than she often allowed it to appear, was kneeling beside the couch where half reclined the tall, handsome Edna; whose raven hair, and pale, fine features, made her like a heroine, as she nervously held the hands which Lucilla had placed within her grasp. There was a low murmur of voices, one soothing, the other half sobbing, but nothing reached the outer room distinctly, till as Phœbe was holding a long wreath, which Ratia was tying up, she heard—"Oh! but it is so different with me from you young ladies who are used to company and all. I dare say that young lady would not be timid."

"What young lady, Edna? Not the one with the auburn hair?"

Ratia made an ecstatic face which disgusted Phœbe.

"Oh, no!—the young lady whom Mr. Sandbrook was helping. I dare say she would not mind singing—or anything," came amid sobs.

Ratia nodded, looked excessively arch, and formed a word with her lips, which Phœbe thought was "jealous," but could not imagine what she could mean by it.

"I don't know why you should think poor Phœbe Fulmort

so brazen. She is a mere child, taking a holiday from her strict governess." Phœbe laughed back an answer to Rashe's pantomime, which in this case she understood. "She has not had half your training in boldness with your inspectors and examinations, and all those horrid things. Why you never thought of taking fright before, even when you have sung to people here. Why should you now?"

"It is so different now—so many more people. Oh! so different! I shall never be able."

"Not at all. You will quite forget all about yourself and your fears when the time comes. You don't know the exhilaration of a room full of people, all lights and music! That symphony will lift you into another world, and you will feel quite ready, for 'Men must work and women must weep.'"

"If I can only begin—but oh! Miss Sandbrook, shall you be far away from me?"

"No I promise you not. I will bring you down, if you will come to Ratia's room when you are dressed; the black silk and the lilac ribbon Owen and I chose for you. I must see you in it."

"Dear Miss Sandbrook, you are so kind. What shall I do when you have left?"

"You are going yourself for the holidays, silly puss!"

"Ah! but no one else sympathizes or enters into my feelings."

"Feelings!" said Lucilla lightly, yet sadly. "Don't indulge in them, Edna, they are no end of a torment."

"Ah! but if they prey on one, one cannot help it."

Rashe made a face of great distaste. Phœbe felt as if it were becoming too confidential to permit of listening, all the more as she heard Lucilla's reply.

"That's what comes of being tall and stately and dignified! There's so much less of me that I can carry off my troubles twice as well."

"Oh! dear Miss Sandbrook, you can have no troubles!"

"Haven't I? Oh! Edna, if you knew. You that have a mother can never know what it is to be like me! I'm keeping it all at bay lest I should break down, but I'm in the horriddest bother and puzzle."

Not knowing what might come next, ashamed of having listened to so much, yet with one gleam of renewed hope,

Phœbe resolutely disobeyed Ratia's frowns and gestures, and made her presence known by decided movements and words spoken aloud.

She saw the immediate effect in Edna Murrell's violent start, but Lucilla, without moving, at once began to sing, straining her thin though sweet voice, as though to surmount a certain tremulousness. Edna joined, and the melody was lovely to hear, but Phœbe was longing all the time for Robert to be at hand for this softer moment, and she hoped all the more when, the practising being over and Edna dismissed, Lucy came springing towards her, notifying her presence by a caress—to outward appearance merely playful, but in reality a convulsive clasp of vehement affection—and Phœbe was sure that there had been tears in those eyes that seemed to do nothing but laugh.

The security that this wild elf was true at heart was, however, not enough for Phœbe. There was the knowledge that each moment's delay would drive Robert farther aloof, and that it was a mere chance whether he should encounter this creature of impulse at a propitious instant. Nay, who could tell what was best for him after all? Even Phœbe's faithful acceptance of her on his word had undergone sundry severe shocks, and she had rising doubts whether Lucy, such as she saw her, could be what would make him happy.

If the secrets of every guest at a *fête* were told, would any be found unmixedly happy? Would there be no one devoid of cares of their own or of other people's, or if exempt from these, undisturbed by the absence of the right individual or by the presence of the wrong one, by mishaps of deportment, difficulties of dress, or want of notice? Perhaps, after all, it may be best to have some one abiding anxiety, strong enough to destroy tedium, and exclude the pettier distresses, which are harder to contend with, though less dignified; and most wholesome of all is it that this should be an interest entirely external. So, after all, Phœbe's enjoyment might hardly have been increased had her thoughts been more free from Robin's troubles, when she came down dressed for her first party, so like a lilly of the valley in her delicate dress, that Owen acknowledged that it justified her choice, and murmured something of "in vernal green and virgin white, her festal robes, arrayed." Phœbe was only distressed at what she thought the profanation of quoting from such a

source in compliment to her. Honora was gratified to find the lines in his memory upon any terms. Poor dear Honor, in one case at least believing all things, hoping all things!

Phœbe ought to have made the most of her compliment. It was all she obtained in that line. Juliana herself could not have taken umbrage at her success. Nobody imagined her come out, no one attempted to disturb her from under Miss Charlecote's wing, and she kept close to her the whole afternoon, sometimes sitting upon a haycock, sometimes walking in the shrubbery, listening to the band, or looking at the archery, in company with dignified clergyman, or elderly lady astonished to meet Honor Charlecote in so unwonted a scene. Owen Sandbrook was never far off. He took them to eat ices, conducted them to good points of view, found feats for them, and told them who every one was, with droll comments or anecdotes, which entertained them so much, that Phœbe almost wished that Robin had not made her sensible of the grain of irreverence that seasoned all Owen's most brilliant sallies.

They saw little of the others. Mr. and Mrs. Charteris walked about together, the one cordial, the other stately and gorgeous, and Miss Charlecote came in for her due and passing share of their politeness. Rashe once invited Phœbe to shoot, but had too many on her hands to be solicitous about one. Flirting no longer herself, Rashe's delight was in those who did flirt, and in any assembly, her extreme and unscrupulous good nature made her invaluable to all who wanted to have themselves taken off their own hands, or pushed into those of others. She ordered people about, started amusements, hunted gentlemen up, found partners and shook up the bashful. Rashe Charteris was the life of everything. How little was wanting to make her kind-hearted activity admirable!

Lucilla never came in their way at all. She was only seen in full and eager occupation embellishing the archery, or forcing the "decidedly pious" to be fascinated by her gracious self-adaptation. Robert was equally inaccessible, always watching her, but keeping aloof from his sister, and only consorting at times with Mr. Prendergast.

It was seven o'clock when this act of the drama was finally over, and the party staying in the house met round a hurried meal, Rashe lounging and yawning, laughing and

quizzing in a way amazing to Phœbe. Lucilla in the very summit of spirits, rattling and laughing away in full swing. Thence the party dispersed to dress, but Honora had no sooner reached her room than she said, "I must go and find Lucy. I must do my duty by her, little hope as I have; she has avoided me all day. I must seek her now."

What a difference time and discipline had made in one formerly so timid and gentle as to be alarmed at the least encounter, and nervous at wandering about a strange house. Nervous and frightened indeed, she still was, but self-control kept this in check, and her dislike was not allowed to hold her back from her duty. Humphrey's representative was seldom permitted to be weak. But there are times when the difference between man and woman is felt in their dealings with others. Strength can be mild, but what is strained can seldom be gentle, and when she knocked at Horatia Charteris's door, her face, from very unhappiness and effort was sorrowfully reproachful, as she felt herself an unwelcome apparition to the two cousins, who lay on their bed still laughing over the day's events.

Rashe, who was still in her morning dress, at once gave way, saying she must go and speak to Lolly, and hastened out of the room. Lucy, in her *dishabille*, sat crouched upon the bed, her white bare shoulders and floating hair, together with the defiant glance of the blue eye, and the hand moodily compressing the lips, reminding Honor of the little creature who had been summarily carried into her house sixteen years since. She came towards her, but there was no invitation to give the caress that she yearned to bestow, and she leant against the bed, trembling as she said, "Lucy, my poor child, I am come that you may not throw away your last chance without knowing it. You do not realize what you are about. If you cast aside esteem and reliance, how can you expect to retain the affection you sometimes seem to prize?"

"If I am not trusted, what's the good of affection?"

"How can you expect trust when you go beyond the bounds of discretion?" said Honor, with voice scarcely steadied into her desired firmness.

"I can, I do!"

"Lucy, listen to me." She gave way to her natural piteous, pleading tone: "I verily believe that this is the

very turn. Remember how often a moment has decided the fate of a life!" She saw the expression relax into some alarm, and continued: "The Fulmorts do not say so, but I see by their manner that his final decision will be influenced by your present proceedings. You have trifled with him too long, and with his mind made up to the ministry, he cannot continue to think of one who persists in outraging decorum."

Those words were effort enough, and had better have been unsaid. "That is as people may think," was all the answer.

"As he thinks?"

"How do I know what he thinks?"

Heartsick at such mere fencing, Honor was silent at first, then said, "I for one shall rate your good opinion by your endeavour to deserve it. Who can suppose that you value what you are willing to risk for an unladylike bet, or an unfeminine sporting expedition?"

"You may tell him so," said Lucilla, her voice quivering with passion.

"You think a look will bring him back, but you may find that a true man is no slave. Prove his affection misplaced, and he will tear it away."

Had Honora been discreet as she was good, she would have left those words to settle down; but, woman that she was, she knew not when to stop, and coaxingly coming to the small bundle of perverseness, she touched the shoulder and said, "Now you won't make an object of yourself to-night?"

The shoulder shook in the old fashion.

"At least you will not go to Ireland."

"Yes, I shall."

"Miss Charlecote, I beg your pardon. . . ." cried Rashe, bursting in,—(oh! that she had been five seconds earlier)—"but dressing is imperative. People are beginning to come."

Honora retreated in utter discomfiture.

"Rashe! Rashe! I'm in for it!" cried Lucilla, as the door shut, springing up with a look of terror.

"Proposed by deputy?" exclaimed Honora, aghast.

"No, no!" gasped Lucilla; "it's this Ireland of yours—that—that. . . ." and she well-nigh sobbed.

"My bonny bell! I knew you would not be bullied into deserting."

"Oh! Rashe, she was very hard on me. Every one is but you!" and Lucilla threw herself into her cousin's arms in a paroxysm of feeling, but their maid's knock brought her back to composure sooner than poor Honora, who shed many a tear over this last defeat, as looking mournfully to Phœbe, she said, "I have done, Phœbe. I can say no more to her. She will not hear anything from me. Oh! what have I done that my child should be hardened against me!"

Phœbe could offer nothing but caresses full of indignant sorrow, and there was evidently soothing in them, for Miss Charlecote's tears became softer, and she fondly smoothed Phœbe's fair hair, saying, as she drew the clinging arms closer round her: "My little woodbine, you must twine round your brother and comfort him, but you can spare some sweetness for me too. There, I will dress. I will not keep you from the party."

"I do not care for that; only to see Robin."

"We must take our place in the crowd," sighed Honora, beginning her toilet; "and you will enjoy it when you are there. Your first quadrille is promised to Owen, is it not?"

"Yes," said Phœbe dreamily, and she would have gone back to Robin's sorrows, but Honora had learnt that there were subjects to be set aside when it was incumbent on her to be presentable, and directed the talk to speculations whether the poor schoolmistress would have nerve to sing; and somehow she talked up Phœbe's spirits to such a hopeful pitch, that the little maiden absolutely was crossed by a gleam of satisfaction from the ungrateful recollection that poor Miss Charlecote had done with the affair. Against her will, she had detected the antagonism between the two, and bad as it was of Lucy, was certain that she was more likely to be amenable where there was no interference from her best friend.

The music-room was already crowded when the two made their way into it, and Honora's inclination was to deposit herself on the nearest seat, but she owed something otherwise to her young charge, and Phœbe's eyes had already found a lonely black figure with arms crossed, and lowering brow. Simultaneously they moved towards him, and he towards them. "Is she come down?" he asked.

Phœbe shook her head, but at the same moment another

door near the orchestra admitted a small white butterfly-shape leading in a tall queenly apparition in black, whom she placed in a chair adjacent to the bejewelled prima donna of the night—a great contrast with her dust-coloured German hair and complexion, and good-natured plain face.

Robert's face cleared with relief, he evidently detected nothing *outré* in Lucilla's aspect, and was rejoicing in the concession. Woman's eyes saw further; a sigh from Honora, an amused murmur around him caused him to bend his looks on Phœbe. She knew his eyes were interrogating her, but could not bear to let her own reply, and keep them on the ground. He was moving towards Lucilla, who having consigned her *protégée* to the good-humoured German, had come more among the guests, and was exchanging greetings and answerings comments with all her most brilliant airs of saucy animation.

And who could quarrel with that fairy vision? Her rich double-skirted watered silk was bordered with exquisitely made and coloured flies, radiant with the hues of the peacock, the gold pheasant, the jay, parrots of all tints, everything rich and rare in plumage. A coronal of the same encircled her glossy hair, the tiny plumes contrasting with the blonde ringlets, and the *bona fide* hooks ostentatiously displayed; lesser and more innocuous flies edged the sleeves, corsage, shoes, and gloves; and her fan, which she used as skilfully as Jenny Wren, presented a Watteau-like picture of an angling scene. Anything more daintily, quaintly pretty could not be imagined, and the male part of the assembly would have unanimously concurred in Sir Harry Buller's "three cheers for the queen of the anglers."

But towards the party most concerned in her movements, Lucilla came not; and Phœbe, understanding a design to keep as near as might be to Miss Murrell, tried to suggest it as the cause, and looking round, saw Owen standing by Miss Charlecote, with somewhat of an uneasy countenance.

"Terribly hot here," he said restlessly; "suffocating, arn't you, Honor? Come and take a turn in the cloister, the fountain is stunning by moonlight."

No proposal could have been more agreeable to Honora; and Phœbe was afraid of losing her chaperon, though she would rather have adhered, to her brother, and the barbs

of that wicked little angler were tearing him far too deeply to permit him to move out of sight of his tormentor.

But for this, the change would have been delicious. The white lights and deep shadows from the calm, grave moon, contrasted with the long gleams of lamplight from every window, reddened by the curtains within; the flowers shone out with a strange whiteness, the taller ones almost like spiritual shapes; the burnished orange leaves glistened, the water rose high in silvery spray, and fell back into the blackness of the bason, made more visible by one trembling, shimmering reflection; the dark blue sky above seemed shut into a vault by the enclosing buildings, and one solitary planet shone out in the lustrous neighbourhood of the moon. So still, so solemn, so cool! Honora felt it as repose, and pensively began to admire—Owen chimed in with her. Feverish thoughts and perturbations were always gladly soothed away in her company. Phœbe alone stood barely confessing the beauty, and suppressing impatience at their making so much of it; not yet knowing enough of care or passion to seek repose, and much more absorbed in human, than in any other form of nature.

The music was her first hope of deliverance from her namesake in the sky; but behold, her companions chose to prefer hearing that grand instrumental piece softened by distance; and even Madame Hedwig's quivering notes did not bring them in. However, at the first sounds of the accompaniment to the "Three Fisher's Wives," Owen pulled back the curtain, and handed the two ladies back into the room, by a window much nearer to the orchestra than that by which they had gone out, not far from where Edna Murrell had just risen, her hands nervously clasped together, her colour rapidly varying, and her eyes roaming about as though in quest of something. Indeed, through all the music, the slight sounds of the entrance at the window did not escape her, and at the instant when she should have begun to sing, Phœbe felt those black eyes levelled on herself with a look that startled her; they were at once removed, the head turned away; there was an attempt at the first words, but they died away on her lips; there was a sudden whiteness, Lucilla and the German both tried to reseate her; but with readier judgment Owen made two long steps, gathered her up in his strong arms, and bore her through the curtains and out at the open window like a mere infant.

"Don't come, don't—it will only make more fuss—nobody has seen. Go to Madame Hedwig; tell her from me to go on to her next, and cover her retreat," said Lucilla, as fast as the words would come, signing back Honora, and hastily disappearing between the curtains.

There was a command in Lucilla's gestures which always made obedience the first instinct even with Honora, and her impulse to assist thus counteracted, she had time to recollect that Lucy might be supposed to know best what to do with the schoolmistress, and that to dispose of her among her ladies' maid friends was doubtless the kindest measure.

"I must say I am glad," she said; "the poor thing cannot be quite so much spoilt as they wished."

The concert proceeded, and in the next pause Honor fell into conversation with a pleasant lady who had brought one pair of young daughters in the morning, and now was doing the same duty by an elder pair.

Phœbe was standing near the window when a touch on her arm and a whispered "Help! hush!" made her look around. Holding the curtain apart, so as to form the least possible aperture, and with one finger on her lip, was Lucy's face, the eyes brimming over with laughter, as she pointed to her head—three of the hooks had set their bars deep into the crimson satin curtain and held her a prisoner!

"Hush! I'll never forgive you if you betray me," she whispered, drawing Phœbe by the arm behind the curtain; "I should expire on the spot to be found in Absalom's case. All that little goose's fault—I never reckoned on having to rush about this way. Can't you do it? Don't spare scissors," and Lucilla produced a pair from under her skirt. "Rashe and I always go provided."

"How is she?—where is she?" asked Phœbe.

"That's exactly what I can't tell. He took her out to the fountain, she was quite like a dead thing. Water wouldn't make her come to, and I ran for some salts; I wouldn't call anybody, for it was too romantic a condition to have Owen discovered in with a fainting maiden in his arms. Such a rummage as I had. My own things are all jumbled up, I don't know how, and Rashe keeps nothing bigger than globules, only fit for fainting lady birds, so I went to Lolly's, but her bottles have all gold heads and are full of uncanny-

looking compounds, and I made a raid at last on sweet Honcy's rational old dressing-case, poked out her keys from her pocket, and got in; wasting interminable time. Well, when I got back to my fainting damsel, *non est inventus*."

"*Inventa*," murmured the spirit of Miss Fennimore within Phœbe. "But what? had she got well?"

"So I suppose. Gone off to the servants' rooms, no doubt; as there is no white lady in the fountain to spirit them both away. What, haven't you done that yet?"

"O! Lucy, stand still, please, or you'll get another hook in."

"Give me the scissors; I know I could do it quicker. Never mind the curtain, I say; nobody will care."

She put up her hand, and shook head and feet to the entanglement of a third hook; but Phœbe, decided damsel that she was, used her superior height to keep her mastery, held up the scissors, pressed the fidgetty shoulder into quiescence, and kept her down while she extricated her, without fatal detriment to the satin, though with scanty thanks, for the liberation was no sooner accomplished than the sprite was off, throwing out a word about Rashe wanting her.

Phœbe emerged to find that she had not been missed, and presently the concert was over, and tea coming round, there was a changing of places. Robert came towards her. "I am going," he said.

"Oh! Robert, when dancing would be one chance?"

"She does not mean to give me that chance; I would not ask it while she is in that dress. It is answer sufficient. Good night, Phœbe, enjoy yourself."

Enjoy herself! A fine injunction, when her brother was going away in such a mood! Yet who would have suspected that rosy, honest apple face of any grievance, save that her partner was missing?

Honora was vexed and concerned at his neglect, but Phœbe appeased her by reporting what Lucy had said. "Thoughtless! reckless!" sighed Honora, "if Lucy *would* leave the poor girl on his hands, of course he is obliged to make some arrangement for getting her home! I never knew such people as they are here! Well, Phœbe, you *shall* have a partner next time!"

Phœbe had one, thanks chiefly to Rashe, and somehow

the rapid motion shook her out of her troubles, and made her care much less for Robin's sorrows than she had done two minutes before. She was much more absorbed in hopes for another partner.

Alas! he did not come; neither then nor for the ensuing. Owen's value began to rise.

Miss Charlecote did not again bestir herself in the cause, partly from abstract hatred of waltzes, partly from the constant expectation of Owen's re-appearance, and latterly from being occupied in a discussion with the excellent mother upon young girls reading novels.

At last, after a galloppe, at which Phœbe had looked on with wishful eyes, Lucilla dropped breathless into the chair which she relinquished to her.

"Well, Phœbe, how do you like it?"

"Oh! very much," rather ruefully; "at least it would be if. . . ."

"If you had any partners, eh, poor child? Hasn't Owen turned up?"

"It's that billiard-room; I tried to make Charlie shut it up; but we'll disinter him: I'll rush in like a sky-rocket and scatter the gentlemen to all quarters."

"No, no, don't!" cried Phœbe alarmed, and catching hold of her. "It is not that, but Robin is gone."

"Atrocious," returned Cilly, disconcerted, but resolved that Phœbe should not perceive it; "so we are both under a severe infliction, both ashamed of our brothers."

"I am not ashamed of mine," said Phœbe, in a tone of gravity.

"Ah! there's the truant," said Lucilla, turning aside. "Owen, where have you hidden yourself? I hope you are ready to sink into the earth with shame at hearing you have rubbed off the bloom from a young lady's first ball."

"No! it was not he who did so," stoutly replied Phœbe.

"Ah! it was all the consequence of the green and white; I told you it was a sinister omen," said Owen, chasing away a shade of perplexity from his brow, and assuming a certain air that Phœbe had never seen before and did not like. "At least you will be merciful, and allow me to retrieve my character."

"You have nothing to retrieve," said Phœbe, in the most straightforward manner; "it was very good in you to take

care of poor Miss Murrell. What became of her? Lucy said you would know."

"I—I?" he exclaimed, so vehemently as to startle her by the fear of having ignorantly committed some egregious blunder; "I'm the last person to know."

"The last to be seen with the murdered always falls under suspicion," said Lucilla.

"Drowned in the fountain?" cried Owen, affecting horror.

"Then you must have done it," said his sister, "for when I came back, after ransacking the house for salts, you had both disappeared. Have you been washing your hands all this time after the murder?"

"Nothing can clear me but an appeal to the fountain," said Owen; "will you come and look in, Phœbe? It is more delicious than ever."

But Phœbe had had enough of the moonlight, did not relish the subject, and was not pleased with Owen's manner; so she refused by a most decided "No, thank you," causing Lucy to laugh at her for thinking Owen dangerous.

"At least you will vouchsafe to trust yourself with me for the Lancers," said Owen, as Cilla's partner came to claim her, and Phœbe rejoiced in anything to change the tone of the conversation; still, however, asking, as he led her off, what had become of the poor schoolmistress.

"Gone home, very sensibly," said Owen; "if she is wise she will know how to trust to Cilly's invitations! People that do everything at once never do anything well. It is quite a rest to turn to anyone like you, Phœbe, who are content with one thing at a time! I wish. . . ."

"Well then, let us dance," said Phœbe abruptly; "I can't do that well enough to talk too."

It was not that Owen had not said the like things to her many times before; it was his eagerness and fervour that gave her an uncomfortable feeling. She was not sure that he was not laughing at her by putting on these devoted airs, and she felt herself grown up enough to put an end to being treated as a child. He made her a profound bow in a mockery of acquiescence, and preserved absolute silence during the first figures, but she caught his eye several times gazing on her with looks such as another might have interpreted into mingled regret and admiration, but which were to her

simply discomfiting and disagreeable, and when he spoke again, it was not in banter, but half in sadness. "Phœbe, how do you like all this?"

"I think I could like it very much."

"I am almost sorry to hear you say so; anything that should tend to make you resemble others is detestable."

"I should be very sorry not to be like other people."

"Phœbe, you do not know how much of the pleasure of my life would be lost if you were to become a mere conventional young lady."

Phœbe had no notion of being the pleasure of any one's life except Robin's and Maria's, and was rather affronted that Owen should profess to enjoy her childish ignorance and naïvete.

"I believe," she said, "I was rude just now when I told you not to talk. I am sorry for it, I shall know better next time."

"Your knowing better is exactly what I deprecate. But there it is, unconsciousness is the charm of simplicity. It is the very thing aimed at by Rashe and Cilly, and all their crew, with their eccentricities."

"I am sorry for it," seriously returned Phœbe, who had by this time, by quiet resistance, caused him to land her under the lee of Miss Charlecote, instead of promenading with her about the room. He wanted her to dance with him again, saying she owed it to him for having sacrificed the first to common humanity, but great as was the pleasure of a polka, she shrank from him in this complimentary mood, and declared she should dance no more that evening. He appealed to Honora, who disliking to have her boy balked of even a polka, asked Phœbe if she were *very* tired, and considering her "rather not" as equivalent to such a confession, proposed a retreat to their own room.

Phœbe was sorry to leave the brilliant scene, and no longer to be able to watch Lucilla, but she wanted to shake Owen off, and readily consented. She shut her door after one good night. She was too much grieved and disappointed to converse, and could not bear to discuss whether the last hope were indeed gone, and whether Lucilla had decided her lot without choosing to know it. Alas! how many turning points may be missed by those who never watch!

How little did Phœbe herself perceive the shoal past which her self-respect had just safely guided her!

"I wonder if those were ball-room manners? What a pity if they were, for then I shall not like balls," was all the thought that she had leisure to bestow on her own share in the night's diversions, as through the subsequent hours she dozed and dreamt, and mused and slept again, with the feverish limbs and cramp tormented feet of one new to balls; sometimes teased by entangling fishing flies, sometimes interminably detained in the moonlight, sometimes with Miss Fennimore waiting for an exercise and the words not to be found in the dictionary, and even this unpleasant counterfeit of sleep deserting her after her usual time for waking, and leaving her to construct various fabrics of possibilities for Robin and Lucy.

She was up in fair time, and had written a long and particular account to Bertha of everything in the festivities, not recorded in this narrative, before Miss Charlecote awoke from the compensating morning slumber that had succeeded a sad and unrestful night. Late as they were, they were down stairs before any one but the well-seasoned Rashe, who sat beguiling the time with a Bradshaw, and who did *not* tell them how intolerably cross Cilly had been all the morning.

Nor would anyone have suspected it, who had seen her, last of all, come down at a quarter to eleven, in the most exultant spirits, talking the height of rhodomontade with the gentlemen guests, and dallying with her breakfast, while Phœbe's heart was throbbing at the sight of two grave figures, her brother and the curate, slowly marching up and down the cloister, in waiting till this was over.

And there sat Lucilla inventing adventures for an imaginary tour to be brought out on her return by the name of "Girls in Galway"—"From the Soirée to the Salmon"—"Flirts and Foolsheads," as Owen and Charles discontentedly muttered to each other, or as Mr. Calthorp proposed, "The Angels and the Anglers." The ball was to be the opening chapter, Lord William entreated for her costume as the frontispiece, and Mr. Calthorp begged her to re-assume it, and let her cousin photograph her on the spot.

Lucilla objected to the impracticability of white silk, the inconvenience of unpacking the apparatus, the nuisance of dressing, the lack of time; but Rashe was delighted with the idea, and made light of all, and the gentlemen pressed her

strongly, till with rather more of a consent than a refusal, she rose from her nearly untasted breakfast, and began to move away.

"Cilla," said Mr. Prendergast at the window, "can I have a word with you?"

"At your service," she answered, as she came out to him, and saw that Robert had left him, "only be quick, they want to photograph me in my ball dress."

"You won't let them do it, though," said the curate.

"White comes out hideous," said Lucilla; "I suppose you would not have a copy if I took one off for you."

"No, I don't like those visitors of yours well enough to see you turned into a merry andrew to please them."

"So that's what Robert Fulmort told you I did last night," said Lucilla, blushing at last and thoroughly.

"No, indeed; you didn't?" he said, regarding her with an astonished glance.

"I *did* wear a dress trimmed with salmon flies because of a bet with Lord William," said Lucilla, the suffusion deepening on brow, cheek, and throat, as the confiding esteem of her fatherly friend effected what nothing else could accomplish. She would have given the world to have justified his opinion of his late rector's little daughter, and her spirit seemed gone, though the worst he did was to shake his head at her.

"If you did not know it, why did you call me *that*?" she asked.

"A merry andrew?" he answered, "I never meant that you had been one. No; only an old friend like me doesn't like the notion of your going and dressing up in the morning to amuse a lot of scamps."

"I won't," said Lucilla, very low.

"Well then," began Mr. Prendergast, as in haste to proceed to his own subject, but she cut him short.

"It is not about Ireland."

"No; I know nothing about young ladies, and if Mr. Charteris and your excellent friend there have nothing to say against it, I can't."

"My excellent friend had so much to say against it that I was pestered into vowing I would go! Tell me not, Mr. Prendergast, I should not mind giving up to you," and she looked full of hope.

"That would be beginning at the wrong end, Cilla; you are not my charge."

"You are my clergyman," she said pettishly.

"You are not my parishioner," he answered.

"Pish!" she said, "when you know I want you to tell me."

"Why, you say you have made the engagement."

"So what I said when she fretted me past endurance must bind me!"

Be it observed that like all who only knew Hiltonbury through Lucilla, Mr. Prendergast attributed any blemishes which he might detect in her to the injudicious training of an old maid, so he sympathized. "Ah! ladies of a certain age never get on with young ones! But I thought it was all settled before with Miss Charteris."

"I never quite said I would go, only we got ready for the sake of the fun of talking of it, and now Rashe has grown horridly eager about it. She did not care at first—only to please me."

"Then wouldn't it be using her ill to disappoint her now? You couldn't do it, Cilla. Why, you have given your word, and she is quite old enough for anything. Wouldn't Miss Charlecote see it so?"

To regard Ratia as a mature personage robbed the project of romance, and to find herself bound in honour by her inconsiderate rattle was one of the rude shocks which often occur to the indiscriminate of tongue; but the curate had too much on his mind to dwell on what concerned him more remotely, and proceeded, "I came to see whether you could help me about poor Miss Murrell. You made no arrangement for her getting home last night?"

"No."

"Ah! you young people! But it is my fault, I should have recollected young heads. Then I am afraid it must have been. . . ."

"What?"

"She was seen on the river very late last night with a stranger. He went up to the school with her, remained about a quarter of an hour, and then rowed up the river again. I am afraid it is not the first time she has been seen with him."

"But Mr. Prendergast, she was here till at least ten!

She fainted away just as she was to have sung, and we carried her out into the cloister. When she recovered she went away to the housekeeper's room " (a bold assertion built on Owen's partially heard reply to Phœbe). "I'll ask the maids."

"It is of no use, Cilla, she allows it herself."

"And pray," cried Lucilla, rallying her sauciness, "how do you propose ever to have banns to publish, if young men and maidens are never to meet by water nor by land?"

"Then you do know something?"

"No; only that such matters are not commonly blazoned in the commencement."

"I don't wish her to blazon it, but if she would only act openly by me," said the distressed curate, "I wish nothing more than that she were safe married; and then if you ladies appoint another beauty, I'll give up the place, and live at — college."

"We'll advertise for the female Chimpanzee, and depend upon it, she will marry at the end of six weeks. So you have attacked her in person. What did she say?"

"Nothing that she could help. She stood with those great eyes cast down looking like a statue, and sometimes vouchsafing 'yes, sir,' or 'no, sir.' It was 'no, sir,' when I asked if her mother knew. I am afraid it must be something very unsatisfactory, Cilla, but she might say more to you if you were not going away."

"Oh! Mr. Prendergast, why did you not come sooner?"

"I did come an hour ago, but you were not come down."

"I'll walk on at once, the carriage can pick me up. I'll fetch my hat. Poor Edna! I'll soon make her satisfy your mind. Has any one surmised who it can be?"

"The notion is that it is one of your musicians, very dangerous, I am afraid; and I say, Cilla, did you ever do such a thing—you couldn't, I suppose—as lend her Shelley's poems."

"I? No, certainly not."

"There was a copy lying on the table in her little parlour, as if she had been writing something out from it. It is very odd, but it was in that peculiar olive green morocco that some of the books in your father's library were bound in."

"Not mine, certainly," said Lucilla; "good Honor Charlecote would have run crazy if she thought I had touched a

Shelley; a very odd study for Edna. But as to the olive green, of course it was bound under the same star as ours."

"Cilly, Cilly, now or never! photograph or not?" screamed Rashe, from behind her three-legged camera.

"Not!" was Lucilla's cavalier answer; "pack up have done with it, Rashe. Pick me up at the school."

Away she flew headlong, the patient and disconcerted Horatia following to her room to extract hurried explanations, and worse than no answers as to the sundries to be packed at the last moment, while she hastily put on hat and mantle, and was flying down again, when her brother, with outspread arms nearly caught her in her spring. "Hollo! what's up?"

"Don't stop me, Owen! I'm going to walk on with Mr. Prendergast and be picked up. I must speak to Edna Murrell."

"Nonsense. The carriage will be out in five minutes."

"I must go, Owen. There's some story of a demon in human shape on the water with her last night, and Mr. Prendergast can't get a word out of her."

"Is that any reason you should go ramping about, prying into people's affairs?"

"But, Owen, they will send her away. They will take away her character."

"The—the—the more reason you should have nothing to do with it," he exclaimed. "It is no business for you, and I won't have you meddle in it."

Such a strong and sudden assumption of fraternal authority took away her breath, and then in terror lest he should know cause for this detention she said,

"Owen! you don't guess who it was."

"How should I?" he roughly answered; "some villainous slander, of course there is, but it is no business of yours to be straking off to make it worse."

"I should not make it worse."

"Women always make things worse. Are you satisfied now?" as the carriage was seen coming round.

"That is only to be packed."

"Packed with folly, yes! Look here! 11:20, and the train at 12:5!"

"I will miss the train, go up later, and sleep in London."

‘Stuff and nonsense! Who is going to take you. Not I?’

In Lucilla’s desperation in the cause of her favourite Edna, she went through a rapid self-debate. Honor would gladly wait for her for such a cause; she could sleep at Woolstone Lane, and thence go on to join Horatia in her visit in Derbyshire, escorted by a Hiltonbury servant. But what would that entail? She would be at their mercy. Robert would obtain his advantage, it would be all over with her! Pride arose; Edna’s cause sank. How many destinies were fixed in the few seconds while she stood with one foot forward, spinning her black hat by the elastic band!

“Too late, Mr. Prendergast, I cannot go,” she said, as she saw him waiting for her at the door; “don’t be angry with me, and don’t let the womankind prejudice you against poor Edna. You forgive me! It is really too late.”

“Forgive *you*?” smiled Mr. Prendergast, pressing her caressing hand in his great lank grasp; “what for?”

“Oh, because it is too late; and I can’t help it. But don’t be hard with her. Good-bye.”

Too late! Why did Lucilla repeat those words so often? Was it a relief to that irreflective nature to believe the die irrevocably cast, and the responsibility of decision over? Or why did she ask forgiveness of the only one whom she was not offending, but because there was a sense of need of pardon where she would not stoop to ask it.

Miss Charlecote and the Fulmorts, Rashe and Cilly, were to be transported to London by the same train, leaving Owen behind to help Charles Charteris entertain some guests still remaining; Honora promising him to wait in town until Lucilla should absolutely have started for Ireland, when she would supply him with the means of pursuit.

Lucilla’s delay and change of mind made the final departure so late that it was needful to drive excessively fast, and the train was barely caught in time. The party were obliged to separate, and Robert took Phœbe into a different carriage from that where the other three found places.

In the ten minutes transit by railway, Lucy, always softened by parting, was like another being towards Honora,

and talked eagerly of "coming home," for Christmas, sent messages to Hiltonbury friends, and did everything short of retraction to efface the painful impression she had left.

"Sweetest Honey!" she whispered, as they moved on after the tickets had been taken, thrusting her pretty head over into Honor's place. "Nobody's looking, give me a kiss, and say you don't bear malice, though your kitten has been in a scratching humour."

"Malice! no, indeed!" said Honor, fondly; "but oh! remember, dear child, that frolics may be at too dear a price."

She longed to say more, but the final stop was made, and their roads diverged. Honor thought that Lucy looked white and trembling, with an uneasy eye, as though she would have given much to have been going home with her.

Nor was the consoling fancy unfounded. Lucilla's nerves were not at their usual pitch, and an undefined sense of loss of a safeguard was coming over her. Moreover, the desire for a last word to Robert was growing every moment, and he *would* keep on hunting out those boxes, as if they mattered to anybody.

She turned round on his substitute and said, "I've not spoken to Robin all this time. No wonder his feathers are ruffled. Make my peace with him, Phœbe dear."

On the very platform, in that moment of bustle, Phœbe conscientiously and reasonably began, "Will you tell me how much you mean by that?"

"Cilly—King's Cross—1.15," cried Ratia, snatching at her arm.

"Oh! the slave one is! Next time we meet, Phœbe, the redbreast will be in a white tie, I shall. . . ."

Hurry and agitation were making her flippant, and Robert was nearer than she deemed. He was assisting her to her seat, and then held out his hand, but never raised his eyes. "Good-bye, Robin," she said, "reason herself shall meet you at the Holt at Christmas."

"Good-bye," he said, but without a word of augury, and loosed her hand. Her fingers clung one moment, but he drew his away, called "King's Cross" to the coachman, and she was whirled off. Angler as she was, she no longer felt her prey answer her pull. Had the line snapped?

When Owen next appeared in Woolstone Lane, he looked fagged and harassed, but talked of all things in sky, earth, or air, politics, literature, or gossip, took the bottom of the table, and treated the Parsons's as his guests, Honora, however, felt that something was amiss; perhaps Lucilla engaged to Lord William, and when, after luncheon, he followed her to the cedar room, she began with a desponding "Well?"

"Well, she is off!"

"Alone with Rashe?"

"Alone with Rashe. Why, Sweet Honey, you look gratified!"

"I had begun to fear some fresh news," said Honora, smiling with effort; "I am sure that something is wrong. You do not look well, my dear. How flushed you are, and your forehead is so hot!" as she put her hand on his brow.

"Oh, nothing!" he said, caressingly, holding it there. "I'm glad to have got away from the Castle, Charlie and his set drink an intolerable lot of wine. I'll not be there again in a hurry."

"I am glad of that. I wish you had come away with us."

"I wish to heaven I had!" cried Owen; "but it could not be helped! So now for my wild goose chase. Cross tomorrow night; only you were good enough to say you would find ways and means."

"There, that is what I intended, including your Midsummer quarter. Don't you think it enough?" as she detected a look of dissatisfaction.

"You are very good. It is a tremendous shame, but you see, Honora dear, when one is across the water, one may as well go the whole animal. If this wise sister of mine does not get into a mess, there is a good deal I could do, plenty of sport. Little Henniker and some Westminster fellows in the—th at Kilkenny."

"You would like to spend the vacation there," said Honora, with some disappointment. "Well, if you go for my pleasure, it is but fair you should have your own. Shall I advance your September allowance?"

"Thank you. You do spoil one abominably, you concoction of honey and all things sweet; but the fact is, I've

got uncommonly hard up of late ; no one would believe how ruinous it is being with them Charterises. I believe money evaporates in the atmosphere."

"Betting?" asked Honor, gasping and aghast.

"On my honor, I assure you not *there*," cried Owen eagerly; "I never did bet there but once, and that was Lolly's doing, and I could not get out of it. Jew that she is! I wonder what Uncle Kit would say to that house now."

"You are out of it, and I shall not regret the purchase of your disgust at their ways, Owen. It may be better for you to be in Ireland than to be tempted to go to them for the shooting season. How much do you want? You know, my dear, if there be anything else, I had rather pay anything that is right, than have you in debt."

"You were always the sweetest, best Honey living!" cried Owen, with much agitation, "and it is a shame. . . ." but there he stopped and ended in a more ordinary tone; "shame to prey on you, as we both do, and with no better return."

"Never mind, dear Owen," she said, with moisture in her eye; "your real happiness is the only return I want. Come, tell me your difficulty, most likely I can help you."

"I've nothing to tell," said Owen, with alarmed impetuosity; "only that I'm a fool, like every one else, and—and—if you would only double that. . . ."

"Double that! Owen, things cannot be right."

"I told you they were not right," was the impatient answer, "or I should not be vexing you and myself, and," as though to smooth away his rough commencement, "what a comfort to have a Honey that will have patience."

She shook her head perplexed. "Owen, I wish you could tell me more. I do not like debts. You know, dear boy, I grudge nothing I can do for you in my lifetime, but for your own sake, you must learn not to spend more than you will be able to afford. Indulgence now will be a penance to you by and by.

Honora dreaded overdoing lectures to Owen. She knew that an old maid's advice to a young man was dangerous work, and her boy's submissive patience always excited her gratitude and forbearance. So she desisted, in hopes of a confession, looking at him with such tenderness that he was

moved to exclaim—"Honor, dear, you are the best and worst-used woman on earth! Would to Heaven that we had requited you better!

"I have no cause of complaint against you, Owen," she said, fondly; "you have always been the joy and comfort of my heart;" and as he turned aside, as though stricken by the words, "whatever you may have to reproach yourself with, it is not with hurting me, I only wish to remind you of higher and more stringent duties than those to myself. If you have erred, as I cannot but fear, will you not let me try and smooth the way back?"

"Impossible," murmured Owen; "there are things that can never be undone."

"Not undone, but repented," said Honor, convinced that he had been led astray by his cousin Charles, and felt bound not to expose him; "so repented as to become stepping stones in our progress."

He only shook his head with a groan.

"The more sorrow the better hope," she began; but the impatient movement of his foot warned her that she was only torturing him, and she proceeded, "Well, I trust you implicitly; I can understand that there may be confidences that ought not to pass between us, and will give you what you require to help you out of your difficulty. I wish you had a father, or anyone who could be of more use to you, my poor boy!" and she began to fill up the cheque to the utmost of his demand."

"It is too much—too much," cried Owen. "Honor, I must tell you at all costs. What will you think when. . . ."

"I do not wish to purchase a confession, Owen," she said; "you know best whether it be a fit one to make to me, or whether for the sake of others you ought to withhold it."

He was checked, and did not answer.

"I see how it is," continued Honor; "my boy, as far as I am concerned, I look on your confession as made. You will be much alone while thus hovering near your sister among the mountains, and by the streams. Let it be a time of reflection, of making your peace with Another. You may do so the more earnestly for not having cast off the burthen on me. You are no child now, to whom your poor Honey's pardon almost seems an absolution. I sometimes think we went on with that too long."

"No fear of my ever being a boy again," said Owen, heavily, as he put the draft into his purse, and then bent his tall person to kiss her with the caressing fondness of his childhood, almost compensating for what his sister caused her to undergo.

Then, at the door, he turned to say, "Remember, you would not hear." He was gone, having left a thorn with Honor, in the doubt whether she ought not to have accepted his confidence; but her abstinence had been such a mortification both of curiosity and of hostility to the Charterises that she could not but commend herself for it. She had strong faith in the efficacy of trust upon an honourable mind, and though it was evident that Owen had in his own eyes greatly transgressed, she reserved the hope that his error was magnified by his own consciousness, and admired the generosity that refused to betray another. She believed his present suffering to be the beginning of that growth in true religion, which is often founded on some shock leading to self-distrust.

Alas! how many falls have been counted by mothers as the preludes to rising again, like the clearing showers of a stormy day.

CHAPTER V.

"Fearless she had tracked his feet
To this rocky, wild retreat,
And when morning met his view,
Her mild glances met it too.
Ah! your saints have cruel hearts—
Sternly from his bed he starts,
And with rude, repulsive shock,
Hurls her from the beetling rock."—T. MOORE.

THE deed was done. Conventionalities were defied, vaunts fulfilled, and Lucilla sat on a camp stool on the deck of the steamer, watching the Welsh mountains rise, grow dim, and vanish gradually.

Horatia, in common with all the rest of the womankind, was prostrate on the cabin floor, treating Cilly's smiles and roses as aggravations of her misery. Had there been a

sharer in her exultation, the gay pitching and dancing of the steamer would have been charming to Lucy, but when she retreated from the scene of wretchedness below, she felt herself lonely, and was conscious of some surprise among the surviving gentlemen, at her reappearance.

She took out a book as a protection, and read more continuously than she had done since *Vanity Fair* had come to the Holt, and she had been pleased to mark Honora's annoyance at every page she turned.

But July light faded, and only left her the poor amusement of looking over the side for the phosphorescence of the water, and watching the smoke of the funnel lose itself overhead. The silent stars and sparkling waves would have set Phœbe's dutiful science on the alert, or transported Honor's inward ear by the chant of creation, but to her they were of moderate interest, and her imagination fell a prey to the memory of the eyes averted, and hand withdrawn. "I'll be exemplary when this is over," said she to herself, and at length her head nodded till she dropped into a giddy doze, whence with a chilly start she awoke, as the monotonous jog and bounce of the steamer were exchanged for a snort of arrival, among mysterious lanes of sparkling lights apparently rising from the waters.

She had slept just long enough to lose the lovely entrance of Dublin Bay, stiffen her limbs, and confuse her brains, and she stood still as the stream of passengers began to rush trampling by her, feeling bewildered and forlorn. Her cousin's voice was welcome, though over-loud and somewhat piteous. "Where are you, stewardess; where's the young lady? O Cilly, there you are. To leave me alone all this time, and here's the stewardess saying we must go ashore at once or lose the train. Oh! the luggage, and I've lost my plaid," and ghastly in the lamplight, limp and tottering, Rashe Charteris clasped her arm for support, and made her feel doubly savage and bewildered. Her first movement was to enjoin silence, then to gaze about for the goods. A gentleman took pity on the two ladies, and told them not to be deluded into trying to catch the train, there would be another in an hour's time, and if they had any one to meet them, they would most easily be found where they were.

"We have no one; we are alone," said Lucilla, and his chivalry was so far awakened that he handed them to the

pier and undertook to find their boxes. Rashe was absolutely subdued and hung shivering and helpless on her cousin, who felt as though dreaming in the strange scene of darkness made visible by the bright circles round the lamps, across which rapidly flitted the cloaked forms of travellers, presiding over queer, wild, caricature-like shapes, each bending low under the weight of trunk or bag, in a procession like a magic lantern, save for the Babel of shrieks, cries, and expostulations everywhere in light or gloom.

A bell rang, an engine roared and rattled off. "The train!" sighed Horatia; "we shall have to stay here all night."

"Nonsense," said Lucy, ready to shake her; "there is another in an hour. Stay quiet, do, or he will never find us."

"Porter, ma'am—porrtterr—"

"No, no, thank you," cried Lucilla, darting on her rod-case and carriage-bag to rescue them from a freckled countenance, with claws attached.

"We shall lose every thing, Cilla; that's your trusting to a stranger!"

"All right, thank you!" as she recognized her possessions, borne on various backs towards the station, whither the traveller escorted them, and where things looked more civilized. Ratia began to resume her senses: though weak and hungry, she was sorely discomfited at having to wait, and could not, like the seasoned voyagers, settle herself to repose on the long leathern couches of the waiting-room, but wandered, woe-begone and impatient, scolding her cousin for the hour of their passage, for her desertion and general bad management. The merry good-natured Rashe had disappeared in the sea-sick, cross, and weary wight, whose sole solace was grumbling, but her dolefulness only made Lucilla more mirthful. Here they were, and happen what would, it should only be "such fun." Recovered from the moment's bewilderment, Lucy announced that she felt as if she were at a ball, and whispered a proposal of astonishing the natives by a polka in the great empty boarded space. "The suggestion would immortalize us, come!" And she threatened mischievously to seize the waist of the still giddy and aching-headed Horatia, who repulsed her with sufficient roughness and alarm to set her off laughing at having been supposed to be in earnest.

The hurry of the train came at last; they hastened downstairs and found the train awaiting them, were told their luggage was safe, and after sitting till they were tired, shot onwards watching the beautiful glimpses of the lights in the ships off Kingstown. They would gladly have gone on all night without another disembarkation and scramble, but the Dublin station came only too soon; they were disgorged, and hastened after goods. Forth came the trunk and port-manteau. Alas! none of theirs! Nothing with them but two carriage bags and two rod cases!

"It seems to be a common predicament," said Lucilla; "here are at least half a dozen in the same case."

"Horrible management. We shall never see it more."

"Nay, take comfort in the general lot. It will turn up to-morrow; and meantime sleep is not packed up in our boxes. Come, let's be off. What noises? How do these drivers keep from running over one another. Each seems ready to whip every one's beast but his own. Don't you feel yourself in Ireland, Rashe? Arrah! I shall begin to scream, too, if I stand here much longer."

"We can't go in that thing—a fly!"

"Don't exist here, Rashe—vermin is unknown. Submit to your fate..." and ere another objection could be uttered, Gilly threw bags and rods into an inside car, and pushed her cousin after them, chattering all the time to poor Horatia's distraction. "Oh! delicious! A cross between a baker's cart and a Van Amburg. A little more, and it would over-balance and carry the horse head over heels! Take care, Rashe, you'll pound me into dust if you slip down over me."

"I can't help it? Oh, the vilest thing in creation!"

"Such fun! To be taken when well shaken. Here we go up, up, up; and here we go down, down, down! Ha! ware fishing rod! This is what it is to travel. No one ever described the experiences of an inside car!"

"Because no one in their senses would undergo such misery."

"But you don't regard the beauties, Rashe, beauties of nature and art combined—see the lights reflected in the river—what a width. Oh! why don't they treat the Thames as they do the Liffey!"

"I can't see, I shall soon be dead! and getting to an inn without luggage; it's not respectable."

"If you depart this life on the way, the want of luggage will concern me the most, my dear. Depend on it, other people have driven up in inside cars, minus luggage, in the memory of man, in this city of Dublin. Are you such a worldling base as to depend for your respectability on a paltry leathern trunk?"

Lucilla's confidence did not appear misplaced, for neither waiters nor chambermaids seemed surprised, but assured them that people usually missed their luggage by that train, and asseverated that it would appear next morning.

Lucilla awoke determined to be full of frolic and enjoyment, and Horatia, refreshed by her night's rest, was more easily able to detect "such fun" than on the previous night; so the two cousins sat down amicably to breakfast on the Sunday morning, and inquired about church-services.

"My mallard's tail hat is odd 'go-to-meeting' head-gear," said Cilla; "but one cannot lapse into heathenism, so where, Rashe?"

"Wouldn't it be fun to look into a Roman Catholic affair?"

"No," said Cilly, decidedly; "where I go it shall be the genuine article. I don't like curiosities in religion."

"It's a curiosity to go to church at twelve o'clock! If you are so orthodox, let us wait for St. Patrick's this afternoon."

"And in the mean time. It is but eleven this minute, and St. Patrick's is not till three. There's nothing to be done but to watch Irish nature in the street. Oh! I never before knew the perfection of Carleton's illustration. See that woman and her cap, and the man's round eyebrows and projecting lips with shillalah written on them. Would it be Sabbath-breaking to perpetrate a sketch?"

But as Ratia was advancing to the window, Lucy suddenly started back, seized her and whirled her away, crying, "The wretch! I know him now! I could not make him out last night."

"Who?" exclaimed Rashe, starting determinedly to the window, but detained by the two small but resolute hands clasped round her waist.

"That black-whiskered valet of Mr. Calthorp's. If that man has the insolence to dog me and spy me, I'll not stay in Ireland another day."

"Oh, what fun!" burst out Horatia. "It becomes romantic!"

"Atrocious impertinence!" said Lucilla, passionately. "Why do you stand there, laughing?"

"At you, my dear," gasped Ratia, sinking on the sofa in her spasm of mirth. "At your reception of chivalrous devotion."

"Pretty chivalry, to come and spy and beset ladies alone."

"He has not beset us yet. Don't flatter yourself."

"What do you mean by that, Horatia?"

"Do you want to try your pistols on me? The waiter could show us the way to the Fifteen Acres, only you see it is Sunday."

"I want," said Lucy, all tragedy and no comedy, "to know why you talk of my *flattering* myself that I am insulted, and my plans upset."

"Why?" said Rashe, a little sneeringly. "Why a little professed beauty like you would be so disappointed not to be pursued, that she is obliged to be always seeing phantoms that give her no peace."

"Thank you," coolly returned Cilly. "Very well, I'll say no more about it, but if I find that man to be in Ireland, the same day I go home!"

Horatia gave a long, loud, provoking laugh. Lucilla felt it was for her dignity to let the subject drop, and betook herself to the only volumes attainable, Bradshaw and her book of flies, while Miss Charteris repaired to the window to investigate for herself the question of the pursuer; and made enlivening remarks on the two congregations, the one returning from mass, the other going to church, but these were not appreciated. It seemed as though the young ladies had but one set of spirits between them, which were gained by the one as soon as lost by the other.

It was rather a dull day. Fast as they were, the two girls shrank from rambling alone in the streets thronged with figures that they associated with ruffianly destitution. Sunday had brought all to light, and the large, handsome streets were beset with bare-footed children, elf-locked women, and lounging, beetle-browed men, such as Lucy had only seen in the purlieus of Whittingtonia, in alleys looked into, but never entered by the civilized. In reality "rich and rare"

was so true that they might have walked there more secure from insult, than in many better regulated regions, but it was difficult to believe so, especially in attire then so novel as to be very remarkable, and the absence of protection lost its charm when there was no one to admire the bravado.

She did her best to embalm it for future appreciation by journalizing, making the voyage out a far better joke than she had found it, and describing the inside car in the true style of the facetious traveller. Nothing so drives away fun, as the desire to be funny, and she began to grow weary of her work, and disgusted at her own lumbering attempts at pen and ink mirth; but they sufficed to make Rashe laugh, they would be quite good enough for Lord William, would grievously annoy Honora Charlecote, would be mentioned in all the periodicals, and give them the name of the angel anglers all the next season. Was not that enough to go to Ireland and write a witty tour for?

The outside car took them to St. Patrick's, and they had their first real enjoyment in the lazy liveliness of the vehicle, and the droll ciceronship of the driver, who contrived to convey such compliments to their pretty faces, as only an Irishman could have given without offence.

Lucilla sprang down with exhilarated spirits, and even wished for Honor to share her indignation at the slovenliness around the cathedral, and the absence of close or cloister; nay, though she had taken an aversion to Strafford as a hero of Honor's, she forgave him, and resolved to belabor the house of Cork handsomely in her journal, when she beheld the six-storied monument, and imagined it, as he had found it, in the Altar's very place. "Would that he had created an absolute Boylean vacuum!" What a grand *bon mot* for her journal!

However, either the spirit of indignation at the sight of the unknéeing congregation, or else the familiar words of the beautiful musical service, made her more than usually devout, and stirred up something within her that could only be appeased by the resolution that the singing in Robert Fulmort's parish should be superexcellent. After the service, the carman persuaded them to drive in the Phoenix Park, where they enjoyed the beautiful broken ground, the picturesque thickets, the grass whose color reminded them that they were in the Emerald Isle, the purple outlines of the

Wicklow hills, whence they thought they detected a fresh mountain breeze. They only wondered to find this delightful place so little frequented. In England, a Sunday would have filled it with holiday strollers, whereas here, they only encountered a very few, and those chiefly gentlefolks. The populace preferred sitting on the doorsteps, or lounging against the houses, as if they were making studies of themselves for caricatures; and were evidently so much struck with the young ladies' attire, that the shelter of the hotel was gladly welcomed.

Lucilla was alone in the sitting-room when the waiter came to lay the cloth. He looked round, as if to secure secrecy, and then remarked in a low, confidential voice, "There's been a gentleman inquiring for you, ma'am."

"Who was it?" said Lucy, with feigned coolness.

"It was when you were at church, ma'am; he wished to know whether two ladies had arrived here, Miss Charteris and Miss Sandbrook."

"Did he leave his card?"

"He did not, ma'am, his call was to be a secret; he said it was only to be sure whether you had arrived?"

"Then he did not give his name?"

"He did, ma'am, for he desired to be let know what route the young ladies took when they left," quoth the man, with a comical look, as though he were imparting a most delightful secret then.

"Was he Mr. Calthorp?"

"I said I'd not mention his name," said the waiter, with however such decided assent, that, as at the same moment he quitted the room and Horatia entered it, Cilly exclaimed, "There Rashe, what do you say now to the phantom of my vanity? Here has he been asking for us, and what route we meant to take."

"He? Who?"

"Who—why who should it be? The waiter has just told me."

"You absurd girl!"

"Well, ask him yourself."

So when the waiter came up, Miss Charteris demanded, "Has Mr. Calthorp been calling here?"

"What was the name, ma'am, if you please?"

"Calthorp. Has Mr. Calthorp been calling here?"

"Cawthorne? Was it Colonel Cawthorne, of the Royal Hussars, ma'am? He was here yesterday, but not to-day."

"I said Calthorp. Has a Mr. Calthorp been inquiring for us to-day?"

"I have not heard, ma'am, I'll inquire," said he, looking alert, and again disappearing, while Horatia looked as proud of herself as Cilly had done just before.

He came back again, while Lucilla was repeating his communication, and assured Miss Charteris that no such person had called.

"Then, what gentleman has been here, making inquiries about us!"

"Gentleman? Indeed, ma'am, I don't understand your meaning!"

"Have you not been telling this young lady that a gentleman has been asking after us, and desiring to be informed what route we intended to take?"

"Ah sure!" said the waiter, as if recollecting himself, "I did mention it. Some gentleman did just ask me in a careless sort of way, who the two beautiful young ladies might be, and where they were going. Such young ladies always create a sensation, as you must be aware, ma'am, and I own I did speak of it to the young lady, because I thought she had seen the attraction of the gentleman's eyes."

So perfectly assured did he look, that Lucilla felt a moment's doubt whether her memory served her as to his former words, but just as she raised her eyes and opened her lips in refutation, she met a glance from him full of ludicrous reassurance, evidently meaning that he was guarding his own secret and hers. He was gone the next moment, and Horatia turned upon her with exultant merriment.

"I always heard that Ireland was a mendacious country," said Cilly.

"And a country where people lose the sight of their eyes and ears," laughed Rashe. "Oh what a foundation for the second act of the drama!"

"Of which the third will be my going home by the next steamer."

"Because a stranger asked who we were?"

Each had her own interpretation of the double-faced waiter's assertion, and it served them to dispute upon all the evening.

Lucilla was persuaded that he imagined her an injured beauty, reft from her faithful adorer, by her stern aunt or duenna, and that he considered himself to be doing her a kindness by keeping her informed of her hero's vicinity, while he denied it to her companion; but she scorned to enter into an explanation, or make any disavowal, and found the few displeased words she spoke were received with compassion, as at the dictation of the stern monitress.

Horatia, on the other hand, could not easily resign the comical version that Lucilla's inordinate opinion of her own attractions had made her imagine Mr. Calthorp's valet in the street, and discover his master in the chance inquirer whom the waiter had mentioned; and as Cilly could not aver that the man had actually told her in so many words that it was Mr. Calthorp, Horatia had a right to her opinion, and though she knew she had been a young lady a good many years, she could not easily adopt the suggestion that she could pass for Cilly's cruel duenna.

Lucilla grew sullen, and talked of going home by the next steamer; Rashe, far from ready for another sea voyage, called herself ill used, and represented the absurdity of returning on a false alarm. Cilly was staggered, and thought what it would be, if Mr. Calthorp, smoking his cigar at his club, heard that she had fled from his imaginary pursuit. Besides, the luggage must be recovered, so she let Horatia go on arranging for an excursion for the Monday, only observing that it must not be in Dublin.

"No, bonnets are needful there. What do you think of Howth and Ireland's eye, the place where Kirwen murdered his wife?" said Rashe, with great gusto, for she had a strong turn for the horrid murders in the newspaper.

"Too near, and too smart," sulked Lucy.

"Well, then, Glendalough, that is wild, and far off enough, and may be done in a day from Dublin. I'll ring and find out."

"Not from that man."

"Oh! we shall see Calthorps peopling the hill-sides! Well, let us have the landlord."

It was found that both the Devil's Glen and the Seven Churches might be visited if they started by the seven o'clock train, and returned late at night, and Lucilla agreeing, the evening went off as best it might, the cousins being

glad to get out of each other's company at nine, that they might be up early the next morning. Lucy had not liked Rashe so little since the days of her infantine tyranny.

The morning, however, raised their spirits, and sent them off in a more friendly humour, enjoying the bustle and excitement, that was meat and drink to them, and exclaiming at the exquisite views of sea and rugged coast along beautiful Kilmeny bay. When they left the train, they were delighted with their outside car, and reclined on their opposite sides in enchantment with the fern bordered lanes, winding between noble trees, between which came inviting glimpses of exquisitely green meadows and hill-sides. They stopped at a park-looking gate, leading to the Devil's Glen, which they were to traverse on foot, meeting the car at the other end.

Here there was just enough life and adventure to charm them, as they gaily trod the path, winding picturesquely beside the dashing, dancing, foaming stream, now between bare salient bluffs of dark rock, now between glades of verdant thicket, or bold shouldering slopes of purple heath, and soft bent grass. They were constantly crying out with delight, as they bounded from one point of view to another, sometimes climbing among loose stones, leading between ferns and hazel stems, to a well-planted hermitage, sometimes springing across the streamlet upon stepping-stones. At the end of the wood, another lodge gate brought them beyond the private grounds that showed care, even in their rusticity, and they came out on the open hill-side in true mountain air, soft turf beneath their feet, the stream rushing away at the bottom of the slope, and the view closed in with blue mountains, on which the clouds marked purple shadows. This was freedom! this was enjoyment! this was worth the journey! and Cilly's elastic feet sprang along as if she had been a young kid. How much was delight in the scenery, how much in the scramble, need not be analyzed.

There was plenty of scrambling before it was over. A woman who had been lying in wait for tourists at the gate, guided them to the bend of the glen, where they were to climb up to pay their respects to the waterfall. The ascent was not far from perpendicular, only rendered accessible by the slope of fallen debris at the base, and a few steps cut out from one projecting rock to another, up to a narrow shelf, whence the cascade was to be looked down on. The more

adventurous spirits went on to a rock overhanging the fall, and with a curious chink or cranny, forming a window with a seat, and called King O'Toole's chair. Each girl perched herself there, and was complimented on her strong head and active limbs, and all their powers were needed in the long breathless pull up craggy stepping-stones, then over steep slippery turf ere they gained the summit of the bank. Spent, though still gasping out, "such fun!" they threw themselves on their backs upon the thymy grass, and lay still for several seconds, ere they sat up to look back at the thickly wooded ravine, winding crevice-like in and out between the overlapping skirts of the hills, whose rugged heads cut off the horizon. Then merrily sharing the first instalment of luncheon with their barefooted guide, they turned their faces onwards, where all their way seemed one bare gray moor, rising far off into the outline of Luggela, a peak overhanging the semblance of a crater.

Nothing afforded them much more mirth than a rude bridge, consisting of a single row of square-headed unconnected posts along the heads of which Cilly three times hopped backwards and forwards for the mere drollery of the thing, with vigour unabated by the long walk over the dreary moorland fields with their stone walls.

By the side of the guide's cabin, the car awaited them, and mile after mile they drove on through treeless wastes, the few houses with their thatch anchored down by stones, showing what winds must sweep along those unsheltered tracts. The desolate solitude began to weary the volatile pair into silence; ere the mountains rose closer to them, they crossed a bridge over a stony stream begirt with meadows, and following its course came into sight of their goal.

Here was Glendalough, a *cul de sac*, between the mountains that shelved down, enclosing it on all sides save the entrance, through which the river issued. Their summits were bare of the gray stone that lay in fragments everywhere, but their sides were clothed with the lovely Irish green pastureland, intermixed with brushwood and trees, and a beautiful meadow surrounded the white ring-like beach of pure white sand and pebbles bordering the outer lake, whose gray waters sparkled in the sun. Its twin lake, divided from it by so narrow a belt of ground, that the white beaches lay on their green setting, like the outline of a figure of 8, had

a more wild and gloomy aspect, lying deeper within the hollow, and the hills coming sheer down on it at the further end in all their grayness, unsoftened by any verdure. The gray was that of absolute black and white intermingled in the grain of the stone, and this was peculiarly gloomy, but in the summer sunshine it served but to set off the brilliance of the verdure, and the whole air of the valley was so bright, that Cilly declared that it had been traduced, and that no skylark of sense need object thereto.

Losing sight of the lakes as they entered the shabby little town, they sprang off the car before a small inn, and ere their feet were on the ground were appropriated by one of a shoal of guides, in dress and speech an ultra Irishman, exaggerating his part as a sort of buffoon for the travellers. Rashe was diverted by his humours, Cilly thought them in bad taste, and would fain have escaped from his brogue and his antics, with some perception that the scene ought to be left to make its impression in peace.

Small peace, however, was there among the scores of men, women, and children, within the rude wall containing the most noted relics; all beset the visitors with offers of stockings, lace, or stones from the hills; and the chatter of the guide was a lesser nuisance, for which she was forced to compound for the sake of his protection. When he had cleared away his compatriots, she was able to see the remains of two of the Seven Churches, the Cathedral, and St. Kevin's Kitchen, both of the enduring gray stone, covered with yellow lichen, which gave a remarkable golden tint to their extreme old age. Architecture there was next to none. St. Kevin's so called kitchen had a cylindrical tower, crowned by an extinguisher, and within the roofless walls was a flat stone, once the altar, and still a station for pilgrims; and the cathedral contained two broken coffin-lids with floriated crosses, but it was merely four rude roofless walls, enclosing less space than a cottage kitchen, and less ornamental than many a barn. The whole space was encumbered with regular modern headstones, ugly as the worst that English graveyards could show, and alternating between the names of Byrne and O'Toole, families who, as the guide said, would come "hundreds of miles to lie there." It was a grand thought, that those two lines, in wealth or in poverty, had been constant to that one wild mountain burying-place, in splendor or in ruin, for more than twelve centuries.

Here, some steps from the cathedral on the top of the slope, was the chief grandeur of the view. A noble old carved granite cross, eight or ten feet high, stood upon the brow, bending slightly to one side, and beyond lay the valley cherishing its treasure of the twin lakelets, girt in by the band across them, nestled in the soft lining of copsewood and meadow, and protected by the lofty massive hills above. In front, but below, and somewhat to the right, lay another enclosure, containing the ivied gable of St. Mary's Church, and the tall column-like round tower, both with the same peculiar golden hoariness. The sight struck Lucilla with admiration and wonder; but the next moment she heard the guide exhorting Rashe to embrace the stem of the cross, telling her that if she could clasp her arms round it, she would be sure of a handsome and rich husband within the year.

Half superstitious, and always eager for fun, Horatia spread her arms in the endeavour, but her hands could not have met without the aid of the guide who dragged them together, and celebrated the exploit with a hurrah of congratulation, while she laughed triumphantly, and called on her companion to try her luck. But Lucy was disgusted, and bluntly refused, knowing her grasp to be far too small, unable to endure the touch of the guide, and may be shrinking from the failure of the augury.

"Ah! to be shure, an it's not such a purty young lady as yourself that need be taking the throuble," did not fall pleasantly on her ears, and still less Ratia's laugh and exclamation, "You make too sure, do you? Have a care. There were black looks at parting! But you need not be afraid, if handsome be a part of the spell."

There was no answer, and Horatia saw that the outspoken raillery that Cilly had once courted now gave offence. She guessed that something was amiss, but did not know that what had once been secure had been wilfully imperilled, and that suspense was awakening new feelings of delicacy and tenderness.

The light words and vulgar forecasting had, in spite of herself, transported Lucilla from the rocky thicket where she was walking, even to the cedar-room at Woolstone Lane, and conjured up before her that grave, massive brow, and the eye that would not meet her. She had hurried to these wilds to escape that influence, and it was holding her tighter than

ever. To hasten home on account of Mr. Calthorp's pursuit would be the most effectual vindication of the feminine dignity that she might have impaired in Robert's eyes, but to do this on what Ratia insisted on believing a false alarm, would be the height of absurdity. She was determined on extracting proofs sufficient to justify her return, and every moment seemed an hour until she could feel herself free to set her face homewards. A strange impatience seized her at every spot where the guide stopped them to admire, and Ratia's encouragement of his witticisms provoked her excessively.

With a kind of despair she found herself required, before taking boat for St. Kevin's Cave, to mount into a wood to admire another waterfall.

"See two waterfalls," she muttered, "and you have seen them all. There are only two kinds, one a bucket of water thrown down from the roof of a house, the other over the staircase. Either the water is a fiction, or you can't get at them for the wet."

"That was a splendid fellow at the Devil's Glen."

"There's as good a one any day at the lock on the canal at home! only we do not delude people into coming to see it. Up such places, too!"

"Cilly, for shame. What, tired and giving in?"

"Not tired in the least; only this place is not worth getting late for the train."

"Will the young lady take my hand? I'd be proud to have the honour of helping her up," said the guide; but Lucilla disdainfully rejected his aid, and climbed among the stones and brushwood aloof from the others, Ratia talking in high glee to the Irishman, and adventurously scrambling.

"Cilly, here it is," she cried, from beneath a projecting elbow of rock; "you look down on it. It's a delicious fall. I declare one can get into it;" and, by the aid of a tree, she lowered herself down on a flat stone, whence she could see the cascade better than above. "This is stunning. I vow one can get right into the bed of the stream, right across. Don't be slow, Cilly, this is the prime fun of all!"

"You care for the romp and nothing else," grumbled Lucilla. That boisterous merriment was hateful to her, when feeling that the demeanour of gentlewomen must be their protection, and with all her high spirit, she was terrified lest insult or remark should be occasioned. Her signs

of remonstrance were only received with a derisive outburst, as Rashe climbed down into the midst of the bed of the stream. "Come, Cilla, or I shall indite a page in the diary, headed, Faint heart—Ah!" as her foot slipped on the stones, and she fell backwards, but with instant efforts at rising, such as assured her cousin that no harm was done. "Nay, nonsensical clambering will be the word," she said.

"Serves you right for getting into such places! What! Hurt?" as Horatia, after resting in a sitting posture, tried to get up, but paused, with a cry.

"Nothing," she said, "I'll . . ." but another attempt ended in the same way. Cilla sprang to her, followed by the guide, imprecating bad luck to the slippery stones. Herself standing in the water, Lucilla drew her cousin upright, and with a good deal of help from the guide, and much suffering, brought her up the high bank, and down the rough steep descent through the wood.

She had given her back and side a severe twist, but she moved less painfully on more level ground, and, supported between Lucilla and the guide, whom the mischance had converted from a comedy clown to a delicately considerate assistant, she set out for the inn where the cars had been left. The progress lasted for two doleful hours, every step worse than the last, and, much exhausted, she at length sank upon the sofa in the little sitting-room of the inn.

The landlady was urgent that the wet clothes should be taken off, and the back rubbed with whiskey, but Cilla stood agitating her small soaked foot, and insisting that the car should come round at once, since the wet had dried on them, and they had best lose no time in returning to Dublin, or at least to Bray.

But Rashe cried out that the car would be the death of her; she could not stir without a night's rest.

"And be all the stiffer to-morrow?—Once on the car, you will be very comfortable—"

"Oh, no! I can't! This is a horrid place. Of all the unlucky things that could have happened—"

"Then," said Cilla, fancying a little coercion would be wholesome, "don't be faint-hearted. You will be glad to-morrow that I had the sense to make you move to-day. I shall order the car."

"Indeed!" cried Horatia, her temper yielding to pain

and annoyance. "You seem to forget that this expedition is mine! I am paymaster, and have the only right to decide."

Lucilla felt the taunt base, as recalling to her the dependent position into which she had carelessly rushed, relying on the family feeling that had hitherto made all things as one. "Henceforth," said she, "I take my share of all that we spend. I will not sell my free will."

"So you mean to leave me here alone?" said Horatia, with positive tears of pain, weariness, and vexation, at the cruel unfriendliness of the girl she had petted.

"Nonsense! I must abide by your fate. I only hate to see people chicken-hearted, and thought you wanted shaking up. I stay so long as you own me an independent agent."

The discussion was given up, when it was announced that a room was ready; and Rashe underwent so much in climbing the stairs, that Cilly thought she could not have been worse on the car.

The apartment was not much behind that at the village inn at Hiltonbury. In fact, it had gay curtains and a grand-figured blind, but the doors at the Charlecote Arms had no such independent habits of opening, the carpet would have been whole, and the chairs would not have quaked beneath Lucy's grasshopper weight, when down she sat in doleful resignation, having undressed her cousin, sent her *chaussure* to dry, and dismissed the car, with a sense of bidding farewell to the civilized world, and entering a desert island, devoid of the zest of Robinson Crusoe's.

What an endless evening it was, and how the ladies detested each other! There lay Horatia, not hurt enough for alarm, but quite cross enough to silence pity, suffering at every move, and sore at Cilly's want of compassion; and here sat Lucilla, thoroughly disgusted with her cousin, her situation, and her expedition. Believing the strain a trifle, she not unjustly despised the want of resolution that had shrunk from so expedient an exertion as the journey, and felt injured by the selfish want of consideration that had condemned her to this awkward position in this forlorn little inn, without even the few toilette necessities that they had with them at Dublin, and with no place to sit in, for the sitting-room below stairs served as a coffee-room, where sundry male tourists were imbibing whiskey, the fumes of which

ascended to the young ladies above, long before they could obtain their own meal.

The chops were curiosities, and as to the tea, the grounds, apparently the peat of the valley, filled up nearly an eighth of the cup, causing Lucilla in lugubrious mirth to talk of "That lake whose gloomy tea, ne'er saw Hyson nor Bohea," when Rashe fretfully retorted, "It is very unkind in you to grumble at every thing when you know I can't help it!"

"I was not grumbling, I only wanted to enliven you."
"Queer enlivenment!"

Nor did Lucilla's attempts at body curing succeed better. Her rubbing only evoked screeches, and her advice was scornfully rejected. Horatia was a determined homœopath, and sighed for the globules in her wandering box, and as whiskey and tobacco both became increasingly fragrant, averred again and again that nothing should induce her to stay here another night.

Nothing? Lucilla found her in the morning in all the aches and flushes of a feverish cold, her sprain severely painful, her eyes swollen, her throat so sore, that in alarm Cilly besought her to send for advice; but Rashe regarded a murderous allopathist as near akin to an executioner, and only bewailed the want of her minikin doses.

Giving up the hope of an immediate departure, Lucilla despatched a messenger to Bray, thence to telegraph for the luggage; and the day was spent in fears lest their landlord at Dublin might detain their goods as those of suspicious characters.

Other excitement there was none, not even in quarrelling, for Rashe was in a sleepy state, only roused by interludes of gloomy tea and greasy broth; and outside, the clouds had closed down, such clouds as she had never seen, blotting out lake and mountain with an impervious gray curtain, seeming to bathe rather than to rain on the place. She longed to dash out into it, but Ratia's example warned her against drenching her only garments, though indoors the dryness was only comparative. Every thing she touched, herself included seemed pervaded by a damp, limp rawness, that she vainly tried to dispel by ordering a fire. The turf smouldered, the smoke came into the room, and made their eyes water, and Rashe insisted that the fire should be put out.

Cilla almost envied her sleep, as she sat disconsolate in

the window, watching the comparative density of the rain, and listening to the extraordinary howls and shrieks in the town, which kept her constantly expecting that a murder or a rebellion would come to relieve the monotony of the day, till she found that nothing ensued, and no one took any notice.

She tried to sketch from memory, but nothing would hinder that least pleasant of occupations, thought. Either she imagined every unpleasant chance of detention, she worried herself about Robert Fulmort, or marvelled what Mr. Prendergast and the censorious ladies would do with Edna Murrell. Many a time did she hold her watch to her ear, suspecting it of having stopped, so slowly did it loiter through the weary hours. Eleven o'clock when she hoped it was one—half-past two when it felt like five!

By real five the mist was thinner, showing first nearer, then remoter objects; the coarse slates of the roofs opposite emerged polished and dripping, and the cloud finally took its leave, some heavy flakes, like cotton wool, hanging on the hill-side, and every rock shining, every leaf glistening. Verdure and rosy cheeks both resulted from a perpetual vapor-bath.

Lucilla rejoiced in her liberty, and hurried out of doors, but leaning out of the coffee-room window, loungers were seen who made her sensible of the awkwardness of her position, and she looked about for yesterday's guide as a friend, but he was not at hand, and her uneasy gate brought round her numbers, begging or offering guidance. She wished to retreat, but would not, and walked briskly along the side of the valley opposite to that she had yesterday visited, in search of the other four churches. Two fragments were at the junction of the lakes, another was entirely destroyed, but the last, called the Abbey, stood in ruins within the same wall as the Round Tower, which rose straight, round, mysterious, defying inquiry, as it caught the evening light on its summit, even as it had done for so many centuries past.

Not that Cilla thought of the riddles of that tower, far less of the early Christianity of the isle of saints, of which these ruins and their wild legend were the only vestiges, nor of the mysticism that planted clusters of churches in sevens as analogous to the seven stars of the Apocalypse. Even

the rugged glories of the landscape chiefly addressed themselves to her as good to sketch, her highest flight in admiration of the picturesque. In the state of mind ascribed to the ancients, she only felt the weird unhomelikeness of the place, as though she were at the ends of the earth, unable to return, and always depressed by solitude; she could have wept. Was it for this that she had risked the love that had been her own from childhood, and broken with the friend to whom her father had commended her? Was it worth while to defy their censures for this dreary spot, this weak-spirited, exacting, unrefined companion, and the insult of Mr. Calthorp's pursuit.

Naturally shrewd, well knowing the world, and guarded by a real attachment, Lucilla had never regarded the millionaire's attentions as more than idle amusement in watching the frolics of a beauty, and had suffered them as adding to her own diversion; but his secretly following her, no doubt to derive mirth from her proceedings, revealed to her that woman could not permit such terms without loss of dignity, and her cheek burnt at the thought of the ludicrous light in which he might place her present predicament before a conclave of gentlemen.

The thought was intolerable. To escape it by rapid motion, she turned hastily to leave the enclosure. A figure was climbing over the steps in the wall with outstretched hand, as if he expected her to cling to him, and Mr. Calthorp, springing forward, eagerly exclaimed in familiar, patronizing tones, "Miss Sandbrook! They told me you were gone this way." Then, in a very different voice at the unexpected look and bow that he encountered: "I hope Miss Charteris' accident is not serious."

"Thank you, not serious," was the freezing reply.

"I am glad. How did it occur?"

"It was a fall." He should have no good story wherewith to regale his friends.

"Going on well, I trust. Chancing to be at Dublin, I heard by accident that you were here, and fearing that there might be a difficulty, I ran down in the hope of being of service to you."

"Thank you," in the least thankful of tones.

"Is there nothing I can do for you?"

"Thank you, nothing."

"Could I not obtain some advice for Miss Charteris?"

"Thank you, she wishes for none."

"I am sure"—he spoke eagerly—"that in some way I could be of use to you. I shall remain at hand. I cannot bear that you should be alone in this remote place."

"Thank you, we will not put you to inconvenience. We intended to be alone."

"I see you esteem it a great liberty," said poor Mr. Calthorp; "but you must forgive my impulse to see whether I could be of any assistance to you. I will do as you desire, but at least you will let me leave Stefano with you; he is a fellow full of resources, who would make you comfortable here, and me easy about you."

"Thank you, we require no one."

Those "thank yous" were intolerable, but her defensive reserve and dignity attracted the gentleman more than all her dashing brilliancy, and he became more urgent. "You cannot ask me to leave you entirely to yourselves under such circumstances."

"I more than ask it, I insist upon it. Good morning."

"Miss Sandbrook, do not go till you have heard and forgiven me."

"I will not hear you, Mr. Calthorp. This is neither the time nor place," said Lucilla, inly more and more perturbed, but moving along with slow, quiet steps, and betraying no emotion. "The object of our journey was totally defeated by meeting any of our ordinary acquaintance, and but for this mischance I should have been on my way home to-day."

"O, Miss Sandbrook, do you class me among your ordinary acquaintance?"

It was all she could do to hinder her walk from losing its calm slowness, and before she could divest her intended reply of undignified sharpness, he continued—

"Who could have betrayed my preference? But for this, I meant that you should never have been aware that I was hovering near to watch over you."

"Yes, to collect good stories for your club."

"This is injustice! Flagrant injustice, Miss Sandbrook. Will you not credit the anxiety that irresistibly impelled me to be ever at hand in case you should need a protector?"

"No!" was the point-blank reply.

"How shall I convince you?" he cried, vehemently.

"What have I done that you should refuse to believe in the feelings that prompted me?"

"What have you done?" said Lucilla, whose blood was up. "You have taken a liberty, which is the best proof of what your feelings are, and every moment that you force your presence on me adds to the offence!"

She saw that she had succeeded. He stood still, bowed, and answered not, possibly deeming this the most effective means of recalling her; but from first to last he had not known Lucilla Sandbrook.

The eager, protecting familiarity of his first address had given her such a shock that she felt certain that she had only no guard but herself from positively-insulting advances; and though abstaining from all quickening of pace, her heart throbbed violently in the fear of hearing him following her, and the inn was a haven of refuge.

She flew up to her bedroom to tear about like a panther, as if by violence to work down the tumult in her breast. She had proved the truth of Honora's warning, that beyond the pale of ordinary *convenances*, a woman is exposed to insult, and however sufficient she may be for her own protection, the very fact of having to defend herself is well-nigh degradation. It was not owning the error. It was the agony of humiliation, not the meekness of humility, and she was as angry with Miss Charlecote for the prediction as with Mr. Calthorp for having fulfilled it, enraged with Horatia, and desperate at her present imprisoned condition, unable to escape, and liable to be still haunted by her enemy.

At last she saw the discomfited swain re-enter the inn, his car come round, and finally drive off with him; and then she felt what a blank was her victory. If she breathed freely it was at the cost of an increased sense of solitude and severance from the habitable world.

Hitherto she had kept away from her cousin, trusting that the visit might remain a secret, too mortifying to both parties to be divulged, but she found Horatia in a state of eager anticipation, awakened from the torpor to watch for tidings of a happy conclusion to their difficulties, and preparing jests on the pettish ingratitude with which she expected Lucilla to requite the services that would be nevertheless accepted.

Gone! Sent away! Not even commissioned to find the

boxes. Horatia's consternation and irritation knew no bounds. Lucilla was no less indignant that she could imagine it possible to become dependent on his good offices, or to permit him to remain in the neighbourhood. Rashe angrily scoffed at her newborn scruples, and complained of her want of consideration for herself. Cilla reproached her cousin with utter absence of any sense of propriety and decorum. Rashe talked of ingratitude, and her sore throat being by this time past conversation, came to tears. Cilla, who could not bear to see any one unhappy, tried many a "never mind," many a "didn't mean," many a fair augury for the morrow, but all in vain, and night came down upon the angel anglers more forlorn and less friendly than ever! and with all the invalid's discomforts so much aggravated by the tears and the altercation that escape from this gloomy shore appeared infinitely remote.

There was an essential difference of tone of mind between those brought up at Hiltonbury or at Castle Blanch, and though high spirit had long concealed the unlikeness, it had now been made bare, and Lucy could not conquer her disgust and disappointment.

Sunshine was on Luggela, and Horatia's ailments were abating, so, as her temper was not alleviated, Lucilla thought peace would be best preserved by sallying out to sketch. A drawing from behind the cross became so engrossing that she was sorry to find it time for the early dinner, and her artistic pride was only allayed by the conviction that she should always hate what recalled Glendalough.

Rashe was better, and was up and dressed. Hopes of departure produced amity, and they were almost lively over their veal broth, when the sounds of arrival made Lucilla groan at the prospect of cockney tourists obstructing the completion of her drawing.

"There's a gentleman asking to see you, miss."

"I can see no one."

"Cilla, now do."

"Tell him I cannot see him," repeated Lucy, imperiously.

"How can you be so silly? he may have heard of our boxes."

"I would toss them into the lake rather than take them from him."

"Eh! pray let me be present when you perform the ceremony! Cilla in the heroics! Whom is she expecting?" said a voice outside the door, ever ajar, a voice that made Lucilla clap her hands in ecstasy.

"You, Owen! come in," cried Horatia, writhing herself up.

"Owen, old Owen! that's right," burst from Cilla, as she sprang to him.

"Right! Ah! that is not the greeting I expected; I was thinking how to guard my eyes. So, you have had enough of the unprotected dodge! What has Rashe been doing to herself? A desperate leap down the Falls of Niagara?"

Horatia was diffuse in the narration; but, after the first, Lucy did not speak. She began by arming herself against her brother's derision, but presently felt perplexed by detecting on his countenance something unwontedly grave and pre-occupied. She was sure that his attention was far away from Rashe's long story, and she abruptly interrupted it with "How came you here, Owen?"

He did not seem to hear, and she demanded, "Is anything the matter? Are you come to fetch us because any one is ill?"

Starting, he said, "No, oh, no!"

"Then what brought you here? a family council, or Honor Charlecote?"

"Honor Charlecote," he repeated, mistily; then, making an effort, "Yes, good old soul, she gave me a vacation tour on condition that I should keep an eye on you. Go on, Rashe; what were you saying?"

"Didn't you hear me, Owen? Why Calthorp, the great Calthorp is in our wake. Cilly is frantic."

"Calthorp about!" exclaimed Owen with a start of dismay. "Where?"

"I've disposed of him," quoth Lucilla; "he'll not trouble us again."

"Which way is he gone?"

"I would not tell you if I knew."

"Don't be such an idiot," he petulantly answered; "I want nothing of the fellow, only to know whether he is clean gone; are you sure whether he went by Bray?"

"I told you I neither knew nor cared."

"Could you have believed, Owen," said Rashe, plaintively, "that she was so absurd as never even to tell him to inquire for our boxes?"

"Owen knows better;" but Lucilla stopped, surprised to see that his thoughts were again astray. Giving a constrained smile, he asked, "Well, what next?"

"To find our boxes," they answered, in a breath.

"Your boxes? Didn't I tell you I've got them here?"

"Owen, you're a trump," cried Rashe.

"How on earth did you know about them?" inquired his sister.

"Very simply; crossed from Liverpool yesterday, reconnoitred at your hotel, was shown your telegram, went to the luggage office, routed out that the things were taking a gentle tour to Limerick, got them back this morning, and came on. And what are you after next?"

"Home," jerked out Lucy, without looking up, thinking how welcome he would have been yesterday, without the goods.

"Yes, home," said Horatia. "This abominable sprain will hinder my throwing a line or jolting on Irish roads, and if Cilly is to be in agonies when she sees a man on the horizon, we might as well never have come."

"Will you help me to carry home this poor invalid warrior, Owen?" said Lucilla; "she will permit you."

"I'll put you into the steamer," said Owen; "but, you see, I have made my arrangements for doing Killarney and the rest of it."

"I declare," said Rashe, recovering benevolence with comfort, "if they would send Scott from the Castle to meet me at Holyhead, Cilly might as well go on with you. You would be sufficient to keep off the Calthorps."

"I'm afraid that's no go," hesitated Owen. "You see I had made my plans, trusting to your bold assertions that you would suffer no one to approach."

"Oh! never mind. It was no proposal of mine. I've had enough of Ireland," returned Lucy, somewhat aggrieved.

"How soon shall you be sufficiently repaired for a start, Ratia?" asked Owen, turning quickly round to her. "Tomorrow? No! Well, I'll come over and see."

"Going away?" cried the ladies, by no means willing to part with their guardian.

"Yes, I must; considering that we should be parallels never meeting, I had to provide for myself."

"I see," said Rashe, "he has a merry party at Newragh Bridge, and will sit up over whist and punch till midnight!"

"You don't pretend to put yourselves in competition," said he, snatching at the idea hastily.

"Oh! no," said his sister, with an annoyed gesture. "I never expect you to prefer me and my comfort to any one."

"Indeed, Cilla, I'm sorry," he answered gently, but in perplexity, "but I never reckoned on being wanted, and engagements are engagements."

"I'm sure I don't want you when any thing pleasanter is going forward," she answered, with vexation in her tone.

"I'll be here by eleven or twelve," he replied, avoiding the altercation; "but I must get back now, I shall be waited for."

"Who is it that can't wait?" asked Rashe.

"Oh! just an English acquaintance of mine. There, good-by! I wish I had come in time to surprise the modern St. Kevin! Are you sure there was no drowning in the lake!"

"You know it was blessed to drown no one after Kathleen."

"Re-assuring! only mind you put a chapter about it into the tour." Under the cover of these words, he was gone.

"I declare there's some mystery about his companion!" exclaimed Horatia. "Suppose it were Calthorp himself?"

"Owen is not so lost to respect for his sister."

"But did you not see how little he was surprised, and how much pre-occupied?"

"Very likely; but no one but you could imagine him capable of such an outrage."

"You have been crazy ever since you entered Ireland, and expect every one else to be the same. Seriously, what damage did you anticipate from a little civility?"

"If you begin upon that, I shall go out and finish my sketch, and not unpack one of the boxes."

Nevertheless, Lucilla spent much fretting guesswork on her cousin's surmise. She relied too much on Owen's sense of propriety to entertain the idea that he could be forward-

ing a pursuit so obviously insolent, but a still wilder conjecture had been set afloat in her mind. Could the nameless one be Robert Fulmort? Though aware of the anonymous nature of brothers' friends, the secrecy struck her as unusually guarded, and to one so used to devotion, it seemed no extraordinary homage, that another admirer should be drawn along at a respectful distance a satellite to her erratic course; nay, probably all had been concerted in Woolstone Lane, and therewith the naughty girl crested her head and prepared to take offence. After all, it could not be, or why should Owen have been bent on returning, and be so independent of her? Far more probably he had met a college friend, or a Westminster schoolfellow, some of whom were in regiments quartered in Ireland, and on the morrow would bring him to do the lions of Glendalough, among which might be reckoned the Angel Anglers!

That possibility might have added some grains to the satisfaction of making a respectable toilette next day. Certain it is, that Miss Sandbrook's mountain costume was an exquisite feat of elaborate simplicity, and that the completion of her sketch was interrupted by many a backward look down the pass, and many a contradictory mood, sometimes boding almost as harsh a reception for Robert as for Mr. Calthorp, sometimes relenting in the thrill of hope, sometimes accusing herself of errant folly, and expecting as a *pis aller* the diversion of dazzling and tormenting an Oxonian, or a soldier or two! Be the meeting what it might, she preferred that it should be out of Horatia's sight, and so drew on and on to the detriment of her distances.

Positively it was past twelve, and the desire to be surprised unconcernedly occupied could no longer obviate her restlessness, so she packed up her hair pencil, and, walking back to the inn, found Rashe in solitary possession of the coffee-room.

"You have missed him, Cilly."

"Owen? No one else?"

"No, not the Calthorp; I am sorry for you."

"But who was here? tell me, Rashe."

"Owen, I tell you," repeated Horatia, playing with her impatience.

"Tell me; I will know whether he has any one with him?"

"Alack, for your disappointment, for the waste of that blue bow, not a soul came here but himself."

"And where is he? how did I miss him?" said Lucilla, forcibly repressing the mortification for which her cousin was watching.

"Gone; as I was not in travelling trim, and you not forthcoming, he could not wait; but we are to be off to-morrow at ten o'clock."

"Why did he not come out to find me? Did you tell him I was close by?"

"He had to join his friend and go to the Vale of Avoca. I've found out the man, Cilla. No, don't look so much on the *qui vive*; it's only Jack Hastings!"

"Jack Hastings?" said Lucilla, her looks fallen. "No wonder he would not bring him here."

"Why not, poor fellow? I used to know him very well before he was up the spout."

"I wish Owen had not fallen in with him," said the sister, gravely. "Are you certain it is so, Rashe?"

"I taxed him with it, and he did not deny it, only put it from him laughing. What's the harm? Poor Jack was always a good-natured, honourable fellow, uncommonly clever and amusing—a well-read man too, and Owen is safe enough; no one could try to borrow of him."

"What would Honor's feelings be?" said Lucilla, with more fellow-feeling for her than for months past. Lax as was the sister's tolerance, she was startled at his becoming the associate of an avowedly loose character under the stigma of the world, and with perilous abilities and agreeableness; and it was another of Horatia's offences against proper feeling, not only to regard such evil communications with indifference but absolutely to wish to be brought into contact with a person of this description in their present isolated state. Displeased and uneasy, Lucilla assumed the rôle of petulance and quarrelsomeness for the rest of the day, and revenged herself to the best of her abilities upon Rashe and Owen, by refusing to go to inspect the scene of Kathleen's fatal repulse.

True to his appointment, Owen arrived alone on a car chosen with all regard to Horatia's comfort, and was most actively attentive in settling on it the ladies and their luggage, stretching himself out on the opposite side, his face

raised to the clouds, as he whistled an air; but his eye was still restless, and his sister resolved on questioning him.

Opportunities were, however, rare; whether or not with the design of warding off a *tête-à-tête* he devoted himself to his cousin's service in a manner rare to her since she had laid herself out to be treated as though her name were Horace instead of Horatia. However, Lucilla was not the woman to be baulked of a settled purpose, and at their hotel at Dublin, she nailed him fast by turning back on him when Horatia bade them good-night.

"Well, what do you want?" he asked, annoyed.

"I want to speak to you."

"I hope it is to beg me to write to ask Honor to receive you at home and promise to behave like a decent and respectable person."

"I want neither a judge nor an intercessor in you."

"Come, Lucy, it really would be for every one's good if you would go and take care of poor Honor. You have been using her vilely, and I should think you'd had enough of Rashe for one while."

"If I have used her vilely, at least I have dealt openly by her," said Lucilla. "She has always seen the worst of me on the surface. Can you bear to talk of her when you know how you are treating her?"

He coloured violently, and his furious gesture would have intimidated most sisters, but she stood her ground and answered his stammering demand what she dared to imply.

"You may go into a passion, but you cannot hinder me from esteeming it shameful to make her mission a cover for associating with one whom she would regard with so much horror as Jack Hastings."

"Jack Hastings," cried Owen to her amazement, bursting into a fit of laughter, loud, long, and explosive. "Well done, Rashe!"

"You told her so."

"She told me so, and one does not contradict a lady."

"Something must have put it into her head."

"Only to be accounted for by an unrequited attachment," laughed Owen; "depend on it, a comparison of dates would show Hastings' incarceration to have been the epoch of Rashe's taking to the high masculine line."

"If e'er she loved 'twas him alone
Who lived within a jug of stone."

"For shame, Owen, Rashe never was in love."

But he went on laughing at Rashe's disappointment at his solitary arrival till she said, tartly, "You cannot wonder at our thinking you must have some reason for not mentioning your companion's name nor bringing him with you."

"In fact no man not under a cloud could abstain from paying homage to the queen of the anglers."

It was so true as to raise an angry spot on her cheek, and provoke the hasty excuse, "It would have been obvious to have brought your friend to see your cousin and sister."

"One broken backed, both unwashed! Oh, the sincerity of the resistance I overheard! no gentleman admitted, forsooth! Oh, for a lodge in some vast wilderness! Yes; St. Anthony would have found it a wilderness indeed without his temptations. What would St. Dunstan have been minus the black gentleman's nose, or St. Kevin but for Kathleen! It was a fortunate interposition that Calthorp turned up the day before I came, or I might have had to drag the lake for you."

This personal attack only made her persist. "It was very different when we were alone; with you, you know very well that there could have been no objection."

"No objection on your side, certainly, so I perceive; but suppose there were no desire on the other?"

"Oh!" in a piqued voice, "I know many men don't care for ladies' society, but I don't see why they should be nameless."

"I thought you would deem such a name unworthy to be mentioned."

"Well, but who is the shy man? Is it the little Henniker who used to look as if he would dive under the table when you brought him from Westminster?"

"If I told you, you would remember it against the poor creature for life, as a deliberate insult and want of taste. Good night."

He took his hat and went out, leaving Lucy balancing her guesses between Ensign Henniker and him whom she could not mention. Her rejection of Mr. Calthorp might have occasioned the present secrecy, and she was content to

leave herself the pleasant mystery, in the hope of having it dispelled by her last glance of Kingstown quay.

In that hope she rocked herself to sleep, and the next morning was so extra vivacious as to be a sore trial to poor Rashe, in the anticipation of the *peine forte et dure* of St. George's Channel. Owen was also in high spirits; but a pattern of consideration and kind attention, as he saw the ladies on board, and provided for their comfort, not leaving them till the last moment.

Lucilla's heart had beaten fast from the moment she had reached Kingstown; she was keeping her hand free to wave a most encouraging kiss, and as her eye roamed over the heads upon the quay without a recognition, she felt absolutely baffled and cheated, and gloriously as the Bay of Dublin spread itself before her, she was conscious only of wrath and mortification, and of a bitter sense of dreariness and desertion. Nobody cared for her, not even her brother!

CHAPTER VI.

My pride that took
Full easily all impressions from below,
Would not look up, or half despised the height
To which I would not or I could not climb,
I thought I could not breathe in that fine air.

IDYLLS OF THE KING.

"CAN you come and take a turn in the Temple Gardens, Phœbe?" asked Robert, on the way from church, the day after Owen's visit to Woolstone Lane.

Phœbe rejoiced, for she had scarcely seen him since his return from Castle Blanch, and his state of mind was a mystery to her. It was long, however, before he afforded her any clue. He paced on, grave and abstracted, and they had many times gone up and down the least frequented path, before he abruptly said, "I have asked Mr. Parsons to give me a title for Holy Orders."

"I don't quite know what that means."

"How simple you are, Phœbe," he said, impatiently. "it means that St. Wulstan's should be my first curacy."