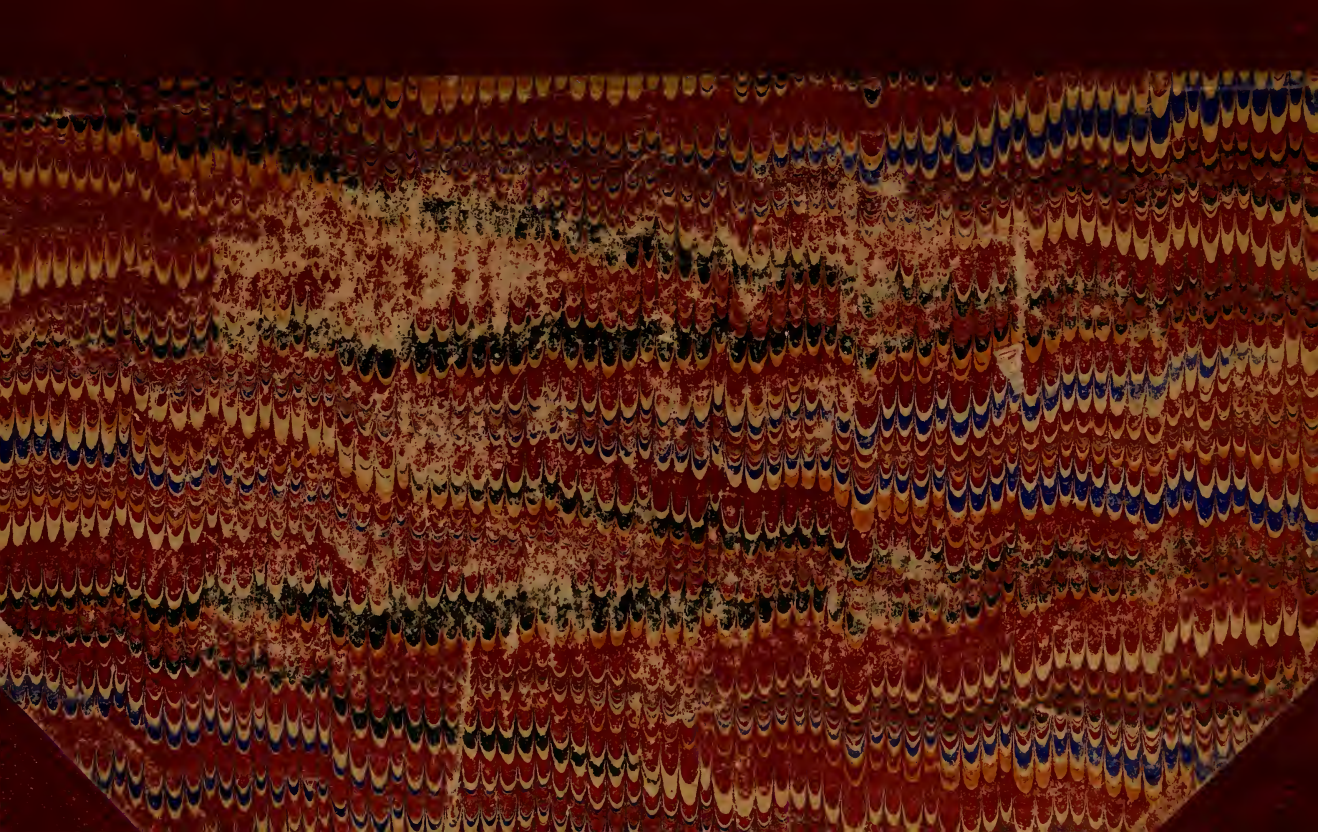

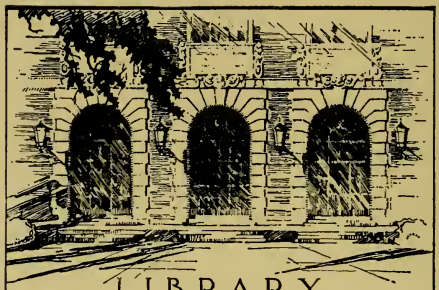

# TROUBLESOME DAUGHTERS

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BY

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"TRUTH SEVERE,
BY FAIRY FICTION DRESSED."

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# PART I.

# TROUBLESOME DAUGHTERS.

## CHAPTER I.

### A WINDY NIGHT.

"But when that the cloud lays its cheek to the flood,
And the wave lays its shouther to the shore,
When the wind sings high, and the sea-whaups cry,
As they rise from the deafening roar,—
O, merry he sits 'mang his jovial crew,
Wi' the helm-heft in his hand,
And he sings aloud to his boys in blue,
As his ee's on thé Gallowa land."

—AINSLIE.

THE wind was blowing in from the sea, and the waves were thundering along the rugged coast of Galloway, one wild and dusky evening towards the latter end of September.

In vain did the flickering sunset struggle for a corner of the heavens—it was speedily overcast; and invisible then was the long line of

white-capped breakers, whose steady beat upon the land could be heard far and near, ere they surged over the rocks, rolling in their treasures of weed, and grass, and broken shells before them.

Far as the eye could reach, it was a bleak and lonely region over which, unchecked, the sea-breeze made its way.

The moorlands were wastes of bog and moss, surmounted by the red waving grass peculiar to the district; the woods were mere clumps of trees roughly huddled together,—and these being perpetually bent before the prevailing blast, presented, from their stunted growth and misshapen boughs, an air of sorrowful endurance, which was heightened almost to the pitch of pathos when winter displayed their bare and interlaced branches.

Solitary stragglers with the same woe-worn aspect, dotted the fields, affording, in their battered and beaten-down condition, a series of roofs for the black cattle of the country, who in bad weather cowered underneath.

Between the villages, which lay at a considerable distance from each other, there were but few dwelling-houses, and only at long intervals

were tracts of land separated from one another by walls of loosely-piled stones. These last were viewed, on the evening in question, with especial ill-will by a sportsman who, at the close of a successful day's fishing, was making his way down from the moor, and who, encumbered as he was with his rod, his creel, and various good trout of creditable size and weight, found getting over the tottering obstacles no easy matter.

Supporting himself, however, by an occasional interjection, and by the consideration that if he could once gain the highroad he should proceed much more rapidly, he bade defiance to the roughness of the way and the buffeting of the elements, and stepped forward with as good a heart as could be expected from a wet and weary man, who sees a neighbourhood with which he is at best but imperfectly acquainted, rapidly becoming obscured in the twilight.

Captain Rupert Evelyn—for such was the stranger's name—had been from an early hour stumbling about among moss-hags, peat-marshes, and stony beds of mountain-torrents which only burst forth during the floods of winter; and had

he allowed himself to own the truth, he must have confessed that nothing would now have gladdened his eyes more than the view, within a reasonable distance, of Castle Kenrick, the friend's house at which he was then staying.

Having, however, declined the attendance of a guide or keeper, asserting roundly that he had never lost his way in his life, and that, moreover, he knew every inch of the road down from the country above to the little port near which the hospitable mansion stood, towards which his steps were to be at eventide directed, he felt that he had no right to grumble, and that he ought to suffer, without even an inward protest, such protracted inconvenience as arose from his taking a round instead of the direct path, which a native of the district would probably have pointed out.

Nor did he disobey the monitor's voice;—the more gloomy and peevish grew the sky, and the more penetrating the blast, the more doggedly and silently he faced it: but unconsciously his steps slackened, and his eyes wistfully searched the landscape at every opportunity.

"If I had not to face the wind," he considered, "I could get along well enough; but,

however, I knew in the morning I should have to fight my way back."

The reminiscence might be consoling, but the battle became increasingly hard to sustain ; nor was our wayfarer in any way reassured by hopes of its having a speedy termination.

Heights were climbed, points were rounded, and level pieces of land were steadily left behind; but although on each occasion he promised himself a joyful surprise behind the ever-renewed veil in front, he was doomed only to repeated and vexatious disappointment.

At length a sharper turn of the road than usual, on a promontory only a short distance off, gave the required fillip to his spirits, which enabled him to brace himself stoutly to the ascent ; and though serious misgivings had now taken the place of his first lurking qualms of uneasiness, he gained the summit at a brisk pace.

Alas for human incredulity !

The gathering dusk hid, it is true, much of the prospect now opened up,—and well was it for our unlucky pedestrian that it did, since, had the light been good, he must have viewed the road he was traversing still wending its

endless way on ahead, a broad white mark on the hillside,—but although such a vision was mercifully withheld, enough still remained to confound and subdue.

Headlands upon which the sea was raging, bleak and desolate reaches of moor above, thickets black under the murky sky, alone met his bewildered gaze.

He stopped short, sat down, and pulled a long, grave, miserable face.

Now was the time for soliloquy. An experienced soliloquist might have made anything he chose out of such a situation: there was an opportunity, such as rarely is given, for plaint composed of retrospection, apprehension, distraction, and a dozen other such mental sensations, whereof we, the chroniclers, might have had the benefit—and it would have saved us some trouble in the way of explanation if we had,—but this fool of an Evelyn never opened his lips.

He was in a mess, and he saw no way out of it. The storm was increasing momentarily; and no habitation, neither cottage nor castle, was visible anywhere.

Fate, however, taking pity on the baffled

wretch, who was obviously punished to the full extent of his demerits, presently sent his way a deliverer, in the shape of a stout country wife, who had been following in his wake for some distance, and who caught him up at this point. From her he could at least ascertain the extent of his misfortunes.

"Hey!" said Evelyn, briskly. "Look here. Can you tell me how far it is to Castle Kenrick?"

The woman stopped to listen.

"Well?" continued her interrogator. "Eh? Did you not hear me? Bother this wind! Castle Kenrick?" in a louder key. "*Castle Kenrick?* How far?"

"Warslin' wi' the wund, sir, I canna hear ye."

"Castle Kenrick?" bawled Evelyn, at the pitch of his voice. "CASTLE KENRICK? How far is it from here?"

"Couldna say, sir. I hear ye noo. Couldna say, I'm sure. It's a wundy nicht."

"Windy—humph! Can't you give a guess, at least? A mile, or two miles, or more?"

"A mile or twa, or mair? Aweel,—maybe mair."

"Is it not down in the bay there?"

"Doun in the bay yonder? Doun yonder? Castle Kenrick?"

"Where is it, in heaven's name?" cried Evelyn, losing patience at last. "Confound the place!"

"Ahint ye, sir,—ahint ye. Oo, ye hae cam the wrang road, I'm thinkin'. Castle Kenrick is ower by," pointing backwards with her finger. "An I had kenned ye sought Castle Kenrick, I wad hae cried on ye lang syne—though maybe," she added, on reflection, "ye michtna hae heard muckle o' me."

"Probably not."

"Aweel, but ye mun jist turn ye roond, and haud your way straight back the road ye cam——"

"I'll do nothing of the sort."

"An' gang ower the bridge——"

"I tell you I won't."

"Ye ken M'Cracken's farm?"

"Now look here," said the young man, with decision, "I'm not going near M'Cracken's farm to-night. In half an hour more it will be as dark as pitch, and I shan't see to put one foot in front of another. It's blowing a gale, besides. As likely as not I should be found at the bottom

of some of these cliffs by morning. You take me home with you——"

"Hame wi' me! Gudesakes!" ejaculated the dame, in not unnatural amazement. "And whae may you be? But I ask your pardon, you are a gentleman frae Castle Kenrick. But I dinna ken; a bit place like oors is no' for quality, unless it be to come in and tak' a rest——"

"Ay, that's it. Let me come in and take a rest. Now, it's no use shouting on into each other's faces any longer. Come along, my good woman, and let's get indoors for better, for worse. Why, where are you making for; are we not to keep to the road?"

"This is the road for us," replied his companion, who, having picked up the heavy basket which she had rested on the ground during the interview, was now kilting up her coats, as she expressed it, to clamber over a low wall at the side, where Evelyn could now perceive that a sort of breach had been made, as though for the purpose.

There was, however, no footpath nor clearing on the other side; and as his guide ran down the bank with the agility of a girl, he was as-

tonished, on following, to find himself almost immediately confronted by a cotter's hut, which, snugly ensconced among the brushwood, might even by daylight have been passed by undetected from above.

"This will do very well," reflected our soldier; "I do not return to Castle Kenrick to-night. Brewster will know perfectly well that I have lost my way—the commonest thing in the world in Scotland; and I can have another turn at the stream before I need put in an appearance to-morrow. On the whole, I could not have fared better."

A quick imagination had settled the matter thus, even in the few seconds which elapsed between the request being preferred and granted; and the same lively fancy had conjured up subsequently a scene which enabled our soldier to think lightly of all previous disaster, and even to consider with some enjoyment so romantic a termination to his day on the moor.

As he ran down the bank he beheld himself speedily made welcome to the best that the vaunted hospitality of the Scottish peasantry could offer, partaking of a clean and comfortable supper, whereof his own trout should be

the mainstay; next forming one of a circle round a blazing peat-fire, and smoking by its cheerful glimmer the friendly pipe; and finally sleeping the sleep of the just—or, at least, of the sound in wind and limb—on a couch which, though rough, should be bleached white as the driven snow.

No wonder that, hungry, tired, and wet as he was, there was something in such a vision even more alluring to his jaded senses than in the recollection of the splendid saloon, gay company, and dress-clothes awaiting him in vain at the Castle. The latter, at least, he could well dispense with.

The door opened, and he was invited to enter.

Oh bitter, cruel disappointment! The peat-reek for which he had mentally bargained did indeed, with overwhelming energy, assail his nostrils,—since it filled the house, unable to find vent in such a wind; but in every other respect, a single moment's survey was sufficient to show that the fair fabric he had reared so happily was founded on sand.

It vanished at the first glance.

The room into which he was conducted, and

in which three men were already lolling at their ease, was small, suffocatingly close, and wretchedly dirty. Furniture blocked it up on every side; and instead of the smouldering fiery furnace, overhung by the seething caldron, which his too sanguine spirit had forecast, a dull fire, nearly out, filled a small portion of a modern grate.

No preparations for a meal,—no scones, oat-cakes, nor girdle-cakes were visible anywhere, but a bowl of uncooked potatoes stood on the low window-sill, and a child of two or three years of age was seated on the floor, busily engaged in mashing a raw herring to pieces with a pewter spoon.

The sight was sickening, joined as it was to a faint, disagreeable odour, which, Evelyn concluded, came from a row of wet clothes suspended on a string across a portion of the ceiling; and although not over-nice nor unaccustomed to hardships, it was with difficulty that he mastered his disgust sufficiently to prevent his turning sharp round and walking out of the hut as unceremoniously as he had walked in.

"Hoots, ye lang loons, to let doun my fire

on sic a nicht, an' me at the toun," began his guide, but without any real resentment or vexation in her tone. "Mattie, my dawtie, let that fishie alane. Wull ye no? Oo, ye're an abbok"—(*Anglicè*, spoilt child)—"that ye are! An' here's a gentleman speerin' for his supper an' his bed, an' me that sair forfoughten——"

"What's keepit ye?" growled one of the men.

"An' what's the gentleman's wull at this time o' the nicht?" said another. "There's naethin' here for gentlemen; but we mun a' do your pleesure, nae doot," ironically.

"'Sakes, gudeman, it's sma' pleesure to me. But sit ye doun, sir—sit ye doun. I'm thinkin' a drappie frae this"—producing a black whisky-bottle—"wad be weel for you and for me. Hey then? What for no?" in surprise as her visitor turned away.

With whatever goodwill such an overture might have been met at another time, under present circumstances it was the last straw breaking the camel's back; and although it is possible that its flat rejection was in a measure owing to there being a half-filled flask still in the pocket of the guest, it was due still more to the nausea the whole spectacle awakened.

How to beat a retreat, however, was the difficulty. He could not stay. Could he possibly go? Would not the men, ill-tempered and surly as they were, while indisposed for his company, nevertheless resent his departure? Even the woman, who had herself demurred at the first, was now endeavouring, by a series of "Sit ye doun, sirs," to inveigle the unfortunate visitor into one of the crazy chairs with which the place abounded. Could he escape, and not make them, one and all, wrathful?

We tell this to show the sort of man Evelyn was. He never hesitated after the first moment, and that moment's pause betokened merely reluctance to wound the feelings of any one, of any degree. The instant his mind was made up he achieved his purpose,—and that by no aid but that of simple address, politeness, and pluck, for he had neither purse nor pence with him, and he did not even leave his trout behind to share the fate of the mangled herring.

He found himself now once again at the mercy of the wind and rain, well out of the scrape as regarded the filthy den into which his own precipitation had led him, but still no nearer than he had been a quarter of an hour

before towards attaining any desirable end to his adventures. The only thing he had gained was the knowledge that he had been for the past hour and a half walking away from his destination instead of to it. The wind had shifted its quarter, and had deceived him.

With the increase of the gale—which, gathering vehemence with a flowing tide, threatened a hurricane before night—the rain, however, had ceased. He might hope, by trudging steadily back, to reach Castle Kenrick drier than he was as he now stood, and he would have the boisterous blast at his back all the way.

With a sigh he was preparing to start, when a curious panting sound, like a breathless but urgent whisper into his very ear, startled him into dropping his fishing-rod and uttering a loud shout.

"I beg your pardon," said the voice, distinctly this time. "I am afraid I alarmed you, but I could not make you hear, and I was sure something was the matter." Even in the midst of so short an explanation a squall carried off the speaker, and swung her round till she was several feet off, and the end of the sentence was lost.

This, however, was of no consequence.

Evelyn beheld a slight feminine form, shawled and wrapped to the chin; and although the features could be but dimly traced in the flickering light, and the utterances be but indistinctly caught, he fancied that it was not the face, nor yet the voice, of a common labourer's daughter.

"Here's another chance!" cried he to himself. "And better luck this time."

As well as he could, he then entered upon his pitiable case, and learned that his dejected and irresolute attitude had arrested the attention of the fair Samaritan, and that on speaking twice, and receiving no response, she had compassionately feared that distress or illness must be the cause.

On finding that all the wants of our stranger were comprised into a direction where to bend his steps, or rather into pity for his having already taken the wrong one, she was about to hurry on, perhaps a thought more hastily than if she had found in the object of her gentle inquiries an aged, or a sick, or a poor man; but this could not be borne.

("Cheated out of her sympathy," concluded Evelyn. "But not so fast, my kindly lass.

This swindling road and I part company once again and forthwith, or I am far mistaken. Here is another, and a more comely, good angel sent to my assistance: where she goes, I go; and though I may not progress so far as to say, 'Her people shall be my people,' I shall certainly hope to make their speedy acquaintance.") "I —I am not very well," he said, looking at his interlocutor out of the tail of his eye.

"So I was afraid. Can I do anything for you?" half turning back.

"Is there nowhere nearer here than Castle Kenrick, where—where—indeed I very much fear I shall not be able to walk as far; I scarcely can hope to reach it to-night. If there were any little inn, or farmhouse — any hut, hovel, or shed, where I could be harboured till morning——" the wind opportunely blew him back as he stood. "Ah!" cried he, staggering, "I could not stand much of this."

His companion stood still.

"You do not know of any?" proceeded Evelyn, as though she had spoken. "Thanks: never mind, then; I must do my best. Good evening. Perhaps I may fall in with a shepherd —oh?—all within doors, you say? Well, it

can't be helped. I wish *I* were, but it is of no use wishing—what? I am to come home with you? Oh? That is very kind, but——" The wind again. Whenever it came in handy, he let it have at him for the nonce,—he was not altogether without guile.

Charmed as he was to find that his dolorous accents had been thus successful, he was scarcely able to retain them on receiving the answer to his next question as to the distance they must traverse before reaching the proffered shelter.

"Five minutes," said the girl, "will take us there."

"Five minutes!" cried Evelyn, and added an internal "Hurrah!" which the necessity for keeping up appearances induced him to suppress all outward sign of; and it may as well be confessed, that so well open did the wily suppliant keep his eyes to future contingencies, that he reflected forthwith whether a slight limp—which should, however, not be suffered to impede their progress—might not be added to his misfortunes, as soon as they were within sight of the door they sought. He was not so absolutely convinced of the hospitality of the Scottish people as he had been half an hour before.

"Five minutes!" he exclaimed; then dropping his tone, but not too low, lest it should be inaudible, "Oh, how thankful I am!" So excellently did he simulate the aspect of a spent and toil-worn wretch who is too far gone to take any heed of the nature of the proffered relief, provided it be only easily attainable, that, in answer to his further suggestion that they should set forth at once, his guide immediately obeyed, only pausing to hope that her pace was not too fast for him.

"Thank you. I do pretty well." (It would have done him no manner of harm to have had another dozen miles added to what he had already walked.) "Do not slacken speed on my account," continued Evelyn, with indomitable resolution; "as long as I can, I will keep up with you."

The angry gusts, which continued to bang the two about unmercifully, made him conclude to dispense with any further provocative of compassion; and presently observing how severely the slight figure at his side was buffeted from side to side, he so far forgot himself as to attempt to give her shelter.

"Look here, keep to the leeward of me," he

said, good-humouredly; "you can't keep your feet on the ground. Take my arm, and it will be something to hold on by," and suiting the action to the word, he took her hand, not rudely, but still with the freedom of a superior performing a kindly act of condescension.

Much to his astonishment, however, the hand, which was bare, and felt very small and soft in his grasp, was snatched hastily away, and at the same moment a break in the clouds permitted a stream of light from the moon, which had now arisen, to descend on a face which, had a single minute more been vouchsafed him for observation, he could have sworn was that of a maiden in his own rank of life, and of a very beautiful one.

## CHAPTER II.

### LUXURY.

"The storm without might rave and rustle,
Tam didna mind the storm a whustle."
—*Tam o' Shanter.*

The immediate effect of this revelation on the mind of the supposed invalid was to cause him to lose sight altogether of the character he was playing.

He pressed forward, straining his eyes to see what sort of an abode might harbour so fair a blossom; and although, a few minutes before, he would have been only too well pleased with the prospect of such excellent accommodation as met his view, he was now unreasonably disconcerted at the sight of a plainly-built, square, whitewashed farmhouse, perched upon the cliff in the most exposed and unkindly spot that the ingenuity of builder could suggest.

A rambling wall, here and there overhung by the bent boughs of a tree, enclosed a small piece of ground on one side, and a deeply-rutted foot-road led through several gates up to the entrance-door on the other; but as this path—for it was little more—struck away towards the right side of the headland upon which the small domain was situated, whereas Evelyn and his guide had crossed the open fields on the left, they only had the advantage, if advantage it could be called, of pursuing it when within a very short distance of the house.

The opening and shutting of the last gate, and another temporary gleam of light, which burst from betwixt the dark masses of cloud above, at the precise moment when it was being held back for the lady to pass through, afforded her fellow-traveller another chance look at her face; but, while mentally anathematising the shade of her hat, which was closely pressed down in order to keep it from being blown away, his observations were further hindered, and finally put to rout altogether, by the vagaries of a long fringed and perversely-minded shawl, which, flying up in front by fits and starts, presently obscured every feature.

So much as he could glean, however, was enough to tantalise. They now gained the door, and for a few minutes the stranger was enjoined to remain where he was; but he had scarcely had time to decide whether it might be necessary to take up again the hypocritical *rôle* he had at first assumed, or whether he had not already cast it off too entirely to admit of its resumption, before he found himself face to face with a stout, elderly yeoman, who, in the heartiest of tones and broadest of accents, was bidding him enter.

"I am afraid I am come under false pretences," he then tried to say, instantly deciding to take his cheery host into confidence, and have a laugh at the whole affair; but he was permitted to get no further.

It was immaterial on what pretences he came. He was there, and that was enough; he could not be too often assured that he was welcome. Whenever he would have spoken he was cut short: the sturdy farmer would hear neither apology nor explanation; and only when both ceased to be offered, consented to permit any one but himself to put in a word.

His daughter—for such Evelyn concluded his late guide to be—did not reappear; but enam-

oured as our hero ought certainly to have been by all the laws of romance, it must be confessed that he experienced on this account neither anxiety nor uneasiness, being content to wait, and to occupy himself, as soon as the assiduities of his new friend would permit, in unreeling the line of his fishing-rod and emptying his basket. Pretty faces he could see by the score any day he chose, but to his ears no sound had ever seemed more musical than Farmer Comline's. "Come ben the hoose, sir, and mak' yersel' at hame. I'm prood to do ye a service, and fain to hae the pleesure o' your company."

He was now housed for the night; and shame to tell, that was the thought which was uppermost in the young man's mind.

To the courteous invitation he made a spirited and suitable rejoinder, and looking around him with the utmost good-humour, mentally contrasted the ample and comfortable apartment which now met his view, with the dark and odorous hovel into which he had at first stumbled. That recollection was now only a source of delight, and the castle in the air it had so ruthlessly destroyed was returned, an actual and solid structure, on his hands.

He could not conceal his pleasure.

The spacious best room at the Muirland Farm was neither parlour nor kitchen, but partook of the best attributes of both. It was a room to be used, sat in, smoked in: up the huge chimney, if the night were chill and raw, flickering blue wreaths that had nothing to do with the fire below would find their way. But the polished floor, only partially carpeted, and the thick close shutters which made curtains unnecessary, told no tales: all was as sweet, fresh, and wholesome as the most fastidious could desire.

Within the massive fireplace logs of oak and fir arched upwards against each other, emitting a broad blaze which spread to the furthest corners of the room; and although it might have seemed as if such a furnace were hardly needed merely to warm, in Evelyn's eyes it would have been ill replaced by the flicker of a smaller fire.

Nor would he have exchanged the ancient, curiously-fashioned arm-chairs, tall timepiece, and square centre-table, for more genteel furniture.

All was in keeping.

The fury of the blast without, joined now to the rattle of the rain upon the window-panes as a passing shower flew overhead, sounded

delightfully in his ears; his eye kindled with animation; and as he took off his cap and stepped forward into the light, with his hair straying over his brow, and the colour in his cheek, a finer, bolder, handsomer young gallant had seldom been seen north of the Tweed. So at least thought Comline's buxom dame, who, by no means insensible to the pleasure of entertaining such a visitor, and—a great point with housewives—of being taken at a lucky moment, being found at her best by him, without foreknowledge or preparation on her part, was no whit behind her husband in hospitality.

"You'll be wet, sir, and weary. This is an ill nicht to be owerta'en on the muir. We're prood to see you, sir, I'm sure. And though this is no' Castle Kenrick, yet it's on the property. Castle Kenrick is but nine miles off. The wrang turn you took was aiblins six miles frae here; I ken the turn weel—there's nae sign nor naethin' to guide folks by——"

"He suld hae tried the 'airt o' the clicky,'" interposed her husband; "that wad ha' been the way—eh, gudewife?"

"'The airt o' the clicky?'" said Evelyn, who, although sufficiently accustomed to the broad

dialect of the Scottish Lowlanders to enable him to follow what was said, though he might not catch the meaning of every word, yet was but imperfectly acquainted with their customs and maxims. "The 'airt o' the clicky'? what is that?"

It was explained to him that the so-called "airt" consists in the bewildered traveller's poising his staff or crook perpendicularly in the air over the road which perplexes him, and then leaving it to itself. Whichever direction the stick falls in, that he is bound to pursue.

"And by doing yon," maintained the gudeman, with a defiant look at his tittering spouse, "ye wad hae been at Castle Kenrick twa hoors syne, —ay, an' mair."

"Weel, weel," quoth Mrs Comline, begging the impending question, "that's as it may be. Castle Kenrick, or no Castle Kenrick, we'll do our best; and as I was sayin', sir, we're on the property. The laird was here himsel' only a few days syne. Sittin' in yon chair for his crack and his joke. He never passes by wi'oot looking in, an it be but for his tumbler of new milk. When I see him coming, I run for the milk; and whiles he says, 'Mistress, I cam' oot

o' my way a gude lang roond just to get my milk.' Puir thing! Trampin' the heather a' day lang, nae wonder he's drouthy. But"—with sudden recollection—"here I stand, talk, talk, and you just wearyin' for your supper, and wet through, forbye. Come up the stair, sir, up this way, and Robin will fetch you a change."

Bending her back to the steep staircase, the kind-hearted old woman led the way, only pausing when the top was reached, to recover breath, and renew her strain of benevolent concern and welcome.

"An' you'll kindly tak' things as they are, sir, and excuse they're no' being just so nice as they micht have been. No' that ye need fear cauld nor rheumatics—hoots, the young can tak' cauld, an' the auld has rheumatics! but naebody need be frichtet for either at the Muirland Farm. The beds are aye aired. An' though I'm alane the nicht, for we're changin' oor servant-lass, yet a'thing's straicht, ye see," throwing open the door of a good-sized sleeping-apartment, which needed certainly no apology either as regarded order or cleanliness.

Evelyn, overjoyed, expressed his gratitude.

"The fire's the ae thing," replied the good

woman, regretfully. "It'll tak' time to burn up in sic a wind; an' 'deed, I misdoot its burnin' weel at a'. But we'll do oor best; an' your room will be daikert by the time it's wanted: an' here's Robin, sae I'll run."

Presently, however, she was at the door again, laden with water, soap, and towels; also with further explanations. Had her daughter been at home the guest would have been better attended to.

The guest listened attentively.

"Lizzie," continued the old woman, garrulously, "has ta'en the road this afternoon, gaen after a lass, for we can ill get on wantin' ane; but she'll be back the morn."

"The morn—that's to-morrow? Was it not she, then——?" He paused; suddenly he felt a conviction that it could not have been she. What if, after all, he were to be right in that strange fancy which had seemed during the past half-hour to be so utterly refuted that he had quite lost sight of it? But he would not seem to pry; so he waited for more, without finishing what he had begun.

"Ay, she'll be back the morn, gif naethin' hinders her," continued Mrs Comline; "and sae

we're just oorsel's the nicht, the gudeman and me, and Missy——"

"Missy?" said Evelyn, absently.

"Ay, Missy that brocht ye in—that fund ye by the roadside. She's—she's just a bit strynger young leddy that's stopping wi' us the noo—stopping wi' my dochter. Lizzie is their governess—governess to her wee sisters; but I'm deaving you wi' my havers—I'll run——"

"No, no; pray don't. Hum—ah—what were you saying?"

"Oo, naethin', sir—naethin'. It's just my tongue, that whiles rins awa' frae me. An' sae if ye want nae mair, I'll leave ye. An' ye'll fin' your ain way doun; an' we'll be blythe to see you when ye're ready for your supper."

Too certain of his good-looks to disturb himself materially about the cut of any apparel that it might suit him for the nonce to don, Evelyn speedily, and with fresh anticipatory sensations, laid aside his own shooting-clothes, and put on the Sunday suit of Mr Comline. Perhaps it was as well, however, that the diminutive looking-glass, from its position on the wall, did not offer a reflection beneath the head and shoulders,—since the sight of his handsome figure,

entirely disguised as it was by the loose and shapeless garments, might have upset even his equanimity.

But when a man has all his life long been accustomed to looking well, he is not apt to be troubled with misgivings. He need not be vain—probably he is not vain; while conscious of superiority, he is almost indifferent to it; it is merely that he has never known any but a good tailor, and that such ignorance is bliss indeed.

Evelyn was an only child, whose father had died while he was yet an infant, and whose mother, a feeble-minded woman of fashion, had done her best to pamper and ruin.

How he had escaped such a fate, no one knew.

The whole gauntlet of toadies, tutors, and dependants he had run from his birth upwards, and in spite of all, at twenty-one years of age he stood forth to the world a fine, open-hearted, good-humoured young gentleman, with the reputation of never having been known to say an ill-natured word, nor do an ungenerous action.

In due time a commission in the Household Brigade was procured for him, and he had held

this about eight years at the time our story commences;—hunting in winter, the London season in spring and summer, sports and pastimes of all sorts in the autumn, filling up his years, and enabling him to pass them agreeably,—whether profitably or not, he did not inquire.

Nearly every August found him in Scotland, either for the salmon-fishing or the grousing; but the particular year which brings him under our notice, lost and helpless on the Galloway coast, and afterwards succoured by a mysterious princess in disguise—he is hoping all this time that she may prove to be nothing less,—it was neither the inducements of the moor nor the loch which had called him northwards.

He was bound on another errand; and it was so far important, that he had set about it at the very beginning of his four months' leave, not having considered what he should do with the remainder of his time.

True, he loitered by the way like a schoolboy, and he saw Carnochan House, which was his ultimate destination, very much in the light of the master's roof where he would be immediately placed under supervision and restraint; but still he meant to get there some day.

Now and then, to be sure, he turned aside a little bit. Ribston's place was here, and Fairlight's place was there; he knew people all up and down the country, and how could he pass them by?

He had shot grouse in Yorkshire, hunted the otter in Cumberland, swept the Tweed, and had a cast over every river and stream that lay to right or to left, ere he entered the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright. Hang it all! There was no hurry. Singing and dancing as beseemed a jolly young Guardsman whom everybody loved, he was a welcome guest at every house he entered: no woman found him remiss, no man feared him as a rival.

They said he was not serious enough; that he had so many pleasures, he could not confine himself to one; and that consequently his love-making suffered. It might have been that; or it might have been—shades of chivalry, shut your ears!—that he found it too easy to conquer, and needed all his armour to defend himself. He did not wish to marry, and he had to take care lest he was married without his will. It was all very well for the others, but this favourite of fortune was really at times hard put to it.

He was so engaging and so sprightly, so kind-hearted and pleasant and rich and respectable, that he was a perfect Phœnix of a young bachelor; and as to his not being serious, he no more dared trust himself to be serious than to drink hemlock: half an hour's seriousness would have done for him for life. As to making embroilments for the sake of gratifying his own vanity at the expense of others, Evelyn was the last man to have been guilty of such behaviour. He had his good points.

Thus it came to pass that no man was more popular, and that the only wonder was how he ever reached Galloway at all. He was now, if not absolutely within hail of Carnochan, in the next county to it; and finding himself so near to his old friend Brewster, and never having been at Castle Kenrick before—if he had, he probably would not have been so ready to go back again—he considered he could not well pass by.

The same easy temper permitted him to be perfectly quiescent, under the consciousness that he would be missed and lamented over, on the night in question, by the party assembled at the Castle. He would not have given real honest pain

to a child, but he could inflict all the distress that his absence was likely to occasion, without remorse; and all the probability that he was the subject of speculation and sighs among the fashionable folks nine miles off, did not prevent his stepping down-stairs briskly and inquisitively as soon as he had made his toilet in the spare room at the Muirland Farm.

No alloy entered into the pleasure of the moment when he lifted the latch and beheld the quaint old parlour blazing with light, a plentiful supper spread upon a snowy cloth on the centre table, covered dishes nestling in each corner of the huge fireplace, and his host and hostess busily engaged with the kettle and the teapot.

Savoury whiffs which assailed his nostrils on coming forward, by no means detracted from the charms of the scene in the opinion of a hungry man.

One of the large roomy chairs had been drawn up to the snuggest side of the table for him, and as he took his seat and reclined at ease on the faded chintz, resting his arms upon its high cushioned sides, no lounge, sofa, nor settee had ever seemed so luxurious.

He had enjoyed his repose for a few moments only, when a door—one of several in different parts of the room—opened somewhere behind him, and the eyes of both the farmer and his wife, who were also seated, being turned towards the quarter whence the sounds proceeded, he experienced a sensation which was altogether novel to him.

His heart beat.

Perhaps it had never done so in his life before.

## CHAPTER III.

### CROSS QUESTIONS AND CROOKED ANSWERS.

"Ill questions generate worse answers."—FELTHAM.

ONE thing was certain, his curiosity had not been undeservedly excited.

There was a suppressed stir of preparation, a half rising up and sitting down again, a looking at him, and then over his head, and then at each other, which betokened that both the old man and his wife were experiencing the feeling that a critical moment had arrived.

Their innate good manners carried them through it; but a certain nervous haste and consciousness, an appearance of anxiety, almost of deprecation, was visible: they were not at their ease—homely and chatty, as they had been before.

"Come, Missy, here's your chair ready," said

the farmer, rising, and holding his own back, with an air that would have seemed more deferential than was necessary towards so young an inmate of his house, and his daughter's friend, had the face and figure that now met Evelyn's eye not borne out his former impression of his guide,—"an' muckle obleeged to you we are for bringing us sic gude company on sic an ill nicht. But, my young leddy"—with a kindly pat on her shoulder as she passed—"it was nae hoor for the likes o' you to be daunnering aboot the countryside. I was near aboot setting aff to speer after ye mysel', when it set in sae thick. Ye wad ha' been hame afore an ye could, I'se warrant; but we munna let ye gang yer lane again to sic a distance, Lizzie or no Lizzie. Hoots! Lizzie can look after hersel' wi'oot fashin' her freends. She's no ane o' your dainty gentry folk. But we're a' the same—a' the same," he added, with an apologetic laugh to the stranger. "No ane o' us, Captain"—for Evelyn had now told his name and rank—"no ane o' us, no even Missy here, but mun mak' a fair idol o' that bit lassie o' oors. She's awa' for the nicht, d'ye see—only for ae nicht, mind—and here's this leddy freend o' hers mun

see her to the coach hersel', and come a' the way hame her lane. Na, na, Missy, that munna be. A fair fricht ye gied us, baith the gudewife and me, an' we mun see till't anither time that ye're safe under bield again' e'en."

Evelyn had hastened to rise and look concerned in the bustle which the new arrival had created; and he now, with the fluency of a man of the world, expressed anew his sense of the obligation under which he lay, and at the same time observing, what had before escaped him, the extreme youth as well as beauty of his deliverer, he ventured to add his approval of the prudent edict issued by his host.

All this was very well, but what did not so entirely please the worthy farmer was the open and undisguised admiration conveyed in the look by which the words were accompanied.

There is no mistaking the ardour of manly homage when it is given free scope and a clear coast; and with all respect for the goodwill of his kind entertainers, it certainly did not enter Evelyn's head to find in their presence any sort of check.

He directed his attention, it is true, to all—in so far as he could be permitted to do so with-

out interfering with their own notions of politeness; but he threw into his manner a glow, a warmth, an alacrity of motion, when the service to be rendered was for his fair contemporary, that could have no other interpretation than that he was deeply impressed, and was at no pains to conceal it.

All that was done or said failed, however, to bring forth response.

Few words and no smiles could be drawn from the severe young face opposite; and so rigidly were the eyes kept for other objects than the guest, and so obstinately to all appearance were the ears closed against his ingratiating overtures, that he was piqued more than amused by his want of success.

He began to find out, what hitherto he had not had a chance of discovering, that he did not like it. He was not used to deaf ears and dumb eyes.

"By Jove, though, they *are* eyes, when you get a sight of them!" said he to himself. "And she has as prettily-shaped a little head and neck as any I have seen this long while back. A dark-haired, dark-browed belle, — the kind, of all others, I admire. Who can she be? And what

can she be doing here? I'll lay something there is a mystery somewhere, and I am not meant to find it out. She can't be mad: that sort of thing isn't done now, and she would not be allowed to go about by herself if she were. She's somebody placed here for some purpose; and she has a curious, uncomfortable look, that tells me she does not above half like the situation. Now if she would only cheer up, and make friends, why, I should find out all about it in no time. Why won't she? I have done her no harm, though I did draw on my imagination slightly when I was compelled to elicit her pity for my misfortunes—they were bad enough, I'm sure, to warrant any additions I liked to give 'em,—but she might forgive a poor half-drowned waif for a little extra make-believe, if that's all. I should be quite charming to her now, if she would only show me grace; but she looks so deuced repellent, that, upon my word, I haven't pluck for the attack."

Want of courage did not, however, prevent his making another effort when, supper over, the worthy dame bustled about, taking away the dishes into the outer kitchen, where all the scullery work and cookery were done; and her

husband, no less eager to atone for and supplement the absence of his daughter and maid, seized brush and shovel, swept up the hearth, and piled fresh wood on the fire.

Evelyn and the young lady were left, as it were, in the lurch.

"Let us set the chairs," said he, "since Mrs Comline will not allow any one to help her with her tray. I am a great hand at washing-up dishes, if she would only believe it, but she won't; so I will lift the chairs, if you will tell me where they ought each to go."

How it came to pass that after this he contrived to settle the slender sphinx in a corner whence she could not escape without deranging the whole circle, and then to draw his own arm-chair to her side, was inexplicable. No directions to that effect had been issued; and, well aware of the fact, it was with an inward chuckle over the clever misapprehension which had wrought so happy an arrangement, that he began to better his acquaintance as speedily as might be: but he had yet to learn what stuff this softly-nurtured and well-favoured young damsel was made of. She did not, it is true, offer any resistance to his courtesies,

nor refuse to occupy the seat he chose for her,—but he found that whether near or far, by her side or with the supper-table between, it made no difference in his obtaining any portion of her favour.

On the whole, he was only half-displeased: he was no longer tired and famishing; the room was warm and pleasant, the huge chairs yielded a delicious sense of luxury, the storm roared without, and the fire burned up brightly within,—he would not let himself be put out by the frowns of an unkind maiden.

Evelyn had given his name, as we said, and he had fancied for a few minutes afterwards that an increase of cordiality—something which was meant to mark still more emphatically than before the sense his excellent hosts had of entertaining an honoured guest—had followed its announcement. The two had certainly looked at each other, and had, at one and the same time, ejaculated "Captain Evelyn!" as though the words were familiar and surprising; and from both glance and accent he had expected an immediate explanation.

No more, however, had been said; and since he was not so much as once asked where he

came from, or where he was bound for, he concluded that his fancying recognition and astonishment in their united tone was a mistake.

He wondered whether or no his credentials had been presented to their silent charge? She gave no indications of their having been so; and they certainly were not disposed to favour him with hers. He thought he would try what he could do for himself.

"Do you know this part of the country well?" he inquired, at the same time bending forward to replace a burnt stick which was tottering from its place.

In order to thrust it within the bars again, he had to stretch across the chair to his right, and as he did so he turned his eyes upwards. He could not be mistaken this time. The face which was thus at his mercy was suffused with crimson; and so obvious was it that he had put a question more than ordinarily embarrassing, that he was almost guilty of showing his consciousness of having done so by some foolish amendment on the observation, when he was saved by the hasty interposition of Mr Comline, who, having settled all to his satisfaction, had sat down, with a sigh expressive of deep con-

tent, in his own easy-chair on the other side of the chimney-piece.

"No' that weel, Captain Evelyn," he said; "she kens it no' that weel for her to be trusted her lane upon the road i' the gloamin' anither day; an' no' that weel that we wad hae her foregather wi' *ilka* strynger she finds by the dyke-side. Ha, ha, ha! I doot ye played upon her credulity, Captain — I doot ye did; an' richt glad I am ye did, tae," he added, fearful of hurting the sensibility of his guest, "baith glad and prood. For a' that, though, ye munna think, ye munna gang and tell her leddyship——" He stopped short, and stared over the top of his spectacles. Mrs Comline was behind Evelyn: was it possible that she had had anything to do with that sudden halt? Had she put on the brake which had pulled up the gudeman so smartly?

"Hey—hum—ha," continued he, after a minute. "Hum — ay; that's to say — wife, whaur's the mull? What was I sayin'? You see, Captain Evelyn, when I'm a wee thing slumbrous after the day's done, I get to nonsense-talkin' at times—no kennin' just what I'm sayin', dinna ye see? An' sae I beg your

pardon, sir, if I'm stupid-like; ye'll tak' nae heed; I'm no jist responsible for a' that comes frae me."

But if not responsible, it was odd that the worthy speaker should have been so exceedingly disconcerted. Such a sudden break-off in his harangue, and such profuse explanations, could only mean one thing—a blunder; and that a blunder, a slip of some kind, had been made and tried to be corrected, was patent to anybody.

"Her leddyship," said Evelyn to himself. "Soho!"

He knew better than to press his advantage: he fell back at once, and in the easiest manner possible, upon his own interests; and, after relating with spirit divers adventures in which he had lately been engaged, and giving some account of the different proprietors, and their reputation as landlords, who were now staying at Castle Kenrick, greatly to the edification of Mr Comline, who was inquisitive on this latter point, he proceeded to inform them all of the ultimate object of his journey into Galloway.

Suddenly he became aware that two large, dark, penetrating eyes, in which he could almost

have sworn tears were shining, were fixed upon him.

He had touched the right spring at last.

"Ah," thought he, "that's it, is it? Not happy at home? Very good, my black domino: since it pleases you to be interested in my conversation at this point, and since you have not cared two straws for anything I have said hitherto, we'll have a little more of the same, if you like."

But although he harped away valorously and ingeniously, nothing further was seen of the wet orbs. They were kept for the fire or the floor; and at the close of the evening, he could only reflect that he had never before worked so hard and achieved so little. The recollection gave him a good hearty laugh at himself afterwards.

At the time, however, a few degrees of chagrin just prevented his mental barometer from keeping steady to the mark of fine weather, at which it might otherwise have stood. He enjoyed his evening, but he would have liked to have made more of it. It was all so jolly, if she, this girl, would have been jolly too. If she would have taken up his friendly tone, and put in her word, and laughed at his jests,—instead of sitting by

with a cold—no, it was hardly a cold face, but a solemn, silent one. "Unapproachable, forbidding," were the epithets that he felt suited the best; and had it not been that the word sounded harsh, as applied to one so young, he would have added "ill-natured." "It was certainly a pity that people should be ill-natured," reflected the young man, "more particularly when they were the only people at hand." He had felt so happy and comfortable, so pleasantly tired, and so agreeably situated, that he had been stimulated to do his very best; and he could not but feel it a little, a very little, mortifying that no impression whatever had been made upon the person for whose good opinion he was chiefly solicitous.

Candles were lit, and he was shown to his room without his even obtaining a "good night," —since, while assisting his hostess in performing the first operation, he heard the mysterious door at his back open and shut again; and though he looked round immediately, guessing what had happened, he was too late.

"What a peculiar door?" he observed, going up to it, as though to examine the workmanship. "A fine solid piece of wood this,

farmer. Are there any more private staircases to this room?" glancing round, with a laugh. "It is really 'no canny,' as you say in Scotland, when people glide in and out like apparitions."

"Oo, there's nae appareetion aboot it, Captain. It's jist a bit wing that was built on to the hoose to mak' it sizable i' my fayther's time. He had the Muirland Farm afore me, and, honest man, he had fowerteen bairns—mair than the baker's dizzen, yon. Sae there's twa rooms up the stair, and twa below—they're entered frae the ootside, thae ithers; and Missy and oor dochter has the upper twa."

"Miss — ah — I don't know your visitor's name; but she must hear the wind a good deal at that end of the house?" The pause following his confession of ignorance, which he had thought almost must produce an answer, was unnoticed.

"Maybe she does," said Mr Comline, drily; "but she kens she's wi'in fower gude walls, and the wund comes na near her pillow. The water frae the waves, when the incoming tide is strang, whiles strikes on her window-panes, though, Captain; and maybe ye'll hear it on

yer ain. An it disturbs your rest, ye'll ken what it is; but after a gude day up the glen, it's no' like to do sae. It's no' that bad neither; it's jist like a thud o' rain, or a handfu' o' peebles, or the like. We that's used to it thinks naethin' o' it; but I wad be loth it should keep you frae your sleep."

"No fears: but how do we not hear it in this room?"

"No' hear it! We micht hae heard it a while ago but for the clatter o' oor ain tongues. The tide's gaen oot noo—it'll no' be in again 'ore mornin'; but when we were at oor supper it was beatin' up—ay, ay, *I* heard it, but I ne'er gied it a thocht."

"Don't you come with me, Mrs Comline; go to your other visitor." She was preparing to lead the way to Evelyn's room.

"Missy's nae visitor, Captain," rather shortly.

"Well, but you are not to make a visitor of me, either."

"No visitor," continued the young man to himself; "then what the deuce is she? Neither fish, flesh, nor fowl, according to the old people. She is not allowed so much as to put a bit of wood on the fire, she is waited on as though

she were a duchess, and yet she is 'no visitor'! I never was more puzzled—and small blame to me, either. After three or four hours spent in ceaseless endeavours, one's faculties become exhausted. I don't remember that I ever bestirred myself so much. I forgot, and remembered, and was absent, and attentive, and everything else that I could think of by turns,—and got nothing for my pains! Close, close as a nail, these Scotch people. That one slip of the old fellow's, that 'her leddyship,' was a piece of luck, and the only one that I had. Well, now to bed, and for sleeping the good round, or as near it as is consistent with the ideas of my primitive friends here. In the morning I shall rise a giant refreshed, and renew the campaign."

Neither the pangs of curiosity, nor the howling of the tempest, interfered to prevent the fulfilment of the first of the above-named anticipations.

The sun was indeed so high in the heavens before Evelyn descended to the sitting-room next day, that, although he would probably have been reckoned an early riser among the gay people at Castle Kenrick, he found himself on the present occasion obliged to breakfast alone.

In the greeting which awaited him, and the earnest inquiries after the comfort of his room, the quality of his sleep, and the number of his blankets, nothing but hearty approbation, however, was manifested at his having done to all such ample justice.

Everything that he could desire was spread before him; not *kept* hot — abomination of abominations—but fresh, steaming, appetising.

That he had not been expected to join the earlier repast was evident, and he thought he could perceive that his not having done so had given his hostess satisfaction. She alone received him. The farmer had gone out, leaving suitable excuses. He had been obliged to betake himself to the nearest village in all haste to find a man who could repair a shepherd's "bught," which had been blown down in the night, of which disaster tidings had been brought in some hours before.

The young lady was also invisible; but of her nothing was said.

("What a fool I have been to lose this chance!" reflected the laggard, who, like most other people, marvelled, when once wide-awake, what inducement he could have had to sleep so long.

"I ought to have been down," thought he, "two hours ago. They have boxed her up safe and sound again; but since 'catch me if you can' is a game that two can play at, I must show my agility, now that I have entered the lists.") Aloud — "Thank you, Mrs Comline. Yes, I think I must surely have got *everything*. I shall certainly know where to look for a true specimen of a Scotch breakfast another time. Oh, more scones! I thought I had finished, but you tempt me till I declare I can't resist. Are you making these yourself, may I ask, or is —ah—any one giving you assistance in the next room?"

"I need nae assistance, sir," somewhat drily.

"But your daughter was to return to-day. Is she not come yet?"

"No' 'fore nicht, Captain. Lizzie has twenty miles to travel, and she'll no' start early neither. Na, na, ye munna expeck to see her the day; but nae doot anither time we'll be fain and hearty to see you; and should it be your pleesure to bide a day or twa, or mair——but what am I sayin'? It's no' likely, when Castle Kenrick is ower by, that ye wad care to stop at the Muirland Farm!" with a laugh at her own

simplicity. "Aweel, sir, an ye be for the hills again, ye'll hae somethin' wi' you : I'll run for a bit paper——"

She was off, leaving in her haste the door slightly ajar; and whilst Evelyn was ruminating with some ruefulness on the ease with which his neatest and most diplomatic sallies were set aside, and was inwardly mooting the point as to whether he should not now give up the contest, and take himself off handsomely, or whether he should, at the last moment, formally request to take farewell of, and express his gratitude to, his earliest acquaintance, he was startled by hearing, just outside the door, the unmistakable imperative whisper of a person who is only too resolute not to be overheard.

"Miss Kate, Miss Kate, ye mun gang ben, an it be but for a 'Hoo are ye?' and awa. It's no' mannerly, my dear, to gie him nae word at pairtin', you that brocht him in yersel'. Dinna bide in the room, an ye likena, but just gang in till him wi' your hat and coat on—as ye are—and say your say, and hae it ower. Hoot, fye! He kens naethin'."

Evelyn heard, confounded.

The instinct of a gentleman prompted him

to rise and shut the door; and, in spite of his desire to hear more, he had already got off his chair to do so, when the nearness of the voice outside made him fear to be caught, however innocently, in the position of an eavesdropper.

Hastily resuming his seat, therefore, he buried his face in his empty teacup.

No one appeared after all; and the clattering of pans and pails in the entry, together with the rustling of paper, which had also preceded the above, recommenced with renewed energy. A pause succeeded next, and subsequently the shutting of a door—probably that of the closet in which his hostess had been rummaging—and he now concluded that she was about to return and provide for his future necessities; but whether alone or not, he could not determine, since he had caught no answer to the energetic admonition above recorded.

He looked at the door eagerly.

It still stood open, very slightly open—so slightly that the narrow chink might pass unobserved, and evidently had so far done so; but though he could hear that some one was moving about on the outside, he was left to himself for full three minutes longer.

A happy thought. Rise, and go boldly out. Catch this Miss Kate, if she be still there; if not, no harm done. He jumped to his feet, and —sat down again.

The whispering had recommenced.

## CHAPTER IV.

### A TELL-TALE HANDKERCHIEF.

"Let me but bind this handkerchief about it hard."
—*Othello.*

So close was it now to the door that, were he to show himself to the unlucky women without having had to lift the latch, they must be informed by his doing so that he had overheard, if not all their conversation, at least as much of it as made him sensible of the propriety of hearing no more.

With the most honourable intentions, he was in consequence at a stand-still.

Either to go out, or to remain where he was, was to annoy somebody: and at length, in desperation, he upset a cup and saucer; and having, he thus hoped, made noise enough to signal his propinquity to those outside, he seized the bread-knife, and held it aloft over what Mrs Comline

called the "loaf-bread," — she always added afterwards, in recording the tale, that the baker had called the day before, and had left some excellent loaf-bread: there he stood, prepared to be caught, and to remind his hostess that she had bidden him supply his luncheon from her well-filled board.

In this attitude, and with a countenance made up to abstraction from all concerns but his own, he was obliged again to pause—for apparently the stratagem had enlightened no one; and the following fell distinctly on his ear,—

"Aweel, my dear, ye mun gang your ain gait; but that's no' sayin' it's a gude gait, mind you. He thinks it's me and the gudeman that's keepin' him frae ye,—ay, ye should hae heard him last nicht, he was that vexed at us! And what for should we keep ye, I wad ken? Keep ye frae yer ain——"

"Sh—sh—sh!"

"Ye'll no' be guided, then?" in a subdued tone.

"I can't."

"Can't? But that's fair nonsense, an' beggin' your pardon, Missy. Folks *can* aye do

what they *suld* do; and that's a lesson ye hae yet to learn, my dear. Noo," coaxingly, "jist gang in wi' me——"

"No, no;" and more followed, too low for the words to be audible. From the tone, however, Evelyn divined what must be their tendency; and he would have smiled to himself at the extraordinary timidity which prevented a girl of sixteen or seventeen from interchanging the commonest civilities with one of the other sex, had it not been for the old woman's "He kens naethin'," which seemed to indicate that it was not mere girlish bashfulness alone which had to be overcome.

He could, however, permit himself to hear no more; and since the cup and saucer were not sufficiently powerful agents in the cause, neither having been broken, he essayed to kick down a chair with his foot, while at the same time cutting lustily at the loaf. The gymnastic experiment succeeded so far as to produce a "Holloa!" so natural, that Mrs Comline appeared at once, although the chair retained its position.

The exclamation had been sufficient.

It had been caused by an accident which is

not infrequent in houses where the cutlery is old and worn. The back of the knife which Evelyn held suspended was, from long usage, as thin and sharp as the other edge; and endeavouring as he did to execute two manœuvres at one and the same time, he brought it into sharp collision with his left hand, the consequence being an exceedingly awkward slit on the fleshy part of the thumb.

Mrs Comline uttered a cry, Evelyn endeavoured to laugh, and the commotion brought into the room, as nothing else would have done, the person upon whom neither the wishes of the one, nor the representations of the other, had wrought any effect.

Without a word she seized the bleeding hand, and disregarding the matron's entreaties and the young man's protestations, marched him off then and there into the back-kitchen. Here was a tap of cold water, and under it the wounded member was held relentlessly, to the infinite diversion of Evelyn, who, while continuing to expostulate, was secretly overjoyed at the turn affairs had taken. He was now alone once more with the mysterious fair,—Mrs Comline having disappeared in search of that home-

liest of remedies, a cobweb,—and it would go hard with him but he would make some use of his opportunity. Her intent expression over the task, and her absorption in it, moreover, could not but be gratifying; he submitted with more than patience to her orders, called the cut a trifle, but poured forth thanks and praises in the same breath. Presently, when it became evident that the first profuse stream was checked, he was directed to press the sides of the cut together, and to wait while his surgical attendant ran to her room for a bandage.

"The handkerchief in your pocket," suggested Evelyn, looking towards a piece of delicate cambric which protruded from the breast-pocket of the rough outer jacket she wore; "my own I can't offer. But if you will kindly——"

She drew it out.

A small piece of pink embroidery in the corner caught his eye.

"Now all good stars look down!" implored the artful miscreant, inwardly; "if she thinks of that, my last device has failed. But no, she doesn't."—(Aloud.) "A little more this way, please; and pass it behind the thumb." ("Confound the provoking thing, it's staring her full

in the face!") "Pray don't move this end, if you can help doing so; it's right over the place, and holds it together capitally." ("Aha! it's too late now, my fair blunderer; so you see what you have done at last, do you?") "A knot, please. There; that's comfortable." ("And you may whistle for your handkerchief till I have inspected those pink letters in the corner.") "Thank you so very much."

"Here's the cobweb," cried Mrs Comline, running in, out of breath, with the unsavoury morsel in her hand. "To think that I wad be a' this while, and couldna get a cobweb nae gait. But I kenned ye had the cauld water, for I heard the tap, and there's naethin' like cauld water; but preserve us a', Miss Kate, ye hanna bunged up the place wi'oot a cobweb, nor naethin'? Whae's to ken when it micht tak' it in its heed to brak oot again, and no' be sae easy stoppit? I ha'e been oot to the byre mysel', Captain, for this bonnie cobweb."

"It was a pity you were not here sooner," said Evelyn, maliciously; "but the operation was well and skilfully performed, I can assure you. The wound will certainly heal of itself, provided it is not again disturbed."

"Wad I no' tie it up for ye, sir? it wad tak' nae harm."

"By no means," drawing back decidedly. "I could not think of having all this young lady's work undone. Her bandage was the exact thing required, and she has put it on as cleverly as though she had been a professor of surgery. The worst of it is, I shall not be able to hold a rod to-day."

"Na, that ye'll no'; ye mun put up wi' that inconvenance, Captain, an' be thankfu' its nae waur. Ye mun find ither ploys at Castle Kenrick; and Missy will reel up the fishing-line maybe?" turning to her interrogatively.

"Oh yes."

"An' that's a' ye hae to do, I think?" continued the gudewife.

"Except to bid you 'good-bye,' and that I have still a hand for. I don't know how to thank you enough, Mrs Comline, but I can only say I never met with greater kindness, nor spent a pleasanter evening. You must tell your husband that I hope he will allow me to say so to himself some day, and the next time I am in the neighbourhood I—I——" he was at a momentary loss,—"I hope I may be allowed to come over."

The lameness of the conclusion was certainly due to the sound of his line being wound up in the outer hall; but whether anxiety lest the operation should not be properly performed, or whether desire to superintend it himself for any other reason, made him hasten his speech to a close, remains unknown.

He certainly deserved credit for his perseverance.

Here was a pretty creature, not yet out of her teens, to whom he had endeavoured to make himself agreeable, and who might have thought it only her place to have been pleased and responsive,—to have been in waiting to give him his tea in the morning, and ready to conduct him part of his way afterwards. They could then have parted on the best of terms, and have forgotten each other pleasantly.

But this frowning black-eyed Kate had positively declined her part—had neither answered to his glances, nor vouchsafed more than monosyllables to his most direct questions. Such *grossièreté* was perfectly idiotic—or would have been, had its perpetrator not had a cheek like a damask rose.

As it was—— Hum! As it was, in spite of

her inhumanity, and her too evident desire to strip off the bandage, and keep him from his hard-earned knowledge even at the last, he resolved to have one more interview—whether long or short, to be determined by circumstances.

He found her reeling-in carefully; and having despatched, or at least permitted, Mrs Comline to hunt about in search of an imaginary pair of gloves, which, it is to be presumed, she thought it only natural that a gentleman of Evelyn's standing should have about him when out trout-fishing, he accosted her youthful charge with, "This is the third service you have rendered me within a few hours. I hope I am not expected to take myself off without tendering in return either money or thanks?"

"Money!" exclaimed the girl, flushing to her brow.

("So much for jocularity," muttered Evelyn, aside. "A wrong cast altogether.") "You don't like to be jested with, I perceive?" he said aloud.

"I don't—understand it."

"Nor like it?"

"No."

After a moment's pause, she added slowly—

"The most cruel words I have ever heard spoken were said in jest."

"That," replied Evelyn, much touched, "is enough. No one can help disliking what has been to them a channel for pain; you will surely, however, pardon one who had no unkind intentions, and whose last wish it would be to awaken any recollections that could distress?" and he held out his hand.

Rather to his surprise he found it laid hold of and retained. "Forgive me," said his companion, with an earnestness in her tone, and a fervour in her eye, that were as disproportionate to the scene as had been her former exaggeration of reserve,—"forgive me. I am sorry I spoke to you like that: you did nothing to deserve it; you—you would not do an unkindness to any human being, I do believe."

"Would not hurt a fly,—let alone the spider which that wicked woman must have destroyed when she brought down so ruthlessly its little web. Do you think it possible the animal survived the shock?"

He was answered by the sweetest, merriest, most musical laugh in the world.

. . . . . .

"All the same, this cut is rather a bore," said Evelyn to himself, when at length he set off on his solitary walk—he having hitherto regarded the trifle in the light of an unmitigated piece of good fortune, especially since he had felt it necessary, after his last experience, to offer sundry assurances that he should in person return the handkerchief. "It is really rather a bore," he now reflected. "Stupid place Castle Kenrick when you can't *do* things, and to-day I could hold neither a rod, a gun, nor a cue. Perhaps I may as well go on to Carnochan this evening. They are expecting me; so, though I had not meant to go, all things considered, I may as well not disappoint 'em."

To the Castle he must, however, adjourn first, to pack up and make his adieux; and the day proving bright and exhilarating, the distance, which on the previous evening had been a bugbear to the imagination, was now precisely the right length for a pleasant morning's stroll.

As he walked along he could perceive that the damage done by the gale was slight as compared to what it must have been had the country been more cultivated: everything capable of sustaining injury had indeed been blown away long

before; and only here and there clusters of stones had been knocked down from exposed portions of walls, and small bushes had been bowled over, and lay on their sides, with their roots stripped clean of mould and fibre.

The boom of the waves, which now came sullenly and continuously from beneath, proclaimed that they had sunk to a tithe of their former size, and that without any visible results. Pieces of sea-weed strewed the fields; but even where these last came down to the shore, and had been entirely at the mercy of the water, they had not apparently suffered.

As soon as our pedestrian was hidden from the view of any one who might be following him with her eyes—he wondered much if she would,—he drew out the end of the traitor handkerchief, which he had carefully tucked into the hollow of his palm; he did not even require to untie the knot to satisfy his curiosity.

The pink letters were there—a great deal of pink, it appeared—but, exasperating disappointment! nearly the whole was a floral flourish, with two simple letters in the centre.

He had expected a name, perhaps a coronet,—something, at any rate, by which he could trace

the owner; but behold, a plain C. N. in satin-stitch embroidery, very neatly and prettily worked, was his sole reward.

It was better than nothing, and that was all that could be said of it.

"C. N.," he muttered aloud—"C. N. What a fuss to make over only a C. N.! I had hoped for a great deal more. Those twirls and flourishes are ridiculously, superfluously nonsensical: all that is needed is the name of the person to whom the article belongs, and *it* should be there in full. Pah! I made sure it was; I saw a perfect mass of pink, and acted accordingly. C. N. was hardly worth the trouble."

By-and-by it was. "So they would not let me send it by post? Very good, my fair C. N. You shall receive it otherwise, in that case. I do not leave it at Castle Kenrick to be fetched by the farmer when he is over there next, I promise you. Nor do I say a word about you to anybody there. Why, you foolish girl, this handkerchief alone would set people talking; farmers' daughters don't have cambric like gossamer. After all, I believe I really must try to keep up the mystery a little longer, for my own sake: I have not had such a piece of good-luck

for many a day. Being picked up by the wayside by a mysterious beauty, and brought into a nest of comforts that it makes one long to be tired and hungry again to think of. How nice it was! How the storm roared outside! I should have been drenched through, besides being nearly done up, if I had had to trudge all these nine miles back after the mistake was cleared up; and into the bargain, I should not have had half so pleasant an evening. Everything was so uncommonly snug, and comfortable, and cheery; but it was 'C. N.' who——no—was it, though?" . . .

Great was the jubilation over the defaulter when at length he was descried approaching the Castle. He was a poor dear man, a stupid tiresome man, an unfeeling cruel wretch, a barbarian, and a monster, all at once.

What did he mean by such conduct? Where had he been? What had he to say for himself? How had they all been experiencing on his behalf such hours of misery as had left them no spirits, no inclination for anything; and here was he who had been the centre of their solicitude, the object of their anxiety, the topic of their tenderest conjectures and surmises, walk-

ing in as coolly as though nothing had happened!

Pray, what *had* happened? Had he lain in a ditch all night? Had he fallen over the dreadful rocks, and waited for daylight to pick up the pieces and put himself together again? Had he sheltered among the ruins of the old Abbey, and fed and warmed himself with the recollection of the midnight orgies that had in olden times been celebrated there?

It was a shabby trick to play upon his friends. How were they to know he was well off, and enjoying himself? Lady Airdrie had thought about hysterics several times, and Netta had declared that, though she did not mind going to the piano, they really must excuse her playing waltzes.

Besides which, there had been no fish for dinner. The cook had made so sure of Captain Evelyn's trout, that she had neglected to provide in case of deficiency; and fancy Mrs Brewster's feelings when there was no fish for dinner!

On her the blow must certainly have fallen hardest of all, since her son, who had been Evelyn's friend through thick and thin, would

not allow any one to abuse him behind his back, and had maintained that the trout would be in time up to the very last moment.

Mrs Brewster, a mild old lady who had no idea what they were talking about, assented to all that was said. She was sure she was very glad to see Captain Evelyn back, and very sorry to hear they were to lose him again that day.

So, it soon appeared, were all.

The ladies were bereft, at the time he returned, of everything in the shape of a male being, and it followed that the appearance at mid-day of a man of any sort was hailed as a perfect windfall.

And a man like Evelyn!

They could not make enough of him.

Castle Kenrick was a sporting-house, and that alone. From eleven to six no masculine voice nor tread was ever heard within the precincts of the Castle; all those weary hours the poor women were left to their own resources—it being, perchance rashly, presumed that they possessed such; but what they did with themselves remained unknown, and it was a secret which it certainly never entered the heads of fathers, husbands, or brothers to inquire into. *They*

came in fresh and gently fatigued, after their exhilarating days on the hill and the river, and found awaiting their return bright faces, pretty dresses, and rekindled animation; but the experience of Evelyn, after passing two hours and a half with a bevy of the fair at his heels wherever he went, was such that he could never think of their fate again without pity.

He was impatient to be off.

All the petting, questioning, and upbraiding were distasteful at the moment; and he almost wished that he had not done so well for himself and his reputation, when it went the round that he had been found half dead on the moor, and had been forced to spend the night at a lonely, miserable, storm-beaten farmhouse, out of reach of the barest necessities of life.

Perhaps it was as well that his friend Brewster was not at home to dispel the illusion.

Brewster's mother was old and frail, and seldom went far from her own doors. She knew the farm, and could vouch for its being a long way off, and for their tenants, the farmer and his wife, being respectable people, but she knew no more; and Evelyn heard her avow her ignorance with a feeling of relief. When she

first opened her lips, he found himself listening with some anxiety. He did not wish to hear then and there who "C. N." was.

His bound-up hand next came under observation.

Was it a fall, or a cut, or a sprain?

What had he done for it? What would he allow to be done for it now?

"Do let me have a peep?" implored the Netta who had drawn the line at waltzes. "Oh dear! it must be terribly painful by the way you shrink back. If you would only allow me to untie your handkerchief—did you bind it up yourself? — oh, the farmer's wife did, I suppose; but I could do it quite as neatly, and——"

"And some friar's balsam," suggested Netta's mamma. "But if I were Captain Evelyn I should not trust myself to any such raw practitioner. There is a small case of medicines in my room——"

He had to beg off resolutely.

"Well, I must say," put in another lady, who quite approved of the refusal, "men do manage wonderfully when they are left to themselves; they are so neat-fingered."

The man in question acknowledged the compliment, but at the moment a vision of other neat fingers than his own rose before his eye.

He was getting very sick of it all, saying to himself that some people never know when to hold their tongues, never can let a subject drop. After it was found that he could not use a knife and fork, he heard nothing for the next half-hour but references to "your poor hand."

There was nothing to change his mind, nor make him delay his departure, and the dog-cart was at the door by two o'clock. In another few minutes he should be rid of them all; and he was gaily taking leave at the door, when his eye suddenly fell on a form more interesting, and at the same time more dangerous, than any by which he was surrounded. Honest Comline himself, walking round from the back entrance with a pocket-book in his hand, came up full of self-gratulation on being just in time. The pocket-book, which was full of letters and papers, had been left on Evelyn's dressing-table, —no, it was under his pillow, and it had thus escaped detection until the bed had been made. He being from home, and no messenger handy,

they had not been able to send over before. "But an the wife had kenned," quoth the goodman, "it was sic a close shave as this, she wad hae fand a way, see an she wouldna! Were ye no' coming for it yoursel', Captain?"

"To tell you the truth,—I'm ashamed to confess it,—but I had never discovered my loss."

Amazement exhausted, the farmer bethought him of his next commission.

"An it wad do your han' nae harm," he said, "it wad maybe save ye trouble, sir, to gie me hame the nipkin. No' to hurt ye, mind—no' to hurt ye——"

"Oh, I could not think of it, Mr Comline. The bandage must not be removed at any price. It's no trouble in the world to bring it back, and your good wife has promised to make me welcome when I next appear. I certainly hope to pay my respects to you both again before long," taking care not to be overheard. "I am afraid now, as I am just starting, I must not stop to bring you inside, but——"

"Hoot awa, sir! I'm nae strynger here," replied the old man, with a mixture of dignity and rebuke. "I ken my way to Mr Purvis's room wi'oot fashin' onybody. Good day to ye,

Captain, and a fair journey and a bonnie welcome. Ye hae a lang and weary ride afore ye, and I doot it will be pit-mirk afore ye reach Carnochan. And that's a pity, for it's a bonnie place,—a bonnie place; see it in the sunlight, and——"

"You know it?" said Evelyn, surprised. "You did not tell me that before?"

"Oo ay, I hae been there," replied the farmer, drily. "I hae been there, as weel as at ither places. Kirkcudbright is on the road to a wheen trystes, and Carnochan is nae distance frae Kirkcudbright, though it's aff the coast. I was there—ahem—nae lang syne."

"How long will it take me to drive from here?"

"It's thairty miles; ye can tell yersel' hoo lang that will tak, Captain?"

"Oh, I shall do it easily in three hours and a half."

"Wi' three gude beasts—no' unless. It took me five, sax hours—ay, and mair—when I cam frae Carnochan yon time. Gude day—sir, gude day,—I'm keepin' you;" and he was off before more could be said.

"Curious," said Evelyn to himself, "that he

should never have said a word as if he knew the place when I was talking so freely about it before."

It was dark, as the farmer had prognosticated, ere he reached his journey's end. The little railway which now runs along the Wigtown and Galloway coast was not in existence at the time we write of; and although fresh horses were to be had at different places by the way, and he had an excellent coaching-road to traverse, either the distance was longer than reckoned, or he was delayed at the stages more than had been counted upon.

The whole aspect of the country altered as he proceeded eastward. It was cultivated and verdant. Fields of grain were either ripe for the sickle or were being already stacked, broad rivers watered fertile meadows, and trees resumed a more natural shape and exhibited a greater variety.

It was all pretty and pastoral, but somehow at the moment our traveller did not like it so well as the dreary wastes he had left behind.

They suited his mood.

Fair and undulating valleys were very well in their way, but he saw them in abundance

round the woody heights of Evelyn Towers, and he fancied that he was tired of smooth, sleepy scenes.

He smiled to himself as he still caught at intervals the sound of the breakers below the rocky bank—they seemed like the voices of a pleasant memory; and on turning inland he was ready to exclaim almost pettishly on the folly of people building their houses away from the sea.

By-and-by, however, he could laugh at himself with returning recollection.

"What a simpleton I am! Imagine Lady Olivia stuck down among those wilds! As it is, she looks upon herself as more than half buried alive, I suspect, though she would not own as much for the world. My poor mother! How hard she fights to say the right thing at all times! I hope and trust her 'dear delightful Carnochan' is not a delusion from beginning to end. Ha! Is this the place?" responding to a guttural intimation of his driver.

"It is? Oh, I am glad of it!" continued Evelyn, inwardly summing up. "Deer park, avenue, good lodges, well-kept grounds;—hum, —all very well, so far. 'Pon my word, she has not done amiss for herself. I am glad I came,

and I can run over from here very easily." (Whither he was to run, the reader will guess.) "I need have no bother. Drive myself half the way, and change. Castle Kenrick can serve as an excuse. Oho! Another lodge, and some very good trees. I like the place. And there's the house. Good house—but not up to the premises. Looks rather old and musty. Scotch houses generally are musty. Well, I shall come upon 'em without their knowing it, and so escape a fuss."

This, however, was not to be.

He had been detected from a window; and though Lady Olivia could not possibly upset her work-table, smash her teacup, and clasp her bracelet in time to get to the end of the room before he was entering the doorway, she was ready to meet him there with the tenderest expressions of joy and astonishment, and taking his hand in hers, present her son to her husband.

# PART II.

## CHAPTER V.

### EVIL FOREBODINGS AT CARNOCHAN.

"Suspicions that the mind of itself gathers, are but buzzes; but suspicions that are artificially nourished, and put into men's heads by the tales and whisperings of others, have stings."—BACON.

A BRIDE of twenty may or may not engross the attention of her friends to the full extent of her belief, but it rarely happens that the nuptials of a widow more than double that age excite even the typical nine days' wonder.

Lady Olivia Evelyn, handsome, charming, and gay, was nevertheless beyond her prime even as a fine woman, and the event which united her to the second man of her choice, though duly heralded, chronicled, and congratulated upon, did not perhaps create the full measure of sensation she had anticipated.

In relinquishing the world—according to her idea of such a renunciation—she fondly believed

that the loss was not entirely on one side; in resigning her post as leader of the *ton*, she was unaware that only in her own eyes had she ever held it; and in mourning over the void which the cessation of her assemblies must have caused, she forgot to remember how scantily they had been attended.

It suited her invariably to put the best face on everything connected with herself.

But the plain truth was, that even in her best days Lady Olivia had never shone forth in her sphere with any prominence, and that such consideration as was shown her, was due to her birth and position rather than to any qualities of the heart or head which could command respect.

As long as she could give parties in Hill Street, and invite guests to Evelyn Towers, she could not be without acquaintance; but when the majority of her only son altered her position with regard to these and other matters, and it was seen that the two were not inseparable—indeed they were seldom together—her status in society suffered.

Of this Evelyn was probably unaware—indeed it is certain that he was so, since otherwise his good-nature would indubitably have led

him, even at some sacrifice to himself, to give countenance to his parent. In every respect he was, it is true, cast in another mould; they had no single point in common either as regarded disposition or tastes, and he could not conceal from himself that she possessed but a slight hold on his affections; but had it once occurred to him that by remaining at the Towers whilst she was there, or residing under the same roof when they were in London at the same time, he could have done more than merely afford her pleasure, he would not have refused to give up his own will. In this instance, as in many others, Lady Olivia's own peculiar faculty for being cheerful at the expense of truth, militated against herself.

She would neither hear nor suggest a word to the effect that anything and everything connected with her lot was not flawless. So long as she could laud her darling boy behind his back, she consented to see his face but seldom; and would he but permit her the exultation of announcing that she had a letter from him in her pocket, she cared not that the writing barely covered a single page.

Thus it came to pass that a perfectly good

understanding was established between the two, and that although it was patent to the world that Lady Olivia was a mother only in name, and that Evelyn interested himself but slightly in her concerns, and shunned her society, both would with equal readiness have repudiated the idea that they were not on the best of terms; and when, with joyful haste, she despatched to him the tidings of her being about to contract another alliance, she was not mistaken in reckoning on one at least who would read the intelligence with gratification.

He might not put faith in her raptures, nor credit above the half of her statements, but enough remained to interest and to excite his approval.

He was as well pleased as ever he had been in his life,—or so, at least, he told himself, oblivious of the fact that the same phrase had risen to his lips when the puppies of his favourite pointer Jemima proved to be of the right sort, when his old chum Harry Burly was chosen stroke of the Trinity boat, and when repeated efforts enabled him to hit the trick of balancing a fork on the back of his hand, throwing an orange into the air and catching it on the spike.

He might not exert himself vehemently to seek his future stepfather's acquaintance, nor was he to be depended upon for being present at the wedding, but he certainly intended to be civil all round, and was—repeatedly—"as well pleased as ever he had been in his life."

This, however, was enough.

His mother felt that she had done the right thing, that her judgment had been manifested, her charms vindicated. It seemed so easy now,—so easy and simple a matter this bringing of suitors to her feet, after things had been settled between her and Mr Newbattle, that she in secret wondered at herself for not having done something in that way before. What had hindered her?

What but her orphan boy. For dear Rupert's sake alone, it must have been, that she had resisted importunity hitherto; and nothing was plainer than that, now when he no longer needed her protecting care, she was free to think for herself. That he had not needed the care for the last seven years, and that he had never had it during the twenty-one previous ones, was immaterial,—nobody could be more charmingly blind than Lady Olivia when necessary,—and

her orphan son—in consideration of his six feet one inch, and his moustache, he was permitted to be "son" instead of "boy"—figured prominently in her announcements of her second marriage.

Nothing could be more radiant than was the widow's description of her prospects.

As a matter of fact, she was sincerely pleased: she would have once more a house and establishment of her own; she would regain all her former consideration in the eyes of the world; and she would be relieved from the haunting apprehension that any day might see her transformed into a dowager. Added to this, her future husband was undoubtedly an agreeable peaceable gentleman, with whom it would be easy to live. He was himself a widower, elderly and somewhat old-fashioned; it was not unflattering that he seemed already half terrified at his audacity in contemplating a union with so august a lady, and altogether amazed at his success. He was certain to be manageable.

Since he had a family, it was a great point that it consisted entirely of daughters. No daughters could make themselves as disagree-

able as could sons. They would probably be pretty and amiable, and she would have the satisfaction of marrying them off soon. Or, if not, girls were always useful in a house: how often had she wished for some herself, when there were things to be done, notes to be written, and guests to be attended to. One poor head and pair of hands could not accomplish everything; and a sweet, pretty daughter, especially now that she saw so little of her son—— but here she would pull up short, even when speaking to herself.

To other auditors it naturally followed that such honest self-congratulation took the form of inflated panegyric upon every person and circumstance connected with her new alliance.

"I am indeed only too fortunate, my kind Lady Julia; I have nothing, nothing in the world to wish for. As for the children, whom some—including dear, prudent Lady Anne—imagined I might fancy a drawback, why, I expect to find in them my greatest treasures! To their companionship and society, I can assure you both, I am looking forward as much as to anything else in the bright prospect now opening before me."

The ladies to whom so much was confided listened discreetly. If they glanced at each other now and then, if there followed an expressive silence after the eloquent peroration, it is possible each knew what the other was thinking of, and that they were reflecting inwardly that, however bright might be the prospect before their old friend, the other side of the picture—namely, that turned towards the family of her bridegroom—was more shady.

That Lady Olivia should behold no dark spots on her side, by having recourse to the simple expedient of daubing the blemishes over, was all very well, but they "humphed" to themselves as they thought of the poor girls. Yes—undoubtedly they were, or would be soon, "poor girls."

The two finely-mannered aristocrats who sat up and gave ear, were, you see, up to all the tricks and turns of their ancient ally; they knew that so long as neither forbearance, nor generosity, nor sweetness of temper was needed, and so long as a flow of words and a certain indolent hilarity met every exigency of the case, she might pass muster excellently well; but they also knew that directly the smooth current

of her days was interrupted by any obstruction, —that were she to be called upon to give up a pleasure, or exert herself to perform a duty, her amiability was no more to be depended upon than that of any other uniformly selfish person.

Her code was a short one.

What was considered proper in the circle in which she had been brought up, what was done by them, and said by them, was all she wished to know. Their opinions alone were founded in truth, reason, and justice—or if not, in the fashionable substitutes for such, that did as well, or better. So far as her experience went—and on this experience she prided herself—well-born and well-bred people were of one stamp all the world over; and the idea of making allowance for peculiarities indigenous to different soils, would have seemed preposterous in her eyes.

Nobody could open her eyes better than Lady Olivia when surprise was to be exhibited; it was her sole argument; she detested representations, and could not understand reason.

Had a hint been offered that she might find in her dear Mr Newbattle's dear daughters, characters already moulded, and wills formed

which she might strive in vain to alter, the width to which her round blue orbs would have extended would have been alarming. Such a thing could not possibly be. No; her settlement could no more be inadequate, nor her jewellery disappointing, than could she find herself deceived in her sweetest children —her Alice, Kate, Bertha, and Marjorie,—all their names quite pat, tripping off her tongue in accents that were nothing short of caressing.

Alice, Kate, Bertha, and Marjorie were, it may as well be confessed at once, likely to give such fond anticipations a deadly shock.

The elder two had been permitted to bring themselves up after the usual fashion agreeable to young ladies who have only an absent-minded indulgent father at their head—that is to say, they had learned as little or as much as they chose, under a governess who was aware that she was in their power, for better, for worse; and they had virtually emancipated themselves from all rules, even while nominally remaining in the schoolroom.

At the respective ages of seventeen and sixteen they had assured their parent, who will-

ingly took their word for it, that their education was complete—and that a nursery governess, whom they themselves selected, and who, strange to say, was really a sensible person, if not precisely superior, was all that was necessary for the younger ones.

Kate was thus free to read poetry and make extracts, and Alice to ruminate before her looking-glass.

Not that Alice was the handsomer of the two—far from it; but she was a full year and a half older than her sister, and had learned to know that she had a nose, a neck, and a chin.

Moreover, the time she thought was at hand for her to display her charms, and it was natural that they should be of more moment to her than if she had been still drudging over her books.

Books were a nuisance; she had had enough of them; she wanted to dress, chatter, and dance—to see and be seen; and, so far, she was not certainly unlike others of her age. Kate might look scornful, but, for all that, the feeling was natural enough; it was the root of the matter which was somehow not straight, the

shallowness and vacuity of mind which induced the vanity.

Aware that she was surpassed in appearance by her next sister, it was Alice's intention to excel in other points of attraction. She would be more amiable, prettily behaved, obliging, and attentive. She would not openly demand "Love me more than Kate; think more highly of me than of her,"—but her mode of extorting a preference amounted to little less. It was her right to proffer civilities; to be at home when visitors called. An opportunity of showing her smiles and her thoughtfulness was courted. She liked to be the single one of the four to strike out a new thing, tread a new path,—and would go to church twice on a Sunday in order to show that she was the only member of the household who did so.

Kate was different: a curious, unexplored, reticent girl; sometimes so amusing that her sisters shrieked over her sallies; but usually grave, absent-minded, and lost in her own thoughts. When roused from these, it was too often by something which excited her contempt or indignation. Nothing sly, nothing slippery dared be attempted if the second sister were by

any chance likely to hear of it, since to face her wrath was more than the other three severally, or in unison, cared to run the risk of doing, even while, behind her back, they would shrug their shoulders and raise their pretty eyebrows, thanking their stars that they had not her temper.

It was an unfortunate possession in the eyes of all, and gave them, each one, a superiority over the unpopular member of the family. Even Maidie, a typical spoilt child, who was wont to obtain her own way by dint of tears and piteousness, would be shocked at Kate; while Bertha would prim up her lips, and look meek, by way of contrast.

Bertha was the least noticeable of the four in every way, and, poor girl, was sufficiently aware of being so, even at the age of thirteen, to make her peevish and fretful, since she had not humility of mind nor sweetness of disposition sufficient to enable her to accept her inferiority without repining. Without Alice's good looks, she had a resemblance to her eldest sister, which, had fortune been equally kind to her in the way of outward gifts, would probably have manifested itself strongly: as it was, she could

only long, with equal intensity, to be admired and approved, and have the constant mortification of feeling that neither admiration nor approval was likely to fall to her share. The little Marjorie,—a great girl of eleven, who, after the manner of family fictions, was still called "little," though on a larger scale than any one of the others, and likely soon to overtop them all—the little Maidie, as she was called,—was the favourite among the rest. She was a smiling, sunny-faced mischief-monger; and the understanding was that she could do no wrong, —a tradition easy to keep up, since everything became right when stamped with her authority. Such were the four daughters to whom Mr Newbattle of Carnochan was about to give the Lady Olivia Evelyn as a step-mother. How little idea any one of them had of any such impending catastrophe, and indeed how far was it from their parent's own contemplations but a few weeks previous to his meeting with the lady in question, may be gathered from the following.

"Papa," from Alice, one day early in March, "how lucky it is that you have at last got through your horrid lawsuit, and that we should

be so comfortably settled with the servants and all, just when it is so important on my account! Everything will be left in good order, and you will have no anxieties to disturb you when the time comes for you to bring me out."

He made no answer, and it was too probable that he had understood nothing. She must try again.

"Do you not think, papa, that it would be an excellent idea to have this green damask transferred to the library when we are obliged to have new covers for the drawing-room? I am a great economist, you know, papa, and I have thought it all over. The damask is really not too old and shabby for the library, though it is far too much worn for the drawing-room. It has done very well so far; but of course by-and-by, when we begin to have people about, and to give dinners, we must have things a little nice."

"Why cannot she say, 'Papa, I want new furniture, and I want company, and to lead a different life'? Why cannot papa tell her to speak out, and not try to wheedle him into consenting to he does not know what?" muttered the downright Kate, in scorn.

Alice, however, knew her cue; and she succeeded so far, that whereas a blunt request would have been met by a blunt denial, her delicate insinuations knocked nobody over.

They began to work, moreover.

First of all was exhibited an attention not often paid; to this succeeded uneasiness, and finally depression.

What was the meaning of all this about "going away," and giving dinners, and damask, and things? What was that hint about a new carriage? that whisper of an increased allowance?

Could it be that there was more in all this than mere girlish love of tormenting? They always had tormented him, those girls of his; but he had generally settled them by giving in, and telling them to let him alone. It seemed now, however, it actually seemed as though no such easy conclusion to the matter were to be permitted.

The threatenings grew more ominous daily.

The air felt heavy with portentous rumblings.

Was it possible that some deep-rooted fell conspiracy was on foot wholly to disturb and

break up the even tenor of his life? Could his own flesh and blood be, in stern reality, meditating a course so vile?

He looked at his daughters, and thrills of apprehension trickled through every vein.

Good heavens! they were grown up — they were women. They wore long gowns, and had knotted up their hair.

It was no longer a case of a new pony or a book; it was a question of dressmakers, balls, lovers, settlements—misery upon misery.

"Do let papa alone." Kate was the speaker, and she had a flush on her cheek and a frown on her brow as she addressed her eldest sister. "Do let papa alone, Alice. Surely you have worried him enough for the present with your chaperones, and your fidgets, and your nonsense."

"That is all very well for you; you would never think of such a thing as a chaperone. You would think that I could go about everywhere with only poor dear papa. As if I could! Besides which, it would be really cruel to him. He must escort me to certain things; but there are others to which it will be absolutely necessary that I should be taken by a lady. That's

what Mrs Popham says, so I suppose you will believe it."

Now, what Mrs Popham said was dogma in the Carnochan household. When papa, who was listening to the last remarks, though he tried hard not to show it, heard the name of Mrs Popham, he groaned aloud.

"What, papa?" said Alice, attentively.

"Nothing, my dear — nothing." ("Ah," sighed the poor gentleman, inwardly, "it was Mrs Popham, was it? That was an ill turn of Mrs Popham to do me.")

He had just before been turning over in his mind the expediency of seeking counsel from this old family friend; but her name, thus introduced between the combatants, struck that ground from beneath his feet.

He saw pretty well how it was. Pretty Susie Popham, who was just one year Alice's senior, had, he knew, been taken up to London the summer before, and had made her entry into society there. She had been much with his girls subsequently,—oh, far, far too much. She must have had a hand in all the brewing of this atrocious browst.

Cruel Mrs Popham! Foolish parent of a friv-

olous child! could any one have believed that she, his own familiar friend, would have served him thus?

And as to his own girls, he was altogether now at a loss.

Feelers, thrown out in fresh directions daily, harassed him, till he knew not what to do or say; for though he would fain not have listened, and certainly did frequently permit the broadest allusions to pass unchallenged, he had never been so quick in hearing in his life. Let him be in the very heart of his newspaper or his book, the first word let drop on one or other of the dreadful topics, like the first boom of the enemy's cannon before an engagement, fell on his ear, a knell of horror.

He was wide-awake in a moment, and shivering.

Bertha's ill-used airs and Marjorie's questions bore to his excited fancy as evil presages as did their eldest sister's endless side-hints and her wranglings with the more considerate younger. He hated to hear Alice on the defensive, as much as Kate expostulating. All seemed to his astonished and enlightened spirit to bear on the one theme, and he could not endure the sight of Mrs Popham's shawl in the avenue.

## CHAPTER VI.

### MR NEWBATTLE SUCCUMBS TO HIS FATE.

> "I myself, vanquished, with a peal of words
> Gave up my fort of silence to a woman."
> —*Samson Agonistes.*

MATTERS stood thus when the Squire fell in with Lady Olivia.

He thought that he had never seen so fine a woman. Everything she wore was pretty, and everything she said was pleasant.

She was charmed with Scotland and the Scotch people; she wondered how anybody could ever care to leave the dear romantic country, with its beautiful hills, woods, and glens. Glens? was she not right? Were not those exquisite, wild-looking, heathery valleys called glens? She thought so,—yes.

Oh, she must taste the whisky. Only a very, very little—dear! stop! that was far too much.

But how good it was, though it did make her cough! Everything indeed was good about Scotland, just as everything was beautiful.

She was sure it was a beautiful part of the country where Mr Newbattle lived,—indeed it must be, for she had never seen, and she did not believe there existed, any part that was not. Did—ahem—did his property lie on the coast?

Inland? Oh?

But near the coast? Oh, indeed?

After all, it was better to be only near the coast than actually on it. The seaside was often depressing, especially in winter. Winter storms were terribly depressing.

Did Mrs Newbattle—oh, she *begged* his pardon. She was so very, very sorry.

To think of her having made such a cruel blunder; she who ought to have been the very last person in the whole world to have been so wickedly thoughtless, having herself endured a like loss. She could never forgive herself.

Presently, however, it was "I scarcely dare venture again, my dear Mr Newbattle, but I thought I heard some one just now mention your daughter? Am I right? Have you a daughter left to solace you?"

She was right: he owned to the solace four times repeated; he had four solaces.

"Indeed? And I have but one son. I see so little of him now either, that it seems as if I were altogether alone in the world." Wonderful admission! but the reader will understand in what it originated.

"He is in the Life Guards," continued Lady Olivia, burning to launch out upon her favourite theme; but prudence prevailed. It would not do to neglect the four daughters for the sake of the one son, and she returned to the charge. "They are but young, I presume, Mr Newbattle; you will have them with you at home for a long while yet?"

"That I cannot say. The eldest is nearly eighteen."

Eighteen? The lady tried amazement, though her squire was bald and grey. "Eighteen? My dear Mr Newbattle!"

"Eighteen, ma'am. And thinks herself quite a woman."

"You have introduced her, then, and taken her into the world?"

Aha! even here — even here he was not to escape. The loathed necessity was draw-

ing daily its chill mantle closer round him.

"No, Lady Olivia," he answered, gloomily, "I have done nothing of the sort—as yet. The time will come soon enough. *She* is ready, at all events."

"And can you wonder at it? Take a mother's advice," merrily; "send her into society as fast as you can,—marry her, and have done with it. Ha, ha, ha!"

"If I could *send* her, indeed," said the poor laird, ruefully. His nightmare was not the sending of her, but the taking her himself.

"And why not?" inquired his new friend. "Why not? Get some elderly relation, some sister or sister-in-law, some one who knows the world, who would give your daughter consequence, and who has nothing else to do, to undertake their charge. It is not, indeed, for you to be troubled," tenderly.

Nice woman, this. Saw things in the right way. Of course it was not for him to be troubled; but that, those four inconsiderate young she-rascals at home never thought of.

Still, the idea, though soothing, was impracticable, for one good reason.

"I have not a sister or sister-in-law in the world," replied he.

"How sad!" Lady Olivia's eyes sparkled. She did not open them in her unpleasing fashion, but they shone and glittered round the poor bewildered fly, whom she was metaphorically inviting to "walk up." By-and-by he had told her every single thing about himself and his troubles, and she had sympathised as surely no one had ever sympathised with him before.

He, too, was informed of all that it was well he should know about herself and her surroundings,—where she usually lived, how independent she was, how unfettered, yet how homeless. Also why she had come to Edinburgh.

She had come to Edinburgh for the end of the Edinburgh season, for no other reason than that she did so love the people, and the customs, and the ways of the place. She adored everything but the climate. The climate was—well, she would not say what it was. It, too, must really be forgiven, when all besides was so brilliant, so gay, so fascinating. She supposed Mr Newbattle brought his family to Edinburgh every spring?

It proved to be her first wrong shot. He had

brought them sometimes; he never—viciously—meant to bring them again. He was only up himself on business.

However, the false move was speedily put to rights. It was found to be Scotland, not Edinburgh, that was Lady Olivia's dream of beauty; and directly she had learned in what county Carnochan was, she was prepared with raptures about the treacherous Solway, with its tides and shifting sands, that would have done credit to the most youthful votary of Scott and Burns.

Finally, he was invited to Evelyn Towers, and he was to bring Alice thither.

He did not say whether he would or not, but he smiled, blushed, blinked his eyes, and spoke to no one else for the remainder of the evening. In short, the old fellow was fooled to the top of his bent, and went away confused and delirious as though with wine.

He had very little to do in the meetings which took place afterwards, and very little to say at the interviews. All was managed for him, and he had only to dilate now and then upon his own concerns, enumerate his ancestors, and describe the extent and nature of his estates.

In doing this he felt at home, and would wax

eloquent; while Lady Olivia listened attentively. He had never before met with any one who was so easily entertained. He had but to talk of his house, his gardens, or his horses, and she would stop whatever she was saying to hearken to him.

At length the glorious meaning of the whole dawned upon his bursting brain. He stared, gaped, considered, and thought it would do.

He would not be too precipitate, would not spoil everything by being in too great a hurry, would certainly make sure still surer first,—but still he meant business.

Here was the very chance he had been hoping for, and wellnigh despairing of. Here was a clue to guide him out of all his recent labyrinth of perplexities. Here was a deliverer who would satisfy all, and give offence to none.

Here, in short, was a dashing woman of fashion and fortune, ready to step into the horrible breach which otherwise he must himself be prepared to hold, and save him from the threatened danger. She had never for a moment allowed him to hope that such a danger could be otherwise averted; pity for the trials and annoyances into which he must presently plunge, had not

been once allowed to take the place of the decree which pointed out the path of duty as the one he must inevitably take; and although he was condoled with, he was given no hope of anything in the shape of so much as a reprieve.

But a way of escape was open, if Lady Olivia were really in earnest in other things she said; if he could believe that she would really be willing to settle down at the old place, assisting, moreover, its not too heavy rent-roll with her comfortable jointure, — and to undertake all his affairs, including the intractable young ones.

What a fine thing it would be for them all! The girls would be satisfied, their father would be saved, and he could snap his fingers in Mrs Popham's face.

His mind was made up in a trice.

Ha, ha, ha! They did not give him credit for being so clever. One and all would think more of him hereafter, when he should have carried through this grand exploit.

He would not tell them too soon. Let them plot and plan a little longer, busying themselves with the wily machinations that had made his life a burden to him of late: he would sweep

their cobwebs on one side presently; he would make them all jump on to their feet.

Little did any of them think what he was after.

Like it? They might like it, or they might not,—that was their own affair. If not, they had only themselves to thank for it: they might take this for their comfort, that they had made their own bed, and must lie on it.

It was to insure a moment's peace, immunity from the continual dinning of the same subject into his ears, that he had betaken himself away from home for a season, and it was to this escapade that they should owe the arrangement in prospect.

Ha, ha, ha! He laughed again at the idea.

He planned how he would announce the news. On their account, of course, it was to be, that he had put himself out of his way. For their sakes, he had considered it advisable to confer on the family circle so valuable an addition. He had understood that they felt the need of some older person of their own sex, some discreet and experienced friend, now that they were advanced to years of womanhood; and he had felt that he could not do better for them than provide them with a step-mother.

Whatever they wanted in future, he reflected, they might go to Lady Olivia for. Let them carry all their plots and their petitions to her, and see what she would do for them. If she chose to fall in with their views, to burden herself with their trumpery absurdities, well and good; he would have no objection, and there would be no excuse for any further pestering of him.

Nothing should make him interfere; that was one point on which he was decided. They should fight their own battles, and he should at length be allowed to return to that peace and quiet which his soul loved.

All his former habits of gentle selfishness rose pleasantly before his view, and were loud in approbation of the course he meditated,—and since, after all, if a man may not please himself when nobody else belonging to him is solicitous of the honour, it is hard to say when he may. Lady Olivia had taken his fancy, and fancy was backed up by every other feeling and motive.

The engagement took place, and fell like a thunderbolt at Carnochan.

*Papa!*

In that one word was expressed the grief, amazement, and derision of his daughters.

Of all men in the world, *Papa!*

To them he was merely a bald-headed, clean-shaved, dinner-loving, church-going, elderly gentleman. He had always answered the purpose so far as they were concerned, had duly given them dessert after dinner while they were children, and guineas on birthdays when they were older. Although he had not cared to join their walks or rides, he had provided them with ponies and carriages; and if he fell asleep over their music, he had never refused them tickets for concerts when in Edinburgh.

Altogether, papa had done very well; they had never known any other papa, and they were satisfied with the one they had.

As for thinking that he could ever give them trouble,—that it was he, and not they, who should reorganise the order of their days—that anything more terrible could happen than that he might be hard to stir up, and kick over the traces a little at each of Alice's innovations,—such a notion had never once entered their heads; nor would they have believed it within the limits of possibility that he should have

dared to think and act for himself in a matter of such delicacy, involving such results, had the words in his own handwriting not been plainly set before their outraged and disgusted vision.

Verily he had turned the tables!

And who had instigated him to the terrible deed? Not Mrs Popham; she was the last person to approve. Mr Macknight, the steward? No; Mr Macknight's position would suffer too much. Mr Maxwell, the lawyer? Least likely of all; he was the girls' best friend.

Nevertheless it must have been *some one*, all agreed—since everybody knew that papa would never have so much as thought of such a thing if he had been let alone; and at length the four, united in their common wretchedness, pitched by good hap upon the guilty person.

*She* must have done it. She, this Lady Olivia, this "kind and sensible person," who was to "take their dear mother's place,"—she was the culprit.

"And papa to talk of his 'good fortune,' and the 'agreeable surprise he is giving us,' and his 'consulting our happiness'!" cried the indignant, penetrating Kate, flinging down the letter; "it is hypocrisy and deceitfulness from beginning

to end! It is the way he always goes on whenever he has done anything he knows he ought not. He does not dare to speak out. If he chooses to—to—to——"

"And just now of all times," whimpered Alice. "It is worse for me than for any one of you. I had arranged everything; and that, papa knew very well,—for I talked before him quite openly. I had got down the new patterns for the drawing-room covers, all ready to show him as soon as he came back."

"They will do for the bride," said her sister, bitterly.

"And what are we to call her? Must we get ready our own dear mamma's rooms for a stranger? Must we see this Lady Olivia take her place at the head of the dinner-table——"

"Oh, hold your tongue," sobbed Kate.

Mr Newbattle prudently resolved to postpone his return to Carnochan until he had felt his way a little; so nothing was said on that subject in the letter which contained the great announcement, — and the return post showed him the wisdom of his decision.

Alice indeed, with precocious diplomacy, endeavoured to insert some prettily-turned phrases,

which should win for her favour in the eyes of the new-comer, into her composition, as well as to suppress in it all appearance of her real sentiments. The thing being done, there was no help for it. She choked down her dismay, and composed as elegant an epistle as she could.

But even she could not bring herself to do more—she could not produce warmth or pleasure; while the volleys fired off by Kate and the younger ones were honest outbursts of affection, resentment, and reproach.

But they all felt alike, nevertheless; and though the laird's eyes twinkled on perusing his eldest daughter's effusion, and he pronounced it a sensible, well-expressed letter—while he only grew red in the face over Kate's, and thrust it down to the bottom of his breeches-pocket,—he would not perhaps have made such a distinction could he have seen into the hearts of the several writers.

As it was, Miss Newbattle's dutiful note was shown to Lady Olivia; and he felt all the luck of its being from his eldest daughter. A second daughter can be suppressed without exciting remark; but had his first-born expressed herself

improperly, it might have been awkward. As for the young ones, Bertha and Marjorie, their poor little pin-pricks never even scratched, for he forgot to open the envelopes.

Lady Olivia retained the composition of her dear step-daughter to be, and showed it round to all who came to see the presents.

She was really gratified to have such a billet to produce, since, although the penmanship was indifferent, and there was a positive mistake in the spelling, the sentiments were entirely what they should have been; and the whole was well put together, and cleverly calculated to please. In such a matter Alice could shine; it afforded scope for all the ability she possessed.

By next day's post there arrived at Carnochan an envelope of the thickest, glossiest texture, and of the most unmanageable shape. There was not a moment's doubt from whom it came.

Three sheets of tiny note-paper, with about a dozen words on each page, were at that time the correct style of correspondence in fashionable circles; and accordingly, three sheets were duly found within. The writing, however, was much closer together than need have been, for Lady Olivia was that pest of friendship, an in-

veterate scribe. On any and every occasion she would, should, and must communicate with her acquaintance at large; and the present was too valuable an opportunity for displaying her rounded periods, and her gushing happiness, not to be eagerly embraced.

She had begged leave to be allowed to write; and since such was the case, Mr Newbattle thought he need not. There was no occasion for two letters. Would she be so good as to mention that he did not intend returning home at present?

In his own mind he had pretty well resolved to defer meeting with his daughters until he should face them under the wing of his august consort. They must come up for the wedding; and here, in Edinburgh, with Lady Olivia by his side, and amid all the novelty and gaiety by which he was now surrounded, he could be a bolder man than he could ever hope to feel himself within the grey walls of his own old tower.

Something of the tumult going on there, in the household as well as in the family, had escaped in the second letters of the girls; Maxwell too, his lawyer, with whom he was now in

communication, had shaken his head, smiling, over the subject: and he felt it was only due to his own peace of mind to keep out of the whole mess.

Once he was observed to chuckle and rub his hands merrily. He was reflecting on the stopper he had put on all such insubordination for the future.

Quarrels, and grievances, and nonsense he could not stand — and indeed he had always been useless when appealed to in a fray; but now he dwelt with satisfaction on the relief it would be to have a wife whose province it would become to inquire into and adjust all matters of dispute. No, no; he would let them alone for the present, and for the future they would have to let him alone.

As it was, Mr Newbattle enjoyed his few weeks of courtship with a zest that was astonishing to himself.

He drove with his *fiancée*, and dined daily at the house where she was staying; and in the intervals he stood in the bay-window of his club.

Nobody interfered with him, nor worried him, nor made demands upon him. He was per-

fectly independent, and did just what he liked, and what suited him, all day long.

Old fogies joked him, tailors measured him, his lawyer managed for him, Lady Olivia smiled upon him. He himself did nothing, and that was all he ever cared to do.

Carnochan seemed a long way off from all that pleasant bustle and genial idleness. His four angry girls could wait; he was not going to thrust himself into that lion's den again in a hurry.

What? Go back to be the victim of a paltry persecution, and hear nothing but whining and unpleasantness all day long? Not he; he had put up with that sort of thing too long. It was monstrous disagreeable to be always dictated to; he could not call his soul his own, he had been so overridden of late.

And to be sure, Princes Street was excessively amusing on the sunny March afternoons; the Exhibition of paintings was open, and all his old cronies were up, either *en garçon* like himself, or with their wives and daughters for the balls.

He met some of them every day; and they were so hearty, and congratulatory, and funny

about his love affair, that he began to feel himself quite a dog, and wondered what he had been about to keep away from them all so long.

Lady Olivia, on her part, left nothing to be desired. She was so full of her own cares and pleasures, that she accepted gratefully whatever time it suited her kind Mr Newbattle to bestow on her, and only thought it *too* good of him to give so much.

She would not hear of his putting himself out of his way on her account. She would not expect to see anything of him before three o'clock; he was always welcome, most welcome, but he was never to feel bound to present himself in Moray Place. After a short drive—it was never too long—he would be dropped at his club again, where the fine equipage in which his lady sat with her friend as duenna by her side, was as much admired as were her velvet bonnet and her elegant bow. She would lean over the side of the carriage—it was open, and had an ostrich rug,—and exchange parting words under the large window wherein the gentlemen stood; and then she would wave her little hand, and smile, and bend her head as her horses dashed away again. No one could less

resemble a widow,—she might not be "Miss," but she was certainly not "Mrs;" and he liked to hear his friends say "Lady Olivia."

Evelyn did not do more for his mother on this occasion than on others; but he was not needed, and she scolded him quite amicably. Even his absence on her marriage-day was not resented, since, with a tall son of eight-and-twenty at her back, she could hardly have passed as the still moderately young woman marrying a man many years her senior which it was her desire to do. In reality she was forty-nine, but she hoped to pass for much less. However, even forty-nine, she reflected, thinking of the Dean, and of Mr Maxwell, and the register, —even forty-nine was not fifty, and she need never again be under the necessity of owning even to forty-nine.

She was in excellent health and looks, and rather expected, in spite of what the Squire must certainly have said about her appearance, to dazzle his daughters, and take their hearts by storm.

They came, and she it was who was dazzled; she was so much taken up by them, that she actually forgot herself. Oh, she would have no

difficulty, no difficulty whatever, in finding husbands for such girls. Why had their father not told her what to expect? why had he never mentioned that he had such lovely treasures hid? Two such pretty creatures (Alice was charmed for once to be bracketed with Kate), —two such, she vowed, she had seldom seen; while Marjorie was a little angel; and even Bertha was made happy by hearing that she had something wonderfully piquant and interesting in her countenance.

Before the bride left, she had kissed them all round, and in the plenitude of her satisfaction, had felt as if the only crook in her lot were really about to turn into the blessing she had been determined all along to consider it.

## CHAPTER VII.

### "I INTEND TO DO MY DUTY."

"But to climb steep hills,
Requires slow pace at first."
—*Henry VIII.*

But, alas! a kingdom conquered leaves a kingdom to be ruled; and Lady Olivia Newbattle, when she presently made her triumphal entry up the long avenue of Carnochan, with flags flying, bells ringing, and tenantry shouting, all in due order, was but little fitted for the post she was so keen to hold. If she had ever consulted any one's happiness but her own, it had been that of her first husband; and he had been so long dead, that she had forgotten altogether what putting up with another person's whims, and yielding to his desires, meant.

She expected to be waited upon when at home—made much of abroad; and for seven-

and-twenty years her expectations had been fulfilled.

Servants could not dispute her orders, nor acquaintances pry into and disarrange her daily life. She did what she chose from hour to hour, and passed even to herself as an amiable, good-humoured person.

But if the old laird of Carnochan had chosen one woman less fitted than another to head a house where commotions were frequent, where Alice had constant mysteries wherewith to vex Kate, and where Marjorie's tyrannies were the theme of Bertha's disregarded complaints, that woman was Lady Olivia. Only the firmest, wisest, gentlest, and most forbearing of step-mothers could have had success; and not a single one of those attributes was possessed by the new mistress of Carnochan.

Added to which, the bride had been for the last month on a pinnacle of success from which it was scarcely to be expected that she should not some day have a fall.

All had been too bright, too uniformly glittering. She was intoxicated with her triumph, with the delight of finding herself once again capable of inspiring ardour, and with the vista

opened up before her by a union in every way so eligible. It was an unfortunate time to take for having her head turned.

All the weak points of a weak nature showed themselves at once, and in their turn drew forth the worst qualities of her step-daughters.

Alice had recourse to fibs and petty stratagems; Kate openly rebelled; while the younger ones sided by turns with each sister, and learned far more than they ought to have done.

Only a few months had passed ere the whole household was in disturbance; and how serious was the entanglement, how resolute the combatants, and what a life poor Mr Newbattle led through it all, may be imagined by any one.

As regarded external circumstances, however, Lady Olivia had no need to withdraw one iota of her former exultation.

She had not been deluded by a needy adventurer deeply in debt, nor the prey of a poor proprietor propping up a rotten estate; in no single point had the Squire exaggerated the size of his lands, or the extent of his establishment. Carnochan was all that he had described it.

Long avenues, shaded by well-grown and

carefully-preserved trees, led up to the house on either side; and a shrubbery and lawns, judiciously laid out, and in excellent order, further met the eye on first approach. There was also the lake with swans on it, which she had been taught to expect.

The mansion itself was very old, and to Lady Olivia's eyes the windows were unfortunately small; but she forgave their not being of greater dimensions when she beheld their number, and reflected that although the front entrance was narrow, it was shaded by a portico.

Nor was she, on the whole, displeased with the rooms within; they were long and bare,—she could fill them as full as she chose.

The great thickness of the walls, however, was what really afforded her astonishment and acute delight.

It was something to be surrounded by walls from six to seven feet in thickness, and soon six and seven feet seemed paltry in her estimation; by the twentieth letter that she had written on the subject they had grown to twelve, to fifteen, to she really did not like to say what number of feet!

Although accustomed to his mother's gran-

diloquence, Evelyn was aware that she had usually some basis on which to work, that she was not altogether an originator; and accordingly, on the night he arrived at Carnochan from Castle Kenrick, never having been there before, as the reader will have already learned, the first thing he did was to investigate its masonry.

Six months had elapsed since his mother's marriage, but since leave was not desirable until the autumn months made him think of Scotland, he had not seen fit to alter his plans on that account.

Even then, as we have seen, he had been in no hurry; but at length, on one of the last days of September, not being able to "do things" at Castle Kenrick, he had bethought him that, after all, since he was expected at Carnochan, "it might be as well not to disappoint 'em."

He was very well pleased with all he saw as he approached the house; and as for the walls, he was really surprised to find that his mother had exaggerated so little. It was nothing to add five feet to walls that were already seven; and although he could not calculate proportions at a first survey, he could perceive that he had never

seen anything like them before, and acknowledged the fact.

Mr Newbattle was only too happy to afford him further information; it was something to talk about; and whilst thus engaged, no one could find fault with him.

Before the arrival of his magnificent step-son, he had been tutored to remember this and avoid that, till his original timidity had given place to a sort of nervous terror whenever Captain Evelyn's name was mentioned.

What if he should bang out with the very thing he had been told to hold his tongue about?

What if the subject that he had been expressly forbidden to mention should slip from him unawares,—or if he forgot that which he had been instigated to bring forward?

It was with infinite relief that he found himself, the dreaded introduction over, comfortably talking about windows. His visitor was conducted round the room, and made to stand in each recess; and he was finally lodged in the doorway leading to the library, and told how comical it was that he should be there close to Lady Olivia's chair, and yet be invisible to her,

when the door opened before he had time to escape a smart rap on the shoulder.

"Oh, that is you, Alice," said Lady Olivia, joining in the laugh graciously. "Come in, my dear. This is Alice, Rupert; and Alice, this is your big brother. Is that it? Is he to be allowed to be your brother?"

Alice smiled and bridled, feeling sure she had no objection.

"And here are the little ones?" continued my lady, as the long-legged Bertha and chubby Marjorie followed. "And our only absentee is Kate. She is away on a visit, as it happens. Otherwise we are all here; and so glad, so very glad, to see you, dear Rupert."

Evelyn, who was fond of children, would have made friends at once—nothing amused him more than to amuse—but he soon found this was not to be. Directly his mother found that any one was talking but herself, she had a message to be run, or a job to be attended to; and on the little girls emitting at the same moment one joyful laugh—the cat had jumped over the back of their father's arm-chair—they were summarily packed off to the far end of the room. "Children," said Lady

Olivia, with a sigh, "are always either awkward or noisy."

She then proceeded to what she called a comfortable chat; and since she has not before been exhibited in her normal state, we subjoin a sample of her conversation, which will also, perhaps, serve to explain the reason why her society was not of first-rate importance to her son.

"Do tell me, my dear boy, who you had at Castle Kenrick? I know you always do manage to fall in with nice people. Who are those Brewsters? I don't know the name. And, by the way, did I ever tell you who we came across the only day we were in Paris? Lord Weyburn. So very strange, was it not? And he was really most friendly, quite affectionate; his mother, you remember, had been so charmed to meet me again at the Anthony-Burnett's last autumn. She had told him all about it. You recollect Lady Weyburn? Do you not? Oh yes, I know you do, my dear, for it was at Sir James Thornton's that she told me she had seen you. Don't you remember?"

"Well, yes," said Evelyn; "I daresay I do." He had just contrived to hide a yawn behind the fingers which pulled his long moustache,

and daresayed he remembered Lady Weyburn to hide the achievement.

"Lord Weyburn, the father, was quite a friend of your father, when they were young men together. His sister married a Colonel Jenkynson,—really good Jenkynsons, though it is such a name—when you spell it with a 'y' it does not look so bad,—and he was a man of large fortune, and member for the county. I will tell you who he was connected with—the Lotteringham family. Either his sister married Lord Lotteringham, or Lord Lotteringham was his wife's brother—I forget which; but one way or other, he and Colonel Jenkynson were brothers-in-law."

"Oh yes." (How his mother did bother about people.) For his part, Evelyn felt that he would have liked to have had a word or two from the pretty, demure-looking Alice, who sat so modestly by with her hands folded, or to have made his way to the corner and played tricks with the young ones: and to be sure, it would have been only decent manners to have included some of the Newbattle family in what was going on; the old gentleman, or the girls, should not have been altogether excluded. But Lady Olivia's manners

were too good for home consumption, and she disregarded his inattention and short replies quite as much on this occasion as she had ever done before.

"Well, but now, Rupert, tell me all that you have been doing, and what places you have been to? You come from Castle Kenrick; that I know. Before you went there, you were at Seamount: I must hear about Seamount first. Was dear Mary Pelly there?"

"Is she not always there?"

"Well, but did you have any chat with her? Was she friendly? Was she well? Did she send any messages?"

"Not that I am aware of."

"Was Lady Seamount at home?"

"Yes."

"And the sons?"

"Yes."

"I always think they are such nice young men."

"Oh?" ("Nice young scamps.") Evelyn put out his lips, and the above passed through his mind, but where was the use of saying it?

"Henry Waters was there, with his wife," he said, aloud.

"Ah," rejoined his mother, "what a sad match that was! I never could bear the thought of that Henry Waters getting my charming Gertrude. I wonder her parents allowed it."

"Come now," said Evelyn, with more animation than he had hitherto evinced; "I don't agree with you at all. Henry Waters is the best of the whole bunch, to my mind."

"Of *his* whole bunch, I daresay. But we were talking of the Seamounts. To marry into such a family—with such connections, and Gertrude having her own fortune besides—it was what he ought never to have presumed to aspire to."

"He is worth them all put together."

"My dear Rupert!"

"Of course he is. I know. He is as good a fellow as ever lived; while the Seamount men——" a laugh supplied the rest.

"I had no idea they were anything but what was proper, I am sure," asserted Lady Olivia, dropping her eyes. "Of course I cannot judge. I cannot see young men when they are by themselves. But I did grudge Gertrude. Now if it had been you——" in a lower key.

"Oho, ma'am! sits the wind in that quarter? No, trust me, I was never in the lists even."

"Well, but you have been at other places. Is there no one—eh——?"

"Not a soul."

"You have heard of Mrs Beaumont's affair?"

"And of nothing else."

"Shocking, was it not? And the Harveys, what are they about?"

"I have no notion."

"The Delanes and Stirlings sent me such beautiful presents. I had hoped to have had some of them to meet you this week—some of the Delanes, I mean; for the Stirlings, though very good sort of people, are not quite—quite—they are people of no family whatever, you know."

"Why, you used to be always with them."

But for this so many excellent reasons were adduced, and he was so earnestly assured that the friends in question had never been admitted to any intimacy,—that there had never been anything to warrant their expecting to be made welcome to Carnochan,—that it would be unfair to her new neighbours to present those as specimens of Lady Olivia's connections and

acquaintance,—that even his long-suffering gave way, and he stole a sly look at his watch.

The evenings at Castle Kenrick, with their solitary recreation—their inevitable billiards—seemed lively as compared to making one of the formal circle at Carnochan while Lady Olivia talked.

Nevertheless, as days passed on, and visitors came and went, the new surroundings, with their attendant chain of fresh ideas and interests, succeeded in some measure in chasing his recent adventure out of Evelyn's head.

Now that he was absolutely at Carnochan House, he was not insensible to the fact of it being his mother's home: the girls were all ready and willing to be made friends with; nor was Mr Newbattle, although reserved in manner and peculiar in his habits, an altogether uninteresting study. When encouraged, and taken in the right way, and at the right time, he had plenty to tell; and the subjects he could converse upon were infinitely more to his visitor's taste than was the tasteless prattle of Lady Olivia. Tales of poaching frays, of neighbours' exploits, of the odd ways and humours of the country people, together with reminiscences of

his young days, which had lain fallow in his mind for twenty years, but which were now brought forth to entertain his step-son, were sufficiently worth listening to.

The house also was curious, and the histories of its tapestry, armour, and pictures whiled away odd hours.

He had not forgotten his dark-eyed *incognita*, nor his intentions of going back some time soon to see what she would say to such a return; but since he was but thirty miles off, and since he could go any day, he was content to wait for the day to be a convenient one.

Just at first his injured hand prevented his shooting and fishing, but even then he could examine the kennels and talk to the keepers. Afterwards he had pretty fair sport, and a good piece of ground to shoot over. As long as he could get away from Lady Olivia, in short, he was quite at his ease; and there being a party in the house, made up expressly on his account, during the next fortnight, she could be dodged successfully: but the very first morning after their departure, he was unlucky enough to be caught and pinned to her apron-string.

"My dearest boy, do come here and sit down.

I have seen nothing of you for the last ten days, positively nothing. Those people who are gone, quite usurped you. Now let us sit down together, just you and I alone, and have our nice talks as we used to do. First of all, my dear Rupert, you have never told me what you think of my new connections. You cannot fail to like Mr Newbattle, I am sure,"—she was in excellent humour that morning—"and—and—and—what do you think of his daughters?"

"Alice is very pretty."

"Pretty? you think she *is* pretty? I am glad of that. That was one thing I wished to know. She is not particularly amiable——"

"Is she not?"

"By no means. Indeed I can assure you—but perhaps I ought not to prejudice you, a stranger; and I am so anxious that you should like her, should like them all—but really——"

"Oh, well, never mind."

"It is her deceitfulness," burst forth Lady Olivia, unable not to mind, and resolved to have it out too. "She is the slyest creature in the whole world, I believe. You have no idea, and you would not believe it if I were to tell you, the things that girl is capable of doing."

"I see you and she do not hit it off."

"No, I should hope not. I must tell you one thing she did lately. We were to dine at the Pophams,—old-fashioned people, but of high standing—the first people in the neighbourhood, in short. Well, Alice had not been asked, naturally; but she slipped over there by herself the day before, with a geranium-cutting—fancy taking a geranium-cutting to a place where they keep ten gardeners!—and actually she manœuvred herself into an invitation. She never told any one of her intentions, and I am convinced she was not wanted—the table would have been quite full without her; but Mrs Popham is an easy woman, and allowed herself to be blindfolded. I call it a most underhand trick; the whole thing was unworthy of Mr Newbattle's daughter."

"Oh, well," said Evelyn, in whose eyes the offence was rather a joke than otherwise. But when he had said "Oh, well," he could not, for the life of him, think of an excuse.

"And the little ones — or at least Bertha is quite as absurd," continued Lady Olivia. "Have you noticed that oblique cast in her eye? It gives her a most unpleasant expres-

sion" (it was no longer piquant and interesting). "She ought to be at a good school, if I could persuade myself to send any girl to school. I have got them an excellent governess, as you see; she is greedy and selfish, but she had first-rate recommendations, and I believe she does know how to teach. I have done all for the children that I can, I am sure," with a sigh.

"Well, and I am sure, ma'am, they—they are obliged to you," looking about to escape.

"I don't know about that. Regarding this very governess, we had the most absurd fuss. The girls had found one for themselves—for Bertha and Marjorie, I mean—without consulting anybody; and such a creature as they had got! Quite a low person, quite gross in her speech and common in her manners! It was not her fault, you will say? Certainly not, but it was a very great fault the way Kate behaved about it all. However, I have no wish to trouble you with family matters."

"By the way, where is Kate?"

"She—well—she is away from home at present, as you know. The fact is," continued Lady Olivia, waxing confidential, "that Kate,—

she is by far the handsomest and most distinguished-looking of them all, my dear Rupert,—but she is a most unmanageable and—and—and altogether impertinent girl. We had no peace, no quiet, no proper rule or order, as long as she was here; and about this matter of changing the governess, she actually disobeyed her father, and defied me!"

"Oh!"

"She was as stubborn as a mule; and since she was not to be won over, her father was obliged to—to send her away; and she is with that very person now. It is only for a time—only till Mademoiselle Pierrepoint has got herself fairly established here; for had the younger ones had Kate to fall back upon, they would never have owned any authority. Oh, you can have no idea how wild and unruly that girl was!"

"So that was it?"

"Yes; she stirred up everything that she thought would undermine my supremacy, and no one could do anything with her but that Miss Comline——"

"Miss Comline!" said Evelyn, with a start.

"The children have talked to you about her,

I suppose. The foolish, headstrong girl took it into her head that Miss Comline was ill-used: it was the greatest nonsense, for I never ill-used anybody in my life; but she quite raved when she heard what I had done. I had merely written to Miss Comline privately, when she was at home for her holidays last month, that she was not the sort of person wanted for the Miss Newbattles, and that it was a mistake altogether her ever having been here. Could anything have been kinder? I only said it was a mistake—I never hinted that it was any fault of hers or of theirs. Miss Comline did not object to what was done, I am sure. She made no reply, and her father came to take away her things. We should have had no scene, no disturbance about the matter, but for Kate, with her ridiculously-overstrung notions. She would see the man himself, and—but it is no use going over it all again."

"How long ago," said Evelyn, slowly, "was this?"

"About a month. I put up with it as long as I could—I did indeed," catching sight of her son's face. "Indeed, my dear Rupert, it is all very well for those who have never been in a

step-mother's place to think it is an easy one. That, it is *not*. It——"

"And how long is Kate to stay away?"

"That depends entirely on herself. She can return any day she likes by choosing to submit to me—to us, I mean—and own that she was in the wrong. In that case I should counsel her father to receive her back; but otherwise," very decidedly, "I certainly shall not. I intend to do my duty, and it is no duty of mine to encourage insubordination and disorder. We get on now very fairly; and by-and-by, we shall do still better. Oh, it really was a blessing to get Kate out of the house!"

"So that was Kate," said her son to himself, meditating. "Poor Kate!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

### OUT OF SIGHT IS OUT OF MIND.

"Weak and irresolute is Man,
The purpose of to-day
Woven with pains into his plan—
To-morrow rends away."
—COWPER.

POOR Kate's handkerchief lay in his drawer upstairs; and, truth to tell, he had been thinking daily less and less about it.

He had thrust it into an empty place on first unwinding it from his hand,—waiting, as he believed, for an opportunity to have it washed without remark; but either the opportunity had not come, or he had forgotten to embrace it.

Not that Evelyn was by nature inconstant; he was only young, light-hearted, and prosperous. Pleasant things happened to him every day, and he found almost everybody nice, and quite everybody kind.

He met so many people.

At every place he went to, he converted strangers into acquaintances, and acquaintances speedily ripened into friends. Invitations poured in upon him from all manner and conditions of men, and the letters awaiting his arrival at Carnochan amounted to a perfect pile.

Lady Olivia, indeed, could not conjecture how there came to be so many, since to her it had been expressly stated that her son was unable to give any addresses. She seemed to be the only person thus cut off from communication, and she eyed the army of envelopes dubiously.

Nor did she do so altogether without a cause, for Evelyn was an excellent letter-writer; and though he did not often sit down to the desk, when he did, he could dash off a dozen notes in an hour. Besides which, he was a sociable fellow, who liked to be *en rapport* with heaps of people, provided only they were good-humoured and hearty, and had, as he would say, no nonsense about them.

But, unfortunately, nonsense of the kind he meant was precisely what his mother was full of; and more, what she set a high value upon. She could not forgive people who were simple

enough to dislike hearing their family pedigree descanted upon; and not to set store by every eligible connection, not to make the most of every visit paid to houses of note, as well as of every distinguished personage met there, was, in her eyes, a proof of ignorance and folly.

She wondered sometimes why her son bit his lip. He could not bring himself to pander to such a taste; and when conversation wound round to the strain Lady Olivia loved, he bore as little part in it as ever he could.

In short, Evelyn was ashamed of his parent; and though he was perhaps unaware of the fact himself, there was scarcely a person he had ever known whom he could not get on with better.

He felt instinctively that a large amount of the attention she bestowed on him was due to his position and means, that her affection was begotten less of maternal instinct than of pride and vanity, and that she spoke of him in a manner that too frequently was humiliating and ridiculous. To be hawked about in her train, to be made to dance to her piping, put forward, bragged of, and puffed off here, there, and everywhere, he had early seen would be intolerable;

and, while yet a schoolboy, he had declined the position.

It followed that she was afraid of him, and more solicitous about his good opinion than of that of all the rest of the world put together. With a considerable amount of trouble and forethought, she had got together at Carnochan people whom she was aware he would consider were of the right sort; and although she might complain that they had usurped her darling during their stay, she was in secret delighted to reflect that all had passed off so well.

Had she known how much their presence had done towards weakening in Evelyn's mind the recollection of the episode which had made such an impression on him previous to his arrival, she would have been still better pleased. As it was, now that the house was again empty, she could not have chosen a worse time unwittingly to unravel his secret.

All his former interest in it returned directly in full force, and the impulse of a frank, outspoken disposition was at once to relate his adventure, and smile over the coincidence.

It was the length of Lady Olivia's tongue which alone stopped the disclosure. He had a

moment for reflection, and in that moment's interval there rose before him a vision of two dark wet eyes shining like stars as he met their full, imploring gaze, and there sounded again in his ears those softly-spoken, yet most sorrowful words, which had seemed so strange in the mouth of one so young,—and all at once he understood.

Her shame and mortification at being found by him, by Lady Olivia's son, her new brother after a fashion, in all the disgrace of a naughty child, who has been turned out of the room, and is discovered hanging about upon the stairs outside, must have been at the root of those sullen looks.

So that was why she had tried to pass undetected, and had shunned his presence and inquiries?

That was the reason why she had been afraid even to speak? It was for fear of letting out her little twopenny-halfpenny secret? He had thought something much more lay beneath. It was a *fiasco*, the whole thing. However, since it had been no joke to her,—and since, after all, childish griefs are as great to the childish soul as those in after-life are to the mature,—he

must be careful not to do nor say anything to increase the discomfort of her situation. He was partly entertained, and just a little bit let down.

It was certainly droll to find himself listening to Lady Olivia's version of the story, with the consciousness that he knew a great deal more of the matter than her ladyship had any idea of; but he felt the tameness of her explanation severely.

Another point was also cleared up. He knew now of whom he was every now and then reminded by Alice. There was no more than the most general family resemblance between the sisters; but occasionally a movement or an expression escaped which it had bothered Evelyn's wits to think where or when he had observed before.

All of this he had to meditate upon while his mother was talking; and the upshot was resolution to hold his tongue, until he had further spied out the land.

After all, it was not the handkerchief which had led to her detection.

Had he been on the right trail by other means, C. N. might have clinched the matter; but until the name of Miss Comline fell from Lady Olivia's

lips, he was not aware that he had suspected anything.

It is probable, however, that one trifling incident and another had prepared his mind for the discovery. The farmer's reticence about Carnochan—the spurious likeness between the sisters—a dozen minor details,—had all led to the same point; so that, when his mother's comment on the unsuitability of the children's governess for her position recalled to his mind what he had thought on the same subject at the Muirland Farm—what he had mentally observed on worthy Mrs Comline's informing him of her daughter's holding such a post,—he was ripe for hearing, and the next moment brought conviction. He did not suspect, he knew that he had got hold of the truth.

For some time after she had done with Kate, Lady Olivia prosed peacefully on, and she thought her son remarkably patient and pleasant that day.

He heard her out, which he did not often do. He let her flit on from theme to theme, mash up whole cartloads of exalted names, and work upon such outer rind of the gossip of society as she loved to peck at, *sans* interruption or yawns.

He did not appear to listen, but he picked a blue tassel to pieces as if it interested him.

She felt all the glow of gratified maternity as she looked across the rug, and saw him still there at the end of two hours, when pretty Alice came in to whisper her hope that brother Rupert would not think it too great a plague to be called upon to take the ride he had promised.

"So soon?" exclaimed Lady Olivia. But of course the young lady, who looked resigned, and said nothing, gained her point. Rupert would have gone if Marjorie had asked him to mount the dun cow; but when to his readiness to oblige was added his desire to escape, he could spring to his feet with alacrity.

"You must really not tease your brother, unless he likes to go," observed the fond parent, in some displeasure: she made rather a point of saying "your brother," since, albeit she would have dearly liked to have kept her precious son all to herself, and permitted the Newbattle faction neither part nor lot in the matter, prudence suggested so strongly the expediency of there being no notion on either side of any tie of another nature ever being formed, that "brother" and "sisters," she felt, had best be estab-

lished from the beginning. She thought herself sly and clever; and to avoid confusion, since the term was adopted universally, we shall use it also.

He was to be "Rupert" to them all, at once; and though Alice had tried to be shy and blushing, and Marjorie to be mischievous, the arrangement had been taken so much as a matter of course by the good-natured young man himself, that nothing more could be made of it.

"But are you quite sure that he cares to ride to-day?" persisted Lady Olivia, one of whose ways it was to imagine that her darling could not possibly speak for himself. "You should not worry about a thing, Alice. It is for Rupert to decide, not for you. He may prefer the boat, or a drive with me, or a walk with your father."

"Or a seat on an elephant's back," added Rupert. "There is every variety of entertainment, isn't there, Alice? Well, come along."

"You might have let him alone a little longer," proceeded Lady Olivia, with her eyes now lovingly bent on the figure before her, now reproachfully turned on the one at her side. "You should not be so insisting, my dear; it is not well-bred. We were very comfortable

together." "Poor dear!" she murmured, as the door closed behind the pair; "he is at the mercy of every one of them: he gets no peace. I am glad, however," reflectively, "that he thinks Alice is pretty. He is a good judge. What if he saw Kate!"

"Alice," said her companion, as they dropped their horses to a walk after a long canter by the river's brink, "don't you miss your sister Kate very much? I suppose you and she are all in all to each other, eh?"

"I am more than a year older, you know."

"I know. Does that include a great deal?"

"And—and I don't think we are very much alike in our ways, and—and tastes."

"You are not alike in appearance,—at least, to judge from photographs."

"Are we not? But we have only such a very ancient photograph of Kate, that you would never *guess* who it was meant for if you knew her."

(Indeed he had not, or his mystery would have been solved long before that morning.)

"Some people think we are very like indeed," continued Alice. "Of course Kate is darker. But they say that *that* is the only difference."

"Oh."

"We are not at all alike in other respects,—at least not so much as most sisters are. But, of course, I do miss dear Kate," she added, pathetically.

"The others are so much beneath you both," observed Evelyn, "that I thought probably you were great friends, and had everything in common."

"But Kate seems nearer to them than she does to me. She does not care for things that grown-up people like. I really don't know what is to be done with her when it comes to be her turn to go into the world, for she cares for nothing at present but burrowing in the library for old books, and spouting poetry in the dark!"

Evelyn laughed.

"When we tell her not to be ridiculous," continued Alice, "she gets very indignant. It is really ludicrous to see how she takes things to heart; and you have to be so careful—of course I would not say it to any one but you,—but she has such a shocking temper. Oh, pray don't say that I told you. What made me say it? I am so provoked with myself.

It slipped out before I knew. I am so sorry I told you."

"No need," said her brother, drily; "I had heard all about it before. My mother has warned me of Kate's infirmity, and even the young ones speak of it with awe. Why should you be more reticent?"

"I was afraid you would think——"

"That it has been exaggerated?"

This was not the meaning of her pause; she had been afraid that he would think amiss of her for adding her voice to that of the others; but she was too quick not to catch at the right thing to say, and her "yes" lay so ready on her lips, that it was in use almost before she was aware.

"Yes, indeed. I am so afraid you will think we all make too much of poor dear Kate's un—un—unfortunate——it is such a pity for her own sake, you know. And of course we are all as fond of her as ever we can be. You are not to suppose she is not a dear good thing,—and so generous, she gives away everything she has: the children can get anything they want out of Kate when she is in a good mind, but——"

"But her good mind is sometimes absent on leave."

"Absent on leave?" Alice stared a little.

"I mean, she occasionally does not know where to look for it. Marjorie seems fond of her, however."

"Oh, Marjorie. But Marjorie will run after anybody who takes notice of her. Kate made a fuss with the child, and she used to get all Kate's nice things—her album, and her glove-boxes, and anything she chose to take a fancy to. Kate is quite silly in that way—she can never keep anything for herself."

"I am sorry for Kate," said Evelyn, as if to himself. "She can't be very happy, I should say."

"No; that is what we all tell her. Of course, when papa married again——"

"All right. Go on."

"Naturally none of us liked it," continued Alice, encouraged by his smile. "We had all to—to make the best of things. But that was just what Kate would not do. She frets herself about every trifle, and even about the little commonplace conventionalities of society," with an air caught from her step-mother.

"You know it is really ridiculous. She only wants a pair of spectacles to be a regular old maid."

"I thought I understood that she only wanted short frocks to be a regular baby."

"I declare," said Alice, laughing, "I don't know which it is. She provokes one both ways."

"Does she mind much," said Evelyn, slowly, "being kept away at Miss Comline's?"

"Oh, you have been told about that? Kate was really in the right, to begin with. You must not mind my saying so, for Miss Comline was extremely nice, and the children were so fond of her, that we all——"

"Yes, I understand."

"So now that she is there, at Miss Comline's home, what more can she want? They can read Schiller and Molière all day long together, with no one to interfere; and Kate likes to be let alone, and she likes Miss Comline."

"You are rather confused, all the same," reflected her brother. "You know very well it is difficult to put a good face upon the matter. And so Kate is at a farm?" he said aloud.

"Hardly a farm. It is a delightful, old-

fashioned, retired country-house. There is a farmyard certainly, and—and——"

("Spare yourself the trouble of describing it," said Evelyn, mentally. "I have seen the place, and it is very much of a farm, I should say. This girl grows amusing. I must lead her on a little.") "It is a country-house, is it? A fine old castle, I daresay. She will have shady avenues to roam about in, as well as the correct haunted chamber wherein to spout her poetry in the dark?"

Nothing was denied, and every other supposition he chose to make further, was likewise assented to. "Indeed, I am quite certain that poor Kate is as happy with them as she would be anywhere," was the conclusion of the subject on her sister's part.

Evelyn's was different.

"I shall go and see that poor girl at once. I shall see what can be done towards putting her in her proper place again, even though she has cheated me out of more sympathy than was her due, and even although it will close forthwith my little romance. I quite believe she is a bit of a vixen, but I like her none the less for that; and, vixen or not, it is a deuced shame to treat

her so badly. What a business it is when a lot of women get together! Nothing but mewing and scratching,—especially behind backs. Men don't do that sort of thing—they let each other alone; and a good thing they do, or there'd be the devil to pay."

Marjorie was the next to add her quota to the information which now seemed to be poured in upon Evelyn from all sides. She was running about the garden when the riders returned, and immediately set up her claim to Brother Rupert: he had promised, it appeared, to go and see her own little garden, and now he had to fulfil the agreement, it not being so easy at Carnochan, as at some places, to promise and have done with the matter.

The flower-beds, through which the two strolled, were still gay; and as Evelyn enjoyed his afternoon pipe, he proposed to the little one that she should gather a bouquet, but was met by a look of delighted astonishment which was incomprehensible.

"Well," he said, "why not?"

"Oh, if *you* tell me to do it, nobody can scold me," replied the child, joyfully; "but remember, Brother Rupert, that you *told*

me; because if not, mamma"—she was the only one who said "mamma"—"oh, she would be as angry with me as she was with Kate."

"Why was she angry with Kate?"

"It was on that tree there was a rose," said Marjorie, solemnly, "and mamma said nobody was to touch it, because she wanted the rose all for herself; and when Kate heard it, she was in such a passion—oh, she was in a passion! —and she went and picked the rose that very minute, and came down to dinner with it in her frock! Wasn't it naughty?"

She received no answer.

"Oh, I say, Brother Rupert, you're smiling!"

"Smiling? Nonsense, Marjorie! I could not have been smiling. You could not see my face behind the smoke, and so you made a mistake."

"I thought you were smiling," said Maidie, nestling her hand into his,—she had pretty little ways that took with people wonderfully. "I thought you were smiling at what Kate did. But when mamma was angry, Kate told her that it was *our* garden, and *our* flowers, and that we had a great deal more right to them than

anybody else had. Kate really and truly did say that, Brother Rupert."

"Did she indeed, Madge—really and truly?"

"Oh, but we are going past the beds, and you said I might get some flowers?"

"Aren't there some out of sight of the house which you may gather quietly, and nobody be the wiser?" suggested Evelyn, not inclined to disappoint the child, but willing also to avoid getting into trouble. "If Lady Olivia objects to your gathering the flowers, it would be better to keep it dark, eh? Come along, and let us find a snug corner where we shan't be seen, and may get as many as we please. As Kate says, they are your own, and it is hard to put a stopper on your having them. We'll take 'em on the sly, that's all."

"I wouldn't touch *one* if I were to take it on the sly," retorted Marjorie, putting her hands behind her. "Oh, you naughty boy! Kate would be angry if she heard you. She never took a single thing that mamma did not know of; and she would not let us, neither. Alice does: Alice takes them up to her room."

"Well, well," replied her brother, somewhat disconcerted in spite of himself. "We won't

disobey this all-powerful Kate, then. She seems to have some good points—eh, Madgey? She has taught you to be all fair and above-board, anyway."

"I wish Kate was here," replied Marjorie, thoughtfully. "She will never see you at all if she does not come soon."

"I don't suppose she cares about that."

"She does care; and I'll tell you how I know. She was *so* fond of Uncle George — Uncle George that died a little while ago,—and when she saw your picture unpacked, and hung up in the drawing-room—you know where—I saw her go and look at it for ever so long, and then she said to herself, 'It is just like Uncle George.'"

"Perhaps if she saw me instead of the picture though, she would find she had made a mistake, and that would be a pity. I daresay I myself am not like Uncle George at all, eh?"

"But you are," persisted the little chatterer; "you are just nice, and funny, and good-natured like him; and you make things for us the way he used to do. And besides, you have got a moustache. Before Kate went away, she told me that the only thing she cared about was leav-

ing me behind, and that she would not see you."

"Did Kate—ah—cry when she went away?"

"Oh no, she did not care a bit."

"I'm sure she did care," said Evelyn, and stopped short, feeling foolish.

"Well, I don't believe she did, for she would not say 'good-bye' to papa, or any one; and she never came near the schoolroom. Mademoiselle was asleep, but we would have wakened her up. I say, can you kiss the wall backwards?" inquired Maidie, suddenly.

"Not that I know of. I daresay I could if I tried, though."

"Well, Miss Comline couldn't; and neither can Mademoiselle, nor Alice, nor any one of us, but just Kate. She stands with her back to the wall, a little way off it, so"—suiting the action to the word,—"and bends down her back, down, down, down, till her nose rubs it first—and that's all Alice can do; but Kate goes downer, oh, ever so much downer than Alice, and at last she gets her mouth quite close up, and kisses it. And then we, that's Bertha and me, clap our hands."

"How on earth did you say she does it?"

inquired Evelyn, turning round, and trying himself. "Eh! — woa! Stop! — I can't get down at all. Now look out, we'll try again. Keep away from me, Madge; don't touch me— look out—don't come near me—there—by Jove, I *can't* go any lower——"

——"Oh, you're not near it at all," screeched Marjorie, in ecstasies. "And you mustn't poke out your knees like that! That's not the way Kate does at all. She just goes down, down, down——"

"It's all very fine to say 'down, down, down,'—that won't make you go down! Kate must be made of india-rubber. Well, there's no use trying, for mortal man can't do it, though woman may. Come along, you little piece of mischief,—how dare you presume to make game of your betters? I shan't come near you again for ever so long, if you behave like that."

"Oh, if you only saw Kate do it!"

"And I'll be hanged if I don't see Kate do it, and that before many days are over."

Such was Evelyn's final resolution,—although, as may be imagined, he kept it to himself.

# PART III.

## CHAPTER IX.

### NAUGHTY KATE.

"An unlessoned girl, unschooled, unpractised,
Happy in this, she is not yet so old but she may learn."
—*Merchant of Venice.*

One absurd perplexity detained our hero a whole day from accomplishing his purpose—he could not, by any possibility, now get the soiled handkerchief washed: he did not like taking it as it was; and he durst not leave it behind.

At length he laughed at himself, and concluded to trust to the good offices of the farmer's wife. That point settled, he announced the next morning at breakfast that he proposed taking a short fishing-run to the western shores of Galloway, and that, if he could have a dog-cart to take him a dozen miles or so, he should start that day. Of course he could have the dog-

cart; and how about his letters? If Lady Olivia could not fidget about her own letters, she longed to do so about those of other people. In this instance the disappointment of not being permitted to forward any was only mitigated by the pledge of a speedy return which such a restriction seemed to give. Rupert could not certainly intend to be long away from his letters, however much he might be tempted to give her and Carnochan the slip; and accordingly, he was allowed to depart in peace, and without more parade and commotion than he must have known beforehand to be inevitable.

How he did wish his mother would sometimes let him alone! Bustle and attentions, such as Lady Olivia delighted in, were revolting to her son. He hated being interrogated; he could not endure being stood aside for, and run about for, and arranged for. Being tied down to do this and that at a fixed date, and in a fixed placed, was abomination: if he were forced to name beforehand a day or an hour to be set aside for a set purpose, the very fact of his having done so would then and there awake in his bosom a raging desire to cheat the appointed time of its prey; and directly he felt bound to

go through with a matter, however much it might coincide with his inclinations, he yearned to throw it up.

This last was the feebler side of Evelyn's nature; and it was perfectly in accordance with such weakness that he should primarily have been so all-engrossed with the recollection of the lovely stranger, whom he had fallen in with under circumstances so romantic,— that he should, when those circumstances faded into the background, feel his interest cool and diminish,— and that directly the thought of restoring the bandage began to assume the shape of a promise unfulfilled, he should recur to it but seldom.

Fortune and Lady Olivia had very nearly succeeded in spoiling one in whom there yet lay latent germs of rare and beautiful excellences, and whom the chill of neglect or the furnace of adversity might have developed into a hero.

Every generous feeling was now stirred up on Kate's behalf.

To be sure, she was no longer a charming mystery; he could not again set her before his imagination as a beauteous unknown creature,

to be thought about and dreamed about. Such a vision had been somewhat rudely dispelled, and his self-complacency had experienced a shock in consequence. He felt that he had made rather a fool of himself.

But none the less was he ready with his indignation when he thought of the motherless girl, who had been unable to accept a buffet of fate, and who had, in consequence, been so hardly dealt with. Her father and sisters, how could they stand by and see it done?

"Handed over to the secular arm," he reflected. "It was a good stroke of business that. The arch heretic put down with a high hand, it appears all her fellow-offenders at once tendered their submission. My lady may congratulate herself."

It is possible that had the injured one been a meek, plain-featured saint, uncomplainingly bearing her burden on unsymmetrically-moulded shoulders, indignation might have been enough; he would still have urged that the discipline was over-severe, he would still have experienced on her behoof resentment and righteous wrath, but I doubt if he would have set out for the Farm.

It was the thought of that proud, suffering, defiant nature, eating its heart out among those lonely wilds,—of that fretted lip and angry eye —of all the charms that he had seen, or fancied he had seen, in the old farmhouse,—that awoke in his breast a mixture of admiration, pity, curiosity, he knew not what—but above and beyond all, a determination to see and hear Kate Newbattle again.

Little Maidie's shocked and virtuous "Wasn't it naughty of Kate?" recurred again and again to his memory as he drove along. He quite agreed with the child; naughty, undeniably naughty it was. Somehow he liked to think how naughty, and to reflect upon what colour the glowing cheeks must have worn, and upon what words the guilty lips must have let loose, in the scene that had been so fast imprinted on the little sister's memory. Pretty bad the whole must have been,—he wished he had seen it.

Yes; he, Evelyn, who always knew by instinct when there was anything unfriendly and disagreeable going on, and kept out of it as he would have avoided the plague, now actually found himself wishing he had been by

when two feminine combatants opposed each other.

"It was all my mother's fault, of course," he told himself. "No woman of sense would have made such an outrageous prohibition. As if there were not flowers enough for any number of people in the garden, and as if she could not have let a trifle like that alone, rather than add it to the vexations the girls were already undergoing!"

By-and-by, however, he found himself having his fling at the girls too.

They might have managed better. His mother, though absurd and tiresome, was not wantonly ill-natured; they might — at least Kate might, for apparently Alice did—have given into her, humoured her. Humouring,— that was all Lady Olivia needed. Would they but show her a little surface-attention, avoid clashing with any of her preconceived notions, and put up with her nonsense, they might all have got along together tolerably enough. If he had met the young ladies beforehand, he could have offered one piece of invaluable advice, which, had they acted upon it, might have prevented all this scandal and rupture. He would simply have said, "Keep out of her way."

Well, it was not too late to drop a hint—such an admonition might yet be useful for the future.

And now he came to think of it, he must really take Miss Kate to task, since it was certainly the duty of everybody to be accommodating, cheerful, pleasant, — and since it was equally certain that Miss Kate Newbattle had not seen her duty in this respect, or had lamentably neglected it.

He never made a fuss over things himself. When things went cross with him, as of course they did sometimes,—he paused to consider, but could not at the moment refresh his memory with instances,—it was no matter, things went cross occasionally with every fellow, so of course they did with him too,—but he did not go about making himself disagreeable. He held his tongue, and the matter righted itself again; that was the way to do. Matters always do right themselves, if people have the sense to be quiet, and keep their tempers.

That was the point, though. Some people could not keep their confounded tempers in order. He must confess he did hate bad-tempered people. A fellow with a bad temper was

like that — what was its name? — that eight-legged thing in the aquarium,—you never knew what he would fasten on next! Made the fellow a nuisance. Obliged one to keep out of the fellow's way.

It did not occur to our philosopher that the obligation in the present instance had not been imperative: instead of keeping out of the way of this naughty Kate, of whom the first thing that everybody said of her was that she had "a temper," as he thus ruminated, every mile brought him nearer to her.

Kate's heart had been very sore since Evelyn's visit. Not that she had fallen in love with him—for she knew from the first, or almost from the first, who he was,—but she had liked him, as she had fancied she would; she had found him nice, kind, and handsome,—all, in short, that she had been taught to expect; and his coming upon her whilst she was undergoing her sentence of humiliation and punishment, had stung her to the quick. Here was the brother of whom so much had been said and thought; whose looks, talents, tastes, and virtues Lady Olivia had never been weary of vaunting; and whose approach had, through her means, come to be regarded by the

expectant household as an event of first-rate importance. Everything was to be got in order before Captain Evelyn came. His name had been used as a spur, a reward, and an incentive; and in every capacity it had not failed of success.

That he should stumble thus upon her poor disgraced self at the outset!

She would rather it had been any one else,—even Mrs Popham, who, up to this time, had been the person chiefly dreaded. Mrs Popham would, she knew, have been only half angry with her, and would have been very angry indeed with Lady Olivia,—but she would inevitably have counselled submission, and submission was just the one thing the rebel was resolved against.

But no visitor could have been so unwelcome as the one to whom she had herself held out her hand.

She would not say altogether why, even to herself—would not acknowledge all that was meant by the vexation, which surpassed what was intelligible to Miss Comline and her parents. But it was so, that there had existed, in the heart of the lonely girl, a sort of dim, fanciful hope, connected with this brother who was com-

ing. On him had been bestowed some of the foolish day-dreams of a keenly affectionate and isolated nature; and the half-real, half-imaginary resemblance to a lost and much-loved relation, had been magnified and dwelt upon until it had become invested with a value whose extent she durst hardly own even to herself.

That he was the son of her enemy she was too noble to regard. She had yearned to behold Rupert Evelyn; anxious to fill up her shadowy outline, if possible,—but if that could not be done, to scatter it to the winds. She had allowed herself to bask in a certain sunshine of anticipation concerning him, to wonder whether any one might ever again be to her what her Uncle George had been—might put up with her follies, take her part, and draw her to his side. Could it be that in her new brother she might find such another friend? The never-uttered thought made her tremble.

"It is not that he is so very much older," Lady Olivia had repeatedly observed, "but my son has seen so much of the world, has had so much experience, that the girls must really remember he will expect to be treated with *some* respect. The little ones had better call him 'Brother Rupert,'

and even Alice and Kate must not look upon him quite as though he were a contemporary."

Accordingly, they had all learned to shake in their shoes; and there had been nothing to dissipate Kate's ideal but the sight of himself.

Had that done so?

We shall see.

All the day after his departure, she followed him with her thoughts. As night drew on, she pictured the arrival at Carnochan, the stir of the assembled household, the joyous welcome from one and another, the circle formed, the outcast forgotten. Tears burst from her eyes again and again as fancy conjured up the scene; but she wiped them from her cheeks as fast as they fell, and stamped down the whispers of regret and longing which strove to make themselves heard above the tumult within. No place would she yield to such cowardly desires. Right was on her side; and would she avow herself to blame—tell a lie, cringe to power, and be subject to tyranny henceforth, all for this? Because she was too weak to resist—because her prison was intolerable?

No, indeed. She would hold out to the end, and defy them all. For very shame they could

not keep her away much longer; whatever Lady Olivia might wish, her father would never consent to any serious extension of her banishment, and she would go home, when sent for, with uncrushed spirit and unabated resolution.

Mean, selfish, and treacherous as her stepmother might be, (Kate exaggerated, but that we all do in the heat of passion), she told herself that she would brave it all, and a day of reckoning would surely come at last, to show which of the two had been sinned against.

But oh, why had Captain Evelyn passed that way?

Why must needs the stranger, whom sheer necessity had driven her to succour, turn out to be Lady Olivia's matchless son?

Was it not enough that she was miserable, cast out of doors, and impotent in her rage and grief, but that he must know it, and be a witness of it?

It did not occur to her that, for their own reasons, her secret might be kept by those he was now among. She was not sophisticated enough to suspect that as little of the matter as might be would transpire, — that experienced hands would slur all such family dissensions over.

She fancied that it was to them the all-absorbing topic that it was to her; that it still held its place of paramount interest, to the exclusion of pleasanter themes; and that it was impossible but that, before Evelyn had been many hours domesticated, he would have heard from one and all their version of her misconduct.

It might have been a relief, but it would also have been a stinging mortification and a new misery, had she known that at the end of a fortnight not a word had been said but that simple "Kate is away on a visit, as it happens," which had accounted for her absence on the first night.

Her name had been obliterated without an effort.

They were all enjoying themselves very well at Carnochan,—getting on better, in fact, than they had ever done before — making things pleasant for their guests, and, above all, for the guest, whom all united in their desire to honour; while, during those same dusky October days, she was chafing her already festering wounds by inventing incidents not one of which ever took place, and coining phrases and sentiments of which nobody felt the need.

What one would say, and what another would

think,—this was all in all to the poor solitary child, until at length such ceaseless brooding over the one subject told upon her health and looks, and made her kind governess, as well as the old people, uneasy.

Lizzie Comline, of whom hitherto nothing has been said, may be presented to our readers in a few words. She was sensible, plodding, tolerably clever, and not without ambition. Being the only child of parents in easy circumstances, and having had every advantage from her earliest years, it had been comparatively a simple matter for her to rise in the social scale; and whatever Lady Olivia might choose to say, she was neither vulgar nor ill-bred. Her manner was retiring, her voice sweet, and her movements gentle; but—and it was on this "but" that all the epithets bestowed on the unfortunate governess hung—she had an undeniable Galloway accent.

It is true that, in the colloquial intercourse at the farm, the dialect of the two younger people more nearly assimilated than did that of Lizzie Comline to her homely parents; that she had been so far lifted by an excellent education, and by consorting with superior people, out of the sphere

into which she had been born, as to seem in their eyes a being worthy of any station, and fitted for any position. But there was some show of reason for the condemnatory clause in Lady Olivia's note—a note which, by the way, had been so grievous to the poor disenchanted parents, that, as soon as they found the light in which it was regarded by the second Miss Newbattle, they could not open their doors wide enough to receive so keen a partisan.

Lady Olivia had declared that Kate should not stay at home to breed mischief. Farmer Comline had stood stoutly forth, and vowed she should go back with him.

Such an arrangement suited everybody; and for the first week or so, in the flush of her wrath, and in the novelty of the new life, the recusant had been well enough satisfied.

Ere long, however, she had pined; how could she help it?

She had been brought up differently. The very conventionalities, and manifold pomps and ceremonies, at which she had been wont to rail, were now felt the loss of. Since she could read all day long without interruption, her brain wearied; now that she had no longer her pony,

she wanted to ride; and Lizzie Comline, who had erewhile been pronounced to be the first and best of human beings, the most learned of instructresses, the choicest of companions, was found—oh, how ashamed poor Kate was to own it—to pall upon her taste.

Naturally, she did not understand that, after such fiery sensations as had wrung her tender youthful frame during the past six months, her palate was spoilt; almost any one and anything must seem insipid.

She was beginning to droop ere Evelyn came. His visit wrought a new fever; and more than ever, though from altered motives, she beat against her prison bars after he had left, roaming about by herself, in terror lest her looks should betray to the kind folks who had harboured her the ungrateful, traitorous desire to leave them which anew consumed her, and more silent than ever when in their company, lest some careless word or expression might slip out, and show the direction towards which every thought tended.

That Evelyn would return, was the last thing she expected.

The days came and went as drearily as they

had done before; and on the brilliant autumnal afternoon on which he again cast eyes upon the Muirland Farm, she was mooning among the rocks down on the shore, dreaming of nothing less than of such a visitor.

Sending back the last gig and driver he had hired, when the village two miles east of the farm was reached, Evelyn deposited his portmanteau and fishing gear in safe quarters, to wait till called for, and walked up to see his friends, unceremoniously. If they asked him to remain, well and good; if not, he had the little inn to fall back upon.

On coming in sight of his destination about five o'clock, it seemed scarcely credible that it was the same abode whose forlorn and desolate appearance had struck him so forcibly on first beholding it.

On its rocky promontory,—bathed in a flood of light from the setting sun, whose gorgeous rays blazed over a sweep of glittering, waveless ocean,—supported on the huge boulders beneath, against which not a ripple broke,—the ancient farmhouse seemed no longer pitilessly exposed, bleak, and storm-beaten; it was rather a beauteous tranquil spot, far from the noise

and fury of the madding crowd, a haven of refuge, a peaceful anchorage for the weary and passion-tossed.

He stood still to view the scene.

Behind lay the waste of moorland road whose unending turns and windings had baffled him so cruelly; beyond, and stretching away to the north, was the mountain-range by whose heights he had steered during his hours on the stream; and beneath the bank, he could now plainly perceive the wretched hovel wherein he had first sought shelter.

Transfigured like all beside, it was now a picturesque point in the landscape; its blue smoke, curling gently upwards in a spiral wreath, pleased the eye, and its heather-thatched roof shone ruddy in the sunlight.

Although but a brief fortnight had passed, so often in the interval had Evelyn's thoughts recurred to the spot, that every object had a curious historical charm, as though he were revisiting some hallowed scene after prolonged absence. He caught himself saying, "It was just here," and "It was just there," of the veriest trifles; and as he laid hold of the gate, the opening of which had afforded him the

opportunity for his second inspection of his fair guide, he found himself quite soft on the subject. He really wished she had not been only Kate.

"Hey, Captain! ye're for back again a'ready?" cried a voice at his side, as a head and two huge shoulders slowly rose to view on the other side of the stone wall at his side. "That's richt. I thocht ye wad come—I thocht ye wad come. The wife said 'Na.' Mickle she kenned! Stop a wee, an' I'll come t'ye," clambering cautiously over. "Here's anither sort o' nicht frae yon, ye'll say. Lord, it's grand wather, an it'll haud anither ten days or sae! And ye ken a' aboot us by this time, I'm thinking," he added, with a chuckle. "And what for oor young leddy was sae thrawn t'ye, and wadna hae her name let on, nor naethin'? Eh, it's a pity, sae young and bonnie! But come in, come in; ye're welcome to the Muirland Farm. And ye're come to stay, Captain?"

"If I may hope that your goodwife will put me up for a night, as she did before——"

"For a nicht? Nae mair nor a nicht?" in accents of heartfelt disappointment.

"Oh, if it comes to that——" said Evelyn, laughing; and soon all was arranged. A boy

was despatched for his luggage, and he had nothing further to think about.

"Bide a bit though," cried the farmer, as they were about to enter the house; "see roond this way a meenut, Captain. The gude-wife's no' set her e'e on us, or she'd ha' been oot to bid ye welcome; sae we'll step ayont—jist ben the yard here, and ye'll see oor Chairlie. Eh, he's a bonnie ane! The morn's morn he's awa' for Falkirk—for the Tryst, ye ken. Noo then, sir," pointing to an aperture in the wall from which Chairlie, a fine black bull of the purest Galloway breed, was looking calmly out. "See to him, then—see to him," continued Mr Comline, with joyous pride,—"see to him, sir; eh, Captain? Isna he o' the richt sort — eh, Captain, eh? See to his heed; see to his bonnie birsey broo; see to his wee bits o' lugs! No' a spot upon him frae neck to heel. Losh, I wish ye could see him a'thegither! but we're no' carin' to fash Chairlie, we dinna gang in——"

"Pray don't, then, on my account."

"There's no' a bull in Gallowa that'll beat oor Chairlie, Captain."

"So I should imagine."

With so painstaking a guide, it was easy to admire, and so confident an assertion wanted nothing but an assent; but Evelyn's assent was given with a warmth that could not fail to please, and his ardent acquiescence in his companion's praises left no room for suspicions as to his discretion. It seemed as if he were scarcely less unwilling to quit the subject or the spot than was honest Comline himself. At length, however, they moved a pace or two.

"Now don't let me take you in," said Evelyn, turning resolutely towards the house. "I know I shall find Mrs Comline about the doors; and it is really a shame——" feeling that he would as soon make his way inside alone.

"Ay, ay, she's aboot," replied the farmer, disregarding the latter portion of the sentence, "but that's no' to say she's doin' a' the wark, as was the way when ye cam' oor road last time,—na, na; Lizzie brocht us a lass whae's doin' fine, an' the mistress may sit in her chair noo, I'm tellin' her. An' we'll mak' nae peyvee aboot ye, Captain; ye'll tak' us as we are, as ye did syne. We're aye the same—aye the same. The laird himsel' whiles comes to us i' the winter-

time, when the Castle's shut up, an' he's doun for a week's shootin', for the woodcock an' the heather-bleet. D'ye see yon flows doun by? Thon's the place for baith the twa. Phoo! I hae seen woodcock there when they wasna to be fund or heard o' in ony ither moss for miles roond. There's anither up ayont that's no that bad neither. But ye're for indoors? I'm comin' wi' ye——"

——"No, don't."

"Hoots! what for no?" replied Mr Comline, stoutly. "My wark's done: an' 'deed there's little wark on hand the noo; we're jist puttin' things straicht here an' there i' the backen. It's a gude time o' the year to tak' for bits o' odd jobs that a body lets pass ither whiles; but it'll no' do to leave ower muckle to it neither, as I was tellin' the lads the noo. They're aff for the day, and I was on the road hame mysel' when I fell in wi' you, Captain. An' hoo are a' the family at Carnochan?" with an evident effort at politeness. "They wad be sweer to let ye awa', I'm thinkin'." Then in a lower key, and glancing round in fear of being overheard, "They're a prood thrawn pack that's there, tho' the wife munna hear me sayin' it."

Evelyn laughed heartily.

"Ay, ay," continued the farmer, in high good-humour, "that's what they are. They're no o' your sort, sir—no ane amang them. I'm wae for that bit young thing that's here, a' the same—that I am. It wasna for her ain folks to cast her frae them, be she what she micht; an' gudesakes, for being a wee thing mettlesome! She micht hae kicked the byre to pieces afore I wad hae spurned sae bonny a heifer!"

"Do you think," said Evelyn, lingering, and still looking restlessly round, as he had not ceased to do since entering the farm precincts, —"do you think that she will be glad to see me?"

"Glad here, glad there, she's glad at naethin'. Maybe she'll speak t'ye, maybe she'll no. But I wad tak' nae heed, Captain, but gang your ain gait, and e'en let her be. She kenned whae ye were a' the time,—and see what cam' o't? There's nae sayin' hoo she'll tak' your comin' back, she's been that thowless this bygane week, ——are ye to tell her a' ye ken?" he broke off, abruptly.

"Certainly, I have no excuse for reappearing otherwise—except this,"—pulling out the hand-

kerchief, which had now grown to be an incubus. "Here it is, you see; and you will understand why it comes so. Perhaps your wife will kindly put it right before Miss Newbattle receives it. To tell you the truth, it was hearing how badly your daughter, and my—hum—ah—sister—had been treated at Carnochan, that brought me here. I—I—came to see if I could—could in any way help them."

"Ye did that?" said Mr Comline, stopping short, and digging his stick into the ground. "Ye did that? Then, sir, you are the gentleman I took ye for frae the affset! I thocht I couldna be mista'en. Lord, I *am* prood! Aweel, it's a sair story, an' they'll no' thole to hear it mentioned doun by," looking at the house; "but sae it stan's,—she was chuckit awa' like a bag o' chaff! They had her for a year an' mair, an' aye they were pleased, and she was weel content; an' a' in a gliff cam' word frae her Leddyship, your mither, to bid her bide whaur she was—here at the farm, d'ye see?—an' no' e'en to gang back to pit her bits o' duds thegither! I went mysel' to fetch them—ay, I did. I'd no' hae my ae bairn gang whaur she was lichtlied, ony mair than my Leddy wad hers,

—a hantle less, maybe. Weel, sir, to Carnochan I went—ye mind I tell't ye I had been there,—an' what did I find? A' the place in a lowe! Ane wi' her tale, and t'ither wi' hers; an' the end o't was that I was free to tak' Miss Kate here gin I would, for I had up and said she should gang wi' me an she chose—an' sae here she is. But it's a puir sorrowfu' face I aye see for my pains; she jist whyripes a' the day lang: an' troth, Captain, though nane can cast it up to me that my mind misgi'es me for that day's wark, I wad be blythe, for a' oor sakes, to see your sister mair couthy."

"Where is she now?"

"Whae kens? Up amang the cleughs, maist like. Whiles she'll sit on a stane, doun by the tide there, for a' the warld like a heron; and 'deed she's nae fatter than the craig o' a heron at the dark o' the moon—when they canna see to fin' their meat, ye ken. Whimsies? She's fu' o' whimsies; she doesna ken ae meenute what she'll do the neist, she's that restless and pingin. But I'm wae for her, that I am, puir thing!"

"But where is she?" thought Evelyn, impatiently. "Here we have been hanging about

the doors this half-hour, and—and—somehow I wish I could see her, and be done with it."

The next moment he heard a light step behind.

The farmer had preceded him into the house, and he made a halt unobserved.

Up she came.

Their eyes met, and he had taken her hand ere she had time for more than amazement. She could only stand still, gasp for breath, and flush all over.

"I have come back," said Evelyn, "on purpose to see you, Kate."

## CHAPTER X.

### A MERRY EVENING AT THE MUIRLAND FARM.

"Mirth, admit me of thy crew,
To live with her, and live with thee,
In unreprovèd pleasures free."
—*L'Allegro.*

"No noisy neighbours enter here,
No intermeddling stranger near."
—COTTON.

HE could not have done better. The next moment brought out his rejoicing hostess, escorted by her no less jubilant spouse; and he had to listen, and laugh, and edge in a word as best he might for another ten minutes, during which time Miss Newbattle stood by silent and bewildered, but certainly without any displeasure being manifested on her downcast countenance.

"And here's Lizzie," cried the farmer next, producing the quiet, unremarkable-looking young

woman about whom so much stir had been made, and whom—although he could not have told why, had he been asked—Evelyn now regarded with especial favour. Surely it would have been more natural that he should have viewed Miss Comline, if not with ill-will as the bone of contention, the apple of discord, the person who had wrought mischief which he was there for the express purpose of remedying, —at least with neutral eyes. It was certainly odd that he should shake her so heartily by the hand, and say to himself, "What a sensible, nice-looking, unaffected girl!"

The fact was, he was overflowing with good-humour and spirits, charmed with himself for having given pleasure, which in turn was affording him varied and delightful anticipations; and the innocent governess, who by strict rule could hardly be charged either with the authorship of Kate's dolor or Evelyn's enjoyment, was the object of the latter's unreasoning gratitude. She had brought about the situation, and he did not care how she had done it.

He had not been mistaken in calculating on the reception he should meet with from any one of the party, since the fact that his dark-eyed

sister stood by, instead of slipping past within doors, was as much as he cared for at present; and as to the other three, it was plain that not only was what he had done taken in good part, but that nothing else would have afforded the worthy people equal satisfaction.

Here was the son, the only son, of the proud, painted Jezebel—(poor Lady Olivia! she only used a little pearl-powder and rouge occasionally)—here he was, on the side of the oppressed. Here was an ambassador extraordinary—a mediator unparalleled. My lady herself, suing for pardon at their door, could not have soothed their wounded pride more entirely.

It did not just then occur to any one to imagine that their champion had deserted, as it were, unbeknown to the opposing powers; nor did it occur to him to suppose that they would think he had done anything else. Nothing was said on a subject which could very well wait—which had better, indeed, be kept for a quieter season; and as long as the party was complete, it was felt, by one and all alike, that genial and ordinary topics could alone be introduced. At supper-time the chances of good sport on the burn, which was within half a mile, were dis-

cussed. Evelyn had inspected the water, and had found it low. This had been the only drawback to his good fortune; but he was too much of a sportsman to complain, especially as a good night's rain would, he knew, pull up the stream to its proper pitch, and all would be right.

"And I'm dinged if we hanna rain 'ore mony hoors are gane by," quoth the farmer; "there's a brugh aboot the moon the nicht that we hanna seen this while back, and that betokens an onfa' o' rain at this time o' the year. Hark! it's drifflin a'ready! The Captain is in the nick o' time, an it come na a spate; but o' that, nae man can prophesy."

"A spate?" said Evelyn.

"A rush o' water frae the hills—a flood, sir, a flood. Rain's what we want—that's to say, what *you* want; for it wad be no' that welcome to me. I could stan' it, but I'm no carin' for it; but neither the ta'en nor the t'ither o' us wants to be drooned."

"The burn is close at hand," said Evelyn, looking across the table, and pointedly addressing Miss Newbattle; "is it too rough-walking on the moor for you to come with me to-morrow, provided the water is in trim?"

The silence and expectant looks of the other three made him repent, the moment he had put the question. It was evidently their custom to let the young lady alone, and he thought he could perceive some anxiety lest he should have done the wrong thing in making his suggestion.

She herself was evidently taken by surprise, and hesitated, looking at him as though uncertain what reply to make to a request so unusual.

"Noo then, Missy," said the farmer, encouragingly, "the Captain wants your company. Poohoo, Captain! she minds naethin' o' rough walking—and it's no' that rough, neither. It's just a wheen bogs—saft to the feet; and there's a dyke or twa, but them she'll easy wun ower; and there's a bit path, a sheep-track, a mile or sae up, that'll gie ye a lift on. Oo ay, Missy can gang brawly."

"It'll do her gude," added his wife.

"Say you'll go, dear," whispered Lizzie.

Evelyn wished anew he had not spoken.

"Why, Kate," he said, gaily, though inwardly vexed with himself for being the cause of her confusion, "you must not make a stranger of me. Alice and I have been riding together nearly every day of late; and the little

ones are allowed to go with me in the boat when they have been on their best behaviour. They have all made friends. I want to get to know you, now. If we have good luck, we shall have a jolly day; and if we can't catch trout, we can hunt for blackberries."

"Blackberries? I doot we hanna thae fruit in these pairts," said Mrs Comline, thoughtfully. "There's a wheen blaeberries, but they're on in August; an' there's cranberries, but they're ower by this time tae. There's naethin' but the brambles——"

——"Brambles; that's it. I saw lots when I was here last, and they can't be quite over. We call the branches brambles——"

——"An' we ca' them rossens. There's rossens o' whuns, and rossens o' brambles, and the like."

——"And the berries, blackberries," Evelyn proceeded, bent on accomplishing his purpose, now that he had once mooted it; "and if Kate will only show me whereabouts to look for them, I'll engage we fill the creel one way or other."

He caught a low "Very well," and was satisfied.

Nothing could exceed the cheerfulness and good-humour which prevailed in the homely

party. It seemed characteristic of the place and its inhabitants; and although it is probable that the flow of spirits which made every smile infectious, emanated in the first instance from the guest himself, he was so far from being conscious that such was the case, that it seemed to him as though it were he who was exhilarated and inspirited by their geniality.

He had not felt so merry, he did not know when.

The quaint old-fashioned parlour was quickly set in order as soon as the meal was ended; fresh logs were piled on the fire, and a supply laid down within the fender, that all the dewy damp might be extracted ere they were wanted; a handsome collie stretched himself at full length on the warm rug in front of the hearth; the farmer pulled round his chair, and Mrs Comline brought forth her spinning-wheel.

"I see another wheel," said Evelyn. "Miss Comline, unless you very much want to knit, do let us have a second hum like that your mother is making now; it is a delightful sound, and ought to be doubled."

"But Kate has learned to spin," replied Lizzie, "and she has picked it up so quickly,

that my mother is quite proud of her pupil. Do get out your wheel, Kate, and set to work, you idle girl."

"The very thing," thought Evelyn. "I wanted to set the other two agoing, so as to clear the coast for operations—to have my young friend on my hands; but this is far better. She must and shall speak to me now." He brought forward the wheel, without inquiring whether he was to do so or not; and the awkward blow on the elbow which, in consequence of handling anything so strange, he bestowed on the fair spinner before whom he was hastening to place it, produced a laugh which was a good enough beginning for anything to follow.

He saw that she was not vexed, only shy, and still suffering from embarrassment. That, he would essay to conquer,—and he rather liked the office.

Accordingly, he must have not only the mechanism of the wheel, but the intricacies of the craft explained.

Next, he would try himself: spinning was a very simple matter; it was only just holding long white rolls of wool in one hand, and a thin wisp of thread in the other, and the thing was

done. It was all very fine to call it spinning; the two ends flew round and round, and spun themselves! He was sure he could do it.

"Let him try, Miss Kate," nodded the old dame, peering over her spectacles, and stopping her own whirring machinery to listen. "Best let him tak' your seat, and try for himsel'. Sit ye doun in her chair, Captain; an' gie him a gude lang thread, Missy."

But the longest thread was, as all spinners will imagine, inadequate.

Evelyn really gave his attention to the business in hand; and the more difficult he found it, the harder he tried to overcome,—dashed at the treadle, thrust in the wool, made the spools fly: but all to no purpose. As often as not, the wheel spun round the wrong way, and a weary unreeling had to be gone through before he could get under weigh again: then, to avoid the constant snapping of the thread, he would permit it to grow thicker and thicker, until it resembled a rope in size and toughness, entering only with difficulty its narrow aperture—while at other times it would dwindle, till the end, slipping through his unaccustomed fingers, would get lost in the reel, and, despairing of

finding it again, he would beg to be allowed to rummage out another, which the artful rogue himself would then slily break off for the purpose.

Kate laughed till she cried.

She was very wrong to laugh, he said. She ought to have been grieved for his misfortunes, interested in his progress,—above all, ashamed of herself for not giving him plainer directions. It was all owing to the absence of proper directions that he had not done better; and since he was treated so unkindly, only mocked and jeered at, instead of being helped to anything better, he would do no more.

No, positively he would not try again—he would sit by and see how it was done; and having left the wool and the wires all in a "burrble," according to the unflattering comment of the enchanted Mrs Comline,—who entered into the spirit of the scene from behind her own flying threads,—he yielded his place, said he would now watch the process only, and drawing his former chair up, leaned his arms on the little stand, and watched very closely indeed.

The position was advantageous.

He could question, comment, exact explanations, and look into her face all the time. When a mistake was made, he could help to rectify it, and it was odd that Kate—who had learned to spin for hours evenly and regularly, since it was the only occupation she had cared to take up in the evenings—should, just when she wanted to be at her best, to display her little accomplishment, make mistake upon mistake. He had his laugh at her, as they fumbled together over the troublesome lost ends of thread; and although she did not like to tell him—being unsophisticated—how infinitely better she would have done had he not been by, there is very little doubt that he knew as much. He took note that the little fingers would have known more fully what they were about had they been cooler, quieter.

Mr Comline was ere long, in his own phrase, "dovering" peacefully; his wife presently left off noting anything beyond her own diminishing pile of fleecy "rowans;" and their daughter, with her fingers flying along a stocking which she was knitting rig-and-fur—in itself sufficiently engrossing, as knitters will testify—was still further abstracted from observation by having her eyes fast on a book on her lap. It struck

Evelyn that no piano nor harp playing had ever offered such opportunities for progressing in intimacy with a fair performer, or even for subtle touches of love-making, had love-making been in the question, as did this antiquated art of spinning.

The soft, steady evolutions of the now obedient wheel would not have drowned the tenderest whisper, while the tax upon the eyes and attention of the spinner was or might be made so slight as to leave her at liberty to talk, to smile, to exchange glances,—to do anything that was required.

The room might have been, perchance with advantage, larger; the company might have been more scattered, but, as he now and then lifted his head to observe, they could not have been otherwise more indulgent. While close by,—while Lizzie Comline was on his other side, and her parents only across the hearth, within earshot, able to take note of all that went on,—no one was prying, no one was intruding. He could say and do what he chose.

Before the evening was over, all coldness and restraint had vanished between him and Kate. She was talking freely, eagerly; she was smiling

at his jests, and listening, even stopping her busy hand to listen, when his conversation grew too interesting. Instead of shunning his notice, she seemed pleased by it, encouraged and cheered,—a different creature, in short.

He had no need to look about for aids to chat.

He had been in the humour, to begin with, and afterwards nothing came amiss.

When presently the circle woke up to life again,—when the farmer reopened his eyes, and the gudewife closed her labours, and Lizzie her book,—he could be ready to take up anew the post of general entertainer, and pass the jest round into which all could enter, delighted to find that the solitary exception to the innocent hilarity of the evening was now no longer grave, that not one among them all was dull, gloomy, nor uneasy.

It was enough to kindle animation afresh. He might not catch the point of every phrase, nor the precise meaning of each term or idiom, but he usually contrived to do without interpretation. Lizzie Comline and his sister Kate should not feel that he was in any way holding aloof, that the relations of the one were beyond

the pale of those with whom he could cheerfully associate; and disgusted as he was at the moment, with the folly and heartlessness of his own parent, he told himself repeatedly that this farmer's daughter, however far she might have left hers behind as regarded outward appearances, was fortunate in having one of whom, in all essential points, she needed never to be ashamed.

The evening closed with goodwill on every side; they knelt together as one household before the Giver of all good; and Evelyn, as he held open the door for the two girls to depart by their own staircase, called presently after them to bid them observe the scene without, where the moonbeams on the water, still bright, though heavy rain was grimly pursuant from the south, was worth opening their shutters to see. He was certainly making progress.

The rain came on, as foretold, and just stopped short of the undesired spate.

Nothing could have been better: and as for Kate's promise, it was fulfilled without a word; in truth, she had thought of little else since it had been given; and somewhat intimidating as was the prospect, she would have been hardly

less disappointed than the projector of the scheme himself, if it had had to be given up.

They set forth, assured that the burn would be at its best.

"An' that's as it suld be," commented the old host, as he stood looking after the young figures, whose rapid, springing step soon took them to a distance. "That's what I ne'er thocht to see, neither. Noo, she'il tell him a' her tale, an' he'll hear the richts o' the story. Lord, to think o't! Him that my Leddy hauds sic a wark wi', her grand English son, to turn roond like this and bite her! Her pridefu' state bit to come low—mony's the day I hae said sae; but, my certie, I little thocht it would! They're a braw couple, thae twa, and wad mak' a braw—hoots! what am I thinkin' o'? He's her ain brither, or as like; they'll be fain to think o' naething mair."

The reader is aware, however, that matters did not stand precisely as the oracular Comline supposed, and that even the thrust to her pride, from which he presumed his noble enemy to be suffering, had not as yet been given.

Lady Olivia, knowing nothing of the pair who were so merrily wending their way to the hill

that balmy morning, nor of the chuckle at her expense which the rejoicing farmer had sent after them, was so far from anticipating any blow from such a quarter, that she was more complacent and benign than she had been for some time, and was disposed not only to look upon her lines as having, on the whole—now that she had got rid of her chief tormentor—fallen in pleasant places, but to extend her borders thereof, and that in a way which is of some importance to our story.

In the west wing of Carnochan, up a narrow spiral stair that communicated with itself alone, there was a small, three-cornered turret-chamber, whose oriel window overlooked the lake, and into which the glories of the setting sun for many months in the year nightly penetrated. It was a snug little apartment when reached; but it was so far removed from the other sitting-rooms, that the inconvenience of being out of the way whenever anything happened, or when wanted by the rest of the family, was so much felt, that no one had ever cared to inhabit the triangle—as it was called—but Kate, to whom its very disadvantages endeared it. The not being causelessly interrupted was just what she valued;

and she was so seldom wanted by one or another for any real reason, that she could not care about saving them the trouble of a hunt. Besides, they might reckon on her being there if necessary, since a petition for its sole use had a few years before been granted; and since then its walls had been embellished by her books and pictures, its table by her writing-desk and such of her other possessions as Maidie's rapacity had spared, and its window endeared by the memory of many a musing hour.

The renunciation of this retreat had been an additional grief of heart to the solitary-minded girl when sent forth on her exile, — or, to be strictly correct, the thought of it had come back to her with many pangs after the first tumult of superior emotions had subsided.

At the time, it had scarcely been thought of, but subsequently it had been felt to be a daily loss. She had, at the farm, no place to be alone in; and none but true lovers of solitude can appreciate such a deprivation. If the weather were unfit for her to wander abroad, she must be ever within sight and hearing of all that went on within; she could not withdraw herself and sit up-stairs without Lizzie's kind voice

offering to keep her company. Her little chamber at Carnochan was the chief pleasure she looked forward to regaining when the day of her recall should arrive.

Now it so happened that Lady Olivia, on the morning after her son's departure, having nothing else to do, set forth upon a tour of the house, and, as ill-luck would have it, hit upon Kate's sanctum.

She was aware of its existence—knew, at least, that there was some such place, some little pokey back-den, called by the children Kate's room, or the "triangle;" but neither of these designations had prepared her for a little abode which, at the first glance, seemed ridiculously good for such a purpose. True, the chintzes were worn and faded, and the furniture a collection of refuse odds and ends—but what of this? The whole was harmonious, and the view from the window exquisite.

*This* the lair of that little sharp-clawed tigress? It was really too bad; she felt as if she had been kept out of it, excluded, defrauded of her knowledge of so much enchantment, in that she had never before found her way thither. Before looking round three minutes she was con-

vinced that she was in one of the best rooms in the house, and a servant was summoned to clear away Miss Kate's things, put them in her bedroom, and remove the furniture to the attics.

"I shall," said Lady Olivia, "have a boudoir surpassing Lady Julia's, and as entirely different from, as it excels, any I have ever seen. A most absurd idea it was indeed, to make no use of such an elegant little retreat."

Even to herself she would not say that any feeling of vindictiveness towards the late owner urged her on to take possession; the room was simply being made "no use" of, and if it were absolutely necessary that the young lady must have a sitting-room of her own on her return, another could he found which would equally well answer her purpose.

Not a qualm disturbed her self-exultation over so lucky a discovery, and she announced it to her husband in the presence of his daughters, together with her intentions on the subject, and her ideas as to the patterns of rep and damask, for which she had written without losing a post.

"Kate's room!" whispered Marjorie, loud enough to be heard; Alice pursed up her lips; and Bertha wrote to Kate the next day. It

was something to have such an item of news to communicate; and Bertha, who was herself in the chronic position of an aggrieved one, now looked upon Kate with a fraternal eye, and told her of her wrongs with a plainness of speech which was not intended to soothe nor to lighten the offence.

This was what was going on at Carnochan. Let us now return to the unwitting and blissfully ignorant Kate.

She was having, perhaps, the happiest day her life had ever known. Showers and sunshine succeeded each other overhead, but all was sunshine within. The trout took well in the deep pools below the waterfalls; and she would not be left behind, even when the banks were high and steep, but went down with her fisherman to the very brink. The trees overhung closely, and she could slip from bough to bough, and be drawn at last on to the ledge whither he had preceded her, and whence she could watch, in silent appreciation, the silvery trout pulled out from beneath the very jaws of the falls, laying them afterwards, with her own little fingers, on the grass at the bottom of the creel. That was conceded to her as her part of the day's work.

If she were absolutely forced to remain on the moor above while he descended, the cliff proving altogether untenable for feminine footing, she was anxious and eerie, in a state of excited perturbation for which she had no name, —but directly he rejoined her, all was well: the hours had never passed more quickly.

As for "telling her tale," neither Kate nor Evelyn opened their lips on the subject.

Time enough, he thought, when he should have won her confidence,—when he had seen that timid glance able to face his own, and that ever-ready blush more slow in coming. Then, indeed, he might hope to enter on more delicate matters, but at present he knew better. She was but half tamed.

And so he spent the evening again beside her spinning-wheel; and there was another day on the burn, and yet another lesson in the mysteries of the craft at night, more interesting and engrossing than either which had gone before, and yet nothing had been said of his mission.

"Aweel," said the farmer, to whom a sort of explanation had been made, Kate being out of the room; "tak' your time, Captain—there's nae call to fash yoursel'. Lord, whae suld ken but

yersel'? An' gentry folks is fashious to us wha kenna their ways — lettin' alane that oor bit customer ben the hoose is a wee thing camstairy upo' her ain accoont. Let her alane, —that's the plan: hurry nae man's cattle, sayeth the Proverbs o' Solomon; an' that whilk is sune done, is ill done."

"There'll be nae mair burn-wark for a while though, Captain," he observed, on the re-entrance of Miss Newbattle; "there'll be an even-doun pour the nicht, by the ark i' the cluds I showed ye the noo, and ye'll see what like the water will be the morn! Miss Kate mun tak ye to see the stanes, the cercle—the what-d'ye-ca'-it? Or stop a wee,—there's the A'bey."

The Abbey, however, was the favourite resort of the ladies at Castle Kenrick, and Evelyn hastily declined it. "'Tweel, there's the stanes, then," rejoined Mr Comline, somewhat disappointed; "I'se warrant ye hanna been there, for they're no muckle kenned o'."

"What is that, Kate? Something interesting, I am sure? This country is full of interesting things—either abbeys, or castles, or forts, or caves——"

"Not one of them is this," cried Kate, joy-

ously: her eyes were as bright and her bloom as steady that night as though she had been a mirthful lassie with a heart at ease, and all besides to her mind. "You have just missed saying the right word. You will see, but I won't tell you what you will see——"

"No. Take me."

"If you are sure you care to go?"

"I do indeed care to go."

"Lizzie, you will come; and we must start early, for it is a good walk."

"Mickle ower faur for Lizzie," said her father, drily. "Lizzie's best at hame, forbye. Gang yer ways, Miss Kate, my dear, and here's your brither to see after ye: wow, but it's a new face ye hae on the nicht!"

"You think her walk has done her good," said Evelyn, frankly inspecting the improvement. "I think so too. I wonder, Kate, what they would all have thought of that jump beneath the bridge!"

Throughout the evening they were continually making allusions to their ramble. As they ate the trout, they disputed to which pool one and another had belonged: and even the prospect of another expedition on the following day,

could scarcely make amends for losing the sport and the scenery of the moor.

But all out-of-door projects had to be abandoned when the dawn broke, and it was seen what sort of weather was in store. Hour after hour the clouds emptied themselves in ceaseless torrents, and Evelyn was fain to find variety in a wet ride to the village for the newspaper, and any letters that might chance to be at the post-office. None, of course, would be awaiting himself, but he was diverted to perceive that the one for Miss Newbattle which was put into his hand, was directed in large childish writing, and bore the Kirkcudbright post-mark. It was certainly from Carnochan.

"By the way," he reflected, "this will show my fair Kate that my presence here is unbeknown at headquarters, which will be a good opening for a 'seris conversation,' as Mr Comline calls it. I must find out how matters stand. I must really perform my duty in that respect. This taking her about, and talking nonsense, by way of cheering up her spirits, is all very agreeable; and as long as I am here, I don't know that I wish her to think about anything more: but to leave her behind! No, no; it is not to

be thought of,—she must be back at Carnochan before I am. I could take a run down the Mull, so as to be out of the way, and make all things natural, if I can but bring her to reason. They must come to terms somehow, that's a fact; and I should imagine my young madam won't be in such a hurry to break the peace another time. Poor little thing, she has had a lesson!"

Kate received her letter, and looked at it dubiously.

"From home, is it?" said Evelyn, with the freedom warranted by his position and his knowledge of her affairs. "Did you expect me to bring you that? I am wet through, but I have had a famous ride, and got my paper. It is clear now, Kate; come with me along the shore before the light goes. I won't be five minutes in changing my things."

He was ten, but no one was there when he came down, and at last he went in search of Lizzie, whom he heard in the back regions, and despatched her to see what was the matter.

"I think," said the delegate, when she returned, "that you must excuse Kate to-day, Captain Evelyn. Her letter has rather upset her. Some little annoyance——"

"Indeed?"

"She would rather be left to herself."

"But, my dear Miss Comline, don't you perceive that it is this very being left to herself which is doing your pupil so much harm? She ought to be drawn out of herself, to talk about her troubles. You should make her confide in you——"

——"You forget, Captain Evelyn, that Kate is hardly my *pupil* even now, and at Carnochan I was only permitted to be her occasional companion—to read with her, but not to teach her, nor have any authority over her. Deeply as I am interested in dear Kate, I cannot presume to dictate to her."

"Exactly, Miss Comline; you are in the right, as usual. You are not the person. *I* am. Send her down to me."

## CHAPTER XI.

### A BROTHERLY ADMONITION.

"Lay aside life-harming heaviness,
And cultivate a cheerful disposition."
—*Richard II.*

Screening her face from observation as well as she could, and wrapped in the old shawl she had worn on the occasion of their first meeting, Kate obeyed the second summons. He could see at a glance that she had been weeping passionately, and that it was no time to affect a jaunty ignorance, nor to greet her with the playful reproach that might have suited another mood.

They walked in silence down the little pathway to the shore; and even when there, it was only an occasional comment on the tide, the sky, or the overhanging cliffs, which passed between them for a considerable time.

At length, having stumbled along to a good

distance, and feeling confident of not being interrupted, Evelyn felt it was as well to speak.

"Sit down, Kate; I have a great deal to say, and I am sure that you will now allow me to say it. Here is a cleft in the rock, quite dry,—come. I am so sorry you got that letter," he added, in his kindest tones.

"Thank you—thank you."

"Will you tell me about it?"

"I am afraid you would not understand; but——"

"Well?"

A long pause.

Then came the outburst. "They never mean to have me back again,—they mean to keep me away all my life—all my life. My room, my own little room, that papa gave me for my very, very own, has been taken from me, and all my things put away—and—and—— She had no right to do it—no *right* to do it. Oh, you don't know the things she does, and I can't tell you, because she is your mother——"

"You may tell me," said Evelyn, gently, "anything. Say what you please; and believe me, Kate, that if I can help you I will."

"I don't think you can," sorrowfully.

"Is it about this room that you heard to-day?"

"Yes. Bertha wrote. Bertha says it is all settled," — sobbing afresh, — "and that papa never said a word. It is to be Lady Olivia's boudoir—my own little room! She never asked any one; she never told papa till the thing was done: she had given orders to have it cleared first; and then she had written for new furniture to put in it. Oh, how dared she? It was a shame, a shame. The room was *mine;* and to go and steal it when I was away——"

"It was as shabby a trick as I ever heard of," acknowledged Evelyn, candidly; "but I would not take it so to heart, if I were you. That won't do any good, you know. Come, don't cry. You speak to your father; and if Lady Olivia won't disgorge this particular domain, he'll give you another you'll like as well——"

——"There is not another room in the house I would care to have."

He smiled.

"If you knew," continued Kate, struggling for breath and speech, "what—what—it was to me! It was the only place I was ever happy in. No one could come to me there, and—and——"

illogically, "I see what it all means. I am not to go home again—never to go home again; never to be taken away from here——"

"My dear child, you are mistaken altogether. You have taken a mere fancy into your head. It was a cruel thing to do to send you here, poor little thing!" putting his hand on her shoulder,—"to fret among these solitudes; but I came on purpose to deliver you."

"No, no; you did not. I see by this letter that you did not. Nobody sent you: oh, why did you come?"

"Are you sorry I came?"

"Why did you come?" continued Kate, as though she hardly knew what she was saying. "I know you meant to be kind, and it is not your fault; but you had better have left me alone. If you had stayed there, it would have been far better: you have done me no good."

"Now," said Evelyn, decidedly, — "now, Kate, you are going to be a good girl: dry your eyes, and talk sense. You know very well that you have merely to say you are sorry, and mean to behave better in future, and a few proper little speeches of that kind, and you can come out of your corner to-morrow. Don't look

so determined over it: wait a minute, and let us talk it over quietly. You and my mother don't get on; that I understand very well. But it appears that you were not an entirely harmonious family party even before Lady Olivia's day. I heard more than one hint dropped about a certain 'naughty Kate' that had no reference to the step-mother."

"By whom? By Alice?" quickly.

"I wonder if it is fair to say? But my chief informant was the blue-eyed fairy."

"Was it Maidie?" exclaimed Kate, in such surprise and evident mortification that Evelyn, who had seen himself in a scrape, and had pitched upon the child, judging that her infantile volubility would be less likely to aggrieve than the tale-telling of an older person, perceived at once the fresh error he had fallen into.

"Well, it was Maidie," he said, however. "Maidie is not a very formidable traitor, is she? I think she had a kind of lurking affection even for the 'naughty Kate,' at whose name she shook her head."

"Maidie!" said her sister, as though deeply hurt. "My little Maidie!"

"You are very fond of your little sister?"

She had turned her head away.

("I must bring this to bear," thought Evelyn. "It is a good idea to work upon.")

At last, and bit by bit, it all came out; nothing—so far as the narrator knew at least—being kept back or distorted from the truth; but to an unbiassed ear, it was plain that a jaundiced view of every circumstance, of every trifling word and deed, had been involuntarily taken; that a naturally high spirit, checked, curbed, and thwarted on every hand—chafed by contact with grosser natures, with all its purest affections repressed, and its noblest aspirations jeered at—had at length proved a soil in which the root of bitterness had taken the place of every tender blossom.

To Evelyn, accustomed as he was to the sunny side of life, to floating along its glittering surface, without a thought of deep and troubled waters, there was something in such a revelation that was not only unintelligible, but positively appalling; and had the voice which made it been one degree less feminine, and the form by his side been less fragile and willow-like, bending beneath the force of its own vehemence, he would probably have repented of his knight-errantry, and

foresworn all further efforts on behalf of Kate Newbattle.

As it was, he listened with a comical mixture of sympathy and consternation.

What in the world could any one do for this hare-brained girl, unstrung in her nerves, extravagant in her passions, and possessed of but one idea?

He had had no notion of anything so bad as this. How was it likely that even a temporary truce should be patched up between the opposing forces, when insubordination and hatred—yes, hatred was the word,—two stubborn things to deal with,—seemed to have entwined themselves around every fibre of the foolish child's nature? To look at her, who could have believed it? The face, the beautiful face, that had been such a pleasure to behold a few hours before, was now clouded like the angry sky overhead, every feature distorted by the storm which had broken forth, and which had left all disordered behind. Her whole frame was trembling. It was a—a pretty kettle of fish altogether.

One thing was obvious: Kate must be soothed and quieted, but she must also be brought down a peg.

Such gesticulation, such flashing of eyes and torrents of eloquence, were altogether disturbing and embarrassing; and though no doubt it was very funny, he did not find himself inclined to laugh.

He was fairly silenced, in short, whilst thus ruminating; and as it turned out, silence was the thing of all others most likely to have a beneficial effect upon the excited young lady. Her feelings having uninterrupted vent, they carried her to the end of her tether pretty smartly, and shame crept in. An uneasy sense of having gone too far began to show itself. Her tone said plainly, "Comfort me."

Evelyn, however, took no notice.

She stole a glance round. He was stolidly gazing at the grey waste of rolling billows in front, as though he intended to say no more after all he had heard; and there was time for anxiety and a new distress to awake in her bosom ere he looked round, looked into her face, and smiled.

"And now," said he, "prepare for a lecture."

"Oh yes," with a sigh of relief.

"You are a strange girl, Kate; and you are only seventeen——"

——"How did you know that?"

"Don't interrupt the court; I know you are. Seventeen thinks a great deal of nonsense," continued Evelyn, with the sententiousness of eight-and-twenty; "and a certain seventeen, not two miles off, has—she must excuse me for saying so—shown a peculiar aptitude for the gift."

"You take it in that way?" exclaimed Kate, bitterly. "Then I have no friend left."

"May I take it," said Evelyn, "more seriously? May I"—putting his hand on hers, but less affectionately than impressively—"speak as one who is many years older, who has seen a good deal of the world, and who—pshaw!—I can't be grandiloquent. But it is not *worth it*, Kate. Believe me, my dear Kate, it is not *worth* all this."

"Worth what?" said Kate, with some natural bewilderment. "I don't understand."

"They say at Carnochan that you are wayward and self-willed. *You* see yourself injured and ill-treated. Shall I tell you what *I* see?"

"Yes," rather faintly.

"I see, Kate, a motherless girl——"

——"And homeless."

"No, not homeless, dear; don't talk nonsense.

Now, I must begin over again; and you spoilt the rounded period besides. I am really in earnest now, Kate; so listen. If you are motherless, you have a kind and most indulgent father. If your home be not all that you wish, it is beautiful and comfortable. If you do not find your sisters much of companions, I'm sure you love them—*one* of them very dearly. Now tell me, have you ever set yourself to see if there be nothing in *you*——" he stopped.

"Well?"

"If your home be unhappy, have you ever tried to make it otherwise?"

No answer.

"If they speak unkindly of you behind your back, have you kind thoughts of them?"

No answer.

"From all I have heard on both sides," continued Evelyn, slowly and clearly, "I have no hesitation in saying which I think to be most—not alone—but chiefly to blame. Do you know, Kate, which it is?"

"*Me?*"

"You." . . . . . .

He could not think afterwards how he had had the courage to say it: it had only been by

keeping his eyes steadfastly the other way that he had been able to speak the word, and having spoken, to allow it to stand.

But the truth was, that Evelyn, like most soft-hearted people, when ground up to the point, could be tolerably severe; driven to break the ice by dire necessity, when once fairly in for it, he would not trust himself to look back; and, resolved in this instance to push his valour *à l'outrance*, he pronounced the last few sentences in a slow, cold manner, that sank like lead into the heart of his auditor.

It was some minutes before she could steady herself sufficiently to utter another syllable; but at length Pride summoned Resolution, and by their joint aid she rose, saying, "I daresay you are right; but that being the case, there is no more to be said. I—I think I will find my own way home."

"You are offended, Kate, and not justly," said Evelyn, with warmth. "You told me I was to speak; I warned you I should not flatter; and now you are angry because you have heard the truth!"

She stood still. "The truth," she repeated, as if to herself. "The truth."

"Yes, the truth. Sit down again, my dear little sister," he continued, more gently, "and think it over for yourself. You say that one and all are against you? I don't allow that, mind; but still, suppose they are? Is it likely that a whole lot of people would be against one, if she were not in fault—pretty much in fault—eh, Kate? It stands to reason, don't you see?"

"They have made me what I am."

"Why should you not be more like them?"

"Because I dislike and despise them," *con fuoco*.

"Oh, Kate!"

"I do, I do; I would not be like Lady Olivia or—or Alice for the world. Even papa—he is not unkind, but he is not what you think; he does not really care for us; he will not trouble himself nor put himself out of his way for any one of us: anybody may do and say what they like, so long as they do not interfere with him. When I tried to show him how things were going wrong, he called me a mischief-maker! All papa cares for is his own ease and comfort. Would you have me like him?"

"I think your father's ease and comfort ought to be a matter of concern to you."

"That is begging the question."

"Eh?" said Evelyn, opening his eyes. Clearly he must not let her take the initiative in this way.

"When people are mean, and selfish, and untruthful, you wish me to imitate them?"

"I retract the words," said Evelyn, looking her full in the face.

Retract the words! No power on earth would have made Kate own to retracting one of her words in the heat of combat. She was staggered by the novelty of such an experience.

"I retract," repeated her companion, "and confess that I was wrong, and you are right. I would not wish you to resemble any one of those you named any more than you would wish it yourself. I would not be more willing to see you take their shape than you would yourself. You are superior to them in every way but one. —Kate, why have you such a temper?"

It was easy to get on after that. Throughout all the harangue which followed—and she had it pretty roundly from him too—she could not for a moment lose sight of the tenor of that last sentence, and he was allowed to say what he chose of her temper. He spoke long, and he

spoke well, for he liked—as who would not have done?—the pleasant task. An occasional faint remonstrance at the outset only gave additional significance to her subsequent silent acquiescence; and the piteousness of the stag-like eyes, which seemed to implore forbearance, added zest to the pleasure of feeling it was in his own they sought consolation.

At length it was agreed upon that he should go back to Carnochan on the following day, and, if he found an opening, tender such submission from the rebel as might lead to her recall. If no opportunity offered, he was to come back to the Farm, in which case she pledged herself to write. All things considered, it was perhaps as well that he should go at once; but he was perhaps a very little nettled to find that his departure was urged. He thought he had done very well, and would have stayed a few days longer with her, if Kate had pressed him.

As to his interceding for her personally, he had his doubts as to how that would work. He would go, but a voice within whispered that he would certainly return.

Lady Olivia was charmed to receive her darling back on the next evening; and being full of

her new toy, and not expecting anything amusing from the experiences of a fishing tour, he found it easy to escape curiosity, or rather there was none to elude. He was told at once about the boudoir, and conducted to it forthwith.

It was now bare, swept, and clean, awaiting its new plenishing.

"Shall I carpet the floor all round, Rupert?" inquired his mother, "or be content with only a bit of Turkey in the centre? Lady Julia Throckmorton had nothing but rugs, and the effect was unique; but the shape of this room would hardly suit rugs. It is odd, is it not? I never saw a three-walled room before; did you?"

"Not that I am aware of."

He had next to go to the window to view the lake, and the place where the vista was to be opened up, in order to show the distant mountains.

"But after all, it is the curious, romantic little perch itself that is so charming," cried its new possessor. "A little ordinary room may with pains be dressed up to look very nice, but this is so distinctive, so uncommon—all by itself up here, there is no limit to what it might be."

"It is in an awfully out-of-the-way place,

ma'am, if you mean that. What a place to get at every day of your life!"

"My dear boy!"

"Who is to find you out, up here among all the bedrooms? A boudoir ought not to be among a lot of bedrooms."

"Who is to know they are bedrooms?"

"What else could they be?"

"At any rate, it is not *among* them; it cannot be called being among them, to be at the very far end of the gallery. I think its dear little retired position is one of its chief charms."

"A dear little retired position, certainly!" He could think of nothing else to say, but completed the sentence with an ironical laugh.

"But, my dear Rupert——" Lady Olivia was evidently disturbed. She could not understand his picking holes; it was unlike him to damp any plan; and when called upon to say a thing was right, she had always reckoned on his doing so. Not having so far had the sympathy of any one but her quiescent husband,—who wanted to fell some timber, as it happened, and contrived that his doing so should open up his lady's vista at the same time,—she had reckoned on the interest of her son, and here was Rupert only speak-

ing to find fault! She did not so much mind his standing in silence looking out of the window while she spoke, but for him not to agree at the end was very bad. At length he roused himself. "Well," he said, "you will not expect to see me here much, so I need not mind. I shall come to you in the library, or the drawing-room——"

——"But I am not going to sit in the library or the drawing-room," protested Lady Olivia, almost in tears. "I mean to be found here, in my own boudoir, by any one who wants me. I have written to Howard's for a chair like your own at Evelyn Towers, on purpose for you, Rupert. It is to be placed there, just where you will catch the view. No one else is to use it——"

——"It will not be worn out soon, then. Thank you, ma'am, for the chair, but it had better be placed somewhere else." To hear Lady Olivia descanting on this and that, doing the honours of the window, the fireplace, and the door, exulting in the domain she had taken alike by force and fraud, enraged him till he hardly knew what he said. In that room he could see only Kate; and her large, full, swimming eye seemed to rise before him whichever way he turned.

Even in being there at all, and in listening to his mother, he felt a coward and a traitor.

"How very——" began Lady Olivia, plaintively.

"What?"

"Unkind."

"Unkind? I don't see that. The room is for you, not me. You will be quite happy here without me."

"Indeed, Rupert, you know better. If you take it so——" She looked round disconsolately. "I had better, perhaps——"

He held his breath — recollected himself, and affected to yawn. "I think I'll go down now," he said. "I promised Alice to go round to the stables and look at her pony's knee."

"Always Alice! Do wait a minute and see about this room——"

"Holloa! There she is. All right, Alice," calling from the window, "I'll be down directly. Well now, ma'am, what do you want me to see?" pressing the enemy sore.

"If I were — *were* to take another apartment——"

"Well?"

"Are you sure, quite sure, that you would make it worth my while?"

"Can't say, ma'am—that is for you to decide."

"Would you be prevailed upon to spend some little portion of your time with your poor mother, who sees so little of you, if she followed your advice, and gave up her own way for yours in this instance?"

Her son laughed unpleasantly.

"Why do you laugh like that?" demanded Lady Olivia, more quickly.

"Because you are absurd, ma'am. What do you mean by my way? I have no way. I tell you what I think—that you are making a mess of the matter. But it is no affair of mine; please yourself."

Could Kate have heard the mentor who had been so severe on her undutifulness as a child speaking thus, it is to be feared his counsels would have been shorn of half their value.

"And now I really must go," continued the young man, turning to the door. "And you must decide for yourself, for I have only one thing to say—that you had better decide to inhabit a more accessible region, if you *do* care

for my company; for if you stay here"—with increased emphasis—"you need not expect that I shall ever again set foot within this doorway!"

"Extraordinary!" murmured Lady Olivia, as the door closed. "What prejudices people do take! What could have set him against this charming little abode? Inaccessible? I don't see that at all. Perhaps it is a little inaccessible; but to call it 'among the bedrooms!' A boudoir may be anywhere—anywhere. Such a cosy nest as I could have made this! It looked quite snug, with even Kate's untidy things all about; but as I would have had it,—oh, it is a pity!"

Of course she gave in, however.

Evelyn was not to be found until evening, but then he had the assurance of his success from her own lips. He seemed pleased for the moment, but there was no permanent improvement in a mood which was incomprehensible, and which she could hardly ever remember to have witnessed before. She coaxed him, hung upon him, fidgeted round him; was by turns sure he was tired or hungry—and finally settled on the idea that his head ached.

She felt that he found the house dull and the evening long, that he did not hear a word of Alice's songs or her own conversation, and—what vexed her more than all besides — that his humour was observed by all. That they should see her neglected was provoking indeed.

Gradually she grew moody herself, packed Bertha off to bed before her time, and begged Alice to shut the piano. The piano or Alice's voice was out of tune, she protested she could not tell which, but they were not together. What a pity it was that Mr Newbattle would sleep in that way after dinner ; she was sure it was bad for him—unwholesome, unrefreshing. How unsociable of dear Rupert to read to himself the whole evening. Would he not at least let them share his pleasure by reading aloud ? They all knew the book, could take him up at any point, if he would only begin. It was too plain it was not for her own delectation she made the request.

However, he begged off, and to hide his absent-mindedness, still affected study till the welcome hour of breaking up arrived.

For the next ten days matters went on much the same.

In vain did Lady Olivia, who concluded that

her son pined for noise and company, endeavour industriously to collect such guests as might be induced to favour a quiet Scotch country-house in the last days of October. She was nice in her choice, and those she desired to have would not come.

Day after day she assured her dolorous guest that things would brighten, that any post might bring acceptations of her invitations, and that he need not fear that they should be by themselves much longer; but to no purpose. She could not fulfil her predictions, and to this she attributed the weight upon Evelyn's spirits.

He seemed to drag through each day.

He idled, and lounged, and hung about the doors without any apparent object for hours together, and she expected every morning to hear that he could stand the stagnation no longer.

At length the anticipated words were spoken, he bade them "Good-bye," and could not say when he should next see them again.

The evening of the same day the little party at the Muirland Farm were startled by a step in the passage, just as the farmer was replacing on its shelf the large old Family Bible which was used at evening worship.

"See wha's at the door, Lizzie," said he; "and, mind you, the door suld hae been steekit at this hoor o' the nicht,—and Hallowe'en nicht tae, when a' the folks are stravagin up and doun."

"Hey!—wha's yon? *Captain Evelyn?*" as the latch was lifted ere Lizzie could cross the floor, and there stood in the doorway a laughing, handsome face.

They were round him in a moment, exclaiming, questioning, wondering, and welcoming, as though he had been their own son and brother.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THREE, FOUR, FIVE DAYS PASSED.

"O days remembered well! remembered all!
The bitter-sweet, the honey, and the gall.
Those garden rambles in the dusky light,
Those trees so shady, and that moon so bright.
And then the hopes that came, and then were gone,
Quick as the clouds beneath that moon passed on."

—CRABBE.

"AN' this on Hallowe'en nicht!" cried the farmer. "An' we that wadna gang a step to keep it, though twa or three's been in to bid us! I tell ye, Captain, that the gudewife and me were fain to hae oor nuts to crack, and oor apples to roast, as we did lang syne, for a' we're auld and oor day's gane by; but no a hait could we get either o' thae twa young leddies to fin' it worth their while! E'en let them be, quo' I, but it's an unco thing to sit and hear naethin' but the sough o' the wund owerheed on Auld

Hallowe'en nicht. Aiblins they'll think the same 'ore the nicht's done," slily.

"Of course they will. Here have I walked thirty miles to keep it. I am ready to begin——"

"No till you've had your supper, sir; a hungry man's no fit for junketin'. Lizzie," continued her mother,—but Lizzie had already slipped away, on hospitable thoughts intent. "She'll see to't," said Mrs Comline, contentedly subsiding on the discovery.

"Thairty miles! A' the road frae Carnochan, that is," said the farmer. "Ay, ay, he'll hae been thinkin' mair o' his supper than o' ony auld-warld daffin' as he cam' trampin' ower the Moss o' Glenkens, I'se warrant him. It's a weary lang tramp, yon."

"To tell you the truth," said Evelyn, looking up with a glowing eye, "I thought of neither. I could think of nothing else than the poet's glorious 'Scots wha hae,' that found its birth upon that barren moor, and of Kate's voice repeating it. I had a fall in consequence, Kate," turning to her; "I came down among some wet stones while I stood by a stream that reminded me of ours here, hearkening to

your 'Let him turn and flee.' You haunted me cruelly all through the Moss; but as you have allowed me to land here at last, I'll forgive you."

"There's a glitt upon thae burn-stanes that's dangerous," observed Mr Comline. "Ye micht hae hurt yersel'."

"If I had, my spirit would still have found its way to the Muirland Farm. Dead or drowned, as they say, I would have kept the tryst I had promised myself to-night. 'Rain, or hail, or fire, or snow' should not have hindered me."

"And glad we are, sir, to see ye—and sae sune forbye."

The worthy farmer thought such haste must surely bode good news.

"Soon?" replied Evelyn. "Do you call it soon? The past ten days have seemed to me the longest I ever endured. I have not come too soon, have I, Kate?"

"'Deed no," cried the tender-hearted Mrs Comline, shocked that he should even think of such a thing. "Come ower sune! Wi'oot it's to tak' frae us oor Missy, there's nae ither way he could come ower sune—is there, Miss Kate?

Eh, my dear, you're rosy red! But gif ye hae ony messages, Captain, they'll keep. Maybe we'll no be sae blythe to hear them as we micht, shame on me that I suld say sae, for a sair thing it is to——"

——"Yes, yes," said Evelyn, hurriedly. "You are right—perfectly right. We'll talk about those matters by-and-by. How is the burn, Kate? And is there a 'brugh about the moon' to-night, farmer?"

The farmer laughed. "Neither brugh nor moon," he said. "But ye'll no need t'ane nor t'ither. The burn's full, and the wife's just weary-in' for a bonnie troot to put i' the pan. Ye'll no' hae mony mair days, though; the fushin's maist ower for the season. Come ower sune, quo' he? I ken what she's sayin'," indicating his gude-wife with his forefinger. "'Come ower sune? The Captain mun be o' anither pirn afore he could come ower sune, gang whaur he may.' Ay, ay, sir; welcome, welcome. And as for the water, did ye no' hear the noise o' the falls as ye cam' by? They hae been a-rummelin' and whummelin' these twa days, till I'm deaved with their dirdums."

"Is my rod in order, Kate?"

"In order, Captain? Ye may tak' yer aith o' that," said Mr Comline, who had got into the habit of answering for the party generally. "It's been reeled, an' unreeled, an' rubbit,—ta'en doun and putten up again,—and I dinna ken a' what! Ilka day it bit to hae something done at it. Tak' my advice, sir, and leavena the keepin' o' a gude troot-rod to be the ploy o' a young leddy anither time. Ha, ha, ha!"

"I have not spoilt it—indeed I have not," protested Kate. "Mr Comline does not know what he is talking about," saucily. "Mrs Comline showed me how to polish up the brass, and I spread the line to dry in the sun, and that was all. You will find it quite right to-morrow, Rupert." He had taught her to say his name, and it now came out quite easily, in the pleasantry of the moment.

"If I do not," said Rupert, with a laugh of intelligence, "it will not have been Kate's fault. She took such care of my watch——"

"Oh, for shame!"

"Ay, ay, we heerd o' that," cried the farmer, rubbing his knees in ecstasy,—"we heerd o' that, Captain. Lord, to think o' a gude gowd watch lyin' at the bottom o' the burn!

'Twas weel it was whaur it glinted i' the sun, or ye micht ne'er hae seen its face mair—or been drooned seekin' it, maist like. It's nane the better for its doukin', I'll daur to say, either."

"Well, no. It hasn't gone since——"

"Gudesakes! No gaen since!"

"That does not signify. Here the time flies—I am glad not to know how fast; at Carnochan it drags—I am glad not to know how slowly." The last sentence was for one ear alone.

He had Kate all to himself the next day, and was obliged to own that in her cause he had done nothing. Her sitting-room certainly had been regained, but such a trifle was made light of; he owned—he did not mince matters—but owned honestly that he had not advanced her interests a step. It might almost have seemed as if a little more reticence might have been practised, as if he needed not to have reiterated his conviction that there was no relenting on the part of the oppressor; but if so, his companion showed no signs of finding fault with that, or with anything else he said or did. She gave the subject the go-by. Yes; she, who

only a week or two previously could not think, and could scarcely speak of any other, now dismissed it without a sigh; nor did he find her a whit less lively and light-hearted, after cutting down all her hopes, than she had been before. To a bystander the whole would have been inexplicable.

The two went off to other topics which had been started and partially discussed on his last visit, and which it seemed one at least, if not both, had been thinking over ever since. This recluse of seventeen had read and reflected on many points whereof her companion was absolutely ignorant; and the pleasure it evidently afforded her to be allowed to open out her mind on these—to find, in her so-called brother, an answering, responsive mind, and to be drawn on and encouraged, instead of being chidden and laughed at—gave alike to herself and her conversation a fresh charm in Evelyn's eyes. She knew nothing of the world, but she was learned in other lore. She recited to him, with an enthusiasm that was as novel as it was bewitching, poetic pieces, phantasies, dramatic scenes; and whenever a noble or heart-stirring sentiment entered in, it was delightful to witness the play

of her features, and to hear the tremors of her voice. She was a born actress, he told her. He had said the same before, and had bidden her have some more such recitations ready for him when next he should appear,—which command, we may be sure, was not disobeyed.

Each day fresh stores were unrolled. When they came down from the hill, he would loiter with her about the shore, or along the straggling overgrown walks of the old-fashioned garden; and each day found him less and less inclined to quit the wild, isolated spot.

No one said a word. "For if onything comes o't after a'," whispered Mr Comline, with a gigantic attempt at solemnity, "I for ane wad say it was the Lord's judgment."

All now understood that the present attempt at a reconciliation had failed; and although their faith in Evelyn's powers as a mediator might on this account be somewhat shaken, their confidence in his having done what he could was such, that they only sought to heap more attentions and more hospitality than ever on his head, in token that they in no wise took to heart his want of success. They were also not a little proud of their visitor. It was something to

harbour a prince, as it were, from the ranks of the enemy.

And then he was no trouble, needed no looking after.

The whole day long he was out with their other visitor; at evening he joined and was the life of their homely repast; and afterwards he hung over his "sister's" wheel till bedtime. Then he had his pipe, and turned in, like a respectable, steady-going, reasonable young gentleman. As long as he was content, they could not but be proud and happy.

Three, four, five days passed.

Evelyn was in the orchard one evening with Kate, in the soft cloudy dusk, and they were picking up the apples which had fallen from the trees, whilst the gulls walked about among the upturned potato-roots, when a little incident occurred. It was a mere nothing—she wished she could give over thinking of it afterwards. It was only that, finding among the long tendrils of the raspberry-bushes a poor little rose-tree of a common kind with one half-blown bud upon it, she had stooped to twist the latter off, and with the usual remark about its being the "last rose of summer," had tendered it to Evelyn.

On taking it he had looked at her—and she could not tell what that look signified.

She had felt hot and foolish at the moment, and the look kept recurring to her memory from time to time.

Some hours afterwards, he took the little rose out of his button-hole and laid it on the stand of her spinning-wheel, while with infinite pains and care he cut down a piece of cardboard from which she had unwound some of her yarn, and folded it into the shape of a book; between its pages was then placed the China rose-bud; and finally, to keep all straight, a hole was bored on each side—unluckily, good Mrs Comline had left her best scissors within reach—and a piece of the wool Kate was spinning at the moment was broken off for him by her, at his desire, and was drawn through and tied in a knot at the back. When all was complete, he surveyed his work complacently, took out a pencil to write something outside, and put the whole in his pocket. What could it mean?

His hand seemed to touch hers more frequently than usual as he took his nightly lesson, and yet he did not progress the better for it; and then at parting he called her to the

window, and standing behind her there, having thrown back the cumbrous shutters for a moment, bade her watch the sails that were making their way southwards one after another, bowing up and down on the waves as they passed.

She drew a sigh as she looked.

"What is that for, Kate?"

"On they go," said Kate, dreamily—"on and on. No rest, no staying still, no quiet. They toss and toss——"

"Well, they toss into harbour at last."

"Or founder on the rocks."

"How sadly you speak! You are thinking that your little bark has foundered somehow? Eh, was that not it? Never fear; she will spread her sail and skim away over the waters yet. She only needs a consort to take her under convoy. Look, do you see those two?—those are partners; they go always together; it is by far the best way. Don't you think so? What? Oh, good night, then."

"Kate, I have been thinking over a plan," said her brother the next day,—it was wet and windy, and he had been out by himself in the morning. "I have been thinking over a plan; shall I tell you what it is?"

"Perhaps it is the same as mine," said Kate, brightly. "I have been thinking over a plan too, Rupert. How strange! Perhaps they will turn out to be the same."

"Perhaps," said Rupert, with rather a peculiar smile. "Your turn is first, so begin."

"Is it about Maidie?"

"About Maidie! Well," after a moment's pause of surprise—"well, go on. What about Maidie?"

"You told me that Lady Olivia said that she had been ordered sea air. Now, why should they all go off to Brighton—such a long, long way—just because Maidie needs sea air? Here is the most beautiful, the most delightful sea air in the world. Oh, Rupert, *do* you think you could get them to send Maidie here to me? I would take such care of her—indeed I would. And I would go on with her lessons. Mademoiselle Pierrepoint might mark out what she was to learn, and—and——"

"And you would be content to remain at the farm?"

"Yes, indeed, as long as they choose, if I had Maidie. I am going to write as I promised, you know,"—faltering a little,—"but perhaps

you would suggest this for me? I could not do it for myself."

"And this is your plan?"

"You don't speak as if you thought it a good one; but if you are afraid that Mr and Mrs Comline might not like it, I am sure you need not be. They are very rich, Rupert; they have plenty of money; and Maidie would be a perfect delight to them. She is such a dear little thing. I would not have asked them to have Bertha; Bertha would not have done here at all; but Maidie would be no trouble, and she would be so happy——"

——"And you would be happy too?"

"Happy? I should be as happy as the day is long. This dear old place, with its rocks and waves and sea-birds—I love it so much——"

"I had no idea of that. I rather gathered you were pining here when first I came. Carnochan was all in all then,—or I was very dull of apprehension."

"I—I have got used to it," panting a little under his eye; "it has seemed more homelike lately."

"You underrated your blessings until I came to point them out? Now to my mind this old

farmhouse on the cliff, with its ruined orchard and battered-down trees, this curious out-of-the-world region, is the most perfect place to winter in I ever saw. There are the marshes above for snipe and woodcock, and the little tarn beyond for teal—Brewster is off for the season, so anybody could get leave to shoot—besides all sorts of stray birds about the shore; and there are the herring to go after,—by the way, I must find out when those boats go out again—it would be rare sport when the takes are good; and the sparlings—I should go after the sparlings too—they are all about those sandy banks."

"Yes, yes; I understand. It is not the old orchard and the battered-down trees that are the attraction; it is the shooting and fishing."

He did not altogether dispute the charge; good sport certainly did enhance the charms of every locality,—but still he liked the farm. Would she come for a walk along the cliffs?

She had never yet shown him the hermit's cave, and he had been promised a sight of that curiosity every day. Although it was showery, he knew she would not mind a wetting; the tide was up, and everything was propitious.

As they walked along she was full of her new

plan—so full indeed, that it escaped her notice how completely she had the conversation in her own hands. Beyond a good-natured remark, designed to draw her on, Evelyn neither encouraged the idea nor threw cold water on it. She could not gain his opinion.

She had his hand, his eye, his care over every stile, or streamlet finding its way oceanwards; but directly she resumed her monologue he remained impassive, and the expression with which he heard her was inscrutable.

His own scheme, he declared, could wait; he would disclose it presently.

At length they descended to the side of the roaring surge.

The tide was at its height, and more than once during their walk they had paused to admire the flying spray which shot into the air from unseen breakers beneath; and now, on a level with the water, and standing as they did on a headland jutting out sharply into the midst of the billows, they could behold on both sides miles and miles of the foaming sea-line.

The heavens—which, heavily clouded, formed a dark background for the white wings of tern and sea-gulls—just lifted above the wild horizon;

the soft south wind which blew in their faces, brought with it a fresh scent of weed and sea-moss; and to Evelyn, who was susceptible to such influences, no perfume had ever seemed so fragrant, no scene so striking or romantic.

He spoke at last.

"I could live and die here," he exclaimed. "Kate, you are right. The crowded haunts of men are a delusion and a snare. Nothing we find there can compete with what Nature offers us in a sight like this. Dear Kate, how shall I thank you for bringing me such happiness? I owe you a debt of gratitude which I long to repay." He bent over her as he spoke, and, not until after a short pause, drew up his head again.

When at length he did, it was seen that the uncovered face beneath was crimson from brow to lip. He had kissed her; and confused and agitated as she was by such a caress, she could not at the moment know how to meet it.

"Forgive me," said Evelyn, as though in surprise. "I have offended you?" (His tone expressed, "But why should you be offended? It was surely a natural and simple thing to do. No harm was meant.")

Nevertheless, although comprehending what was thus implied, she could only faintly stammer a denial.

"But why, then, did you blush so deeply?"

"I—I am not used to it."

"Never grow used to it then, Kate. Kisses on a phlegmatic cheek are not worth a *sou* as compared to one on this"—touching it again. "Now tell me," continued Evelyn, gaily, "was not that a truly cool, condescending, fraternal salute? Am not I a model of the patronising big brother? Kind, benignant, and affectionate, when he is in good-humour, and even willing to be propitiated when he is lawfully irate? I think you will give me a good character, Kate. I think you will allow that I deserve your recommendation. As long as you don't bother me, and don't tell tales of me, and don't get in my way, I am as nice and pleasant to you as any man in my position can be to a troublesome little sister whom every one else tries to get rid of; now, am I not?"

They had reached the mouth of the cave as he spoke, taking refuge from a shower which had been driving towards them before the wind, and which was now drenching all the open

shore,—and as little as she regarded its noisy clatter on the stones outside, did Kate regard his words as he drew her into the sheltering cavern. She could only feel the touch of his arm, which continued to encircle her as they sat down, and wonder how it spoke a language so different.

"Well, what do you say?" continued Evelyn. "Eh? I'm afraid you don't look upon it in that light?"

His only answer was an uneasy movement.

"There is something going on within your mind," pursued he, stooping forward to see all he could, "which had best have vent, Kate. I know the symptoms. Don't be afraid; pluck up spirit, and have it out. Come," and he would have embraced her a third time.

"No, don't," said Kate, angrily. "I don't like it."

His arm dropped from her side.

"And—and I won't suffer it," she continued, with increased energy.

He sat mute.

"Rupert, how could you?" broke forth the speaker, passionately. "You that I trusted, and hoped so much from! You that seemed to be the only friend I had left in the world!

You should not have treated me so. I am not your sister—you are not my brother. Let me alone."

"You are not my sister—I am not your brother; is that to be so? Finally?"

"Yes; it is."

"Then hear me," said Evelyn, his own colour rising, and his tone changing—"Miss Newbattle, hear me. Remember that such a position was none of my seeking. It was offered to me, and I accepted it. When first I saw you, Kate—when first I knew who you were—I was well enough satisfied to be given a brother's privileges, and you were pleased that I should claim them. You see that the idea is a farce now? So do I. I repudiate the position. You start? But I do. I declare to you that I would not have you for my sister if I could. Be my wife, or nothing."

He clasped her again in his arms, and kissed her as often as he would.

. . . . .

The tide had receded a pace ere either spoke again, and then it was but low ejaculations and tender epithets which were murmured among the echoes of the rocky canopy.

At length Evelyn raised his head and spoke more briskly. "Your little plot that filled your little imagination this morning must fall to the ground, Kate; the time has come for me to unfold mine. It bears a curious resemblance to yours, do you know? In every point but one the two are precisely similar. You propose to remain here for a while? I propose that you should. You desire a companion? I approve of your having one. You wish for your sister? I offer—myself."

"You, Rupert? You?"

"And why not I? The teal and the woodcock were not such first-rate considerations as you profanely declared them, but still they may come in handy. Maidie could not take you the wanderings over moor and mountain that I shall do. Nor would she learn to spin any more deftly, Kate. Choose between us, then. Which will you have?"

"It is a dream," said Kate, putting her hand to her eyes,"—a dream. Talk to me, Rupert. Tell me really what you mean. I cannot think —I cannot understand—will you stay here?—*here?*"

"Even so, Kate. Here,—if you will have

me. And so you think it is a dream, do you? A dream that a very minor prophet might have forecast, I should say. Who could meet you, beautiful, lonely, nearly broken-hearted, without longing to be your comforter?—and as for you, why, my poor child, you had no chance when I was here without a rival, and with nobody to warn you off the foolish, good-for-nothing fellow." He smiled proudly.

"And you will not go away again?"

"Not yet awhile, any way. Why, Kate, what a life we shall lead down here, away from all the world—nobody knowing, nobody dreaming of our happiness! I will take you out on moonlight nights, my wild sea-mew, when the waves are booming along the shore, as they are doing now; and we will take boat with the fishermen,—yes, you shall go in those very boats we saw last night, when they don't go too far out,—and we will learn their songs, Kate, and sing them to each other. And I will tell you tales, my child, of the great world that you have never seen; and you shall read to me your strange old poets, and rave as you did on the moor last night. You shall read Shakespeare too; you shall be my Juliet,—my

Portia,—my Kate, whose Petruchio would not have tamed her if he could! Shall it be so, then? Speak, Kate—I can listen to you now; take up the theme, dear, and let me hear what you can say about it. Why are you so still? Have I frightened my darling? Have I been too quick, too hasty? Forgive me, sweet; I will try to be more gentle. Is there more the matter yet? What is it?"

"I do not—understand."

"Let me teach you."

"I cannot think——"

"——Let me think for you."

"Is it——" She stopped afresh.

"What a puzzled little face! And I am not to touch it? Well, what is all this about? Why are those eyes turned on me so imploringly? I shall satisfy them, shall I not, Kate? I am not afraid. Speak on."

"It is all so strange."

"Strange?" repeated Evelyn, not unflattered by her timidity. "Strange? Well, I daresay it is. I have taken you rather by storm, have I And you thought I was doing my best to get you received back at Carnochan, you poor little dupe. What should I want you back there for?

We are far better off here. They don't want us, and we don't want them, so everybody is satisfied all round."

"But we shall have to write, and oh, Rupert! what *shall* we say?"

"Time enough to think of that when we do write," said Evelyn, lightly. "Sufficient unto the day, you know: look here, little one, it would be uncommonly disagreeable for both of us to be hailed back to Carnochan just at present, wouldn't it? Well, if we have to begin at the beginning, make our prosy explanations, together with all the nuisance of confessing our little fraud so far, that will be the inevitable result; and, good Heavens, Kate, think of the scenes that would follow! You could not stand them,—no more could I. The paternal blessing on such occasions is bad enough, but the maternal other thing, especially as coming from Lady Olivia, would be a few degrees worse."

"Would it? She—she would not approve, then?"

He laughed, looked into her eyes and laughed again. "I thought you had been too clever for such a question, Kate?"

"Would she be very angry, Rupert?"

"Aye, that's better: I can answer you there. Yes, my little innocent, I think I may venture to say she would be very angry. So long as I am not there to see, I don't find that that afflicts me in any extraordinary manner. I think I can survive the thought of her despair. How shamefully she has used you, my poor little one, leaving you here to fret and cry, while she triumphs in your place! Cheer up, Kate! no more tears; we shall cheat them all."

"*Cheat!*" She repeated the word as though it had struck her a blow.

"While they think your existence is a burden under the weight of their displeasure, and that all the life and the spirit is getting crushed out of this little heart by slow torture,—we, together, shall be making merry at their expense! We shall be laughing at them from our hiding-place! Perhaps now and then I may go over and see how they are getting on—walking in, as it were, from far-off places, when we are actually under their very noses all the time! It would be awkward if you were to be sent for; but I can take care to prevent that, I think. They are off to Brighton for the present, and we can invent excuses by-and-by. You must not write

too contentedly; you must not let them see you are too happy,—we must keep up the show of dissatisfaction."

"And this is to go on," said Kate, slowly, "for how long?"

"Why do you ask? You are already afraid of being tired of me? The prospect wearies you?" He paused for a disclaimer.

None came.

"Is that it, Kate? Can that be it? I hardly expected——"

"No, Rupert; that is not it; but—but it is so hard to explain. If it were only for a week or so, and we were to tell them everything afterwards——"

"My dear girl!"

"The longer we keep back the truth the more difficult we make it to be open when the time comes," said Kate, with a touch of the old imperiousness Carnochan knew so well. "Why should we not be honest from the beginning?"

"Because we have not *been* honest from the beginning; and what's past can't be undone. Aha, Madam Kate! I had you there."

She was silent.

"Don't you see," continued Evelyn, rather

hurriedly,—"don't you see, dear, the only course that is now left open to us? We must meet at Carnochan — when you do return there, — we must meet, as it were, for the first time. We shall be presented to each other in due form; and our acquaintance will subsequently ripen, after a proper and discreet fashion. At first it will be advisable to be rather shy and formal,—reserved,—no, distant—that is the word. In short, you may behave precisely as you once did, and as you would do still, were we to meet as strangers. Both of us will require all the presence of mind and ready wit we conjointly possess, remember; but I think we shall manage somehow: I think I can trust my little fellow-conspirator. Then, by-and-by, the constraint between us may wear off by slow degrees, and we may begin to be friendly. Why do you look at me so, Kate? Never do you fear but what I shall find plenty of opportunities for throwing off the mask,—trust me for that. I think I can call to mind already more than one hide-and-seek corner that will answer our purpose. And the beauty of the whole thing is, that we need never to the last day of our lives make an awkward disclosure. In due time I

shall apply to your father, and after that all will go on as it always does, I suppose. At least, our little romance will remain our own."

"And you would play a part like that?" said Kate, in a low, unnatural voice; "and you would have me play it too?"

"And who could play it better? You have quite the talent. I am not afraid for you. I think I see you when some unlucky allusion is made. You will throw it aside so deftly, that I shall scarcely be able to refrain from a smile of approval. I shall not be half so smart myself, I fear; but I will do my best."

"Everything I did would be a deception, and every word I spoke a lie——"

"Hut-tut; that's strong language. I shall think that I have got 'Naughty Kate' back again!"

"I am to act one perpetual falsehood,—and that not only here but there. There," said Kate with growing excitement in her voice and manner,—"there, where they all know how I have begged for truth,—how I would not allow the little ones to quibble and palter as Alice would have taught them to do,—there I am to go about among them, myself the falsest thing about the place! Even if we were never found out, we

should be in constant fear of detection. Any moment something might happen——"

"No, no; we shall take care to prevent that."

"Could I ever look my father or sisters in the face——"

"Oh yes; after a while—perfectly well."

"My own dead mother——"

"Dear Kate, she——"

"And the end and object of all this," proceeded Kate, unheeding, "what a mean and cowardly one it is! We are to flinch from a momentary disagreeable at the expense of our honour! Think, Rupert, how foolish, how blind;—a mere momentary disagreeable!"

"All very fine. Yes, my dear Kate, you lay a most excellently scornful accent on the words; but 'a mere momentary disagreeable' sounds a thousand times less charming from Lady Olivia's lips than from yours; I can assure you of that, from the experience of a lifetime. Such 'momentary disagreeables' have a trick of lengthening out *ad infinitum* on these occasions. I know what it would be."

"And to escape it you would degrade us both? Whatever you dread, it could not be so bad as that?"

"Dread? Nonsense. That is, you really do not know what you are talking about, you silly child, and need some one to take you in hand. Come, don't pout; I see I shall have to lecture you again, as I did last time I was at the farm. I thought I had brought you fairly well into subjection on that occasion, but you are a tough little customer. Why, I declare, she's in the pet already!"

It was the last thing he ought to have said.

"That is enough; that will do," cried Kate, passionately. "I see we shall never understand each other. Is *this* the happiness you promised me? I thank you, Rupert, but it—it—" struggling for composure, "it is not such as I care to possess. Is *this* what is to make me forget the past? The past would haunt me day and night. Don't speak to me, don't touch me,—I will never listen to you again."

"Kate! My child!" His tone changed to one of tender remonstrance.

"I am not your child. Take away your hand. Oh, how could this hand deal me such misery!"

"Kate, Kate, what are you saying?"

"That which I will never unsay. I have

been deceived in you,—in you who seemed to me so good, so noble. You made me love you,—I did not want to love you. You found me out,—I never asked you to come. And I thought, I thought—but it does not matter; I see it all now; I am blind no longer. God forgive you, Rupert, for all this!"

"My darling!——"

"Hush!—not now. I am nothing to you now. You renounced me as a sister, and I will not be your wife."

"You will, Kate, when you hear me——"

"And therefore I will not hear you," said she, springing to her feet. "Let me go. We are only wasting time now; let me go, Rupert."

("Well," thought Evelyn, "here is an ado! Who would have thought that her devil of a temper would have stepped in in this way? It's ridiculous. I shan't give in; so she must; and that's all about it.") "I should not have supposed you were a person to be tormented by an over-scrupulous conscience," he could not resist saying at last: "leave that for others, Kate; it is not for you."

The emphasis on the "you," slight though it was, was too much. It stung the high-souled

girl to the quick. "What!" she cried out; "you mean that I am already undutiful and miserable enough? That I am ready enough to yield to temptation of any kind, be it what it may? That I have been turned away from my father's doors because I was a disgrace and a trouble to them? And you thought that I —whom you yourself reproached for my evil passions and temper—was ripe for any revenge? Was that what you meant, Rupert? Oh, Rupert, did you really mean that?" she sobbed aloud.

"I scarcely know what I mean, Kate. You will not attend to what I say——"

——"No, I will not."

"And you are transported out of yourself, by giving way to these ungovernable fancies. You are not in a fit state to consider any question calmly; believe me, you are not. You yourself acknowledge that your — your excitable temperament is apt to mislead you. It never did so more than in the present instance. Then why will you not put yourself in my hands?"

"Rupert, I fear God. I have disobeyed Him, dishonoured Him, rebelled against Him, and

forsaken Him—but still I am His. 'I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before Thee, and am no more worthy — no more worthy——'" her voice was lost in weeping.

No other sound broke the silence of the cave; for Evelyn, awed by the extent of the emotions he had himself awakened, and hopeless of regaining the ascendancy he had lost during the first half-hour, was now gloomily silent, whilst debating what course he should next pursue.

It was still raining heavily without; but Kate, apparently without being aware of what she was doing, presently began to move towards the entrance of the cave, as though intending to escape from the presence of her companion.

Common humanity prompted him to call her back, especially as the shawl, which had slipped from her shoulders as she broke from his hold, remained on the ground; and the thin cotton frock, which had been a part of her wardrobe on coming to the farm in all the mildness of the late summer, was but a poor protection against a smart autumnal shower.

His summons, however, had no effect. It

was either unheard or disregarded; and he was obliged to follow ignominiously, and seek to detain the fugitive by other means.

She thrust him aside.

The manner of her doing so was such, that even his patience gave way at last, and he frowned contemptuously. "Don't be foolish. You need not be afraid that I shall trangress again. You may permit me to put a covering on you, Miss Newbattle, without feeling anxiety. I have only one thing to say, and that is, that I presume even your candour will hardly think it necessary to inform your parent and mine of this piece of folly? It would not be pleasant for either of us,—probably you will not regard that,—but still, as a personal favour to me,—for their sakes,—or on any other grounds you like to consider worthy,—I must beg that if you *can* keep the secret, you will."

"I will."

"What is the matter? You are ill?" cried Evelyn, struck by her tone. "Good heavens, what a brute I am! Kate, I did not mean it, I did not know what I was saying. Kate, dear Kate, forgive me,—speak to me. O God! what have I done?"

The cheek which had approached hers, as his terrified senses became aware of something strangely, dreadfully wrong, was all at once wetted by something warm, — it was blood, which was flowing from a broken vessel.

END OF VOL. I.

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