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—TROUBLESOME DAUGHTERS—

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TROUBLESOME DAUGHTERS

TROUBLESOME DAUGHTERS

BY

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'COUSINS,' ETC.

"TRUTH SEVERE,
BY FAIRY FICTION DRESSED."

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. III.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
MDCCCLXXX

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PART VII.



TROUBLESOME DAUGHTERS.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LADY OLIVIA IS RESOLVED THAT KATE SHALL
BE SEEN AND ADMIRÈD AT LAST.

“Tell her that’s young,
And shuns to have her graces spied,
Had a rose sprung
In deserts where no men abide,
It must have, uncommended, died.
Small is the worth
Of beauty from the light retired,—
Bid her come forth,
Suffer herself to be desired,
And not blush so to be admired.”

—WALLER.

It was on the brightest of bright May days, exactly five years after the events recorded in the last chapter, that there drove up to the door of a house in a well-placed London street, a

train of railway cabs, piled up and brimming over with all the paraphernalia of a family arriving from the country.

The first person of note to descend and be received by officious attendants, was an elderly lady, somewhat wan and disordered by travel, whose weary air contrasted with the sprightly chatter and springing steps of the two younger ones who followed, and who, as they looked around them, noting this and that, with smiles on their rosy, pretty faces, showed that they were neither too tired nor too dusty for present cheerfulness.

It is Lady Olivia Newbattle, with the two daughters who now alone remain under her maternal wing, upon whom our curtain thus again draws up.

They are not the two youngest, as most people would suppose,—there are nearly six years between them, though there does not look one.

“Indeed, many people would imagine that Marjorie is the older of the two,” averred her step-mother; “and that is the reason why I mean to bring her out at once. She is at her very best now; in another few years, it is quite possible that she may grow coarse. You, my

dear Kate," for Kate was the auditor on this occasion,—“you will never look coarse; your beauty is quite of another order. But being as it is, we will not put off. Think how unlucky we were about you! First, your health putting a stop to my taking you out after poor dear Alice's marriage; the next year, our losing her was the cause; again, I was unwell myself—it was really most unfortunate; and then our deep mourning, necessitating two years' strict seclusion. You yourself advocated that, my love, and very right you were. But you see how it all was,—how it was really impossible for me to carry out my intentions; and I should regret it far more than I do had your bloom faded, or had our circumstances been altered. As it is, however, seeing you as I do, not only with unimpaired, but really improved looks, strong, well, and most excellently provided for—thanks to your dear father,” lifting her handkerchief,—“indeed, by your poor sister's death, holding a position that you had not before,—I feel, I really do feel, my dear Kate, that whatever may have been our sorrows and vexations, all is now for the best. You feel the same, I am sure; it is quite a reward for your not fret-

ting and making an outcry, as most girls would have done in your place. Now is your day as much as Marjorie's. Now everything is convenient, our affairs are in good order, we ourselves hale and hearty; and now, therefore, I intend to have the pleasure of introducing to the world both my lovely daughters at once."

Times were indeed changed since she stigmatised them as her unruly crew.

They were now her dearest children, her kind Kate, and her sweetest Marjorie; and since she had only the two to look after, she was once again ready to trumpet herself as on the brink of that perfect felicity which was for ever, poor soul, within view, yet for ever eluding her grasp.

Let us, however, take a brief survey of what had happened during the past five years to bring about the situation.

Two deaths and one marriage had reduced the family circle to its present number.

Alice had been taken first. After a brief and childless wedded life, she had caught a fever whilst travelling abroad with her husband; and tidings of her end had been sent to her early home, ere any there knew of her illness.

It cannot be said that the shock was such as

to kill her father, for Mr Newbattle lived for fully two years after; but many people, more especially among those who knew most of the old laird, affirmed that it had had a great effect upon him.

Year by year he had become increasingly dull and heavy.

He had sat in his arm-chair nodding behind his newspaper from morning till night, finding every occasion for signing a cheque a burden, and every sight of his lawyer, or steward, a nuisance.

No one had known much about him, or what he did, or how he passed his days. He had not cared for anybody to be with him,—nor to be read to, nor waited upon. He had liked, as of old, to be let alone. At meal-times only he had appeared; and it was during these that suddenly, in the midst of the buzz and talk, he had on more than one occasion looked round with a vacant eye, demanding vaguely, “Where is Alice?”

If visitors were in the house, the sight of their faces would at first constrain him to exert a little of his precise, pleasant, old-fashioned politeness; but as soon as he had become accus-

tomed to their presence, he would relapse into forgetfulness. He had dreaded to be roused, and had whimpered if begged to go anywhere, or do anything.

It could not but be a strange and subtle relief when all this was over, and when, without pain or knowledge, the father, who had never been more than a father in name, was called from their midst.

The will, to which a codicil had been added at the time of his second marriage, was duly found, and gave no dissatisfaction, since it had been drawn up and composed by one of his most trustworthy friends and most efficient helpers, Mr Walter Maxwell.

Contrary to all established precedent, Maxwell, with everything in his power, had merely resolved to do his best for the girls, and to keep the old acres together; to which end they were now found to be left to the eldest and other daughters *in tail*, under trustees, the younger ones being properly portioned, and a suitable jointure being provided for Lady Olivia.

If the widow did not absolutely raise a note of thanksgiving that her eldest step-daughter was now no more, it was as much as she could

do to prevent herself from doing so. She had grown to detest Pollaxfen, and Alice had been latterly a mere echo of her husband. To have been ousted by them, to have had to quit the old walls seven feet thick—the long shady avenues, the lake, and the swans—would have been a trial under any circumstances,—since, however much she had liked to break out into little scampers hither and thither at times, she had dearly loved to have Carnochan to fall back upon; but to have known it as the residence of Mr and Mrs Pollaxfen, with the stinging recollection that through her means they had come together, would have been more than flesh and blood could well have endured.

Somehow, stupid and snoozy though he was, she had always meant her husband to live.

She had never, even when Pollaxfen was putting his very plain questions about the farms and the fishery rights, felt that any day might see him master in the place whereon he stood.

Eventually, of course, it was to come to that; but the day seemed a long way off. The squire was not an old man; he had never had worries nor cares but those raised by his own imagination; he had undergone no strain on his mental

organs; his money had been plentiful; his estate had prospered; his children had grown up around him; and although he had lost his first wife, he had apparently agreed with the sentiment expressed in the ancient ditty—

“Gin one wife dies, I can sune get anither,”

and had carried out the idea manfully.

It was perhaps the very absence of anything to rouse or stimulate that had fostered Mr Newbattle's malady.

“Ease was his chief complaint, and to judge right,
He died for heaviness that his load was light.”

He had never been so well in his life as when he was being beset by his daughters in such a fashion as to drive him away from his home, and exert himself to escape still more permanently from their clutches. He had been quite brisk for the time, as we know. On his account it was only a pity that the subsequent turmoil at Carnochan had not lasted longer; for no sooner was the house cleared of the arch-rebel, and the rest reduced to subjection, than torpor once more crept through his veins, and all the late benefit received, was undone. A few more years of that repose clinched the mischief.

He was unfit for the slightest jar, the veriest pebble on the smooth path of his daily life.

Alice's death settled the question in reality, though he had lingered on a while after it; and he was a dead man at a time when he ought by rights to have only been seeing in the distance a green old age.

No one could say Lady Olivia was inconsolable; or, on the other hand, that she showed any want of proper feeling.

She did not for a considerable time permit the "All is for the best" that was in her heart to rise to her lips, but she would not have been human had she not felt this,—that since both Alice and her father were to be taken, it was a merciful dispensation which removed the daughter first.

Pollaxfen need never now have anything to do with Carnochan, nor need its inmates have anything more to do with him.

The estates had devolved on Kate, under trust, as we said; and this suited Lady Olivia very well.

Dear Kate was now so attentive, so kind!

She had her own little ways of course, but what of that? She was still rather unsociable,

rather given to running away from everybody, —but then she made such excellent, inestimable use of her solitude. She was still imprudent about her health—would go out on cold and damp days, —but what then? Young girls could not be expected to coddle and fuss like grandmothers.

In short, with only the two of whom she was really proud and fond in her way,—for Bertha's marriage, of which we shall presently speak, had followed shortly after her father's death,—Lady Olivia had an excellent time of it.

All Kate's generous nature was enlisted on her step-mother's behalf with the feeling that she was now powerless for weal or woe,—that she had no hold on any of them unless they chose to cede it,—and that she was, strictly speaking, her own guest in the very halls from which she had erewhile expelled her.

The tongue that had once been so hasty, was slow now to utter an ill-advised word. Lady Olivia was even consulted and referred to, on matters whereon it was possible that her opinion could be valuable. Due attention was paid to such friends as she chose to ask to the house,—carriages and horses were at her disposal, as of

yore,—her new garden was finished and arranged according to the plan she had laid down,—and it may be doubted whether the extra respect and deference paid to her wishes by this once unmanageable daughter, was not the only difference really experienced by the widow after the loss of her husband.

Bertha's marriage, which took place within a year of her father's demise, was a very sober, jog-trot affair.

Unable to take any position at home, and no particular favourite with any one there, she was glad to close with the first offer made her; and luckily, it was one that no one was disposed to cavil at. Mr Walter Maxwell, junior, only son of their kind old friend,—who was connected with the west-country Maxwells, though no one knew how,—was quite good enough for Bertha, whom Lady Olivia secretly acknowledged she had never expected to be so comfortably quit of.

The young man was sensible, respectable, unobtrusive, and felt all the honour of being thus permitted to enter the Newbattle family.

They could not find any fault with him, nor with the connection. It was not brilliant, but

then Bertha was not brilliant. There had never been a breath of the word "season" as connected with Bertha; it had been instinctively felt that she would never have "done anything" in London; and no one, not even she herself, felt it hard that she should be married straight off from the old country-house before her knowledge of mankind had extended beyond the young Pophams, Neddy Maclure, and her husband.

A quiet and peaceful year was now passed by the three left behind, at the end of which time, as we have seen, Lady Olivia doffed her widow's cap, and delightedly surveyed her "two lovely daughters." She had always petted Marjorie, she had learned to be proud of Kate; with her son still absent,—with nothing else to fasten such affections as she possessed, upon,—with finding herself considerably treated, and permitted to have a say where she had no longer a claim to rule,—she had grown to be very fond of them indeed; and it was a proof of this, that although no one knew better than she herself how uncertain was her tenure in her present comfortable quarters, more especially if she persisted in opening fresh doors through which

matrimony might find his way, she was yet resolved that Kate should be seen and admired at last.

Kate might sigh, but she must submit. She had never forgotten, never would forget, the past,—but she had learned to hear Evelyn's name without the wild beating of her heart which it had once occasioned; she could listen to his letters, remind his mother of little events and incidents to be narrated to him, and look forward—or so she told herself—to the meeting which was ever drawing nearer, with a pleasure that should have in it no element of regret.

When he did return, he should have no embarrassments to fear from her.

Perhaps the young brow, whose exquisite moulding made Lady Olivia whisper about busts and statues, and having a “head” done for Carnochan as soon as she could satisfy herself as to the rival merits of the two leading sculptors of the day,—perhaps it was a shade more pensive than it might have been, had the course of her love run smooth and been crowned by wedded happiness; but it was far more serene, more smooth and open, than it had been in the old hasty days. She had not wept and suffered

in vain. She would not scout the peaceful tenor of her present life, the even sunshine by which she was now surrounded, albeit the very memory of the past hurricanes of love, and grief, and bitterness, were dearer to her heart. She would accept with grateful submission the lot assigned by an all-merciful Hand, even while dropping in secret a tender tear to that which might have been. And only at times—and these were few and far between—would she turn from her startled self with a flush of shame and surprise, as some sudden thrill shot through her veins, caused by the mere mention of a name,—or when a nerve awoke and quivered under unconscious hands, lightly fingering bygone scenes.

Such revelations were disappointing. So long a time having elapsed, she ought to have been calmer, more reasonable. And, moreover, if such nothings had the power to arouse and disturb, what should she do when called upon to face reality?

Reality in the person of Evelyn—that Evelyn who had forsaken and forgotten, but whose image, untouched by time and unharmed by the neglect and fickleness with which she could

not but charge him, was still enshrined within her bosom, — that very Evelyn she was now again, as it appeared, on the verge of meeting.

“For I have quite made up my mind,” said Lady Olivia, with clear decision in every tone, “that it is my duty, on account of both the dear girls, to spend a season in Town, and be there to meet my son when he arrives in July.”

Mrs Popham was the confidante on this occasion, and Mrs Popham's brow cleared when she understood that no opposition had been offered by either of the “dear girls.” She had not been altogether without a dread lest *her* child of the Newbattle family might have meditated a withdrawal from the scene, — since Kate's disinclination for ball-rooms was an old story.

“But she ought to go,” said Mrs Popham, discussing the matter with her daughter, who was now no longer Susie Popham, but a blithe young matron transplanted to other spheres, — “Kate ought to go,” attested Kate's stanch old friend. “It is not right that she should shrink from society in the way she does. Every young woman in her rank of life ought to pass through a certain amount of experience of the

world ; and that cannot be had anywhere better than in London. But I know poor dear Kate will shirk if she can,—and indeed I am in terror each day that I shall hear it is only that giddy-pated Marjorie who is to be taken ; but if there is a whisper of the kind, I shall let Lady Olivia know what *I* think.”

Lady Olivia, however, was spared the knowledge, since she had not the slightest intentions of leaving any one behind, and since Kate, whether she desired to “shirk” or not, dared not raise her voice, far less her eyes, as soon as it was given out that the visit was to be no more on her own and Marjorie’s account, than that the parent might be on the spot to embrace her son as soon as he should again touch English shores. *That* silenced her.

Mrs Popham misinterpreted the troubled countenance.

“Cheer up, my dear silly child !” cried she ; “why, even I, old body that I am, could find it in my heart to be pleased with such a prospect ! You need not fag yourself out with gaieties ; they are not in your line, and very well for you they are not ;—but London is full of charms of other sorts, my little novice,” tapping her on the cheek

playfully. "The best of everything goes to London, Kate,—music, and paintings, and books, and flowers——"

"Flowers!" said Kate, opening her eyes.

"Flowers, and trees, and sunshine, love. Yes, yes; you think you are leaving all the beauties of nature behind you, and going to immure yourself in a dusty smoky town, surrounded by brick walls——"

——"No indeed, Mrs Popham, I did not think that."

"At any rate, you will be surprised at a good many things you see; you will have had your little countrified ideas blown away like thistle-down, ere I meet you again. I long to hear your experience. Lady Olivia will do the thing thoroughly, I have no doubt; and you and Marjorie will be taken here, there, and everywhere. I am not afraid for you; I know my little Kate of old—she is above being dazzled by such vanities,—but Marjorie——" her tone became grave.

"Yes, Marjorie?" said Kate, and held her breath. For Marjorie,—that great, bright, ruddy-haired, many-tinted creature, who had been the darling of the household when a little one,—was still, in her sister's eyes, beautiful and irresistible,

only——. Marjorie had so early in life begun to practise steps and attitudes, and study her person from head to foot in the long pier-glasses at Carnochan; Marjorie had for a long time past taken such a heartfelt interest in having all the details and accoutrements of her toilet in perfect order, in bustling out her little petticoats and puffing up her little frills, when it was a case of children's parties and picnics; Marjorie was invariably so much disturbed when the sun tanned her face.

Read old fusty, musty books? Not she. Play and sing, take out her paint-box and try to catch the gleam of the fleeting clouds as they passed over the lake, or the fine shadow cast by the larches? To do this bored her. Teach in the Sunday-school, visit the poor, comfort the sick? Not for millions of worlds.

In short, the girl was idle, vain, and frivolous; and all that Mrs Popham could find to say, when she paused after introducing her name into the conversation above recorded, was that no good would come of keeping back one who was already panting for the fray, and whom opposition would inevitably only render the more set upon it.

“Let her go,” she decided, promptly,—“let her go, say I. She will then have it in her power to choose which world she will have—this, or the next. She will be no worse in the midst of it all, than she would be hankering after it down here. Already she speaks of nothing else ; who can tell that whereas the idea is all in all to her at present, the reality may not prove a disenchantment? See, Kate, my child, it is not the world, but the love of it, which ‘worketh destruction ;’ it is not being here or there, in one place or another, which prevents our bearing about always with us the Christian’s hope ;— ‘the kingdom of God is within you’——”

——“So granny always said,” cried Kate, suddenly,—“so my dear, dear granny always said.”

“Can you remember your grandmother?” replied Mrs Popham, surprised ; “I should have thought that was hardly possible, considering that she died when you were all so young.”

“The kind nurse, who took care of me through my illness five years ago,” faltered Kate, colouring, as she always did when that illness was in any way referred to. “You remember how ill I was at the farmhouse in the

West, that time I was staying there? The farmer's wife was my 'granny.'"

"And you liked her?"

"Liked her!"—again that light in the eye—"I loved her with my whole heart," said Kate. "You don't know what she was to me; and when you speak in that way, dear Mrs Popham, I fancy I hear her voice again. You don't mind my saying it?"

"Indeed I do not need to mind. 'One family, we dwell in Him;' and we should have our family likeness, Kate. My poor child, I fancy this good woman was your best friend at that time?"

"Yes,—yes."

"And I know you needed one."

"Yes," very low.

"God bless you, dear! Go where you will now, you will find flatterers and admirers in plenty, but not such friends as those, believe me, Kate. Be true to them, and," emphatically, "true to your own heart, my little one, whatever happens; and, above all, be thankful that you have early been led to choose 'that good part which shall not be taken away from you.'"

CHAPTER XXVII.

TREADING ON THIN ICE.

“ The rage for competition, show, and style,
 Is London’s plague—and spreads for many a mile.
 No rank nor age escapes that vulgar sin,
 Breathed in its nurseries,—in its schools worked in.”

—*Essays in Rhyme.*

So up they all came, bag and baggage, men-servants and maid-servants, and were established in a small house, well placed, handy for going everywhere, and remarkable for nothing else.

The drawing-rooms were tolerable, filling the whole of one storey ; but the girls’ bed-chambers would hardly have been approved of by their waiting-women at Carnochan ; while even Lady Olivia had to mount two flights of stairs before she could take possession of the gloomy and badly-lighted apartment wherein she was to install herself.

“How will she like this?” whispered the ignorant young ones, aside. A whole suite of rooms had been allotted to their step-mother’s use at Carnochan, and she had not found them too many.

But their consternation only received the good-humoured ridicule of the town-bred lady, whose father had been short of money, and who had made the convenient discovery that London alone suited his health, and that since he could not really live amidst the unwholesome marshes of his own estates, he had no need to keep up two establishments.

“To be sure,” she said now, “this is a dull and inconvenient room compared with my luxurious quarters at dear Carnochan; but it is London, my dears, London,—that makes a whole world of difference to those who know. I was not better off as a girl; and even at Mr Evelyn’s mansion in Hill Street, our upstairs apartments were nothing to boast of. My dear creatures, one-half of the best people you meet here, come out of just such houses as this! All the space is given up to the public rooms. And think of the situation! I daresay you fancy now that we should have done better away in South Kensington or some

of those parts, where, it is true, we might have had a domain double the size for less than half the rent; but wait a week or two, and you will change your note. Wait, and you will thank me. Wait till you begin to want to drive back and forward, night after night and day after day, to all the houses in this district—it is *here* I mean you to visit, not three miles off, remember; and wait till the people begin to call,—see if they would care to travel out to regions unknown; and wait till you want to pop in and out of Bond Street of a morning. Why, if I had taken you where I said, you might have been found at that absurd man Whiteley's,—I shudder to think of it; but you would have known no better. Think of it all! Now, here we are, in as nice a little place as could possibly be, and with everything and everybody just round the corner.”

“If you are satisfied,” said Kate, “I am sure Marjorie and I shall be. I did not like your having to climb so high, that was all.”

“You kind creature! But really, I shall not think of minding that. I shall be near Marjorie, and she can make use of the cupboard outside the door here.”

“It is too bad of Kate to make me have this good room,” said Marjorie, with a decent pretence of earnestness. “I don’t know what to say, mamma. Ought not she to have it, and I to be poked away into the garret? *You* say.”

“Well, my dear——” Lady Olivia looked at the two.

“Just hold your little tongue,” said Kate to her sister. “I suppose I have a right to choose, haven’t I? Well, and I have chosen.”

“You dear, good thing! But I could get on quite as well there.”

“Could you, indeed? I should like to know how poor Coleman could, at any rate. What would she say to having to go through all that marvellous performance of your hair-dressing through a skylight-window? And you are sure to have ten gowns for one that I have: where could they all go, unless in this cupboard?”

“They could still be kept here,” faintly.

“And have Coleman trotting up and down those stairs in never-ending journeys? Nonsense! Take this room, and it settles everything for everybody.”

“Certainly it does, my dear Kate; and Marjorie is very much indebted to you.”

Which Marjorie usually was, since she and her “mamma” had learned the marvellously successful trick of claiming nothing and obtaining everything,—of having whatever was good, pleasant, or desirable, forced upon them against their will. They had to give way to Kate, you know—since Kate always had been self-willed and domineering; and, “Don’t you remember,” Lady Olivia would add, “what a *temper* she had once? Depend upon it, it is still there, if she were to be crossed. Recollect this, my dear Marjorie, and you will find that it is always best to let your sister settle things herself.”

The next thing was to sit down and make out a list of all the eligible acquaintances and old family connections on whom she could venture to leave cards, in the hope that they would be ready to take her by the hand, and bid her once more welcome to her former haunts.

No one knew better than she the thin ice on which she was about to tread.

She must expect, primarily, cool inspection and empty professions.

Thereafter, it would either be neglect or ardour, neck or nothing, for the rest of her stay in Town.

If her wares were approved of—if her judgment of them were endorsed by the higher powers—if they were found to have the beauty, the air, and the germ of success in them, that she believed they had,—she would have no further difficulty. She would then lead such a life as she had only known in dreams, and for the sake of which she had sometimes been almost ready to wish, as she beheld her son in his prime, that he had been a daughter.

To lead her child from one house where she had been the centre of all eyes, to another where her appearance would create an equal sensation, had long seemed to her the proudest position that a parent could hold; and the idea that possibly her contrasted pair — her imperial Kate, and Hebe-like Marjorie — might conjointly mount the throne of beauty, and become the stars of the day, made her tremble with nervous anxiety and excitement, as the moment of competition drew near.

Could Kate have known what was passing in Lady Olivia's breast!

Mum as a mouse was that cunning woman on such subjects to her eldest daughter; not even to Marjorie could be safely confided the ruminations which made her smile to herself as she gloated over them in silence,—lest Marjorie might whisper again. And then—then, had the truth come out,—had even one-half of the busy fancies that were always working within come to light, how should she ever have faced the scorn of that proud spirit?

“No, no,” nodded Lady Olivia to herself. “No, no; I must be very careful what I am about. She is very good, and kind,—and most obliging and liberal too, I am sure, about all our expenditure;—but there are *some* things—— Oh, I know what I am about. She can be quite as foolish and tiresome as ever if she chooses. There was that scene with Harold Pollaxfen; had it been with any one else, it would really have been a terrible *esclandre*; as it was, I did not care a straw,—or rather, I was very well pleased that he should get a such a set-down. Impertinent upstart! To dare to meddle and interfere, and about Rupert too! Oh, I was very glad, very glad indeed, that Kate should stand up for my family as she did.

He was answered indeed! Ignorant, ill-bred man! Kate never could bear him,—nor could I.”

She was not likely to be called upon to do so for the future, at any rate.

Unless he could make himself disagreeable, unless some opportunity arose for being provocative and cantankerous, Pollaxfen now let his wife's relations alone. Chances did, however, at times occur to him—since unhappily, at the time of Alice's settlements being drawn up, it had been considered well to make her husband an additional trustee on the property in which she could only have a life-interest, but which would descend to her son, should she have one to outlive her younger sisters.

One old county neighbour, and a first cousin—poor, and living at a distance—were the other trustees, neither of whom dreamed of assuming any responsibility in the matter, beyond doing what Mr Maxwell told them. Maxwell they knew; his wisdom was proverbial, his character was unimpeachable: if they could serve their old friend by signing papers now and then at Maxwell's office, and by listening without going to sleep when Lady Olivia requested advice as to the management of her dear

orphaned children, they were very willing to do so.

Lady Olivia usually had advice to seek, when she wanted something else.

She was not the only one who had whims to be gratified during the two years consequent on their bereavement; but whereas Kate would look straight into the eyes of Mr Macculloch or Cousin Charles, and make her request, and get put off with fair promises and pretty speeches, Lady Olivia, who would slip in her little petition through a side-door as it were, marshalling a host of fears, hopes, and anxieties through the grand entrance first, never had any difficulty in obtaining what she wanted.

“It is *finesse* that the dear girl is so deficient in,” said she.

Pollaxfen alone outwitted Lady Olivia, and indeed them all, including Maxwell, who wished a dozen times a-day that his tongue had been bitten out before he had suggested to the old laird that the two other trustees were elderly men, and that the introduction of some young blood would be advisable, in which case no one could be more suitable than the intended husband of his eldest daughter.

He understood Mr Pollaxfen was a man of business,—and events had shown that he had understood only too much aright. Money matters drew out the only abilities Pollaxfen had; and it was his delight to torment and delay,—thus showing his power, even when other exercise of it was denied him. Luckily, he was only one of three, so his opportunities were limited.

In London, however, and with nothing in any way to call for his interference, the ladies had no need to fear intrusion.

He had never obtained his desire, had never achieved that rank in the fashionable world which he had so persistently coveted. Evelyn had failed him, Lady Olivia had failed him; he had had no other props whereon to lean, and he and Alice had done nothing unsupported.

He had at first tried hard to lure his first friend on to take him up, and push him to the front, as he felt assured she could do if she would. He had even written himself, offered her rooms at his house, said all that he could say,—but she was not to be tempted.

She had found out what she did not know before, that in London, Harold was surrounded

by wealthy and vulgar relations ; and it was evident, from the way in which Alice wrote of Mrs Edgar Pollaxfen and Mrs Albert Pollaxfen, that these had instantly swarmed around the bride. No concert, or flower-show, or ball, or *fête* of any kind, could be gone to, but it was in company with one or other of those dashing ladies ; while Harold's sister Lucy was also up, and staying with him and Alice in Palace Gardens, and Lucy's name was in every letter. The writer and Lucy had got bonnets alike : Lucy was so fond of the theatre, that they went to a play nearly every night—in the mornings she and Lucy went shopping. If Lady Olivia were coming up to present Kate, she and Lucy would like so much to be presented on the same occasion.

Lady Olivia remembered Lucy, and remembered the other members of the Pollaxfen family, who had all been at Alice's wedding, and whose costly array had done much to garnish the festal chambers ; but it cannot be said that she was glad to find how entirely her step-daughter appeared to be at one with the wearers of those wonderful gowns and scarves.

It was all natural enough, and nothing could

well be said; but in announcing that a variety of causes had obliged her to defer dear Kate's *entrée*, Lady Olivia did not specify that, under other circumstances, she would have been glad to have included Miss Pollaxfen's name on her list.

Blind Alice, however, saw nothing; and the next letter from Palace Gardens, expressing a cool regret that her dear Kate was unable to come to Town, proceeded eagerly to suggest that, for her and Lucy's benefit alone, her step-mother should betake herself thither. A *P.S.* added that Mrs Edgar Pollaxfen, curiously enough, had never been at Court, and would be greatly obliged if she too might enrol herself under Lady Olivia's banner; and Harold would go also, since he had the promise of his county member's sanction for his admission,—so they would be quite a party.

It was too much.

To set forth to a Drawing-room with a rabble of Pollaxfens at her heels,—to see them thereafter herding together unknowing and unknown,—to be asked who they were, and have to acknowledge them as the people with whom her husband's eldest daughter was associated for life,—she could not do it.

Had they been in nowise connected, and had there been any object to be obtained, Lady Olivia was wise enough to know that she could have done as she chose without risk of remonstrating "My dear creatures"; but, in the present instance, she was aware that, although Pollaxfen being Alice's husband might be an excellent reason for stopping at his house, drinking his wine, and using his horses, it would be considered none for producing him and his in society.

Accordingly, she had no intentions of committing such an offence.

Since that was what he expected, and what was not to be avoided if once his hospitality were partaken of, she would prefer to immolate herself on the altar of Kate, and remain at Carnochan.

She had done so, and Alice's death had put an end to the whole embroilment. She need now never come across either of the two competing Mrs Pollaxfens, whose names were constantly in the fashionable journals, but who were not likely to be met with elsewhere.

The tie between them and her was snapped, and snapped, oh joy! before any mischief had

been done. Never but once had the names of Evelyn or Newbattle appeared in conjunction with that of Pollaxfen. Never once had she been "My dear creatured" at on their account. Of course, she had done well about the marriage, deserving a hearty "Brava!" for her generalship; but having secured the man and his money, she had been equally sagacious in having shown that she would never intrude him.

All had been most satisfactorily arranged, even—with a sigh—to poor Alice's leaving no children behind her.

Pollaxfen was done with; but how about the Charles Newbattles? Lady Olivia at her davenport, pen in hand, conning over the plan of her campaign, had to take bearings of the ground in every direction.

There were the Charles Newbattles. Goodness knew where they lived, and what appearance they would make when unearthed!

They were not offensive, like the loud-voiced, jewelled Pollaxfen hordes,—but, on the contrary, they were very meek and poor, and were quite endurable at Carnochan, where they seemed to enjoy themselves more than any one else ever did. She had no objection to them

at all, if they could be kept to that one yearly visit; but here, in Town, could they not be suppressed? Such things were done every day; there was no occasion for incivility or unkindness,—they had simply to let well alone, and the chances were a hundred to one against a suspicion of the propinquity of the Scotch cousins coming to the Charles Newbattles' ears. Except in the matter of actual distance, they were in every way more entirely cut off and severed from these relations than when three hundred miles lay between the families.

“I think,” she suggested, easily, “that we will not all at once look up our multifarious kindred, Kate. I have several here and there, with whom, by-and-by, I will communicate; and you and Marjorie have the Charles Newbattles——”

“But I told them we were coming.”

“How unfortunate! Did you mention the day?”

“No; for I did not know it myself.”

“So far well. We can escape a little longer. I should not have named the project had I been you; but young people are hasty, I know. Had you waited a little——”

“Why should I wait? I am longing to see them.”

“Oh,” said Lady Olivia, somewhat discomfited; “of course, if that be the case, I have nothing to say. If you are ‘longing’ to see them, very well. But are you quite sure, my love,” more gently, “that they are equally ‘longing’ to see you? When people live in a very small way, they do not always care to be hunted up, and put to inconvenience, unless they can in some way be benefited. At present we can do nothing for your — ahem — cousins, literally nothing. At Carnochan it was different; there, one could really show them kindness. If,” softly,—“if you would think it over, we could call before we left, and arrange with them to pay us a nice long visit in November, just when they are always so glad to get out of London——”

Kate laughed. “No, no; I cannot wait till November, nor even till just before we go,” she said. “What! Be here for three months, and not see more of them than that! I wonder what they would think! Besides which, I have been looking forward to seeing Dora as to one of my principal pleasures, and Marjorie is just as

anxious to be with Josephine. Are you not, Marjorie?"

"Oh yes," said Marjorie, doubtfully; "but if mamma thinks it is a pity, perhaps we had better——"

"What? Better what?"

"It would be easier not to go there at all, than to find we could not do anything more," continued Marjorie, looking from one to the other. "Since it is so far away where they live——"

"I thought you had been really fond of Josephine."

"So I am fond of Josephine,—only she does wear such hats! Don't look at me like that, Kate,—I don't mean any harm; but we could not exactly have them at our parties, you know; and would you not think it unfair to have people when we were by ourselves, and not when we had anything going on?"

The colour mantled to her sister's cheek. It was plain she was, in the language of horsemen, about to bolt, and another word or phrase would have been the signal for her riding roughshod over all opposition. But experience had taught Lady Olivia to know the symptom, and quick as

thought she interposed : the Charles Newbattles, hats and all, should be permitted to visit in Chirk Street, rather than that Kate should fly off at a tangent, and take her to task for certain other matters as to which it was absolutely necessary that she should have her own way. It was of vastly more importance that no demur should be made to her renewing the acquaintance of divers lively and not over-scrupulous associates of her youth, than that there should now and then be the risk of a nobody being met on her staircase. By giving in to her impetuous step-daughter on this point she would gain the other.

“Say no more, Marjorie,” cried she, gaily. “Your sister will ask whom she chooses to this house ; I shall do the same : and we shall both endeavour to make it pleasant to the other’s guests. We agreed beforehand that ours was to be a joint-stock concern, did we not ? We must each do our part,—each contribute our share to the general fund,—in the matter of friends. Who will you produce, Maidie ? Whom are we to look to you for ?”

Of course Maidie had nobody, being ashamed to mention poor Neddy Maclure and his sisters,

who were up in London for a fortnight, seeing sights and buying finery,—and who, she knew, would have been overjoyed to have seen even once and away in Town, the people whom they saw every week of their lives in the country.

The Maclures lived within a mile of Carnochan, being the only near neighbours the Newbattles had ; and as it had been their habit from time immemorial to regard Alice and Kate as the “glass of fashion and the mould of form,” they had been amicably looked down upon, and permitted to come and go at will.

It was not till the two younger Miss Newbattles grew up that the intimacy with the Maclure family was felt to be unfortunate. Bertha and Marjorie made too much of the girls, and were rather inclined to find Neddy amusing, to the secret rage of Kate, who could not endure that a vapid, underbred youth, however good-looking and assiduous, should be a magnet to attract her sisters to the cottage, and to make them put fresh ribbons in their hair.

She thought the Maclures should have let invitations alone, as they had formerly done,—never dreaming of projecting schemes, nor of asking her and Alice down to their little noisy

house, but waiting modestly to be taken notice of, and accepting hospitalities, without seeing the necessity for offering any return. In short, they had known their place.

But now all was changed, and the alteration was in a great measure owing to this smartly-dressed, talking, singing, vapouring Neddy. She stormed to herself when his figure was seen in the avenue, and when at the sight Marjorie would colour and smile, and show herself as conscious of being the attraction as any peacock flaunting its train before an audience.

Yet she was not angry with her sister, as she ought to have been; it was only the happy Neddy whom she longed to shake till the teeth rattled in his head. He meant no harm,—she did not suppose that he had really presumed to lift his eyes beyond the present moment; but it was bad enough that he should lay claim even to that.

“Here he is again!” One day the exclamation had escaped her lips when Mrs Popham was sitting by.

She would not have said so much perhaps—would at least have taken care not to say it before that astute visitor—had it not been that,

from various symptoms, distinct though minute, which had been going on from early morning—from the fresh flowers in the glasses, and the fresh braiding of Marjorie's hair, together with a particular song having been left on the open piano, and a walk having been declined,—from these all, separately, and put together, she had gathered who was expected.

“Here he is again!” she had cried, unable to help herself, when Neddy, true to time, was seen approaching.

Marjory had caught the words and Mrs Popham's smile, and now she knew better than to name the Maclures when called upon to add her quota to the sum of eligible acquaintance which was being made up.

She had told Neddy at parting that they would be sure to meet, and had talked of being at the same places at the same time, and of making up parties to go hither and thither; but even at Carnochan, after that smile of Mrs Popham's, there had arisen in her breast a conviction of the desirability of not carrying such projects ultimately in effect—a conviction which led her to refrain, even as she spoke, from committing herself to anything special; while two

days of London, and of Lady Olivia in London, where she expanded like a blossom in her native air, impregnating the atmosphere on every side with her precepts and wisdom, was sufficient to make the apt pupil shrink from even a casual encounter.

The Maclures' day was over.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A SURPRISE.

“Heaven from all creatures hides the book of Fate,
All but the page prescribed, their present state.”

—*Essay on Man.*

“I CANNOT think why you should make a fuss about going to see Dora and Josephine, when you are always so bad to the poor Maclures,” Marjorie did just say, however, when, on the morning following the confab, she saw her sister preparing to set forth for Fitzroy Square.

“I do not understand,” replied Kate, “why you should compare the two.”

“Because any one can see that you think the Maclures beneath you, and yet I am sure they are no worse than the Charles Newbattles.”

“Marjorie!”

“Not a bit worse,” said Marjorie, obstinately.

“To name them in the same day! Dora is as

delightful a creature as ever lived ; and though I do not care quite so much for Josephine, I always thought you did. The Maclures are——” her face showed what.

“They are a great deal better dressed.”

“Dressed — *dressed!*” cried her sister, impatiently. “Dressed! You silly Marjorie!”

“But what is it all about, then? You are never at all kind to poor Selina ; and I always thought it was because they were poor, and had to live in a small house, and could not afford to do as we do.”

“If you thought anything of the kind, you were very unjust. ‘Poor!’ ‘Small house!’ As if *that* mattered!”

“What is it, then? We know them so well, and they are so fond of us!”

“We only know them well because we have to know them well. We cannot help ourselves. We have not a taste or a feeling in common. I scarcely ever go to the cottage without being disgusted.”

“What a shame!” Marjorie looked quite dazzling, with the shifting roses in her cheek, the moisture in her blue eyes, and the pout on her lip,—she stood up and abashed the

frowning elder sister, who, as usual, was right, and yet was made to feel herself in the wrong. The part of champion of the oppressed,—that part which suited her so well, and which she had so often played,—was stolen, and played by her opponent, and here was she in the garb of the oppressor !

One little triumph, however, she had. “ Well,” she said, “ Marjorie, they are your friends, and you know what I think of them. So herewith I promise that I will not say another word against any one of the three the whole time I am here, —I really cannot answer for myself at Carnochan, where they provoke me at every turn,—but here in London, I think I can say I will not mention their names ; and if you want to ask them, tell me, and I shall get out of the way.”

“ Oh——” said Marjorie, and stopped.

“ Well ? ”

“ I did not mean that.”

“ You do not want them here, yourself ? ”

“ N—no.”

“ I thought as much. Your eyes are opened in London ; you see that they are unfit company for you, directly that you can get better. You would not have them meet the fine people

you and Lady Olivia are going to see this afternoon——”

“All I say is, they are as good as the Charles Newbattles.”

She would hear nothing of what followed. Kate might have spared her breath and her arguments. Even Lady Olivia could have better understood what she meant than did this obtuse, dogged, impenetrable antagonist. Marjorie thought she had a right to her own opinion, and was not to be hoodwinked out of it; and she was never quite so friendly to poor Josephine afterwards, because of what Kate had said.

Josey did not flatter her as Selina Maclure did—did not insist on letting down her hair to marvel at its length and beauty—nor did she sit up at nights working endless embroidery wherewith to adorn the frocks of her patroness.

Lina certainly was the kindest, sweetest friend,—and, in addition to some dozen or two of kisses, she got a valuable set of fur trimmings as a reward for her labour. Those were the terms the two were on; they could not meet without exchanging confidences, and presents.

Josephine Newbattle would have laughed at the idea of working for her rich cousin, whose

wardrobe was overstocked already; she had enough to do with keeping her own things respectable, and making and mending for the younger ones; it was not likely that she would let her little Johnnie and Jemmy wait for their warm winter stockings, while she was finishing the long silk pair which Marjorie had begun for herself, and which she would fain have turned over to some one else to finish ere they were above a third done.

Good, kind, obliging Selina, the moment *she* understood what was wanted, could not seize upon the knitting-needles fast enough. It happened that she was quite dotingly fond of knitting in silk, and that she was out of work at the time, and was only too much delighted to be allowed to do something for her friend,—but Miss Maclure made her own out of the affair, we may be sure.

Lady Olivia, as well as Kate, thought it was high time to put a stop to the intimacy: things had been getting too barefaced altogether of late; and now, in answer to a certain crossness of tone with which Marjorie spoke of the Fitzroy Square expedition, she was met by a rebuff from her step-mother, which was so unexpected

as to be more efficacious than the whole of Kate's tornado.

“I do not wish to hear a word against the Charles Newbattles,” said Lady Olivia, decidedly. “The Charles Newbattles are very worthy people, and I shall certainly—certainly call, as soon as my other engagements will permit. You may tell them so, Kate. We should never forget old friends; and *à propos* of old friends, I have a note from Lady Everley just now, saying how charmed she is to hear she is to see me so soon again: there was never any fault on her side, I am convinced, Kate; and indeed the whole affair we spoke of the other day happened so long ago, that it is all buried and forgotten by this time. With the exception of a very few stupid and ignorant people, everybody visits Lady Everley now, and so I shall,”—rather quickly,—“go and see her at once. You have got the carriage this morning, my love? Then Marjorie and I can have it in the afternoon. Oh, you are going with Coleman in a cab? Very well, very well; I believe that is quite permissible nowadays, and it will certainly leave the horses a little freer, if now and then you and Marjorie can make use of a cab. Now, mind

you give my compliments, Kate ; for the Charles Newbattles are really nice *friends*, although, perhaps, not the most desirable *acquaintances*. As for those people we left at Carnochan, those Maclures, they would be intolerable either as the one or the other."

Kate would not look at Marjorie after this, but set off at once in search of the large, cheap, rambling domicile tenanted by the obscure member of the Newbattle race.

Poor and unsuccessful Cousin Charles had always been ; he was now elderly, patient, and resigned. An early marriage had been followed by a large family ; and although the elder children were by this time grown up, and in one way and another endeavouring to make their way in life, and lift its weight off their parents' shoulders, it was but too evident that the struggle was still going on, and that both father and mother had lost in it all the freshness, vigour, and buoyancy of other days.

How grave, how quiet, and subdued they were !

They were not so at Carnochan. Cousin Charles was almost merry there, and was a favourite with everybody in the house ; while

his little plain wife was perhaps the only person of whom in her life Lady Olivia had never said an ill word.

Even she had been touched by that quavering smile.

“I think she must be ill,” she had once asserted of poor Mrs Newbattle, who had never known what was meant by the luxury of being really, thoroughly, comfortably *ill*, but who had always a dull pallor on the cheek, dark rims round the eyes, an aching back, and a perpetual sense of something left undone which she ought to have done.

One day, during a visit from the middle-aged pair, it fell out that Lady Olivia had a headache. Cousin Sophia often had headaches, often felt giddy and sleepless when her day’s work was done; but then, to be sure, it was her lot to suffer,—she never said anything,—and it was only now that, in her concern and sympathy, she felt that she knew what a headache was.

She slipped into the dressing-room, and fresh wet bandages were laid from time to time across the sufferer’s brow, and old drowsy tunes were hummed in a soft monotonous undertone, and Lady Olivia slept.

When she awoke, the headache was gone—but the visitor was still there.

“But why did you stay?” cried the astonished lady. “It was too bad, it was really too bad, on this lovely afternoon. I am quite ashamed. Could you not have slipped out, after I had dropped off, at any rate?”

“The opening of the door would have disturbed you, and I was quite happy here, it was so nice and quiet. I did not really mind——”

“You shall have the carriage, and go for a drive now, at least. It is not too late.”

“Oh, not for me!” It seemed quite wicked to take out a whole coachman, carriage, and horses, for only poor old Cousin Sophia. “Not for me!” she cried. “If indeed, Lady Olivia, you were thinking of a drive yourself——”

But Lady Olivia preferred to lie still awhile. The young people then?

They were nowhere about.

She had to comply, set out in solitary grandeur, ascertain where she wished to be taken, and how long she desired to remain out; and she could never afterwards think enough of the attention—nor of the misery of it.

Neither, to do her justice, could Lady Olivia

forget that afternoon. It would not be true to say that Mrs Charles Newbattle was from that day forward treated as an honoured guest, nor even that she was ever after welcomed and made much of at Carnochan on her annual visit there,—but one tribute the little homely woman had, and that was, that no unfriendly word, no shaft of malice nor of contempt, was ever thereafter launched at her behind her back. It was purely as a matter of expediency that a renewal of intercourse with the cousins was felt to be undesirable when in Town; and perhaps, after a fashion, the worldly-wise lady was not so entirely at fault in her view of the matter, as her step-daughter imagined.

Kate was, it must be conceded, a little taken down and uneasy during the two hours spent in the Square.

She did not by word or look show to those around what was passing within, but a little cold feeling crept over her heart as she sat in the family circle.

She had not been met quite as she had expected to be.

And how was the rich, free, bright young heiress, entangled by no home cares, fettered by

no wearisome necessities, to know or understand—had it been put before her—that of all days in the week, and of all hours in the day, she had chosen the very worst on which to break into a hard-working, overgrown household?

The announcement of her presence in the drawing-room—the drawing-room whose “cleaning-day” it was, and whose best covers had not yet come back from the laundress,—the news that a visitor, and a visitor whose presence at that early hour portended an ominous stay, had been ushered into their solitary receiving-room,—fell on all alike, elders and youngsters, with the weight of a blow. “*Here?*” “*Now?*” “*In the house?*” was heard in whispers of vexation up and down stairs, as the tidings were passed from one to another. Blank consternation succeeded. They had to go in among the half-dusted sofas and chairs, whose every infirmity was exposed by the unmerciful sunshine,—and find there, in the midst of the upset, their eager, unconscious guest, waiting to be greeted with warmth equal to her own. How shyly and miserably each felt his and her unresponsiveness! Kate might see nothing to account for reluctant smiles and languid em-

braces, but each poor soul who turned the handle of the door took in at a glance the tarnished filigree paper in the fireplace, the darns in the faded carpet—usually hidden by rugs, which were at the moment absent—the want of the best chair-covers. She might perceive nothing amiss—indeed Kate never could be got to think of such things,—but every loss, every item awry, affected Dora and Josephine.

What demon of mischief had possessed their cousin to rush down upon them in that frantic fashion?

She, for whom they had wished to be at their very best, to catch them at their very worst,—it was really hard.

And a first visit too! The first occasion that any single member of the main line of the Newbattle family had ever set foot within their door! What report could be given? What would be thought? Try as they might, they could not seem pleased.

Nobody knew what was to be done with Kate; each one had something else on hand, and something they were dying to attend to.

Dora, having just succeeded in packing off the younger boys to school, had promised her-

self a clear morning without interruptions, which should be entirely given up to working out the art design to be shown at the next prize-meeting of her society,—Josephine was already, when the door-bell rang, more humbly employed. Her solitary muslin robe had just been popped into the wash-tub, with a view to its being ready for wear by the time she should have to receive these very cousins, Kate and Marjorie; and she was herself—and no shame to her—making bare her arms to plunge them in the warm soap-suds, when told of the terrible advent below. Then she had, as soon as she could, to appear, all unpresentable like the rest, rather than hurt her cousin's feelings.

It might be kind of Kate to come, but surely it was kindness mistaken and inappropriate. It was kindness which might have been dispensed with; and perhaps something of the aspiration that it had been, was visible in one and another perturbed countenance. Afterwards, in the course of remarking on the length of her stay, their voices were undeniably rueful. Good and reasonable as they were, they could not help a pang as they reflected that she, to whom time was nothing, had stolen their precious hours,

and had perhaps lost Dora her opportunity for ever.

At Carnochan, Dora had been at Kate's disposal all day long, and there they had suited each other admirably,—but then Dora's holiday-making was Kate's daily life.

All the year round, as the humble relation went through her drudgery, she looked forward to that fortnight's leisure and intercourse. Her tastes were the same as those of the more fortunate Kate, and, in the intellectual atmosphere, she, too, would have thriven, had fate been kinder; but as it was, with all her tasks upon her mind, with work before her and work behind her,—no escape and no rest practicable,—it is hardly to be wondered at that she should have seemed strangely unlike herself on that May morning in Fitzroy Square.

Kate was perplexed when it appeared that by no possibility could a morning be arranged weekly for the two to spend in each other's company, and that her schemes for going together to hear poets, lecturers, musicians, and what not, were looked doubtfully upon. She had said nothing of such projects to Lady Olivia, but she had reckoned on their being responded to with eagerness by

Dora and Josephine ; and she was still, as we know, a little wilful, a little inclined to enjoy a tilt of arms—it would really have given an additional zest to the pleasure of doing the kindness to have had to announce her intentions to her step-mother.

And now the girls would have nothing done for them !

“How could I go ?” said Dora, afterwards. “If I were once to begin, there would be no end of it ! If Kate will send us gallery tickets, and let us sometimes go by ourselves in the evenings, we may manage it,—but the idea of our being dressed out, and driven down, and sitting among all the fine folks at St James’s Hall !”

“But it is a pity,” said Josephine, sorrowfully. “And when Kate had taken all the trouble to come soon, on purpose——”

——“Trouble ! it is no trouble to her. She has nothing else to do,” cried poor Dora, who had some excuse for being disloyal, in that she was tired out, and had spoilt her work, even when at last she had sat down to it. “If Kate had only been like other people, she would have found out how to cut short her visit ; but she sat on and on.”

“Well, I liked her for doing it,” responded honest Jo; “and though I knew my gown was being soaked to pieces, and could not even recollect whether I had put in the bran to keep the colour fast or not, still I liked Kate for staying as she did,—instead of bouncing in and out like a fine young lady, with, ‘So sorry that I must run, but really I haven’t a minute,’ when everybody knows that she has only come because she has been so bored at home that she has not known what to do with herself!”

“Alicia Partingdon,” said Dora, obliged to laugh. “Yes, that is her, exactly. But really, Josephine, I do hope those two won’t take to coming here often, and asking us there. You would just get to talking nonsense, while Marjorie looks at herself in the glass; and you would try on her hats, and wish you had the same——”

——“Indeed I should not!”

“You poor Jo, you couldn’t help it; and I did not mean to vex you, dear. You are as good an old Jo as ever lived, when people let you alone; but you can’t stand the infection of Marjorie. Don’t put yourself in her way,” said Dora, very kindly.

“I had been so looking forward to their coming,” murmured her sister; “and though I *was* at the wash-tub, I was determined not to mind about my gown. I did not grudge Kate my time. How could you? Why, Dora!——” But Dora had rushed away to hide her face.

No, Lady Olivia need not have been afraid of them. It was long before any one of the family appeared in Chirk Street; and then one solitary card, in ancient fashion engraved, announced that the civility which had cost the most agonising timidity and tremors to Cousin Charles and his wife, had at length been paid.

After that, she did drive to Fitzroy Square herself, and do her best to be affable.

Unfortunately, however, it was not so easy as she had expected: she, as well as Kate, was somewhat dismayed,—more dismayed than she had really anticipated being, as she avowed afterwards. That very dowdy brown silk, that altogether shocking cap! And yet the two had only been put on because Lady Olivia was expected, and somehow Lady Olivia knew it. She knew by intuition that Cousin Sophia was not in working garb; and it seemed as if it were hardly within the limits of possibility that

one who was thus when for company prepared, should ever have been permitted to lay a hand upon her own august brow.

Marjorie looked like a royal princess in her spotless robes, with her smiling face, and flushed, healthy cheek, between those spiritless, dull-looking girls.

Lady Olivia herself, becomingly draped and veiled, with rich lace tuckers round her throat, and a rich rustling train spreading out behind, shone forth with a marvellous lustre of youth and comeliness.

Josephine took the pattern of that tucker in her mind's eye on the spot, and reproduced it, as she believed, for her mother, in imitation edging; but nobody could say that it looked the same. Nor could she by any means catch the poke of Lady Olivia's white chip bonnet, in which nestled the two contrasting ostrich-tips that fell so softly on to the hair beneath.

Mrs Newbattle's bonnet would not poke, and she had only one very old and very thin little feather to curl over the brim. The effect was not what it should have been, in consequence; and, "The way they get up these fine fashionable ladies is altogether too exasperating," cried the

baffled young milliner, in her despair. "Lady Olivia cannot be a day younger than our own dear mammy, and yet she looks quite at a different time of life. I did not want those grand plumes of Marjorie's half so much for myself, as I wanted the little red and white tips for mother."

"Marjorie's plumes would have been no good to you," observed her brother Walter, who had been present during the call, and who had somehow felt as if all the brightness had faded out of the large, dingy room after Marjorie left. "You could not wear an erection like hers on your little head, Josephine; it would not be in keeping."

"That is because you are an artist, and go in for harmony of tone, and colour, and models, and nonsense. I like a good hat; and if I had that one of Marjorie's, I should soon show you whether I could wear it or not!"

"I wish," said Walter, softly, "she would let me paint her."

"Paint Kate rather," suggested Kate's friend Dora—"paint Kate, Walter, if you paint either of them. Marjorie is pretty—well, more than pretty, perhaps," as both brother and sister ex-

claimed at the term,—“but Kate—oh, I think I never saw any one like Kate! Such features, and such expression! It is not when she is quiet that she is at her best; it is when she grows restive, when the lip begins to twitch, the eye to sparkle, the blood to come and go——”

“But, my good girl—woa—stop! How am I to paint all this lip-twitching, eye-sparkling, blood coming and going? Eh?”

“I think I see Kate sitting for her portrait, besides,” added Josephine.

“I admire Kate extremely,” continued the brother. “Strictly speaking, she is, of course, the greater beauty of the two; but I confess,” consciously, “that I feel more—more drawn to trying my hand on her sister. I think I could make a better thing of it. If Dora, now, could paint, and could set to work on a twitching lip, and changing colour, and make her whole picture grow restive and jump about, she would be the one to take Kate.”

He was laughing nervously, and Dora took no offence; she only wondered a little, and laughed at herself a little, and suggested, “Try.”

But Walter would not try.

He knew very well what he wanted, and he

thought he knew how to obtain his wish, more-over.

He did not go near Chirk Street ; he knew better than that. Silently he prepared his canvas, and got everything ready ; and then, like a spider, he sat and watched for his fly.

The fly was not Marjorie, but her sister. Could he get round Kate, he had few doubts as to overcoming Miss Vanity's scruples. He had read her pretty well. Every movement of the golden head, every turn of her eyes, had said, " You painter fellow, do you see me ? I'm got up for you. Did not I know we were coming here, and that this was your day at home ? And did not I tilt my hat and feathers on one side, and take off half my ornaments, on purpose to dazzle your artistic senses ? There ! look at me as long as you please ; make a study of me, if you like. I am giving you the chance ; if you don't take it, 'tis your loss, not mine."

And seeing all this as plainly as if he had heard the words, he was no whit behindhand in responding. He would, at all events, make his venture.

At length Kate came. She did not come often ; it was harder than she had thought it

would be, to find a spare afternoon. Lady Olivia's highest hopes had been fulfilled; they had engagements for morning, noon, and night, and their engagements were to the best houses. And then she had her own little, humble duties, which were amicably tolerated, since dear Kate was so good and religious, and since she made so many nice friends at the dear duchess's, and since she did nothing that was wild or improper. Visiting a few sick people in the houses at the back of their own, and going to Lady William's ward at the hospital once a-week, was a very nice, quiet, ladylike way of being good, and nobody could object to it.

So Kate's time was pretty well filled up, one way or other; and as she soon learned to feel that it was only at Carnochan that she must expect to find her cousins free from cares, and fit for relaxation, she did not intrude on them, contenting herself with doing such little kindnesses as came in her way, and prognosticating pleasant future meetings in the north.

One day, however, and that not very long after Walter had begun to watch for her, she came to the Square. He caught her, and made his request. What did she think? Would

she speak for him? Would Lady Olivia disapprove?

Kate thought not,—indeed something had already been said about a picture; she would see what could be done.

One amendment on his proposal, only, she insisted upon. It was not to be a favour granted to him. Neither for his sake, nor for Marjorie's, would she ask her step-mother to countenance such a proceeding. No; the business must be regularly entered into, as a commission given to her cousin by herself. *She* would have a right to the picture when finished, and he must either value it for her himself, or permit the opinion of some authority to be passed on it.

Walter objected valiantly.

Then he had the pleasure of witnessing all that varied play of countenance which his sister had called upon him to delineate; and but that he really durst not, he longed to follow up Dora's suggestion, and make a second overture.

It was too late now, and vain was it even to sue for the full measure of the cup of sweetness he had held before the eye of fancy. No, indeed! He saw the slight figure thrown back,

the proud young neck reared up, fancied the nostril quivered, and gave in abjectly. "I thought she would have stamped," he said to himself afterwards.

So it was ultimately arranged that he might paint, but that he must be paid for it.

He was not so well content as he should have been; artists are a thriftless race, and the having begged for the task which was now to line his pocket, seemed almost a humiliation. He was angry with Kate, and angry with himself. Why had she been so imperious, and he so tame? He had allowed himself to be overawed by a single glance of her eye, and dictated to by the tone of her voice, in place of the words. A mere Miss, too,—scarcely out of her teens! He "wished Kate had been far enough ere he had asked her;" he could have made far easier terms with Lady Olivia; and with Marjorie easiest of all. *She*, at any rate, would have seen that the honour was enough for him.

But Kate was such a queer, tiresome girl; one never knew what she would say, or what she would do. "I'll answer for it, she leads her precious step-mother a lively life," he con-

fided to the protesting Dora. "I'll be bound, Lady Olivia would bless the man who would take Kate off her hands,—if it were not for Carnochan."

"The opportunity for such a benediction will not be soon forthcoming, I should say," replied Dora. Dora had no high opinion of the married state, she told herself.

"*Won't it?*" Walter misunderstood. "*Won't it, then?* Why, Kate is the sort of girl no man can look at, and not want to be after,—well, I can't say 'no man,' for I have just escaped by the skin of my teeth, never mind how or why—but it's a fact, all the same. She's *all there*, you know: every inch of her is on the spot in a moment when there's anything she cares for going on. You should have seen her just now; by Jove, I didn't know which way to turn! I declare I—I wasn't sorry when the whole scene was over, I felt myself such a fool; and what was it all about? Nothing, the merest nothing,—only my lady chose to have her own way in spite of reason—a woman, every inch of her; eh, Dora?—and the truth is, she looked so whimsically and exasperatingly lovely all the time she was giving utter-

ance to the most provoking nonsense that ever man listened to, that—that—that—pshaw! all I mean is, it was lucky the man was me, and no other.”

As for Kate, she hurried home, no less full of it all. Here at last had opened of itself a way in which she might benefit, and perchance permanently, the poor relations who at times pressed somewhat heavily on her conscience; and anticipating no difficulty from Lady Olivia which she might not ultimately succeed in smoothing away, she ran up-stairs gaily on hearing that the ladies had returned from their drive and were in the drawing-room. No time was to be lost, since Walter had been promised a little note to be despatched that evening, in answer to the “It would be well that I should know soon,” which he had fancied careless and indifferent enough to hide any deeper emotion. It had not quite done so; a lurking anxiety had been apparent throughout it all; and this had obtained for him his request far more readily than anything else could have done.

She ran up, as we have said; and finding no one in the front room, pursued the sound

of voices, and passed through the folding-doors to the shady recess at the back, wherein the afternoon tea-table was usually placed.

Some one was sitting beside Lady Olivia on the sofa, looking up at Marjorie, who stood before them both, displaying herself to best advantage in her pretty fanciful draperies,—some one whose dark smooth head was thrown back on the cushion, and whose arm was stretched out along the sofa. He turned towards her,—and her face changed.

It was Evelyn.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A BAD HALF-HOUR.

“Past and to come seem best; things present worst.”
—*Henry IV.*

“MY dear Kate, *who* do you think we have got here?”

“Why, of course she can guess,” cried Marjorie, before her step-mother could proceed further; “she has only to look up”—pointing to the fine crayon head which Lady Olivia had not forgotten to bring from Carnochan, and hang in a prominent place, where it could attract attention. “Kate does not need to ask,” continued her sister, patronisingly.

It was well that neither of them looked at Kate. The mother’s eyes were fondly bent upon her son, and Marjorie was regarding his portrait; the silent greeting between the two who had once been lovers, passed unheeded.

He rose, she came forward, and they took each other's hands.

It seemed to Kate that he was looking at her, though she could not look at him; and then she fell into the background, one thing only being clear amidst the ringing in her ears, the swimming of her eyes—that she must not betray her trust.

She had pledged her word,—how hard it had been to keep it, no one knew; come what might, she must not now give way.

But what a moment it was!

The sun was blazing outside like a furnace, and it had so blinded her, that on first entering the cool dark room wherein the group had assembled, she had needed the pause consequent on her entrance to be sure of what her own eyes saw; and now the closely-drawn blinds, and the shadow they cast, served her in good stead. No one not seeking information from her face could have told that it was working strangely, and there was nothing to call for comment in either her manner or her movements.

“Come, Kate, sit down, and rest,” said her step-mother.

Marjorie did all the standing in that house.

She liked to be seen from head to foot, and she had a variety of effective tricks which came into play on these occasions. When the youngest Miss Newbattle was arrayed and glorious, she would show herself to any one, be it the oldest crone or the youngest child,—none were too mean to be treated to a view. How much more this magnificent new “brother”!

He was talked at, smiled at, flourished at immediately, and the two were deep in recollections, when Kate’s entrance created a diversion. No sooner, however, had the very slight bustle consequent on the introduction of the newcomer subsided, than the thread of “Do you remembers” was renewed with eagerness; and even Lady Olivia had to wait for her turn.

“Rupert, do you remember how you made me take the grapes?”

“There was not much ‘making’ in the question, I take it.”

“Oh, there was indeed; I was frightened out of my wits.”

“Your little wits!” murmured her step-mother.

“I had my little wits, mamma, as well as other people. I liked the grapes, but I did not

like being scolded and sent to bed for stealing them ; so I made Rupert say that he had made me do the deed, and then we ate our grapes together comfortably."

"Now, be quiet, chatterbox ; I want to hear and to speak too." Lady Olivia could no longer be kept back. "My dearest Rupert, I have a hundred things to say."

"Yes," said Rupert, starting. Where had his wits been next ? Back in those bygone days ? Marjorie felt sure they had, and that he had been recalling her as his "blue-eyed butterfly," and that he had been saying to himself, moreover, perhaps, how gorgeous the butterfly had now become.

She flew at Lady Olivia with a rush. "Now, mamma, when you begin like that, I know you are going to be prosy—and it is far, far too hot to be prosy. Just let us hold our tongues, and look at each other, and eat cake. There is Kate, taking no heed of anybody ; sensible old darling—she goes at her tea and cake—oho, she has not touched them ! Why, you stupid thing, what have you done to make yourself look like that ? Racketing out to the East End——"

"Stop, stop ! East End ? What are you

thinking of, child?" interposed the reproving tones of Lady Olivia. "Rupert will suppose you mean Bethnal Green, at least! She has only been to Fitzroy Square, my dear Rupert, to see some very good, kind people who live there. Dear Kate is so self-denying, she shrinks from no duty; but the tax is sometimes,—and why did you not drive, my love?"

"We came by train; it takes so much less time." Speaking even those few words, with the painful conviction that some one was listening to hear how she spoke, was almost more than the fluttering breath could accomplish; but it was done, and there was no need for more. A sudden fancy had seized her sister, and she now twirled a pirouette which set all her feathers waving, and sank on one knee beside Kate's chair.

"Oh, Kate, does Walter want to paint my picture?"

"Yes," said Kate, softly. She hardly knew what she was saying, and was entirely unconscious that half an hour before it had been the last thing she had meant to have had drawn from her, until Lady Olivia's sanction had been obtained. All of this was now obliterated in

the haze which had fallen over the thoughts and wishes of the morning. She answered "Yes," and the clamour which followed was inaudible. She only heard the silence beyond, and saw that a hand had been raised as though to screen the eyes of a person who meant to hide the direction they took. He was certainly looking at her.

"What?" said Marjorie, clapping her hands; "do you really mean it?"

"Yes," again, almost in a whisper.

"How delightful! Do you hear that, mamma? Rupert, do you hear that? My picture to be taken,—and not in a horrid, stupid way—not 'at the request of the family,' to make up the set of portraits for the gallery, but to be asked for by the man himself! I thought he would do it," triumphantly. "I thought so when I was there the other day. I felt sure he was up to something, by the way he kept looking——"

"He ought to take her now," Lady Olivia nodded, aside. "Look, Rupert. As she stands. Charming!"

"But tell me," proceeded the charming one,— "tell me how it came about? Did he come to you? Did he ask you? Oh no, I remember you have just been there. Why, Kate," in ac-

cents of bitter disappointment,—“ why, Kate, I believe you went there to speak to him, and you mean to give him the thing to do *for a charity!* ”

“ There’s an accusation,” said Evelyn, rousing himself, as the others laughed. “ I must say I shouldn’t care to be made ‘ a charity ’ of myself. It is not flattering, is it, Marjorie ? ”

“ I won’t be done, and that’s all about it,” said Marjorie, pouting.

“ Walter asked me ; and I only gave him the commission afterwards,” said Kate, addressing her sister, and looking at no one else. “ It is all settled, if Lady Olivia approves.”

“ Well, my dear,” replied Lady Olivia, with a delighted glance at her son, to be sure that he had observed the deference to her, which in his presence was so especially acceptable, “ you were very right to make no unconditional arrangement. I will think it over. Mr—ahem”—she did not wish to say the name of Newbattle—“ Walter is a very rising young artist, I am told, and perhaps we could not do better ; still——”

“ No ‘ stills,’ no ‘ buts,’ mamma ; Kate has settled it all. There ! ”

“ You see what a tyrant we have got, Rupert. You little thought, when you left us five years ago, that the little good Marjorie would have changed into this great arbitrary creature.”

“ I little thought she would have had five years of my absence to change in,” he said.

“ And am I changed, Rupert ? ” said Marjorie, fishing. “ Was I a ‘ little good ’ girl once ? Kate was never good, she was always rather vicious——”

“ Was she ? ”

How odd that he spoke so !—that he did not laugh, and banter, and make fun about it ! She had even halted for Lady Olivia’s playful rebuke and Rupert’s encouragement ; but his “ Was she ? ” was uttered in a tone that was quite peculiar ; and as he said it he stole,—yes, she was sure that he stole,—a long, furtive look at her sister.

That was not what he was to do at all ; he was to look at her, not Kate.

“ Oh, well,” she rattled on, lightly, “ she is as good as gold now, and only plagues people now and then, to keep her hand in. But if I thought that in the matter of my picture she had set about to cheat——what ? ”

He had said something to himself, which nobody caught.

“What did you say?” demanded Marjorie. “Oh, you think she would not play me such a trick, I suppose? But then you don’t know our Kate; she has all sorts of Quixotic ideas.”

“Now, my dear Marjorie, I must really beg that you will not say such things. I can *not* have Kate called Quixotic,” said Lady Olivia, with great seriousness. “I have told you so before. Nothing can do a girl more harm than such a reputation; and it is not true either, Rupert—there is nothing in the smallest degree Quixotic about my dear daughter,” assuming, in the excitement of the moment, a solemnity which could not but be ludicrous.

One person present, however, knew that Lady Olivia was not quite so absurd as she appeared.

Kate felt that Marjorie would not have cared to be branded as Quixotic herself; and, moreover, that the epithet, applied in all sportiveness, usually followed some little fit of foolish jealousy.

And she was perfectly right. Marjorie had noted Evelyn’s look. “I daresay he rather admires Kate,” she now said to herself; “but Kate does

not think much of him, or she would not be so silent. Men like lively girls; I shall certainly be his favourite in the long-run."

At length Rupert rose to go.

He had rooms at his club, within half a mile, and would see them constantly; but he was engaged for that evening.

As soon as he had taken his departure, and inquiry could be made with tolerable composure as to how, when, and why he had come, the anxious, shivering, feverish Kate had the satisfaction of hearing all about it; and for once in her life she did not find Lady Olivia tedious.

The most prolix and verbose statements were listened to with undeviating attention; and though Marjorie must interrupt at every turn—resolute on knowing more about her picture, on hearing what Walter had said, and what Kate had said, and when she was to have her first sitting—Kate, too, showed her spirit. With Evelyn absent, she could and would ask about him; she would not be daunted even by her sister's pertinacity; and at length she had as full an account as had been given to Lady Olivia herself. Her son had left the service at the close of the campaign, as he had before

spoken of doing, but he had done so rather more abruptly than he had originally intended, and having received their London address only the day before sailing, he had thought he could not do better than appear without forewarning.

Oh yes, the explanation was there in full, had any one cared for it, but it may be doubted whether the girl who listened desired more than merely to be talking of the one subject, to the exclusion of every other; while the narrator equally, or almost equally, carried out of herself, was scarcely less indifferent. He had come, and that was enough. He had come for good, and his mother's happiness was complete.

At thirty-four a young man should have done with roving, and should begin to take a pride in his ancestral seat, she said. Surely now, at least, he would think it time to marry and settle down. All at once she discovered that she had wanted this for years, and would have scouted the idea that not so very long before, nothing had terrified her more than the idea of becoming a dowager. Dowagerhood had been shorn of more than half its horrors since those days. Now, although the season was rather far advanced, Rupert might even this

year make his mark, would certainly come in with all the dash of a novelty, and perchance cut out the jaded dandies who had been hard at work since Easter. Then, if he would only do something, and if Marjorie would only do something—but stop! what if they should take it into their heads to “do something” together?

No; that she could not, would not allow. Each must look higher than the other.

Rupert must be told the very next day about young Lord Fairlight, and Marjorie must have it laid down to her that the new arrival was to be considered in the most strictly fraternal aspect.

“Nothing,” considered Lady Olivia, “so effectually damps romantic fancies as being given every facility for humouring them: if the girls see my son morning, noon, and night, they will never think of him, handsome and distinguished-looking though he be; and unless they draw him on, he will never think of them either.” A sensible general remark, which, however, did not exactly hit the case in point, as our readers know.

Marjorie was wild over her picture; frantic even about her boots, that were never to be seen;

and fidgety and variable over each portion of her attire : but in the midst of her deepest distraction, the announcement that Captain Evelyn was below was sufficient to bring her down. He went out with them on the second evening after his arrival, and every one was glad to see him back again. He was speedily posted up in all that was now going on ; had half-a-dozen secrets confided in his ear before the night was over ; and from the place where he took up his position, holding quite a little court behind a side-door on the outer landing, there issued sounds of suppressed mirth and revelry, highly tantalising to all the fair ones beyond. None of his popularity had declined. Billies and Charleys and Teddies clustered round him as of old ; and a certain Max, who was of a more than ordinarily cheerful disposition, burst out a laughing in his face at intervals.

At length, however, he appeared to bethink himself that he was neglecting Lady Olivia's girls, and sought them out, only to find the reflection had come too late. He had not had a chance for the past hour.

Marjorie said to herself that he showed no fight. She was rather put out that he took his

dismissal so peaceably, and tossed her mazy golden locks as she muttered, "Stupid! If he had said a word, I could have managed it. Why, I never dance with Cecil Barrington if there be any one else. There he goes to Kate now."

The "he" alluded to was not Mr Barrington, but Evelyn, who, not without some inward perturbation, was, for the first time since his return, voluntarily accosting her sister.

It was plain that "No" was being said; but then followed a pause, a few more words, and her hand lay within his arm.

They went off among the dancers, and the first round showed that not a dancer in the room could equal Kate's partner. The easy spring, the precision, and the grace with which Captain Evelyn waltzed, had once been well known in Town; he had lost none of it, as he had lost no attraction in face or figure: and though it was impossible for spectators to say whether the lady he had chosen was his equal in the first respect, she wanted nothing in the last. They were the handsomest pair on the floor.

"That stupid Cecy Barrington!" cried Marjorie, under her breath.

As long as all around were floating like themselves to the soft melodious strains, Kate moved mechanically with the rest, and hardly realised what had taken place. The touch of Evelyn's hand on her waist was so light, that although she could not exercise any volition of her own, the tie which bound her to him was so indefinable, that it seemed as if they had but one movement, one will, between them. Not that she excelled—for practice and early training had been wanting; but she was naturally elegant, and her lithe slender form, made for activity and grace, prevented any awkwardness, even on unfamiliar ground. Had Evelyn been caring about the matter, which he certainly was not, he would still have been satisfied with her step. As it was, he prolonged the rounds from a different motive: he had a task to perform as soon as the dance was over; and until it was off his mind, he could hardly bring himself to speak to his partner.

Neither cared, indeed, to stand still. Almost ere she had drawn her breath, she was asked if she were ready again; and though the final cessation of the music shot a feeling of terror into her heart—as she, too, anticipated a trying mo-

ment—it was something of a relief at the same time.

Evelyn, when he had overcome her scruples as to accepting him in place of a tardy youth who had been out of the way at the moment the dance began, had not merely urged his cause, but had intimated pretty plainly that more lay behind. He now led her where they could not be overheard, and without allowing himself time to hesitate, plunged boldly into the subject he wished to introduce.

“There is something I have to say to you,” he began, not looking at her, but obviously getting off his lesson as quickly as possible, “and this chance is what I have been waiting for. After what—what took place once——” He stopped.

“Yes.” Very steadily, very gravely spoken.

“May I allude to it?”

“Yes.”

“Now that we have met again, and that we shall have to meet daily, we should both be in continual fear—that is to say, very uncomfortable—I mean it would be awkward for both of us, if we should begin by avoiding each other. And—and—I thought, if we were to agree to—

to—what I mean is, that if we could just see each other as if there were nothing——?”

“Yes.”

“Do you understand?”

“Yes. And—and you are quite right.”

“We may be friends, and speak to each other, and go about with each other,” said Evelyn eagerly, and evidently relieved to have got on so well. “You see, I shall have to be in your way, as you are under my mother’s care, and I should like to be with you too, if—if it can be done; and—and we can be all on good terms, without any——”

“Bother,” said Kate, with a smile.

“That’s it—bother. If there is to be no bother, it will be pleasanter for us all. I know you have forgiven me,” he added, in a different tone. “Kate, will you try to forget?”

“It shall be as you say, Rupert,” replied she, trembling a little. “I am glad you spoke; it was kind of you, and it was the best thing you could have done. Yesterday,” she went on bravely,—“yesterday I was taken by surprise; it was so strange, so very unexpected; and I am afraid I showed——”

“Recognition? To no eyes but mine. But I was angry with myself for having placed you in such a position,—exposed you to such a trial. That, too, I wish to explain; you must have thought me abominably heedless, but, indeed, I meant to get away before you came in. I thought I understood that you were away for the day——”

——“Oh, it did not matter.”

“And you are well—quite well? But I need not ask. I——”

“Oh, you are here?” said Marjorie’s voice in the doorway; “I thought you were down at supper, Kate; and there is poor Sir Harry stamping and swearing——”

“Don’t send your sister his way, then,” said Evelyn, sitting still with a determined face. “Tell us his whereabouts, and we will give him a wide berth, Marjorie.”

“It is really too bad of Kate; I never thought she would have been the one to treat poor Sir Harry so unhandsomely. He always reckons on her, Rupert. She is his standing-dish,—his *pièce-de-résistance*: he knows that, however shocking his performance, Kate will pull him

through. She does look rather inclined to give him a cuff on the ear for his pains, all the same, sometimes," she added, in parenthesis.

"Well?" said Evelyn, coolly.

"You had better go back to the dancing-room, Kate," continued the young lady, turning to address her sister; "you really had, if you don't want to make a fuss."

"Please take me," said poor Kate, rising hastily, and feeling she knew not what.

"Please do nothing of the kind," interposed Marjorie, her intrepidity being quite equal to the call upon it; "here is Mr Barrington, only too much charmed to escort the recusant, and see that she behaves better in future," looking at him to intimate he was to do as he was bid. "And here am I, at your honour's service for the next waltz," dropping a curtsy in the most accomplished style imaginable before the other gentleman.

"The truth is, Rupert," she continued confidentially, as the party mechanically fell into the ordained arrangement,—“there, let them get out of hearing,—the truth is, that I did not choose to commit myself to you until I knew your paces; but now that I see you dance

divinely, I am no more afraid. A good partner is everything," continued the girl, who had never had a partner at all until within the last six weeks. "How did you get on with Kate?"

"Not fair, that. I shall have Kate asking next how I got on with you?"

"But did you notice how neatly I passed on Cecy Barrington to her? He plagues me so dreadfully, you know, that really I have to take care of myself. I don't wish to be unkind, but he should not encroach; he will have to learn to put up with Kate now and then."

"Cruel," said Evelyn, with a movement of the lips that was not a smile, but had something of the effect of one. "What do people do when they 'have to put up with' Kate? Tell me, in case that evil fate may befall me some time or other. Do they all look as resigned as poor Barrington did; or do some of them stamp and swear like Sir Harry?"

"What do you mean? I don't understand you."

"*She* would have understood," muttered Evelyn. "Half a word was always enough for her. Well, the worst is over, and now I may be as kind to the poor girl as I please."



PART VIII.

CHAPTER XXX.

MARJORIE PROCLAIMS HER OPINIONS AND APPLAUDS HER HONESTY.

“ A few brief words her character portray,
This world contents her—if she might but stay.”
—TAYLOR.

So Kate learned what was now before her: nothing more was ever to be said on the old subject; and that book of the past which had dropped from its shelf, and fallen open with a fluttering of leaves that threw up to view this and that buried scene, was to be fast shut again for ever.

Evelyn came and went; his being of the party made no change in the gay distractions which now entirely filled up the days of Lady Olivia and Marjorie,—nay, their having him was only an excuse for venturing further, including more than had been done before.

Marjorie made him her slave.

He had to be there early and late, and in attendance wherever she went, or my lady was not pleased. He had to give his opinion of her portrait, of her riding-habit, of her—oh, fie!—stockings. The pretty clocked and embroidered stockings, which came in boxes tied up with blue ribbon, were passed over to him for review, and brother Rupert took it upon himself to pronounce that he could not pass a satisfactory verdict until he saw the articles in use. Lady Olivia might tap him with her fan at this; but then, she said, among brothers and sisters there was no use in being prudish. She was quicker than Marjorie in some matters.

On Sunday afternoons there was always a wonderful dressing up of the latter. And for whom? They had hardly ever any visitors, having been obliged to discourage all mere acquaintances, to please Kate. “But although dear Kate still retains some old-fashioned Scotch prejudices,” Lady Olivia had said, “she will certainly not extend them to you, Rupert. Rupert may be welcomed, may he not, Kate? It is our only day for having him quite to ourselves.”

Accordingly, it did just occur to Kate that there was some reason for the marvellous toilet which blazed forth on their one quiet day. Maidie averred that she liked to wear her new things, that it was of no use laying clothes by, and that one should always be fit to be seen, whether people came or not. She saw no reason for being dowdy on Sundays more than on other days; and no representations from her injured and interested maid could make her feel that her hair, as it had been good enough for church, could not need rearranging, just for sitting upstairs in a darkened drawing-room.

“It’s sheer ill-nature of her, and that’s what it is!” alleged Coleman. “Gets out of order, indeed! Fiddlesticks! That’s what I say. Miss Marjorie’s hair never used to get out of order on a Sunday till Captain Evelyn took to coming regular,—and I do think ’tis a sin and a shame to keep a poor woman indoors for near upon an hour frizzling and tying hair, and me with two miles to walk to my chapel—all in the heat of the day, too. Laws! he’ll never think a pin the more of her for being all set out for him! She should make believe not to care whether he came or not, if she wants to bring him round;

but there! she'll not catch him, nohow. He's not for her at all, as is plain enough, one would think. Can't Miss Marjorie see that all the time that he's fiddling and giggling behind her chair, he's no more thinking of her than if she was the sweep? Oh, la!" cried the lady's-maid, with a toss of her head, "I could tell you where his eyes is! Not two miles off, neither! Don't he watch somebody in and out of the room, and aint his head always turned her way, whichever that is,—and don't I have to give him the white shawl, before he'll take either of the others out of my hands, when I come down with the wraps, before they goes out? Miss Marjorie's being by, don't shut him up like a knife,—he doesn't hear every word *she* says, and see every turn she takes, and make as though he didn't. There'll be a fine to-do some of these days, when she finds out that all the bows and the ribbons have been for nothing, and that she had better have gone to church on a Sunday evening, like Miss Kate;—and I, for one, shan't be sorry!"

From which it will be seen that Coleman was vindictive, as well as sharp-eyed and discriminating. Perhaps it might have been well, however, if Marjorie had heard her;—not that she

was what could be called in love with Evelyn : she was not, she would have told you, thinking of love at all ; it was only that Lord Fairlight was tiresomely heavy company when Rupert was making fun at the other end of the room, and that she could not keep herself from wondering what he could find to make him stay so long with Kate, when she could not get at him for all the Dickys and Harrys by whom she was surrounded, and that Cecy Barrington had grown of late to be a perfect pest, unless, indeed, her "brother" were looking on to see her fooling him.

As long as Rupert would stand by, and shake his head at her, and whisper his sly allusion afterwards, she had no objection to talk with the best or the worst of them, — she enjoyed nothing more than keeping up the ball of badinage and compliment, showing thus, as she hoped, her power and her prestige ; but as soon as she missed a certain tall figure from the circle, everything fell flat.

More especially did the jest become stale if she suspected, as was not unfrequently the case, that Rupert had found his way to her sister. It seemed as if it were only in these crowded

assemblies that he had anything to say to Kate ; he seldom, if ever, addressed her if there were only a few present ; and if he joined the two girls, and no one else were by, Marjorie was sure of having him to herself. She never thought of observing, as Coleman did, where his eyes strayed to. Had she been asked, she would probably have said that they were oftenest on the ground ; but unless she turned right round, how could she tell, when he usually took up his post somewhere behind her ? But she did notice that when their handsome cavalier accompanied the party to balls and receptions, he was almost always to be found in the vicinity of her sister Kate ; and whether this were by accident or design, remained yet to be seen.

She did not altogether like it ; she had never quite forgotten that look of his when first—as all believed—he had been brought into contact with Kate ; and what it meant, she had not been able to decipher. Probably admiration,—certainly admiration,—but was anything else included, and had the feeling died out subsequently, or did it still remain ? The latter was the chief point. Both sisters were included in Rupert's brotherly attentions ; he danced with

both, and gave to both gifts and bouquets; but he spoke to the elder with a gravity and brevity that contrasted curiously with his easy tones when addressing the younger,—and one day it occurred to Miss Pert to tax him with being afraid of the ex-virago.

He turned on his heel, and would not answer her. Marjorie took a little more care after that experiment, and confined her attention to her own affairs,—which, indeed, were always to her of paramount interest. She was so full of herself, and of this phase of her existence, that, out of sheer simplicity, she let every one into the secret. You could not be with her ten minutes ere she had given you her confidence,—had shown the end, and aim, and object of her life, by every tone and attitude.

To hear her talk was to marvel at her aptness and her presumption. London was everything,—Carnochan was nothing. None would have dreamed of the seventeen years passed, almost entirely, in a retired country-house,—she might, she must have been cradled in the hotbed in which she was now ripening with such precocious and amazing celerity.

The jargon of the place,—its ways, manners,

and customs,—were by this time as completely hers as they had ever been her step-mother's; and indeed, whereas she had at first leaned with the utmost docility on that guiding hand, it was she who now instructed Lady Olivia.

“Fashions change,” she would say, with a toss of the saucy head, if any demur were made to a whim or proposal,—“fashions change, *ma chère mère*; and things are done now that would have been thought very bad a dozen years ago.”

“*Half-a-dozen!*” the *chère mère* would eagerly interpose at this,—“half-a-dozen, my dear child: you forget; and really——”

“And really it makes no difference. Who cares now what was the *mode* half-a-dozen years ago? Things are out of date one season that were in full swing the last.”

She was so young, so strong, so positive, that weaker vessels were inevitably borne down. Besides, what could they say? Asides she ignored, scruples she laughed at. Admire her, agree with her, give her her own way, and all went well enough; but she could not endure indifference or the secret smile: and thus it came to pass that occasionally, in the presence

of her brother, she was irritable and suspicious. This sort of thing went on sometimes.

“I don’t think I shall go to-night.”

“Indeed?” said Evelyn. “Why not?”

“Oh, I don’t know. It’s a bore.”

“A bore, is it? Hum! Fairlight not to be there?”

“Fairlight! Nonsense!”

“Or Charlie Nepean?”

“Pooh! Charlie Nepean!”

“Or Teddy Tempest? Or Cecy Barrington?”

A pout.

“That’s odd. What can have become of them all?”

“Nothing that I know of.”

“Why are they not going to the ball?”

“They are going—every one of them; you’ll see them all as large as life,—or rather, you won’t see them, as you have gone and engaged yourself to that tiresome dinner to that tiresome old general. What you can see in *it* to attract you, I am sure I can’t imagine! Soups, and fishes, and roast-beefs!” with a shudder.

“Good girl, Marjorie,” said Rupert, approvingly. “Always put the right thing in the right place,—food first, company afterwards.”

“Company? Oh, sir, you would have me believe it is for the company you go, would you? I admire your taste. It makes one hotter than one was before to think of all the horrid red coats.”

“There won’t be any red coats at the ball, I presume?”

“I tell you I am not going to the ball. I said so before.”

“And what, then, does your royal highness propose to do with yourself, if one may presume to inquire?”

“Nothing. At least,—oh, I daresay I—I shall go with Kate to the Charles Newbattles.”

“Oh, really? Happy Walter!”

“Rupert,” pettishly,—“Rupert, for shame! What a tease you are! I declare I never met with such a tease. Why will you not let one alone? I do believe you like to say provoking things. Can’t you even leave out poor Walter?” with a sigh.

“It appears you can’t, Madge.”

“How can you say such things? You always speak in that way to me, as if you thought——”

“Come, come, come,” from Lady Olivia.
“Rupert! Marjorie! What is all this about?”

Silly people, to quarrel for no reason! Marjorie, what time is the carriage to be ordered for to-night?"

"Marjorie is not going to-night, ma'am."

"Not going!"

"She prefers a quiet tea with her picture, and her painter, and the rest of the family; after which she will proceed to the studio——"

"What nonsense is this?" Lady Olivia's brow wore the frown that had almost grown obsolete. "Marjorie will do nothing of the kind; I could not permit such a thing for a moment. It is different for Kate, who knows what is due to her, and can take care of herself——"

"So can I, mamma."

"So can *not* you, my dear; and I should not think——"

"She did not mean what she said," interposed Evelyn, to keep the peace. "She no more intended to lose the grandest ball of the season than to throw her best frock into the fire. Well, perhaps I may drop in for a little and see how you are getting on, Madge." And he brought her a bouquet presently, which quite reconciled her to the martyrdom.

No one was allowed to hold her flowers at any time that evening; and they were in water on the drawing-room table when he came next day.

“Well,” he said, “how did you and Teddy get on? That was a smart little corner you had chosen. Miss Chamberlayne wanted it awfully, but she had to give up the ghost of a hope at last.”

He might say so if he chose; and so far from being called a tease this time, his companion, all smiles, could make quite merry over Miss Chamberlayne’s discomfiture.

“Do you know what I heard last night?” proceeded Evelyn. “That the eldest Miss Newbattle was the best hand at talking, and at flirting, and at kicking up her heels generally, of any of the beauties going!”

“*Kate!*” exclaimed Marjorie.

“Whom else could the eldest Miss Newbattle mean?”

“Oh, I see. But, Rupert, do I really look the eldest? Should you take me for the eldest? How very odd! I always said that was what people would think, because I am fatter and taller, but I never really thought it. Why, Kate is nearly three-and-twenty, and I am not eighteen!”

Her tone of mortification was diverting. There was no attempt to suppress it; the more she had been made of, the more had her appetite for adulation increased, and the more unreserved had she become in its display. An implied tribute to her sister, at ever so slight an expense to herself, was not to be borne,—and there having been such a tribute in the present instance, was doubly objectionable, coming through the channel it did. She could not, however, get any satisfaction out of Rupert. He put her off with jests and nonsense, and she was unable to discover whether he thought the reputation she had won worth the having or not.

“I can’t help it, you know,” she said, plaintively. “I do mean to be good, Rupert, but they won’t let me. As soon as I have got rid of one of them, another comes up——”

“It’s hard lines, isn’t it?”

“And you, who could help me, so often refuse to go with us now!”

“Well, I do, Marjorie; the fact is, I couldn’t stand it. I go as much as—as your sister does, but you are beyond me. I did my London when I was a boy——”

“A boy, indeed!—a boy!”

“I began when I was not much older than you, and had ten years of it; and when one has once had a surfeit, it is not easy to take to it again. Furthermore, it’s a—a useless life. If you were not here,” reflectively, “I should be off to-morrow.”

“Pray don’t let *me* keep you.”

He smiled the bitter-sweet smile that had made Pollaxfen’s ears tingle, and it made Marjorie’s now. She bit her lip; but, to be sure, how should she suppose that “you” so spoken could mean anything but “you” singular and personal?

“This sort of thing is very well for a week or two,” continued Evelyn, presently. “But I wonder that even a girl in her first season is not tired of it before it is half over.”

“Tired of it!” cried Marjorie. “Tired of it! Oh, Rupert, I only wish it would never end!”

“My dear girl!”

“I do indeed. I should like to go on as we are doing now, for ever and ever. Of course I should. There! Say what you like to me. And so would half the girls we meet, if they dared to tell the truth. We don’t want any other heaven——”

“Stop that! Think what you are saying.”

“You need not scowl at me, then,” Marjorie

recoiled a little. "You should rather be pleased with me for not being hypocritical. After all you said about honesty and truth the other day too, I might have expected to have had one person to whom I might tell out what I thought, without having a face made at me."

"It was not your saying, so much as your thinking——"

——"What? That London is better than Heaven? It is to me, a long way. I should prefer it, I know, if I were given the choice,—and so would heaps of others. I hardly know one who wouldn't—except Kate."

"Did it ever occur to you," said Evelyn, slowly, "to try to be like Kate?"

"No, my dear sage adviser, it certainly never did occur to me; and for two very sapient reasons—namely, first, because I could not if I would; and second, because I would not if I could." And she made a *moue*, intimating that the question was disposed of.

"She is different from all her sisters," continued Evelyn, without looking at his companion; "she has had the same home, the same up-bringing, the same surroundings, and yet——"

——“Go on; ‘and yet what?’”

He picked up a book which had fallen, rose, and walked to the window.

“And yet what?” persisted Marjorie, following. “What disagreeable thing are you going to come out with next, Mr Mentor? You may as well say it, now that you have got so far.”

He took her hand. She was mute with astonishment at his look and manner. “My dear,” said the young man, very seriously. “You said a fearful thing just now. You proclaimed yourself readily, openly, unnecessarily, on the devil’s side. You flaunted his colours in my face, and called on me to admire your honesty. If ever a poor girl had need of—of repentance, and of seeking forgiveness on her knees, you have to-day, Marjorie.”

Marjorie began to cry. “I think you are very unkind,” she said. “You know that I am not one of your over-saintly people—that I don’t stop to think over every single word; and then you take me up like that, and frighten me till I don’t know what I am saying!”

“I am sure you did not know what you were saying,—but I am afraid you meant it, all the same.”

“Of course I meant it. That is to say, I meant it at—at the time; I don’t mean it—always. But I do hate those very precise parsonical persons. And still worse, the others who are as fond of going about as I am, but draw up their lips, and look as mild and meek as possible, whenever there is any one by to be shocked.”

“*They* are hypocrites. No, don’t copy them.”

“Who am I to copy?”

He opened his lips twice to speak, but got no further; it seemed as if the answer stuck in his throat.

“There now!” said Marjorie, triumphantly. “I thought you did not know what you were talking about.”

“I know,” said Evelyn, with a hurried look and manner, that bespoke mental disturbance—“I know well enough. But I can’t explain. It is not for me, Heaven knows, to instruct. Go to your sister; ask her.”

“That was what you meant when you said she was different?”

“Yes.”

Marjorie had to swallow this as best she might. A few tears of real vexation did her

no harm with Evelyn, who, although he partly suspected their source, only felt that to see a woman cry was what he never could endure; and afterwards he was thanked—touchingly thanked—for having cared so much about a silly girl as to talk to her for her good; and he was begged not to mind her having been cross, but to tell her all her faults in future, and to help her to amend,—and it was all so prettily put, and the clasped hands were so pathetic, and the violet eyes so large, that what could a poor fellow do but pat her on the shoulder, and tell her to be a good girl, and bid her take care in case somebody should come in and find out that there had been a scene?

Marjorie thought that she would not mind, supposing some one did. She rather liked the idea of being asked what had been the matter? She hopped up-stairs presently, and ran to her glass to see how she had looked through it all; and finding that she had never been in better face, so to speak, began to sing, and to think that she would not be long before she needed just such an another admonitory interview.

It was so nice to be lectured by a man like Rupert, and to feel that in spite of the unpleas-

ant things he managed to say every now and then, she had only to be a little penitent and soft to bring him round again.

All that afternoon she kept up the farce.

It was she who was grave and silent when Evelyn came up to have a chat with the two girls, as their little low carriage drew up under the shade in the Park that afternoon. Lady Olivia was at home nursing a headache; and accordingly the sisters were alone, and sat side by side, followed by admiring glances whichever way their horses turned. At length the carriage came to a stand-still, and Rupert found them out, and came and stood talking.

But he could not succeed in making Marjorie at all cheerful. She was on the farthest side from him, and she kept her head steadily turned that way, with a pulled-down, doleful, drooping air, that was intended effectually to dispel the last grains of severity in his cruel spirit.

Kate, on the contrary, was, as it fell out, in one of her brilliant moods. What had caused it, or what she was thinking of, she did not disclose; but in her flushed cheek, her eye, her whole looks and manner, there was a certain exaltation,

a life, that at length drew her quondam lover's attention towards her so closely, that he had none to spare for any one else. He could not bear to see Kate excited now. All Pollaxfen's dreadful insinuations could be recalled at any moment by an agitated air or impetuous accent. That she was at the present time in health, and that for some years past no anxiety on her account had been felt, he was aware; but the tidings of her renewed illness subsequent to the wedding, and the frequency of Lady Olivia's protestations that she remained at Carnochan herself purely "on our dear Kate's account," had seemed absolute confirmation of all that had been said.

He knew that his mother could be reticent and plausible even to himself. She might, and very properly too, choose not to take him into a confidence which it would be desirable in every way to limit; and her having gone so far as to allow that it was a matter of health at the first, was good proof that she could not adduce any other grounds.

Afterwards, of course, there had been deaths and mourning to account for seclusion; but nevertheless, he could perceive that even at

this date they did not care to thwart or disturb their impulsive, warm-blooded beauty,—and he drew his own inferences.

How that eloquent eye and mobile lip had once delighted him! Now he durst not look on them.

It startled him to see her so amusing and bewitching. What was there all at once to exhilarate!

He began to watch, painfully, jealously.

In spite of the carriage-door being thus usurped, however, a knot of adorers pressed round where the youthful belles sat,—some merely standing about, resolved to show to the world, if they could do no more, that they were of the party—others, more lucky, chatting briskly and continuously, racking their brains in order to keep pace with the clever Miss Newbattle, who was “in a jolly humour” that afternoon, but who was not always to be depended on for not “snapping a fellow up short.”

Accordingly, they made hay while the sun shone, to Evelyn’s wrath, and to the no small displeasure of some one else besides.

The flashes of fun and laughter made Marjorie on the other side presently exchange her imaginary pensiveness for a genuine fit of the sulks,

since she was not in the field, and since it appeared that she was to be let alone if she chose. Her large white parasol was brought down in front of her face resolutely; and she had a word for no one, as she reflected that Kate had no business to be so gay, when she was really dull and out of spirits.

For Kate was gay—very gay. Indeed, something had happened shortly before which had pleased her much; something which had caused a glow of generous warmth to a heart that but seldom had a chance of exercising its best impulses, and something which she would have asserted was as unconnected with herself—with her hopeless love and its anxieties—as anything could possibly be. Yet why, then, that peculiar pleasure, that secret uplifting of the heart? Are they usually caused by the mere contemplation of a benevolent action?

“Oft in the passions’ wild rotation tost,
Our spring of actions to ourselves is lost;—
As the last image of that troubled heap,
When sense subsides and fancy sports in sleep
(Tho’ passed the recollection of the thought),
Becomes the stuff of which our dream is wrought,
Something as dim to our internal view,
Is thus perhaps the cause of most we do.”

Dim indeed, and altogether unsuspected, was

the cause in the present instance; but while Kate was happy in her ignorance, Evelyn was miserable in his. Anguish and admiration increased every moment as he listened to her voice, and stole glances at her radiant countenance. He had better have gone away. In that very "eye of fire" lay one great source of her attraction for him,—those varying moods enthralled one who was uniformly moderate in his views and equable in his temper. He was cool, and he liked heat. He could not, to his mind, ever behold Kate to greater advantage than when roused and stimulated beyond what she was herself aware of,—and then, by whom or what, it did not materially signify. But Zounds! it must be by *something*!

Let there be some apparent, palpable spring from which effervescence, whether mirthful or the reverse, might proceed, and he could serenely enjoy the overflow; but a flood of merriment, of provoking badinage, and captivating glances, and nothing to account for it!—Pah! it was not like Kate to care for fooling puppies.

Things were going too far, and somewhat arbitrarily he resolved to put a stop to the whole.

Miss Newbattle had placed her hand for a moment on the low side of the carriage, close to where Captain Evelyn leaned over; he moved a pace nearer her,—in order, apparently, to permit an acquaintance of Marjorie's to see what he could do towards restoring that sad-visaged young lady's complacency—and finding the hand within reach, covered it with his own.

“I think you are staying out too long,” he said, bending so far forward as to conceal the action, and speaking with such a decided lowering of the voice that the other men involuntarily fell back a little. “The sun is very hot, and you look overdone, flushed, excited. Go home, Kate,—go home and rest.”

Her face showed its amazement.

“These friends of yours would tear me in pieces if they knew what I was saying,” continued Evelyn in the same undertone; “but you know, *you* know, Kate, that your health is not to be trifled with. May I give the order?”

“Oh yes. You are very kind; but really we have not been out long, and—and I am afraid poor Marjorie will not thank you.”

“I am going to get you to take your sister home,” said Evelyn, making Marjorie stoop

forward to hear what he said. "This din of people's tongues is too much for her, and these fellows will not let her alone."

All this time his hand lay heavily on Kate's.

"Oh, very well; but," said Marjorie determinedly, "I shall just take Kate in, and come back myself. *I* had nothing to do with the din, I am sure; and whatever Kate may do, I am not going to sit stuffing indoors on this glorious afternoon. You may expect to see me back in half an hour, Captain Evelyn,—though I daresay you would think me better employed in reading good books at home. Perhaps, if you refrain from saying so, I may condescend to pick you up, and take you for a turn yourself," relenting, as the idea occurred to her. It would be rather nice to drive up and down with Rupert, and set people talking.

Kate started at the words. She had been only half grieved at being sent away before; it was so kind of Rupert, and he had held her hand in such a grip, and looked so grim upon the subject, that a little flutter had crept over her at being the object of such solicitude,—but now a horrible suspicion crept in.

What did Marjorie mean? Was that what it

all had been done for? To get rid of her, and give her no choice in the matter? Was it possible that Rupert could stoop to make pretences for his ends? Alas! she must always feel that Rupert had been once unworthy. Then, indeed, it had been for her sake; but now—the hot blood burned her cheek as she told herself that his anxiety had been affectation, and his significant grasp a mere conveying of his resolution to have his will.

For after all, it was nonsense. She had never felt better in her life; she was really enjoying the sunshine and the gay scene, perhaps a little also the homage and the flattery,—and why should he so suddenly have taken it into his head that they were unfit for her? Why, but because she was wanted out of the way, and no other pretext for dismissing her was at hand? When she had been thus easily disposed of, the two would take their fill of the summer air, and each other's smiles. The pleasantest hour of the day was drawing on; and here was she, who loved the open air so much, condemned to her little stifling room,—forced to accept professions of affectionate considerateness, which were but a mockery, and

a mockery so shallow, that the artifice could impose on no one.

Yet to resist could not be thought of. They should have it as they would.

And when, by-and-by, the two came in together,—Marjorie looking brighter than she had done all day ; Rupert rather grave, but only becomingly so—only silent, as a man should be whose being is awakening to a new life under the electric shocks of a woman's glances,—the whole seemed only too plain.

She marvelled at her blindness in not having foreseen what would so surely happen.

And how about the future,—about that very evening, for instance ? They had all been going to a concert—not a large affair, but one of those little chamber-concerts which were pleasant, if not extraordinarily superior, and which Kate liked well enough. Rupert had promised to come to dinner and join the party.

Could she go or not ? An insane desire consumed her to go and see the worst, make sure that fancy should never again have room for hope, or else—oh, she could hardly dare to think that the afternoon's vision might even yet be dispelled !

Should she not decide to go ? It appeared

that she had no need to decide on anything—the point was settled for her. Her breath came short and brokenly as she was told of their having negatived the idea before she came down to dinner, and her eyes shone with a gleam of defiance and momentary passion, which spoke daggers to Evelyn's heart. Yet she did not rebel, even while inwardly most indignant.

What had she done to be treated so? Why should such deceit and trickery be needed? Why could they not say, or at least openly show, "We wish to be alone, and your presence is superfluous"?

Had she ever once, by word or sign, betrayed to any one that passage in her life which he had wished forgotten? Had she herself once reminded him of it? Put herself in his way? Never,—never!

She had rather shunned him than otherwise,—unobtrusively, plausibly; always having an excellent excuse for being absent at the times he was most likely to be there, but accomplishing her purpose so sensibly and cleverly, that even he had not been able to find it out.

There was no flying out of the room if left alone by chance with him: on the contrary,

there was always a vast flow of talk, indomitably pursued, without intermission, and apparently only waiting for such a chance to have its tap turned on ; and when the door opened again, they were found thus entertaining each other, by any one who chose to come in.

On Sunday evenings he had once or twice walked with her to church, and on one occasion they had had but one prayer-book between them,—that was to say, she had hers. What did it matter? The places were looked out and the book held towards him again and again. Afterwards he shawled her up, and she had accepted his arm down some dark steps in the entry. She had made no demur to anything, accepting strictly the position he had laid down as the one he wished her to take up ; and now she thought that she should not have been treated as he and Marjorie were treating her.

She was so proudly conscious of having done her part, that her spirit rose at their—or rather his injustice.

“He need not be afraid,” she said, bitterly. “He might have trusted me. But I shall yet show him that I am to be trusted, even as I was once—beloved.”

And then she sat down and wrote a letter, which, had its contents been explained to Captain Evelyn, might have altered the aspect of affairs—or it might not, for there is no driving an idea out of the head of a man when once it has been driven in.

Still it was a pity he had not the chance, more especially as the effect of Marjorie's dew-drops in the afternoon *tableau* had not been precisely what she had imagined. He had been sharper than she thought. He had noted how speedy was the skin-deep repentance, how immediate the trite responses, how paltry the pretence! She had thought to gull him, and he had not found it worth his while to deceive her; but she had not seen his smile as she ran away.

He had felt rather sorry on the whole. It was a pity, he had said to himself, that she should be so poor a creature, so emphatically the result of Lady Olivia's training and the world's spoiling; but whilst summing up the whole into a shrug of contempt and the inward observation, "Girl of the period," he soon found himself far away in spirit from the little London street, the summer sun, and the flies buzzing in

the window-panes, taking part in another scene, in which, with another pupil, he had played the teacher.

How infinitely more satisfactory had the task been then !

It had taken a full hour to bring the refractory Kate to reason, as they sat by the sea-shore under the moaning cliffs, on that occasion when she had first poured into his astonished ear her version of her wrongs.

He had been absolutely dumb during the recital, confounded, and ill at ease, as he listened to the impetuous torrent of words. She had wrung her little hands together as she spoke, and he had wished to goodness she would be less vehement and more docile !

Afterwards he had given it her roundly, not mincing matters, but dealing out one home truth after another with a valour that was creditable, all things considered, and which had certainly surprised himself quite as much as it had dismayed his auditor.

How she had winced and swerved beneath his blows ! What starts of pain she had been betrayed into, whenever a shaft more than usually pointed cut into her quivering heart !

Every charge he had found against her had, it is true, been repelled with energy ; and excuses, as well as counter-accusations, had been brought forward with all a woman's volubility ; but that she was suffering under the ordeal, she had not been able to hide.

All the while he had marked her panting breath and heaving bosom. He had thought her on the point of breaking down over and over again, and had been half savage, half charmed with the dogged obstinacy which he could not overcome. Her indomitable spirit had refused to be mastered while an inch of ground remained on which she could take her stand. Whilst she had had a word to say for herself, she had said it a dozen times, persevering in the repetition till he was sick of the phrase,—and then all at once she had given way, bowed her head, and buried her face in her hands.

He beheld the moment, and felt his triumph over again.

It had been something indeed to have wrought that exquisite result ; it had been worth any one's while to have probed the wound which could thus yield up its poison.

No falsehood here ; no ready, glib acquiescence, and closing of the interview with a tripping step and a mock sigh. No simpering surface spread over the little scar, which was after all a mere nothing.

Not so, indeed. The demon within, sullen and resisting to the last, had been hard to kill, even when bruised from neck to heel ; but, once slain, there had been no resurrection, and the death-struggle had left wounds never wholly to be effaced.

Oh how sweet Kate had seemed to him after that ! * * * *

The door opens, and he passes her on the threshold without a word.

CHAPTER XXXI.

“OVER-IMPULSIVE, MISS KATE.”

“Despatch thy purpos'd good : quick courteous deeds
Cause thanks ; slow favour, men unthankful breeds.”

—*Translation from Ausonius.*

KATE'S letter was to Maxwell, the lawyer, and Maxwell said, “Heyday ! what's this ?” as he caught the drift of it ; after which he knitted his brows, put out his lips, and appeared to reflect deeply.

“It's true,” he said, “that they did her a service, and that she owes them some return. I recollect all about it—ay, ay ; I recollect very well, and undoubtedly she owes them some return. But a return like this is—is not to be made in a hurry. Five hundred pounds ! Hum ! And she demands it as coolly as though it were five hundred pence, and she could take me by the throat, and make me pay, or hand me

over to the tormentors. Impulsive, over-impulsive, Miss Kate. The wild Newbattle blood getting the upper hand again, as it aye did with one or another of the race. Talks of obligation? Hoots! An obligation is one thing, and five hundred pounds is another! ‘Cousin Charles approves?’ Like enough. Cousin Charles thinks he may stand in want of five hundred pounds himself some of these days. And Mr Macculloch refers her to me? Very good, Andrew Macculloch; very good. I’m to have your sins on my shoulders as well as my own, am I? That’s it, is it? Hum! ha! But Pollaxfen,” with sudden briskness,—“ay, Pollaxfen! There’s the scratch! What will Pollaxfen say? Hang me, if I’m not inclined to give the business a push, just to see how the meddlesome, cantankerous, sheep-faced body would take it! Set him up for a trustee! Had I ever had a glisk at yon time, of things turning out as they have done, I would have seen Pollaxfen at the bottom of the ocean before I would have given my voice for putting in his name! But who could have foreseen it? I made as sure of an heir before the year was out as ever I did in the old laird’s time. They’ve

cheated me,—cheated me ; that's what they've done.

“ And now here's this bit lassie rules the roost, and we must all do her bidding ! Five hundred pounds ! Oo, we can raise it easy enough, if it's desirable ; but it's just that, that I'm not so clear of. What if it should be only a beginning—the first chink of the door opening to destruction ? If she find it's plain sailing this time, she'll be at it again before we can look about us,—or I know nothing of womankind.

“ It'll be a thousand, next time. Whew ! That would be no joke, once that sort of correspondence sets in ; the property will not stand that, my bonnie lady : London too, and all the hats and bonnets to be paid for,—she doesn't reckon them in yet, and still she's short of money ! And though you are but a single woman the now, Miss Kate, there's maybe a wedding to follow, and sons and daughters all to be provided for, unless—unless”—with a gleam in the grey eye—“ there should be a grandson of Walter Maxwell's own, one day, laird of Carnochan.” For Bertha had at this time a baby boy ; and who could say to what a destiny that favoured infant might not be born ?

“Well, there’s one thing, however,” concluded the old gentleman; “we can do nothing without Pollaxfen,—and I’m very much mistaken if Pollaxfen will allow us to touch a stiver.”

Two days before Mr Maxwell was thus called upon to ruminare, his fair correspondent had fallen in with Evelyn’s old acquaintance, Brewster of Castle Kenrick, who, on Kate’s inquiring after his tenants at the Muirland Farm, had informed her that the poor folks were in great trouble, having lost the greater portion of their stock during the cattle-plague, which had visited the district severely. He had done all that he could, Brewster had averred; but he had other tenants in equal distress, and he had found it beyond his power to set them all on their legs again.

Having just come from Castle Kenrick, the young laird was full of the subject; immensely pleased to find some who could and would listen to him, and who had an interest in it—Kate having mentioned enough of her connection with the Comlines to justify hers.

The paltry jargon of the hour was strange and distasteful to a simple sportsman such as Brewster: what did he care, he wondered, for

the squalling of an Italian puppy, or the tricks of a French ape? He had heard of no mortal thing but the tenor and the conjuror since coming up; he had gone to a *séance*, and had seen how everything was done,—by Jove, he had! Seen all through it at once, ropes and pulleys and everything,—and had just missed having both his eyes knocked out, by one of those confounded tambourines coming at him full swing! He would take precious good care not to be let in for that sort of fooling again,—and as for the squawker, he might squawk himself hoarse before he went near his place a second time.

Such were his internal reflections.

How delightful, then, to find some one who would talk of Castle Kenrick, and the old hills of Galloway! He brightened into positive intelligence over the subject. Yes, the poor Comlines; the best souls in the world: he was really awfully sorry for them; he did not know what was to be done. Of course he had cut down their rent—he had cut it down more than one-half; but when a fellow has four or five such farms on his land, and not one of them can raise a sixpence, what can one say?

“Mr Brewster,” said Kate, at this point,

“you have done your part, now it is for me to do mine. How I am indebted to these good people, I have explained to you ; and that debt never has—never can be paid off. But in one way—as regards—as regards money, my father did wish to—to offer them a suitable remuneration, and he could not prevail on them to accept anything. Literally, they would take nothing but a trumpery silver teapot. How glad I am that at last it is in my power to do them a service, if only to show that they are not forgotten—never will be forgotten. You must, if you please, give me your advice. I am rich, you know, and can afford to be bountiful ; what shall it be ?”

“Eh ?” said Brewster, staring a little. “’Pon my word, you are very good. It will be a great thing for the poor folks if you will really send ’em a trifle. But don’t bother yourself, you know,—for, of course, you have lots of claims, and all that sort of thing. Think it over, and we’ll have another talk by-and-by.”

“No, indeed,” replied Kate, laughing. “By-and-by does not suit me at all. And I detest thinking things over. This must be done at once ; and it is the most fortunate thing in the

world my meeting you as I have done ; if you will not mind giving me a little more of your attention——’

“ Oh, you know,” said Brewster, who, country lout as he was, understood that he was talking to the finest woman in the room. “ Oh, you know,” he said, and smiled deprecatingly. “ It’s you, you know——”

——“ What I want to be told is, how shall it be done ? Through you ? ”

“ No, no ; that would never do.”

“ And I could not send it anonymously, as I should like them to know it came because I looked on them as my friends——”

“ To say nothing of having to sign the cheque.”

“ Oh, to be sure, the cheque ; I had forgotten that. But what is the cheque to be for ? Do help me. Do say.” She was on fire with eagerness, and he would have given something to have had a respite wherein to collect his wits, and consider what answer he should give.

“ What for ? Eh ? I suppose you mean how much ? Hum ! Well, perhaps fifty pounds,—but, upon my word, it’s a shame to trouble you.

I ought not to have said anything about it ; I'm really——”

“Don't. But fifty,” said Miss Newbattle, doubtfully. “That is very little. I am sure you could not have meant fifty; you must have meant one or two hundreds, at least. What could fifty do towards restocking a farm?”

“Oh, nothing whatever. A good Galloway bull costs that.”

“Mr Comline's prize bull,” said Kate ; “how proud he was of him ! ‘Chairlie,’ do you remember ? When I was there, ‘Chairlie’ was his favourite theme.”

“Oh, you were at the farm in ‘Chairlie's’ time ! No, certainly, poor Comline may whistle for another such animal. He has never had as fine a one since,—and now he has none at all.”

“And you knew that, and yet told me to send him a paltry fifty pounds ! For shame, Mr Brewster ! you have been trifling with me. You think that I am not in earnest, and that I am merely playing at being benevolent ; you think that I do not know what I am talking about, and that I am to be put off with anything you can suggest to ease my conscience ;

and you think that it is no matter to me, so long as I am kept in the dark. You think——”

“Oh, by Jove, I never thought as much as all that in my life!” cried poor Brewster, overwhelmed at the extent of his imputed treachery.

“I’ll—I’ll say anything you like, you know, if you really want me to do it, but——”

“Would a thousand do?”

“A thousand! Bless my life!”

“I wish,” said Kate, emphatically, “to do my kind old friends a real service, not merely to make them a gift which is insignificant to them and unworthy of me. Can I not make you understand that?”

“Well, but you know, a thousand! Come—a thousand!”

“Would a thousand stock the farm?”

“Rather; five hundred would do all they want, for that matter—for they have some three hundred pounds’ worth still in hand. But really,” said Brewster, with honest trepidation, “you make me feel ashamed. And you must take care too, Miss Newbattle,—upon my word you must,—or you’ll get yourself into a mess. And then”—in despair—“people will say I had a hand in it, you know.”

“No, they won’t; we’ll not give them the chance,” said Kate, in high glee. “Now I have found out at last what I am to do, and the rest is easy enough. Five hundred pounds. Perhaps I had better say only that, although I should have liked a thousand better. But there’s Mr Maxwell; he keeps us all in order; I shall write to him to-morrow——”

“Maxwell of Murthrie?”

“No; Mr Maxwell, our lawyer. He manages everything for us *really*, though he goes through the form of asking my trustees.”

“I say, trustees! Don’t let us get into a scrape, Miss Newbattle.”

But Miss Newbattle expressed her scorn for scrapes, and drove down to Fitzroy Square the next day, beginning, as wise people do, with that which is least. Cousin Charles’s opposition to anything she wished, would be, she knew, a mere bagatelle; and so it proved. Probably, as Mr Maxwell said, Cousin Charles felt ruefully that such another good turn would have been only too welcome to himself. Perhaps, poor over-burdened wretch, he would not have minded then and there having had a note slipped into his fingers. At any rate, he

had agreed, willingly, approvingly. And then it had been Mr Macculloch's turn, who, with his weather-eye well open to contingencies, cautiously shifted the burden on to the lawyer's shoulders.

He would not oppose ; his consent should be forthcoming if Maxwell asked for it. But he would do no more.

All had, however, been so far satisfactory, that, fresh from the scene of action, the youthful victor went joyously to her drive, radiant and beaming with an inner spring of elation at her success, joined to pure, unselfish pleasure in her enterprise. Her letter, however, which was not written until after she had entered into the cloud which succeeded to that burst of sunshine, was very different to what it would have been had she sat down to the desk an hour or two before.

It was rather short, and very explicit.

Maxwell, we know, considered it cool. He took no offence ; there was no disrespect to him. He merely felt that too little was made of the whole thing. Miss Newbattle wanted the money, and begged him to see that she got it ; one trustee had consented, the other would not oppose,

and she had not asked the third. Would he be so good as do this for her, as she would prefer having Mr Pollaxfen applied to through him?

“Ay, ay, that’s gey and plain to be read,” quoth the shrewd Scot. “That I can understand. She steps daintily over the wee puddles, and gives me the river to jump. I’m to tackle Pollaxfen, am I? So, so; I must see what can be done. I have not had a good bout with Pollaxfen since the last timber business; I doubt this will stir him up still more merrily,—ha, ha, ha! It’s something to have the chance of another upturn with that piece of mincemeat,—and so, if it were only that you hate him as much as I do, my bonnie Kate, I’ll do your bidding.”

But when the worthy gentleman had signed and sealed his note, he leaned back in his chair thoughtfully.

“What I can’t see,” he said, half aloud—“what I can’t make out, one way or another, is, what the devil it can matter to Pollaxfen? What business is it of his? He behaved himself fairly enough about the settlements,—a wee thing snack, but nothing to speak of—nothing to speak of. And now, now that it

is all over with him, that he has nothing more to gain, nor yet to lose, the very name of Carnochan to him is like a red rag to a bull! Can it be that he's sore about the want of family, think you? It may,—it may; but stop a bit, I'm not clear that that will account for all the stramashes we have had together. It's this objection, and that objection,—and he must see this, and refer to that,—as if he set himself teeth and nails to plague us all! Now, if he had married Kate—— Ha!"—a pause. "Married Kate," repeated Maxwell, his tone rising and his eye glittering, as though he had caught the glimpse of an idea which was seeking to elude him. "And why did he not marry her? Alice was nothing compared with her sister. The property? Tootle—tootle—too! He has money enough. Not but what Pollaxfen's a man who would never despise a five-pound note,—but still it's not in my mind that it was the property. In that case he would now let the property alone, wouldn't he? Sure-ly. And why doesn't he then? And what for does he set himself to bother Kate in everything she fancies? And what for does he never come near the place, if he

take such an interest in it? And why does she ask me to apply to him now? Why am I *always* asked to act as go-between whenever anything's wanted? Has she ever once gone to him straight? Never. Has she ever once got her will without a wrangle? Never. Has she ever spoken to him, or he to her, since the day of her sister's death? Never,—to my knowledge at least. Now I know where I am!” cried he, kicking aside a footstool, and pacing up and down the room in an agony of discovery. “Now I know where I am! Bless my soul, what a fool I was not to think of that before!”

He had now, at any rate, retrieved his character.

He had not guessed the whole truth—that would have been too much to expect; but he had so far got upon the right scent, that while presuming that Alice's hand had been sought only after Kate's had been refused, he found that solution of the problem met every exigency.

“And he'll not forgive her to the end of his days!” concluded Maxwell, chuckling and rubbing his hands over his success. “Trust Pol-laxfen for that! He has had an experience, I take it. Ay, Kate's a vixen,—or was a

vixen—for the poor lassie’s quiet enough nowadays; that old harridan of a step-mother takes care of that! I wish Jezebel could get an Ahab No. III. to quit us of her, before ever she comes across the Tweed again,—that’s what I wish. I could manage the bairns; and poor Bertha would get asked something oftener to her own old home than she does now. Heigh-ho! Well, we must bow to the decrees of Providence. . . . So it’s to be? So be it. . . . And Kate gave it Pollaxfen hot, did she? I’ll wager she did. And now she’s got to ask his leave for the use of her own money, has she? That goes against the proud stomach of her, or I’m mistaken. Now that shows the folly and shortsightedness of the sex. Up and let their tongues fly, without an eye beyond the present moment,—beyond the pleasure of deafening a man with their clatter. Here’s an enemy made for life, with as small ado as though he were a gnat brushed off with a pocket-handkerchief! Not a thought that the gnat can sting,—no, no; that would be far beyond any one of them, least of all Miss Kate. Well, all I can say is, the browst is of her own brewing, if she like not the taste of it!”

A few days afterwards, not without a certain satisfaction in the fulfilment of his anticipations, he sat down and penned the following:—

“DEAR MADAM,—In accordance with your desire, I have applied to your trustees, Mr Andrew Macculloch, Mr Charles Newbattle, and Mr Harold Pollaxfen, for permission to raise on the Carnochan estate the sum of five hundred pounds, to be handed over to you for your own personal and private use, at this present time. The answers I have received this morning from Mr Andrew Macculloch and Mr Charles Newbattle are favourable to your request, but Mr Pollaxfen is of opinion that no more funds should be raised off the estate for any purpose, and that the income you annually derive from it is sufficient to cover all necessary expenditure. I may add that Mr Pollaxfen’s letter is very decisive; but should you wish it, further application can be made to him, together with a fresh statement of the case, and any particulars likely to make him reconsider his decision.—
Yours very faithfully,

“WALTER MAXWELL.”

“A fresh statement?” said Kate to herself, when she came to that part of the letter. “But I have no fresh statement to make. I told him all at the first; there is nothing more to be said; and if there were, it would make no difference. Whatever I asked, it would be the same. What shall I say? I hardly thought he could have refused me again,—and to refuse such a small request! How very odd Mr Maxwell must think it! Coming through him, I thought that, for the mere look of the thing, Harold would have been obliged to agree. Perhaps”—with a bright idea—“perhaps, however, I made a mistake in that. He may have been angry about that very distinction between him and the other trustees, supposing that he has found out I asked them myself. Mr Maxwell has let this out, I daresay. And that is just what Harold would pounce upon, for he would like to have me humble myself to him, and have the power of saying ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ to myself. How I should hate doing it! But if it be the only way——”

Her hands were hot and trembling as, at last, after many hours’ conflict,—after fluctuations of resolution, shrinkings, and ups and downs in-

numerable—shying at the leap as surely as ever she resolved to take it,—she at last sat down and wrote.

Yes, she would do it, cost her what it might.

She would write with propriety and dignity, to ask as a personal favour that he would withdraw his opposition; and would, furthermore, assure him that the case was an exceptional one.

Reasons more cogent she had none to give, and was also aware that reasons were not what were required; it was supplication, and that alone, which could gain her purpose.

Well, she would supplicate.

She tried not to think of the man as she wrote the letter, not to feel that his hands would unfold it, his eyes rest upon it, and his lips sneer over it. So long as it effected its end, she would be fain to be satisfied, at whatever expense to her own pride; and although certain that the manner of his granting her request would resemble the tossing of a bone to a dog, she would not regard it—or him. He might laugh to himself at having thus brought her on her knees. Let him laugh, so long as he did not say her nay; and that, it was surely impossible that he could now do.

But what if he did ?

Along with her lawyer's letter, she had that morning received a shabby envelope with a terribly messed-up direction, in Lizzie Comline's well-known hand; and perusing poor Lizzie's effusion—tracing the not ignoble pride which strove with the affection—the sorrow, the humiliation, mingling with the gratitude—all the tumult of feeling that was so apparent throughout the simple and dignified phrases, had brought the tears in such a stream down her cheeks, that she had been glad no one else was down when the early post came in;—and though longing for sympathy and counsel, she had not dared to name it. To no one could the matter be confided, until settled;—when a brief statement that she had helped the Comlines in an hour of necessity would have been quite sufficient for Lady Olivia and Marjorie. Neither took any interest in the Comlines now; there would probably have been felt a mild approval of her paying off the old obligation, and that would have been all.

She would have made no secret of the matter, but for Evelyn. She did not wish it to come round to him; and come round it would most

certainly have done in Lady Olivia's benign encouragement of her dear Kate's benevolence.

Kate hardly dared look at that poor letter after perusing Maxwell's.

What if she should have to tell those who were now blessing her in their full hearts, whom she had lifted out of their despondency, and had caused to be glad and hopeful, trusting to her word, that she must fail them after all? What if she should have, with her own hands, to dash to the ground the cup of happiness she had held out?

No petty conjectures as to what they might in that case think of her, their friend and would-be benefactress, entered into that noble breast. She would not deserve contumely—she did not fear it. It was the chance, the barest minimum of a chance, the fraction of a possibility, that Pollaxfen might, in spite of all she had done, remain immovable, which made her palpitate all over.

Tell herself as often as she would, that for him to refuse was now impossible, she felt within her secret soul that even impossibilities such as this, do now and then take place.

CHAPTER XXXII.

POLLAXFEN'S ANSWER.

“A man that studieth revenge keeps his own wounds green, that otherwise would heal and do well.”—BACON.

EXPERIENCE proved her right.

With all the devilish relish for such a task likely to be engendered by revengeful thoughts long fostered, Pollaxfen put together the few curt sentences in which he utterly and entirely declined to be addressed on the matter by his sister-in-law, referring her for his answer, which had been already given, to Mr Maxwell. Personal correspondence on matters of business was, he must beg to inform her once for all, out of the question.

Unluckily, the cruel letter was put into Kate's hand by Lady Olivia herself, Evelyn being present as well as Marjorie; and her step-mother's remark on the direction being in Harold's hand-

writing, did not tend to preserve her equanimity. Lady Olivia had picked up the letter on the hall-table, and brought it up to Kate, who was quietly reading, or trying to read, in the drawing-room, not having been on the look-out for afternoon posts. It had not occurred to her that she could have an answer before the following morning, and she was at once startled by receiving it in the presence of all, and discomposed by their knowledge of who the writer was.

“See what he wants, my dear Kate,” observed her step-mother. “It is so very, very seldom that we ever hear anything about that connection now,—and from Harold himself we have not heard directly for years. I feel quite curious.”

“I daresay,” suggested Marjorie, smartly, “that it is to say he is going to be married again. It would be just like Harold, if it be; he is the sort of man to go marrying on for ever,” forgetting that some one else, not very far off, had not been restricted to a solitary choice.

“And he writes to Kate to announce it? Hardly likely,” replied Lady Olivia, who had

happily missed the end of the sentence. "I am the person that he would surely think it fit to acquaint with any tidings of that sort," she added, with a very natural touch of dignity.

"Oh, Kate is head of the house, in a way, mamma. And though Harold hates her"—(Evelyn listened attentively)—"though Harold hates her,—he does, mamma, whatever you may say,—he would not on that account, perhaps, be backward in informing her of his new prospects. I know what I know. Ten to one, Rupert, that Harold Pollaxfen is going to enter the matrimonial state once more,—will you take me? Quick,—before Kate satisfies mamma's curiosity."

"There is nothing to excite curiosity," said Kate, who, between her struggles to preserve a calm exterior, and her mortification at the insulting terms of her brother-in-law's refusal, was scarcely able to speak at all. "There is really nothing to interest any of you but myself. I made Harold a request, and he has refused it. I—I think he need not have done so."

("And I wish you had not given him the chance," thought Evelyn.)

“Is that all?” both Lady Olivia and Marjorie exclaimed,—and then laughed at each other.

“Something about money, I suppose,” continued the elder lady, presently. “I must tell you, Rupert, that this spendthrift girl of ours always finds herself short of money; and yet no one knows what she does with it. She does not spend it on herself; that I know,” with an affectionate look. “She does not allow herself one-half of what Marjorie finds utterly insufficient.”

“Indeed, ma’am? Can it be *because* Marjorie finds hers insufficient?”

“Now, Rupert, how unkind!” But Marjorie looked a shade confused, all the same. “I am sure I don’t want money,” she added; “it never does me any good. It all gets frittered away in paying bills. As for Kate, she does not even do that; she has no bills to pay. Hers just drifts away from her, no one knows how.”

“Except the people who receive it,” added Lady Olivia, who was rather proud of her step-daughter’s princely ways, since they did not interfere with *her* purse. “You forget them, Marjorie.”

“Well, she is as good as she can be, dear

old darling; and it is a horrible shame of that stingy Harold not to let her have as much as she likes, if it be money——”

“It is money,” said Kate, in a low voice. “I wanted some for what I feel sure you,” addressing her step-mother, “would have considered a very proper purpose. At another time I will tell you, if you care to hear, for it is a—a long story.”

“Oh yes, my dear; another time. And I can always trust you, I am sure; though, of course, it would be as well that I should be consulted. And Harold will not consent?”

“No; Mr Macculloch and Cousin Charles both agreed at once: it” — she struggled with her tears — “it was not kind of Harold to refuse.” Then she rose and left the room, while those left behind looked at each other, as though to see what each thought.

“She is very much put out,” at length observed Lady Olivia, nodding her head sagaciously. “She never speaks so unless it is something very serious indeed. And she was nearly crying too!”

“To think of crying about anything Harold could do!” exclaimed Marjorie. “If I were Kate,

I should show more spirit; I should snap my fingers at him. What need she care? He is just a little smug-faced baboon, not worth a thought."

"I am afraid he has been rude to her," said Lady Olivia, showing that she thought rather more of the offender than the last speaker did, by a slight apprehension in her tone. "I am afraid he has been making some of his speeches. Nobody can say more disagreeable things,—and he never understood Kate."

"He never could bear her——"

"My dear, don't talk in that absurd way. You were a very young girl at the only time we ever saw anything of Harold Pollaxfen, and cannot possibly recollect anything much about him. There is no need to make yourself out to be older than you are——"

"Nor to make myself out younger," retorted Marjorie, whose tongue was always ready with a flippant reply, especially if her 'brother' were present. "You forget, mamma, that though I look so *very* old for my age now, I was supposed to look equally young for it once, and that the time that I cannot possibly recollect, was only five years ago."

“And here,” thought Evelyn, “is a chance I might have had all this time, and never once thought of it! Like Lady Olivia, my recollections of Marjorie seemed to point to the fact that she could not be any authority on what passed then. She seemed a mere plaything. But I’ll lose no time in sounding her now.”

Easier said than done. Marjorie went upstairs before her step-mother, and he had to wait.

All, however, were to be together that evening. They were engaged to a musical party; and though the affair was not to Evelyn’s taste, he exerted himself so far as to appear when it was half over, getting wedged into the doorway with the best view of the two rooms, and, what he valued still more, of the party whom alone he cared to observe.

Marjorie had attendants of course; so had Kate; and Lady Olivia, ample and radiant, presided over the flock.

Brewster sat next to Miss Newbattle (having got his invitation to that end), and they talked together so earnestly and constantly as to be impolite to the performers,—a fact which Lady Olivia refrained from pointing out, considering

that it was that very nice young Mr Brewster of Castle Kenrick who was the delinquent. Since Kate would have nothing to say to Sir Harry, and since Castle Kenrick was such a fine property she was told, (she had no idea whereabouts it lay), she would not mind even though several heads did turn round once, when at the most piano-part of the symphony, a bass voice at Kate's side refused to be moderated or silenced.

"That's what I should do, at least," the voice was saying, when at length Evelyn drew near. "You can't help it; you have done all you could. When a brute like Pollaxfen——" The name fell distinctly on Evelyn's ear.

He stood still in mute amazement. What on earth could Brewster have to do with Pollaxfen? And to speak of him in such terms? And to Kate?

People, however, were rising on all sides, and Brewster stopped, getting up also, while at the same time he caught his friend's eye and nodded. "Just come, eh? Well, I don't know much about such things, but it strikes me you've lost the best of it. We have had some uncommonly good music, haven't we, Miss Newbattle?"

“You were an attentive pair. To see you, I should have pronounced you both to be critics of the first water.” In spite of himself, there was an infusion of bitterness in the raillery.

Brewster, however, only laughed. “He’s chaffing us, Miss Newbattle; he has been watching us from some hiding-hole. O—o—h!” with a ludicrous air of surprise and defeat, as at that moment who should step up but the identical Sir Harry once or twice before named, who, seeing that neither of the gentlemen seemed to have thought of offering to conduct the young lady to the supper-room, where most of the assemblage had now adjourned, swooping down upon the prize, bore it off himself, after the fashion of the fox in the fable.

“Oh!” said Brewster, rubbing his eyes. “Well!—I say!”

Evelyn also looked foolish.

Presently, however, they drew together by mutual consent.

“That’s the best-hearted girl in England,” cried Brewster, recovering himself. “I can’t tell you how sorry I am that I bothered her about this, Evelyn. You know I couldn’t help it, for I had no idea of what she was going to do.”

“What are you talking of?”

“Hasn't she told you?”

“Told me what? Why should she tell me anything?”

“But you are a relation,—or next door to one. And you are always there, aren't you? Perhaps I ought not to say anything; and, after all, you could do no good, unless it were to speak to the poor girl, and tell her not to fret. She's in a sad way about it; and what's worse, it's my fault,—for I should have stopped her at the first. I wouldn't have it get about for anything, mind you; for I don't know what would be thought of my allowing my tenants to be relieved by another proprietor. It was only Miss Newbattle's making out that she had been under an obligation—bother it, I'm telling you now, after all!”

“Look here,” said Evelyn; “you may go on. I understand now why Kate did not tell me, and there is nothing to hinder my hearing of it from you. Perhaps I can help her.”

“If you could—but I don't see that you can. However, you remember the people at the Muirland Farm,—the farmer that took you in——”

“Perfectly. What about them?”

“Awfully hard up, that’s all. Lost nearly all their stock—well, more than half, at least—in the cattle-plague. Miss Newbattle wants to help them. She says the daughter was nursery-governess at their place, and that afterwards she herself was taken ill while down at the farm—I had an idea I had heard something about it, but it had gone out of my head, not knowing anything about the Newbattles then,—and so she thinks she would have liked to do something for the poor folks.” Brewster was himself rather disappointed at the failure of the attempt, as was natural, and spoke of the “poor folks” quite pathetically.

“Did she tell you any more?” said Evelyn.

“Oh yes; the end of it was, that she wrote off to them at once;—of course she shouldn’t have done that, till she had seen her way clearer—but then women never stop to think,—and it was really awfully nice of her, wasn’t it? Off she wrote, and told ’em all about it. So, of course, they were pleased enough, poor critters. And then this morning comes a plump refusal to let her have the money—it was to be five hundred pounds”—looking rather sheepish—“from her brother-in-law, Harold Pollaxfen, one

of the trustees. It seems the estate is under trust, and she had had the consent of the two others, on the strength of which she wrote to the Comlines. Considering, you know, that she was doubtful of any one of them, it was about the last thing she should have done," concluded Brewster, sensibly.

"She pledged her word that they should have the money?"

"So she says."

"And Pollaxfen refuses, in order to annoy her,—not," said Evelyn, "that there is any real difficulty?"

"If there had been any real difficulty, her lawyer, Maxwell, who seems a straightforward fellow by his letter, would have pointed it out."

"She showed you the letter?" said Evelyn, with a faint pang, for which he could not account. It was too absurd to be jealous of poor Brewster, who was as honest a jackass as ever walked the earth; but it was a little grievous to feel that he had been shut out from a confidence to which this acquaintance of a week had been admitted.

"Oh yes, she showed me the letter," replied his companion, pluming himself thereon, and

looking vastly pleased. "She brought it here to-night, on purpose—and Pollaxfen's too."

"I don't see what occasion there was for her doing that."

"Well, you know, it was only natural that Miss Newbattle didn't want me to suppose that she had spoken off the book. She had made so cock-sure of having the five hundred all right,—had talked a little big, you know, meaning no harm, poor thing,—that it is rough upon her; and she is a proud kind of girl, too; she hates to have to own beat."

"Very true. She would feel it, certainly. She showed you both the answers?" interrogatively.

"The lawyer's was all right,—sensible, to the point, offering to write again if required—of course, six-and-eightpence, you know; but Pollaxfen's was a beast of a letter,—and to send it to that lovely girl!"

"Was it,—was it really?"

"I tell you what, Evelyn, she has given it him hot at some time or other, or else he is wild at missing the place himself. Carnochan, they tell me, is a goodish estate, and he married the eldest of them. Lady Olivia looked him out,

glad to get one off her hands, I suppose. Step-mother, you know. By George, she's your mother!"

"Oh, well," he presently resumed, reassured by his companion's laugh, "they get on all right, I suppose. I don't know anything about it, I only say what other people tell me. But I'm deuced sorry I let this poor girl put herself in Pollaxfen's way."

"Met him ever?"

"Oh yes. One year I saw a good deal of him. Awful little—how did he come to be picked up by your people at all?"

"Brighton. I say, is he the sort of fellow that would be capable of—of——"

"Anything, as long as he wasn't found out. Everybody who knows him has some story or other to tell of him. But he's a sneaking kind of hound too; he would have been more careful if he had suspected this would come to the surface."

"It would be good sport to take him in the flank," said Evelyn, looking fixedly into his friend's face. "A surprise movement, eh? I won't have Kate balked of her whim. As you say, it is hard upon her—and she is a proud girl. To be done by such an earthworm! She

shall have the five hundred—it's nothing to me—and she shall keep her word to the Comlines."

"Oh!" said Brewster, coldly. "Ah! As you like, of course. But—but I wish you wouldn't. It makes a fellow feel so uncommonly awkward——"

"Not at all. Why should it? I have nothing to do with you or your tenants; but I tell you—only keep it to yourself—that I would pay ten times the amount to checkmate Póllaxfen."

"And to help Kate."

"To help Kate, yes. She was quite right in supposing that now is the time when she could clear off scores with them gracefully and properly; and it would be a very uncomfortable feeling for her, and very improper that she should have to feel it, if she were obliged to draw back. My mother can't help her—she has not more than she wants herself—and I am the next person. You'll hold your tongue about it, I know, like a good fellow, for all our sakes; but I just inform you, that you may not be wondering what took place when the farmer tells you he got the cheque. Just you look upon it as Miss Newbattle's money, will you?"

"I suppose so," said poor Brewster, ruefully.

“But,” he added, “with a sudden gleam of hope, will she take it?”

“Of course she’ll take it from *me*. I am the only person she could take it from,” replied his companion, very decidedly. “I’ll settle it with her to-night. No fears. So you may set your mind at rest about old Comline.”

But what was the pleasure of having a mind at rest about old Comline, when it was not at rest about himself? It seemed as if Evelyn had bowled him out completely; and what followed next, made him disposed to throw up the game, and walk away from the field.

Lady Olivia and the girls came up to summon their squire; they were off to finish the evening somewhere else, but it appeared that Kate was tired, and indisposed to go.

“I am trying to find that tiresome Mrs Heatherwill,” explained Lady Olivia; “I have been hunting her up and down the rooms everywhere; for she passes our very door, and I know she would drop Kate there with pleasure. She has her carriage quite to herself——”

——“She is gone, mamma,” said Marjorie. “Charlotte says she went ten minutes ago.”

“Did she really, Charlotte? How stupid of

me not to find her sooner ! Then we must look for some other person ; but it is not every one who is going home so early."

"Never mind——" began Kate, trying to be heard.

"Let me be the some one," said a voice that was the last she could have expected to hear. "I am going nowhere else, and I will see Kate home with pleasure ?"

"Are you not coming with us, Rupert ?" Lady Olivia spoke, and Marjorie looked, the same interrogation.

"No, I have had enough, thank you."

"You really have ? And were not going on to Lady Cartright's, at any rate ? Well, that is lucky ; that will do admirably, then. We shall be the losers ; but then you had not been coming,—and Kate is really fatigued. My dear Kate, Rupert will take you home. You understand how it is, do you not, Rupert ? We are going in precisely the opposite direction, and to-night it so happens that we are a long way from Chirk Street,—it is so kind of you—so much obliged. Now, Marjorie."

"We'll go in a hansom, eh, Kate ?" said Evelyn, pleasantly.

“Looks miserable, doesn't she, poor girl,” whispered Brewster, who had lingered, talking to the other two. “I say, Evelyn, you're a good fellow, and I won't begrudge you your luck, if you are the man,—but if you're not, put in a word for me.”

“I don't half believe he is, either,” he declared afterwards, as he marked the reluctance and trepidation which the gallant soldier's marching-orders excited.

Evelyn had almost to drag his unwilling young lady down the stairs, and to Lady Olivia alone was left all the thanking and smiling, since Marjorie looked as forbidding as her sister.

It was very stupid and tiresome of Rupert to go, and he only did it to vex her, she thought.

Rupert, however, would not let go his hold ; and it being a glorious July night, he had no scruples in obliging his charge to walk along for some distance until they came upon a hansom.

“Drive round the Park first,” was all the direction he gave, before getting in after her ; and he said it boldly, so that she might hear. “It will do your head good, Kate. The night is pretty cool, and we can open the whole

concern, and get as much of the fresh air as possible. Did you ever take a hansom through London in the dark before?"

In pointing out to her this and that, he found occupation for the first five minutes.

After that, both were silent for a while, and then they turned into the Park. But for their first understanding, it might have been embarrassing here; thrown thus into such close juxtaposition, without any hope of interruptions or relief, nothing but excessive discomfort and awkwardness might have been felt. "But now," said Kate to herself,—“now we are both quite easy, and can talk to each other without minding at all about it.”

Why, then, did they not talk? All was silent enough; the soft ground they were passing over scarcely permitted the sound of their own wheels or the horse's hoofs to be heard. The lights in the streets receded farther and farther in the distance. Still Evelyn held his peace; and it was not until, in desperation, she had made some trite remark upon the beauty of the night, that he turned his head towards her.

“I was sorry to see you so unwell to-night,” he began. “Mr Pollaxfen's letter——”

“Thank you, yes,” quickly. “His letter was not a pleasant one, but I should not have shown how much it—how much I felt it. Perhaps I should rather say,” she added, “that I should not have felt it.”

“Would you mind my knowing what your correspondence was about?”

“Oh—I could not tell you.”

“You need not tell me—I know. I meant, do you mind my having been told? Brewster told me. I made him.”

“Mr Brewster?” She drew a breath, and waited. Then suddenly went on, “It was unkind, was it not, Rupert? Harold does not like me,—he never did; but just because of that, should he force me to act unworthily, or at least to show that I have no power to keep my word, and fulfil the hopes I have held out? I would rather have done anything, anything, than this!” He could see her lip quiver ere she turned it from him.

“I cannot understand,” said Rupert, slowly, “what object he can have in using you so ill?”

“He has no object. He dislikes me; that is all.”

“Why,—pardon me,—but why, Kate, does he

dislike you ?” Her quick ear caught something unusual in the question, and she looked round at once.

“Why ?” she said,—“why ? Can one always give a reason for being disliked ? People who do not like each other at the beginning——” she paused, getting out of her depth.

“It seems to me,” said Evelyn, determined to go on, “that there is more in this than appears. Dislike is a feeble word. I gather that your brother-in-law, of whom I must tell you that I have no specially good opinion, has some personal and deep-rooted grudge against you, Kate. Not against the family, so much as against *you*. Is this so ?”

She could not deny it.

“And now—what is the meaning of that grudge ?”

No reply.

“I ask you,” said Rupert, less collectedly,—“I ask you, dear Kate, out of no idle curiosity, believe me. Do not refuse to answer. Give me your confidence ; I promise to hold it sacred.”

“Rupert—I cannot.”

“You cannot ?”

She shook her head.

“It is the one thing I ask of you now; and I do ask it very earnestly — most earnestly. There must have been some cause given, or supposed to have been given, for this extraordinary and otherwise incomprehensible repugnance: it pains you to speak of it,—and no wonder; but for your own sake——”

“For Alice’s sake,” said Kate, quickly, “I cannot.”

“For Alice’s sake!” He appeared to be deeply struck, and on the verge of knowing all. “For Alice’s sake, did you say? Then the mystery lies between you, Alice, and Pollaxfen: is it so?” His heart sank.

“Yes, it does.”

“And you will not tell me? Then at least put me in the way of learning the truth from others,—your sisters?”

“No, no; they know nothing.”

“Who, then? In heaven’s name, Kate, don’t trifle with me! Do I frighten you? I did not mean to do that,” more gently. “But if you would only speak——”

“I will not speak. Rupert, you mean kindly, and I thank you. I see you think I care about being friends with Harold, and I do not; that is

all : there is no need to try to reconcile us—we are better apart ; and I will try to conquer all angry feelings towards him. He is not a man I can ever esteem : he tries, as you see, personally to annoy and disturb me ; but he was Alice's husband, and I would rather we said no more about him."

"By heaven, you are a noble girl!"—said Evelyn, and broke off short. His tongue refused to utter another word ; and poor Kate, whose heart had leaped at the words, waited in vain for more.

They passed into a long, dark, shady avenue.

"Let us drop the subject then," said Evelyn, in a new tone ; "and now that we are under the trees, Kate, and I cannot see your face if it be not friendly to my announcement, I shall perhaps have the courage to tell you what principally brought me home with you to-night. It was not only to importune you that I came : dry your eyes, and prepare to smile again. You shall have the cheque you promised to your friends by to-morrow morning ; and they need never know that there was any hitch in the matter."

"But, Rupert—you—have *you* any power over the estate?" said Kate, in surprise.

“Not over yours, but over my own. Look here: if we could have made Pollaxfen eat his own words, that is what I should have liked better than anything,—a little, low-born, pettifogging interloper, to dare to treat you so——”

“Never mind.” It was a very gentle voice that spoke. “Never mind him, Rupert; I don’t.”

“You *did*, however; he brought the tears to your eyes this afternoon——”

“Tell me what you were going to say.”

“I cannot let you suffer—or perhaps it ought to be that I cannot let our poor friends in Gallo-way suffer—because of his brutality. You will not be proud and foolish with me, Kate, and refuse my help? No one else can stop my giving the five hundred you promised; and as you know the pain of being prevented accomplishing your intentions yourself, I trust to you,” smiling, “not to inflict the like pain upon me.”

“But do you really mean that you will give the poor Comlines the money?”

“I certainly mean to give it you for them.”

“Not me!”

“Yes, you. You are a woman of business now, Kate, and can understand that it would be

quite undesirable for me to appear in the affair. Think for yourself, and you will see that these good people cannot but know, whatever they may choose to say, that you do owe them a good turn, and they show their sense by making no demur to accepting one at your hands. But if they were to find that they were, after all, relieved by me—by one who was—was—well, you know what I would say; however kind and hospitable they were, they would hardly recognise *that* as being anything of a claim,—they would feel degraded—it would embitter all their pleasure; now, would it not?”

“Perhaps; yes. Oh, you are right, I suppose: and how good you are, Rupert! I am so glad,—so very glad! Thank you: may I say, thank you?” shyly.

“Well, yes; you may say ‘Thank you.’ And I shall say ‘Thank you,’ too; for you have saved me a long explanation by the exercise of your intelligence and forbearance. If everybody were only as quick at understanding as you, Kate,—it is such a nuisance to have to argue and expound.”

“Oh dear, I am so glad! I can’t tell you how glad I am!”

Perhaps it was not altogether about the cheque, but this of course she did not know; it seemed as if it were, and she would not look beneath the surface that night. It was something to be even unreasonably happy.

“You don't know how many ways I had thought of, for saving up the money somehow—but I am afraid I should never have done it; besides which, they would have had to wait. Oh, Rupert, it *is* so kind of you!”

“Is it? It must be pleasant to be kind, then.”

“After I had spoken to Mr Brewster, I had no hope; for he told me at once that nothing more could be done.”

“Much Brewster knew about it! Why did you not come to me? You treated us all very badly, I think, telling no one your trouble, and flying off with it to Brewster!”

“I had no one else,” said Kate, colouring; “and he had to be told, besides.”

“You might have confided in me, at any rate. It was a perfect wonder that *he* did not want to help you—eh?”

“I am afraid—he did.”

Both were silent, then both laughed.

The relief of having something to laugh at,

the relief of being thus unexpectedly delivered from her dilemma, and the relief of having brought a trying interview to a close—for they were now rattling through the busy streets again—was altogether too much for the overstrung nerves of the sensitive, excitable girl; and from having begun with a feeling of diversion that was sober enough, Kate laughed immoderately, intemperately, wildly.

She could not stop.

How could he know that the gasps and sighs he heard, were not all excited by her sense of the ludicrous—that her merriment was hysterical—that she bowed and bent over, as again and again she was overcome by mirth, almost writhing under the pain it gave, because her poor weak body was unable at this time to resist?

He looked at her, and his own laughter died away.

They reached home, and he got out, carefully assisting her to alight; but he did not take her hand and lead her in, as he had all but made up his mind to do.

They waited together on the step, no one coming at the first summons; and the hansom turned and drove off.

“The servants are out, or enjoying themselves,” said Evelyn. “How silent it is hereabouts to-night! Hark, Kate, to that heavy, rumbling, continuous sound in the distance! That is the roar of Piccadilly.” He stopped, listening,—then muttered half aloud, “It is like the noise of the waves in Galloway.”

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE END OF THE SEASON.

“You’ve played, and lov’d, and ate, and drank your fill,
Walk sober off. . . .”

—POPE.

THE cheque was sent off the following day, and by a speedy post came the Comlines’ grateful acknowledgments.

The letter was duly shown to the true donor, and Mr Brewster was apprised thereof, and Lady Olivia and Marjorie were told as much as it was good for them to know ; but nothing of any note came out of all these conferences, and soon Kate learned to forget that she had been looked at fervently and spoken to kindly.

She had but to suppose that Rupert had been interested in circumventing Pollaxfen, with whom he had now confessed to having quarrelled at the time of the wedding ; and that a

feeling of recrimination had in reality, more than perhaps he was himself aware, lain at the bottom of his desire to take up the cudgels on her behalf.

She could not read his heart, and appearances were certainly against him.

He was now, it seemed again, all for Marjorie. Lady Olivia was obviously awakened and suspicious, constantly begging dear Kate to take Rupert's arm, leaving her on his hands at every opportunity, and studiously watching that he was not alone with the sister who was really harmless. Days passed, and he could not find the opportunity he wanted.

There were eyes, however, that saw something was amiss.

“Oh, take her, take her ; make up your mind, and have done with it !” Kate would break out to herself with dry lips and burning cheek. “End this miserable courtship—if courtship it can be called—so unlike that which I remember, yet which seems to satisfy poor, easily-contented Marjorie. You would not have won me so, Rupert. I would not have been caught by a lazy word now and then, and a compliment on my clothes that is more than half contemptuous.

He only makes much of her if he be in the mood—she has no power to draw him towards her, to keep him with her. Oh, he spoke to me differently, he looked at me differently! Her companionship does not animate him as mine did. With me he was always gay, happy, content; he seemed to need no other presence, to want no one else when I was by. Even yet I could satisfy him, if he did but know, would but believe—God help me! what am I saying? Have I been seeking to submit to His will all these years, only to come to this at last?" . . .

"It is a little hard to bear," said poor Kate, presently. "But it is all for the best. I am strong, I can stand a good deal. My brothers-in-law," added she, with a brave smile, "are evidently, one way or another, destined to be the torment of my life!"

After this, she was more at the Charles Newbattles than ever: and Walter painted her; and found that, contrary to his prognostications, he did not "make a better thing" of Marjorie, for Kate's portrait was universally admired, while that of her sister was pronounced to be a washed-out and shadowy thing that had mistaken itself for a Greuze.

“Greuze only would have done her justice,” asserted Walter; and he found some consolation in the continual corrections and retouches that were necessary; but he himself owned in the end that he had not succeeded.

The curl of Kate’s long black lashes, the rich bloom of her cheek, her melting eye and tender lip, he had caught wonderfully well, to do him justice; the turn of her head showed the exquisite curve of chin and throat, and the narrow gold band which caught up her hair had not been suffered to confine it. One long tress strayed over her shoulder, and lost itself in the sombre hues of her dress.

It was altogether a good picture, and nothing gratified the youthful aspirant to fame more than the unequivocal pleasure of Evelyn over it.

Evelyn hardly looked at the tall girl in white, with a blue sash round her waist, who would not turn into Marjorie for all the pains both Walter and his sitter had been at. He had been brought down by the original on purpose to say what he thought of it; and all she got was this. He pronounced it very good, excellent,—gave it the highest praise it had yet received from any one,

—but, even as the glib compliments were passing his lips, his eyes were roving.

He could not keep them off the other portrait.

Kate was not there, or he might have been more wary, more guarded in his expressions, more furtive in his inspection. As it was, the moment Marjorie's back turned,—for she was called off presently by the girls,—he openly hung over the rival canvas.

“It is her very image,” he said. “Her look, her movement. You must have had a treat indeed, in having so rare a subject. I congratulate you from my heart. What a fortunate man you must be, Mr Newbattle, to have the power of producing such speaking likenesses! What hours of enjoyment you must have! What anticipations, when you have tempted such a sitter into your studio! The triumph you achieve at the close must alone console you for the cessation of your pleasant toil.”

But in the case of the other picture, the toil had ceased without the triumph,—and it was with it Walter was principally concerned, as we know: however, he was infinitely relieved to find that no notice, or next to none, was bestowed on that unfortunate failure, and that all

the raptures of his companion were reserved for Kate.

That was as it should be. He was charmed with Evelyn—whom, until that day, he had detested,—and could not subsequently be loud enough in his praise. Men were not his *forte*, he said, or he certainly should have liked to have made a pair-picture to his dark-eyed belle.

At the time, he could only listen and smile, well pleased to have at once his heart lightened and his artistic vanity tickled,—for the time not even minding that his cousin Marjorie had neither eyes nor ears for him. She was engaged during most of the visit in laying down the law on divers points of fashion and folly, for the edification of Dora and Josephine, who, not without their own reasons for doing so, carried her off, that she might not interfere with that round of the studio which they presumed their brother to be taking his guest. Who could say what this grand Captain Evelyn might not do for Walter? Give him commissions, and all sorts of things.

They came back, however, to find the gentlemen, as they had left them, in front of the sisters' portraits; for though there had been

a running commentary on other sketches—on a few of the most cherished of the collection,—they had met with too little attention to encourage the appearance of more. All the real interest that had been shown was for the one picture,—and there had been enough enthusiasm lavished upon it, to make up for any amount of lukewarmness over others.

“Exhibit it, by all means, if you have her permission : but I think I know Kate better,” were the words the returning party caught on their entrance.

Either Marjorie was not one of those who heard, or she did not object to the sentiment ; she was very gay and ridiculous during the homeward drive, recalling to Lady Olivia’s remembrance all the odd freaks that Kate had ever been guilty of, and tittering even over the vehement alliance lately formed between her and their cousin Walter.

“If I were you, mamma, I should not allow her to go there so much,—I should not, indeed. You thought that I was not to be trusted, but it may turn out that Kate is the combustible person. He has taken no pains with me ; has he, Rupert ? He was all on my side at the first

—I do assure you he was, though you may not believe it,—for I saw quite well that you thought nothing of my picture, and I consider it a wretched daub myself,—and the reason is, that now he has deserted to the heiress. That's the way with them all. Penniless paupers like me," said Marjorie, drawing her brows together distressfully, "are pushed on one side altogether, directly the rich elder sister looks benignant. Has she been looking benignant in that quarter, do you think, Rupert?"

Rupert said nothing, but he went back to Chirk Street grimly determined.

A visitor was in the drawing-room. Hurrah! Here was his chance of a private interview at last. He had been resolved to get, but not to make, the opportunity, since the sequel might not warrant his having done the latter. It would be making too much of the matter if he seized upon his prey, and then could extract nothing from her!

"Look here, Madge," he said, after inveigling her into the back drawing-room, "what is it about your brother-in-law, that you and my mother have hinted at once or twice? Why did he behave so in this matter of Kate's?"

“Oh—he hates Kate.”

“You have said that more than once. Come, we shall get on now, for that is the very point I am driving at. Why does he hate Kate?”

Marjorie picked a flower to pieces.

“Do tell me,” said Rupert, coming close to her; “I know by your look that you have something nice and amusing to say. Do be amusing, Madge; I’m in want of entertainment.”

Well, she would be amusing. She would, at any rate, detain him there by her side, instead of permitting him to wander off to the front room, and be pounced upon by Lady Olivia.

“I’ll tell you all I know,” she said; “but, Rupert, you must really take care not to say a word to Kate, for she looked as black as a thunder-cloud the only time I ever mentioned the subject to her. She has such lofty ideas about honour and things,—and of course poor Alice is dead, and so Kate is quite right to say nothing that would have vexed her,—but how Alice could ever marry the man! And Alice must have known something about it too!”

“It?” said Evelyn, with his eyes on the floor.
“What?”

“Just that Harold tried all he could to get

Kate first. Hush! There she comes!" They both listened breathlessly.

It was only a servant, however, who was soon gone again.

"Now tell me," said Evelyn, "all about it, Marjorie. And see here,—tell me first how do you know? Who told you? How did you find out?"

"It was only Mademoiselle," said Marjorie, a little reluctantly, "our French governess, who was at Brighton with us when we first knew Harold. She said she found out directly that he was going to propose to Alice, and she believed that he did really come after us for that purpose; but then, as soon as ever he met Kate at Carnochan, he fell over head and ears in love with *her*. Mademoiselle declared that was the truth. She told Bertha, and Bertha told me the last time she was staying with us. Bertha and Mademoiselle were always great friends, you know."

"Well?" said Evelyn,—“well? What next?”

"Next he took to playing fast and loose with them both! Wasn't it a joke?—only poor Alice is dead, so we mustn't laugh. But think of the cunning of the creature! He tried to

make sure of Kate before he let go his hold of Alice; he hadn't learned that he should be 'off with the old love,' you know, before he was 'on with the new.'"

"And did he get 'on with the new'?"

"Not he. Get 'on' with Kate! She would as soon have picked up a toad! Mademoiselle said he used to lie in wait for her behind doors, and out in the passages,—and even followed her up to her own little room, when he was sure the others were out of the house, and did everything he could to make up to her: how blind mamma must have been, and them all!" broke off Marjorie suddenly; "if *I* had been older, I should have seen through him in a trice."

"To be sure you would. And it appears Mademoiselle did?"

"Yes. But think of her being the only one, Rupert! The only one of all those people about!"

"Perhaps she was not the only one. Others may have chosen to keep their own counsel better."

"Oh, but she is. At least mamma does not know a thing, and Kate would be very angry *indeed* if she were told; and I don't suppose

Alice did, or she would surely not have taken him afterwards. Fancy Harold's going straight from being refused by the one sister, to propose to the other !”

“A curious thing to do ; but time pressed, I suppose,” said Evelyn, with a great assumption of being lively. “And no doubt he was in the vein ; he had had one love-scene, and——”

——“I should not have imagined it was such as to lead him to long for another. Ha, ha, ha !”

“Kate would not be reticent, I presume, as he would find to his cost, eh ?”

“Not she. I daresay she swore at him——”

“Marjorie !”

“Well ?”

“You promised me not to say such things.”

“Goodness, Rupert ! you are the most particular man I ever met. Because you don't swear yourself,—and by the way, why don't you ? Mamma says you are very much changed since you went away, and she thinks you must have been under the influence of some very excellent, superior person. Pray who may this excellent, superior person be ? And when may we expect to see her appear on the horizon ?”

“My mother has shown more penetration

than I gave her credit for. But the person in question is certainly not on the horizon," with a slight emphasis on the latter words.

"Oh then, she——"

"Who said it was a 'she'? Don't be childish, my dear, else I shall suggest that you have Mademoiselle back again. And—ah—by the way, where is the good lady now?"

"Gone to a Miss Grubber."

"A—what?" said Evelyn.

"A Miss Grubber," repeated Marjorie, looking at him gravely. "A—Miss—Grubber. A first cousin of Harold's dear friend Grubber, who came to the wedding,—not to fill your shoes—for those were already shuffling about upon the feet of Shangles—but your collar, or your mittens, or some other part of you that was beyond what Shangles could undertake. The two came; and the poor Grub was condemned to crawl into breakfast with Mademoiselle, and be under a raking fire of French verbs all the time he was eating. However, he lived through it; and the other day, when I had persuaded mamma to let me finish my wonderful education, and bring me up to this land of bliss,—which, by the way, she never

would have done, but that she thought I was being run after by somebody there——”

“Somebody there! It seems to me there is somebody everywhere.”

“It is not my fault, Rupert.”

“At any rate, you lost no time. You improved the shining hour even under Mademoiselle’s reign? And how did she fall in again with Mr Grubber,—was he another ‘somebody’?”

“No, no; nonsense!”

“You think not? Oh, but give him the benefit of the doubt. At least he took an interest in Mademoiselle. She was not the rose, but still—eh?”

“Rose or not, he introduced her to the Manchester heiress, and there she is now. Fancy Manchester in July!”

“Does Miss Grubber live in Manchester?”

“No, a few miles out of it. Springfield is the name of the place. Oh, I daresay Mademoiselle is very well off. She will get the best of good living among the cotton lords, and that is what she cares for most in the world.”

“And perhaps the young lady will bring her to Town occasionally. Is she—ah—likely to be up just now?”

“Oh no, they’re at home. I had a letter from Mademoiselle yesterday. I write to the poor soul every now and then——”

“To recount your triumphs.”

“To recount my triumphs? Yes, sir,—if you choose to say so. It is something to have triumphs to recount; and Mademoiselle does not find fault with my poor epistles, at any rate. From the way she thanks me for them, no one would ever believe that she once threw up her hands and eyes over my exercises!”

“Doubtless the exercises deserved that, and more. She was with you for six years, and has survived it! I think she deserves commendation at the hands of the family. I shall be in Manchester in a day or two; would it give her any pleasure if I were to call, do you think?”

“Oh *do*, Rupert! It really would. How nice of you to think of it! She would never get over the compliment; and, as you say, she was with us a long time; and I have no doubt—that is to say, I can see perfectly well that her heart is with us still. She is always talking of us, and puffing us off to her new friends, I know. And she was really fond of me, and of

Kate too, in her way, though Bertha was her great ally. She would be overwhelmed by the honour of a visit."

"Well, she shall have it——"

"Mind you tell her all about us. Tell her that I electrify the whole fashionable world with my knowledge of her adorable language; that I find no one else half so well instructed; and that wherever there is a foreign ambassador or prince—don't stick at trifles—to be entertained and spoken to in his own tongue, Miss Marjorie Newbattle is sent for post-haste. Do give her something to talk about, and plume herself upon, Rupert. You don't know how little it needs to be, nor how much she will make of it."

Mademoiselle had been so entirely the person of persons with her pupils during the last six years, that even Marjorie could retain an interest in her preceptress three months after parting. She was charmed that the report of her brilliant emancipation should be conveyed to the ears not only of her late governess, but also to those of the less fortunate Miss Grubber, who had still many a weary verb to conjugate. She gave Evelyn hints of what he was to say,

of the points she particularly desired to be brought forward, — and could scarce forbear telling him to tell them both outright that she was the reigning beauty of the day. That, however, she did just feel might be left to himself.

All of this the messenger took in good part. He had learned the utmost that he had expected from the interview, and it had all been satisfactory, — so satisfactory indeed, that, until he had the main facts corroborated, he scarcely dared to think of them. Go down to Manchester he would, forthwith.

He was, however, obliged to defer the expedition for a day at two, since business called him down peremptorily to his own place; and he was detained there fully a week.

On rejoining the party in London, he found that they were on the wing also. Their time was up; they had only the house in Chirk Street until the end of July, and the end was now close at hand. In vain Evelyn endeavoured to inveigle them to Evelyn Towers. Lady Olivia knew better; and even Marjorie, whose birthday was to be celebrated by an influx of gay people on their return to Carnochan,

was ready to precede them. Kate was not asked.

The next thing was, however, why — since they would not go with him—why should he not go with them ?

They would be glad of an escort ; and though it would have been unbecoming in Lady Olivia to have taken her two step-daughters down to her son's estate, no one could find anything unusual in the son's accompanying his mother to her present home. That, if it meant anything at all sinister, meant that he was pursuing her fair charges,—the former movement must have seemed like pursuit of him, and pursuit so palpable that she wondered, with inquiring eyes, how Rupert could ever have proposed it ?

Rupert laughed and coloured, when this was pointed out to him.

“ Well,” he said, “ I daresay you are in the right, ma'am ; we must not set tongues wagging. But how about this ‘ season ’ of yours ? Are you pleased ? Are you satisfied ? Has it, on the whole, turned out as well as you could have expected ? ”

“ Quite,” said Lady Olivia, emphatically.

“Perfectly, completely, entirely. They have been more thought of than any other girls possessed of only their advantages; they have been in the best circles, and they can begin next year where they left off this. As to their being married—that,” audaciously, “is what I had no desire for.”

“I agree with you. Marjorie is too young.”

“*Much* too young. I am so glad you think so. A very great deal too young. Think of it—barely seventeen!”

“And Kate is too——”

“Yes, Kate is too——”

“*You* say,” said Evelyn, maliciously. “I—what?”

“Upon my word, I don’t know.” Even his mother could not help being diverted. “But you know, Rupert, I cannot quite wish her to marry. Although I should be truly sorry to put any hindrance in the way of a really eligible alliance—indeed, that is a thing I would not do upon any account,—still, since there *is* no one, I cannot be grieved that she is still—that we are still to go on in the old way. They are dear girls——” she stopped, she did not wish to praise them too much.

“And about this journey, Rupert? I really think the plan you suggest is excellent. To go by sea from Liverpool would be a very little way, and we should miss so much of the railway. Really, it would be a great let off. My poor head would not stand a long railway journey, nor a night at a noisy hotel. All the hotels will be crowded just now with people going north for the Twelfth. ‘The Twelfth,’ you know—that is our great day in Scotland. And so you will come with us? It is too kind.”

She hardly knew how to think enough of his proposal. Had he suggested that they should all take flight in a balloon, she would have been charmed with his considerateness.

His idea was, that, as he had business in Manchester, he should set off by an early train, transact it, and reach Liverpool in time to meet the party there, whence they would proceed at once, by sea, to Kirkcudbright.

Since all were pleased with the arrangement, it might now be gone into more thoroughly. It was found to answer every purpose. A London train reached the Liverpool terminus at seven o'clock, the Kirkcudbright boat sailed on Friday evening at eight. If the weather continued

favourable, nothing could be pleasanter than such an hour of departure, since the change from the heat and dust of the railway, to the coolness and quiet of the water, would be delicious. Perhaps Evelyn did not know—at least he certainly did not tell Lady Olivia—that the “Countess of Galloway” came to Liverpool laden with cattle, and returned filled with boxes, barrels, cargo unsavoury and illimitable. He had a fancy for the mode of transit, and could see nothing in it but what was agreeable. His mother was content, and the berths were written for.

Friday came, and there had been no change made in the programme.

Evelyn started early: they did not see him before he left, but he had been with them late the night before; and after he had left, they had all been rather dull and thoughtful, and Marjorie had been absolutely inclined to moralise to her sister, as they lingered in the denuded drawing-room—Lady Olivia having gone up-stairs.

“Oh dear, dear,” she said. “It is all over at last. I wonder whether anything will ever again be so beautiful, so wonderful. First there was the coming up on that lovely May day—it was like a fairy-scene, after our hot, dusty

journey in the dark—and then getting together all the pretty things, and last of all the people. Do you remember, Kate, the day we came home from our drive, and found the hall-table covered with cards and notes? It was never empty again after that. And it has been just Paradise ever since; everything one did, and went to, more delightful than the last. And—and Rupert coming too.”

“You were as happy before Rupert came, Marjorie?” It was half a question, half an assertion. Marjorie, however, took it as the latter. “Oh dear, yes,” she said, decidedly. “Every bit as happy, and would have been as happy had he stayed away. I had plenty without him, I can assure you, Kate: all I meant was, that he helped us; he—he looked well, and people liked him; and—and, on the whole, it was a good thing he came. Not that we wanted him, not that *I* wanted him at all,—only he made the whole thing more complete. Oh dear me! I do wish I were coming up to-morrow morning again for the first time! Can there ever be a second time to equal such a first? Carnochan would be dreadful, if it were not for my birthday. That will enable me to survive.

I do hope the Tempests will come," she added, eagerly. "I think they will, but they would not say for certain. Teddy says *he* will come, whatever the rest do; but I am afraid the rest won't let him, unless they come themselves. Teddy would help us with everything; he knows how to carry off things so well; everybody said that Lady Tempest would never have had half such nice parties but for Teddy."

"Oh, Kate," she broke out after a pause. "About the ball, what *shall* we say to the Maclures? We *can't* have them, you know. We really can not. I don't know what the Tempests or the Barringtons would think. What shall we do?"

"Ah!" said her sister, gaily, "it is for you to settle between your Teddy and your Neddy, —I have nothing to do with it."

"Cruel wretch! You settled poor Walter with a vengeance."

"Walter is different. Walter I can feel for. Had I not interfered, I believe he would have been invited down for the birthday too!"

"Oh, he was," said Marjorie, coolly; "but he denied himself the pleasure."

"Marjorie, how could you?"

“How could I what?”

“Knowing what you know, and feeling as you feel, you ought to have done anything rather than that.”

“Feeling as I feel? Pray, how do I feel?”

“I do not say anything about the others,” replied her sister, parrying the question. “They can take care of themselves. And as for Neddy Maclure, he ought never to have presumed—his punishment is only what he deserves. But Walter,—you encouraged him, flattered him, set yourself out to please him every time you went to the house—which you did whenever nothing else amused you more,—and you knew all the time that he was of the same blood as you yourself—your equal in everything except mere fortune, and that there was nothing to prevent his putting his own construction on your behaviour towards him. How can you wonder that he should misunderstand?”

“I do not wonder at all. He showed his appreciation.”

“If you had seen him as I did when I broke it to him, you could not be so heartless. Marjorie, you have disturbed his quiet, hindered him in his profession, and shaken his faith in

women,—can you think of all this, and speak as you do?”

“Kate, what things you do say! You do exaggerate so. Now, you stand there like a Gorgon ready to devour poor me! As Rupert says, you have a great deal of the ‘old Adam’ in you still. I do wish you would let me manage my own affairs. I never asked you to interfere between me and Walter,—nor did he.”

Indeed she was heartily vexed at being baulked of a tender parting, and of her cousin’s coming by-and-by to be her resource at Carnochan when no one else was there,—to paint her over and over again, as the two had agreed should be done in those halcyon days to the poor boy, when she had sat before him instinct with every grace and outward charm, irradiating his little dingy studio, and seemingly willing to be shining there for him, and for him alone. At odd hours the silent worship of her artist cousin had been quite to Marjorie’s mind; and she had provided, as she thought, a good store of it, which should come in again presently on dull and rainy days. It was too bad of Kate to put in her oar. She might at least have left her Walter, considering that she had—stolen Rupert.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AN INTERVIEW IN WHICH NO ONE BEATS ABOUT
THE BUSH.

“Sincerity is a most compendious wisdom, and an excellent instrument for the speedy despatch of business. It is like travelling in a plain beaten track, which commonly brings a man sooner to his journey’s end, than byeways in which men lose themselves.”—TILLOTSON.

IT will be borne in mind that everything Evelyn had heard of or from the Newbattle family during his term of absence, had served to corroborate Pollaxfen’s story.

He had corresponded uninterruptedly with his mother—greatly to that lady’s delighted astonishment—hoping against hope, as every mail arrived, that it might contain some tidings which should show that the hasty step he had taken had been a mistaken one; but none had ever come. On the contrary, every effusion of Lady Olivia’s contained about that time, some

special reference to Kate's illness. The illness was real, being no unnatural outcome of all that had been undergone by one whose health and strength had barely been re-established ere they had again to be severely taxed, and who, on her return home, had been ill fitted to find there only new and distressing varieties of trial. An easy and quiet life had been absolutely required, and the very reverse alone had been obtained. The consequence had been a fresh breakdown; and the whole had been made much of, and put forward by Lady Olivia for reasons which, as they have been already hinted at, need not further be enumerated. Directly her pen was in her hand, she fell into the vein, and Evelyn was treated to "dear Kate's state of health," long after dear Kate was walking about again as well as ever.

He had accepted it all, and told himself that he had looked for nothing else.

He had tired of a military life, had left the service, and had set off homewards without any definite object in view,—or so he had imagined,—but it is possible that underlying the yearning desire to return to his native land, which had increased at length to such a point as to

make him act upon it despite the remonstrances of his less fortunate brother-officers, it might have been that at the root of all lay still one spark of mingled hope and regret unquenchable.

How amazed was he, then, to find his lost love, the ailing girl about whom his mother had been so plaintive, the fragile creature whom fancy had painted, drooping, and perchance already preparing for an early grave,—how could he believe his senses on finding the subject of such sorrowful musings being brought out as one of the stars of the London season!

He had never forgotten her; his passion needed no rekindling. But had it done so, beholding Kate, as he now did, with all her early promise of infinite beauty fulfilled, without a charm missing,—no more would have been needed. From the first hour of reunion he was hers.

He had then resolved to find out for himself how matters really stood; but such investigations on so delicate a ground proved to be scarcely feasible. Who was he to ask? What was he to say? Sometimes the answers he received in reply to carefully-prepared speeches were so ominous to his ears, that he himself

started aside from the topic he had introduced, in terror of what might be coming next.

No; he could not bear to be told in plain terms the truth. He would wait and watch,—and the result had been continual fluctuations of opinion. Like a man of sense, he had at once perceived that it would be folly to take any account of Miss Newbattle's behaviour in his presence, until some sort of understanding had been established between them; and accordingly he had, as we have seen, quickly accomplished the explanation which was to relieve her of embarrassing reminiscences. He had then thought to see clearly.

But who can rid himself of suspicion?

A thousand trivial circumstances that at no other time would have had even a passing attention, now carried weight. A word let drop would be brooded over for hours.

Lady Olivia had but to whisper, "Don't disturb Kate;" Marjorie had but to throw up her little hands, wag her head knowingly, and cry, "How shall we tell Kate?" and the phrases seemed pregnant with terrible meaning.

If Miss Newbattle came in hot and flushed, he fancied her eye wild; if she talked, as she

did at times, with that brilliant dramatic effect which invariably made Lady Olivia bridle and look around for applause, he durst not answer her. He trembled to let it be seen how her words moved him. Marjorie's sparks of small pleasantry would die out to their last glimmer when Kate was at her best, and every eye and ear would be drawn towards her alone. Then would come the other mood. As though the fire had spent itself,—had burned out, and left no glow, no warmth behind,—the strange creature would hang her head, and sit silent for hours afterwards, in melancholy, brooding silence. Who was to tell Rupert that he was the cause?—that she was hungering and thirsting for some kind word or look from him who had once been so keenly appreciative? and that when none came, and when, with cold, unmoved face, he heard and took no part in all, the plaudits and laughter sounded harshly in the retrospect?

He only saw what he saw—a temperament fitful and variable as the winds, a fragile frame, a girl whom he had once loved, and who had loved him to her own hurt; and ignorant as he now was of the state of her heart, he felt that it was not for him to venture all at once

upon the tender ground he longed to tread. He could not again risk a mental shock, he told himself repeatedly, and resolved to control his desires, at whatever cost to himself.

But it must be confessed that, as the days rolled on, his patience gave way. Again and again he was ready to fling aside prudence, caution, every hindering sentiment, and heart and soul enter the lists wherein he daily saw others competing; but so surely as this happened, something occurred within the next hour or so to upset all again, and once more he would be left in the dark, afraid to face the disclosures which the light might have in store.

Pollaxfen's last effort brought matters to a climax. He was on the verge of knowing all when he implored Kate to tell him the cause of her brother-in-law's persistent enmity; but the end of that interview had again been sorrowful. No, he could not.

However, to go on as he had been doing of late, was not now to be thought of; and having obtained from Marjorie all that she knew, he was off to have it confirmed by Mademoiselle. Should the governess be explicit, and her information appear to be founded on substantial

grounds—hey for the bonnie woods of Carnochan, and the hours he would have among them! He would no longer hold back, but set to work on the instant to woo and win.

He laughed at his own presumption, as he told himself it should be to woo and win.

He was not a vain man; but he had always been successful, and why should he be unsuccessful now? He could not by any reasoning silence the instinct within, which was jubilant at the prospect now before him. At last there was something he could do—some step he could take. After all the inactivity, the dumbness, the standing aside to which he had been condemned of late, he was once more upon the road, pressing forward.

He had been, as we said, in Chirk Street the night before his northern start, and something of all this had been visible,—that is to say, there had been an interest, an animation, a lingering by the side of Kate, and a softness of air and tone whenever she was addressed, which the one sister had almost sunk under, and which had fairly betrayed him to the other.

Marjorie saw that she had lost, and that Kate had won; and though it cannot be said that her

heart suffered, her vanity, her consequence, and her spirits did.

She could have liked Rupert better than any one, had he chosen her.

As he had not, she—could do without him.

But, under such unflattering circumstances, she felt that she must really outweigh the big fish in the neighbouring creel by a host of a smaller fry in her own. She must go in for quantity instead of quality. All the Teddies, and Neddies, and Walters that she could count over as her own, might surely be considered equivalent to one Evelyn.

And therefore, when defrauded by Kate on all sides,—when she was not allowed to have the sturgeon, and when another hand had tossed back the smelt into the water—that is to say, when Rupert had been carried away from her, and she had been forced to let Walter go free,—she felt that it was a hard case.

Throughout the homeward journey she was fretful and peevish, would not have her cup of tea when the others did, and wanted to eat when there was no prospect of a stoppage. Then she must needs lie down on the sofa opposite to where Lady Olivia reclined, and

make believe to be asleep. They only wished she had been. In ten minutes she was up again, fidgeting hither and thither; vexed with herself for getting travel-soiled, and with her maid for leaving her dressing-bag behind; particularly anxious—or so it seemed to her sister—to look trim and spruce on their arrival in Liverpool.

This must all, then, be on Rupert's account, since he was to meet them there.

If so, and if his feelings were reciprocal, how little it signified that one of the other travellers was pale and sad. He had been cruelly kind the night before, and had set Kate thinking through all the short, light July night afterwards,—and now, unable to dwell on any other subject, unable to keep from recalling those hurried glances, those strange expressions, she felt that just for once she would give herself a little licence. Just for once she might give the reins to fancy and remembrance. Why not? She had no proof that there was anything between him and her sister—still less had she any reason for supposing that a union between them

would have tended to happiness. She would let Marjorie alone.

And so, with nothing in the world to do but sit still and watch one fair pastoral landscape after another come and go, she gazed and dreamed. In that leafy lane she might have watched for Evelyn; by that limpid streamlet she might have stood with him; through those laden orchards, and level meadows deep in grass, they might have roved together.

And there was nothing to be ashamed of in her love,—the love that had been created by his, and that had outlived it. It was, she told herself, a poor and pitiful idea of love, to say that it must only keep alive in the bosom when sued for, that it must only answer to affection given.

Not so. Such love is selfish, ignoble,—at best, but a form of gratitude. The love which goes out towards another, not because it is besought by him, but because he is worthy thereof, is true, noble, disinterested, and may be harboured in the purest heart.

“I love Rupert,” said Kate to herself plainly, “I may love him, I dare to love him. Not for what he is, nor for what he has ever been *to me*, but for what he is *in himself*. No one shall

ever know it ; but no one can interfere with it. It is my right,—the right of every human being,—to love the best and the highest ; I will hold to my right. And this I will do,” added my lady, with no small internal pomp and verbosity,—“this I will do, satisfied that it is according to the dictates of a clear conscience, and conformable to common-sense and virtue.” Having thus comfortably registered which vow, the summing up of which gave occupation and a curious sense of fantastic pleasure for some time, she considered the matter disposed of.

It then became a mere duty, an absolute necessity to go over every single thing that had ever taken place between Rupert and Marjorie, with a view to understanding their position towards each other. Certainly, of late he had seemed to care about making progress less than ever ; but then, that might be because he was already sure of his footing. Certainly, he had vexed her sister more than once ; but then Marjorie had been so soon vexed and out of humour during the past week. Certainly, he had held obstinately on more than one occasion to her own side, when every movement of the rival beauty said

“Come to me;” but then—— But then for that, she had no reason to offer.

It was such inconsistencies which made her reverie so all-engrossing. She could not rid herself of them. Seek as she would to dwell on the scenes between Evelyn and her sister, every thought was busy with Evelyn and herself.

Evelyn, meanwhile, was pursuing his errand blithely. Arrived in Manchester, he speedily found himself driving through suburbs, villas, and outlying villages, on his way to the present abode of Mademoiselle Pierrepont.

Mademoiselle was within,—probably going through the French verbs afresh with, it was to be hoped, a more promising pupil than poor Marjorie had been,—and her visitor was shown into the library by a servant who was obviously confounded that so grand a gentleman should ask for the governess.

During his journey he had made up his mind what course to pursue.

It would be absurd, he saw, to attempt to throw any other colouring than the true one on his visit; having to deal with a woman who had shown herself as clever and penetrat-

ing as Mademoiselle had done, it would be useless even to beat about the bush. He would stand no chance of attaining his object, parenthetically; and he would also be unable to throw himself on her mercy, and close her mouth for the future.

Accordingly, on the entrance of the brisk little brunette, all clean collar and cuffs,—for to these she had limited her attention, having sufficient good-breeding not to keep him waiting while she changed, as she longed to do, her faded morning-dress for a better,—he greeted her without the slightest allusion to being in her neighbourhood, or pretence of any sort.

He “should not long intrude upon her valuable time,” he said, with excellent gravity; “but if she could spare a quarter of an hour?”

She was entirely at M. le Capitaine’s service.

“I only returned to England six weeks ago,” said Evelyn, who had studied how he was to begin, in order to lose no time, for the interview must necessarily be brief, in order to enable him to catch his train for Liverpool,—“and in coming to London I found your late pupils there——”

——“*Pardon.* Not my pupils, Captain

Evelyn. One alone was my pupil, Miss Marjorie. Miss Kate I never did teach; she did read with me French and German, and we have a little music together, but she is not my pupil, to be called my pupil."

"It is of her I wish to speak, Mademoiselle."

"So? Indeed?" A pause. "You look serious," cried Mademoiselle, quickly. "What is wrong? What is the matter?"

"It is difficult to explain," stammered Evelyn, finding this out, now that he had got so far; "I—I hope I shall make myself intelligible. Pray forgive me if I am abrupt and hasty, but," with his usual facility for saying the right thing, "I do not need to apologise to *you*; Mademoiselle Pierrepont will intuitively perceive the drift of my poor explanations, when I attempt them."

Mademoiselle bent her head delightedly.

"I think, so far as I can see," continued Evelyn, exchanging his suave smile for a look of energy and concentration, "that a great—a—a scandalous falsehood has been told about Kate Newbattle——"

——"*Indeed?*" cried his companion, with a smack of her lips. "*Vraiment?* Scandalous!

Oh, my dear Captain Evelyn! *Que je suis*—
—um—um—um”—under her breath; if he
had taken back the word, she would have been
ready to tear her hair in her disappointment.
“Scandalous!” she whispered to herself. “Oh,
mon Dieu!”

“Yes, scandalous,” repeated Evelyn, how-
ever. “Scandalous, and shameful to the last
degree——”

——“Oh! *mon Dieu!*” again murmured
Mademoiselle.

“And if you can assist me in discovering
the object of the scoundrel who propagated
the story (how do I know that he has not
gone to numbers of others besides me?), I shall
not know how to be grateful enough.”

“*Mais moi,*” protested Mademoiselle, rather
blankly; “how shall I do anything? I have
not the power, the opportunity. I am here
with my pupil, the young Miss Grubber,—
there is only one, and she is a very nice, charm-
ing girl, and very kind, and oh, so rich,—I
do not perceive that I can leave her; I am
only here these three months; we have begun
so nicely——”

“No occasion for your leaving her, Made-

moiselle. None, at least, for your leaving her for more than the few minutes in which you now honour me with your presence."

"Oh then," cried Mademoiselle, joyfully, "I do indeed anything you wish; I am most happy that you command me." Her knowledge of English had improved so much during her six years' residence in this country, that she now spoke with fluency, and rarely used even an idiom amiss. "In what way can I assist you?" she added, softly.

"By recalling all you can," said Evelyn, with a sudden dash into the heart of the subject, "of what passed between Mr Harold Pollaxfen and his sister-in-law previous to his marriage. I do not ask this," he continued, checking, by a movement of his hand, and by an involuntary drawing nearer to where she sat, the amazement which he saw ready to be poured forth in words, "I do not ask this without a reason which, when explained, will, I feel sure, satisfy any scruples you may now have. But in asking your confidence, your open and unreserved account of all you observed then, I give you my word, it will be warranted by mine—that is—hum—ha—do you follow me?"

“*Mais oui*—yes.” After the early compliment to her intuitive perceptions, she would not have owned to not following anything he chose to say.

“If I were to explain for what purpose I require the information, my reason would inevitably bias your version of the story. Pardon me, but it would—it must. I wish to have all that you can tell me, whilst you are entirely uninfluenced.”

“I understand,” said Mademoiselle, thoughtfully. “You are at liberty to ask me this?”

“At liberty? If you mean authorised by Miss Newbattle—that I certainly am not,” replied Evelyn, rather disturbed; “but she could not object—she could not disapprove——”

“I perceive. You have right on your side.” His look made her hasten, in case the request might be recalled before she could gratify it. “I comprehend entirely, Captain Evelyn. I have in you entire confidence, and”—with a charming French smile, “I give you mine.”

“You are very good,” said Evelyn, curtly. “Well?”

“What you desire to be told is about M. Pollaxfen’s admiration, *tendresse*, for Miss Kate,

before he was engaged to be married to her sister,—to Alice, whom he had met first, and whom——”

——“Yes, yes?”

“Patience, my good Captain Evelyn. I tell you all. I have it now before me, as it was then. It was more than the *tendresse*, than the fancy, the being struck by a beautiful girl, and liking to look upon her, and to speak to her—Pfui! He would have thrown over Alice, Carnochan, everything, if Kate had but lift up her little finger! You look at me? Yes, yes, I know what I am talking about,” nodding her head,—“I do not speak idly. Listen: the very first night he comes, I descend to the drawing-room before dinner,—for I had made my toilette and gone down, though the wind howl, and it is all so melancholy,—because this M. Pollaxfen comes, and Lady Olivia wishes that every one should be there, that it should all be bright, lively, *vif*. We are all to be merry for him, and he comes to propose to Alice. *Me comprenez vous?* This is understood. He has met Alice before, but not Kate——”

——“I know, yes. Thank you, I understand perfectly.”

“And Alice was not prettily, not becomingly dressed, on that evening. She had put on some old ball-dress in which she had been admired at Brighton. Bah! what might have looked very well at Brighton—at grand assemblies and in the candlelight—was not for Carnochan, and a dozen people dining together in the light of day! She appeared thus, *décolleté*—and the gown was dirty too—before dinner; and she was showing M. Pollaxfen round the windows, I being present,” continued Mademoiselle, seeing it all before her, as a good narrator should, “when in comes Kate! Ah, what a contrast! She is all in black up to her throat, for she was not allowed at that time to bare even the smallest piece of her beautiful neck—but she needed nothing. A Spanish princess——”

“I know, I know. Yes,” said her auditor, with kindred enthusiasm. “Proceed, Mademoiselle, you are doing excellently. Well?”

“He looks at her, and his heart falls dead at her feet!”

Evelyn laughed nervously. “*His* heart!” he said. “But I interrupt you. More about the heart, Mademoiselle, if you please. As much as you like about Mr Pollaxfen’s heart—so long

as you don't ask me to believe that he has one."

"After that, beginning from that very night," pursued Mademoiselle, with exceeding unction, "he was ever on the watch. He knew when she went up-stairs, and when she came down. I catch him hanging about the gallery and hall for hours, spying upon what she does, and where she goes. He makes excuse to bring her little offerings. And he had great opportunities too, Captain Evelyn. His room overlooked the porch, and from it he could see the lake, and her favourite walk round the banks; and so, as soon as she had slipped away from the house—this was at first, before she had learned herself to dissemble——"

"That, Mademoiselle, she could never learn."

Mademoiselle gave him a queer look.

"I mistake the word," she said. "*Pardon*. What I mean is, she learned to avoid, elude M. Pollaxfen, after a while. But at first, so soon as she goes, he is off after her; not following, but going round by the opposite path, so as to meet negligently—what you call, by accident. There was scarcely a minute of the day that he knew not where she might be found. And

headaches — *allons donc!* Poor Lady Olivia had headaches indeed; but M. Pollaxfen's headaches were always in their right place. Sunday morning was his headache-time; see you, Captain Evelyn? Kate is not strong enough to go to church yet, and he flies up to her little room, where the poor child retires to compose herself. I hear him go there, the very minute the rest have left the house!"

"You remained behind also?"

"Sometimes; yes. The dreadful Scotch sermons," pleaded poor Mademoiselle; "and I would not leave Kate entirely to M. Pollaxfen's mercy. I knew why he had his headache very well."

"And you are convinced he was really in love?"

"In love!" raising both her hands — "in love! I do not know what love is if he was not 'in love.' He was infatuate, *furieusement* in love. And so, when, for all his pursuing her, and hunting her, and never letting her alone, he could get nothing but hatred, contempt——"

"Ah!" escaped Evelyn.

"You understand that the love turned *sour*, — *il se caillait*. How no one else perceived this, I

cannot imagine; to me it was so plain, that a child might have read. I knew the very afternoon on which he spoke out plainly; I knew that he must have done so, for I met her flying from him with a look of fury—oh, she can look like a fury, that Miss Kate! But still I do love her; for was it not noble?—she never said one word to us all! She may have told Alice, in order to warn her; but if so, Alice would not be warned. To no one else did she ever repeat one word. But I am there, behind her—see you, Monsieur; and though I hear not the words, I see her fling him off as if he was a serpent—yes, indeed, he had gone so far;—and she breaks from him through the little side-door of the garden, from behind which I am looking; I have but just time to step out on the path, and pass her as if I observe nothing. Then I come inside and meet him; and if she is like a fury, he is a devil! I say, ‘*Bon jour, Monsieur,*’ and pass on. But I slip back again through the greenhouses, and see the flowers, and am close to him, while the great vine-pots hide me. He talks to himself, and he grinds his teeth, and then he laughs out loud, ha, ha, ha! I do not hear the words he says, but the face, the

actions are enough. He is mad with anger and love."

"Well?" said Evelyn, as she paused for breath—"well?"

"The very first thing that I hear when I go down-stairs that evening is, that Alice and Mr Pollaxfen are engaged! He has quick made up his mind, you see; if he does not strike out at once one bold stroke, all is lost,—he is fooled, laughed at, the loser in every way. He obtains neither the one sister nor the other, and he loses Carnochan also. Carnochan is a beautiful place," with a roguish glance at her companion.

"And after that?" said Evelyn, looking at his watch. "I do not wish to hurry you, Mademoiselle; but time——"

"Yes; time passes when one is thus occupied," replied the lady, cordially. "And so it was all arranged at once, Captain Evelyn. He is, within two hours, refused, despised — and accepted, adored. Behold the transformation!"

"Behold it indeed! So after that, he took no heed of Kate?"

"*Pardon*; he takes as much heed as before, but all in the opposite direction. It is now to spite her, distress her, hold her up to ridicule

and contempt. He says things at breakfast, luncheon, dinner. There is no more rest for the *pauvre petite* than there was before, except that she can shut herself up, and he does not persecute her as he did, in her own room, nor out on her walks. He does not seek her out when alone; but in company—and it was in company that before she had her only respite—he can now molest. And then he goes to Alice with his falsehoods!”

“To Alice?” said Evelyn, thinking of the letter Pollaxfen had shown from her. “To Alice, yes. I want to understand how Alice came to be so duped?”

“You may well say duped. Alice—bah!—she believed because she was *determined* to believe. All her life long, from her very infancy, she had been jealous of Kate—that, any one could perceive; she showed it to me, a stranger, before I had been in the family twenty-four hours,—and she was frightened—oh, she was very much frightened—at what had been going on. Then he comes to her and says it is all a farce, a little play,—that he has been making believe, in order to find out that he is beloved: ah, Captain Evelyn! what will not men say under such circumstances?” observed Made-

moiselle, sentimentally. "Alice lets it out to me when I am with her in confidence afterwards; and she is, oh, so much pleased to show that Kate has been mistaken! She asks if it is not amusing that Kate should even have come and complained to her? She is not angry with Kate, she assures me; she is only sorry because she is afraid her poor sister may do the same again, and may get into difficulty. I find that she says whatever M. Pollaxfen tells her to say; and he has told her that Kate is fanciful and vain, and inclined to think herself run after—the poor child who had never been run after by any one in her life!" (Evelyn smiled.) "And Kate has no chance of telling the truth. Because why? She will only make mischief if she is credited; and if not——" Mademoiselle shrugged her shoulders.

"So then Alice really believed that Kate had been behaving in an extraordinary and unaccountable manner?"

"I do not know what she *believed*; I only know what she *said*," replied Mademoiselle, cautiously.

"Did you," said Evelyn, with a marked and significant emphasis—"did you, Mademoiselle,

at this time, or at any other time, ever observe in Miss Kate Newbattle's behaviour anything at all peculiar? Did you consider that she ever spoke, or acted," slowly, "in a way that was inconsistent with—with moderation or—or propriety, under the circumstances?"

"*Eh bien? Non, vraiment,*" responded Mademoiselle, surprised. "I see nothing inconsistent nor peculiar about her. Never,—not at any time. She behaved very upright, very honourable, very *wonderful*, I think. Do not you? I am sorry for her with all my heart, poor girl, for she met with no return but unkindness, suspicion, *malveillance*. As for her, she had no blame."

Evelyn breathed a sigh of relief. His head had sunk down between his hands, but now he raised it. "Thank you," he said—"thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for your frankness. One question more—though it is merely a secondary one, my chief object in coming being now attained. However, I should just like to know if you think Mr Pollaxfen ever spoke of the matter to any one else?"

"Not to Lady Olivia; of that I am sure."

"Was he likely to have gone to any other

person—any one at a distance, without means of knowing the truth,—was he cunning enough to impose on a comparative stranger, and reckless enough to attempt it, without having any object?”

“Yourself?” said Mademoiselle, astutely. “*Mais oui*, Captain Evelyn—cunning enough, and reckless enough; but ‘without having an object’? *C’est autre chose*. I think it is just possible that he had an object.”

PART IX.

CHAPTER XXXV.

“NOT IN VAIN WERE HER SAD HOURS.”

“Our blasted hopes, our aims and wishes crost,
Are worth the tears and agonies they cost.”

—*Essays in Rhyme.*

So there he had it all as clear as day, and not all the hope that he should forthwith get the better of Pollaxfen could entirely make up for the certainty that so far Pollaxfen had got the better of him.

Oh why had he not gone to Carnochan?

Pollaxfen had been too sharp for him. His repeated reference to Alice, and her written allusion to her sister, which he had produced fresh on its receipt, had been the best cards in his hand, and he had played them to win; for Evelyn, ever ready to think the best of people, had little dreamed that the girl he had found so amiable and simple—or whom he had been

willing to believe so, for he could now recall various occasions on which he had found her otherwise—could lend herself to be the fool of a malignant backbiter.

He was now beside himself—or would have been, but for the prospect of a certain meeting at seven o'clock. That tempered the affliction. He would not suppose himself Beloved, but he had a conviction that no one else was so; and he hoped, he longed, he panted to regain the place he had once held.

Meantime, however, he must, as in duty bound, satisfy his present companion.

She had exhausted her own stores, and was eager to replenish them. From whom had he received a hint? Who had put him on her track? What had M. Pollaxfen's old love affair to do with things of to-day?

"I imagine," said Evelyn, "that the unlucky bridegroom having been, as you say, Mademoiselle, deeply and speedily impressed by your—ah—by the—the second Miss Newbattle's personal charms himself, considered that every one she fell in with, would probably smart under a like experience. He wished then, we will suppose, to spare me——"

“The *monstre!*”

“The scorpion, or centipede, rather. We can hardly make a monster out of such a little poisonous asp. He came to ask me to be his best man at the wedding, and he hung about me in town for nearly a week. I endured him for—for—well, of course, he was entering a family with whom I was closely connected, and I was bound to be civil.”

“Ah? So? He feared Kate would be happy with you.”

“Or I with Kate?” said Evelyn, laughing and reddening. “That was it, Mademoiselle. And since I passed over the innuendos with which he in the beginning merely wanted to prejudice me against her, he thought he would go a step further.”

“Naturally,” assented Mademoiselle. “Naturally.”

“At last he became very much excited, and in the heat of the moment gave out, I suspect, a great deal more than he had at first meant to do; but, having said it, he had to stick to it. He told me precisely what you say he told Alice, only he painted in coarser colours. He asserted that his bride had been nearly lost

to him ; that the breach between the two had been wantonly made by her sister ; and that it had been only not irreparable, because both were convinced that the poor enamoured girl was—was—I—I can't say it."

He got up and walked away.

" Was what ?" demanded Mademoiselle, clasping her hands and rising also to her feet, with her intense delight in the scene. "*Mon cher* Captain Evelyn, you hesitate ?"

He turned almost fiercely.

"Crazed," he said. "Imbecile. Insane. Pol-laxfen declared it ; Alice's letter pointed to it ; every word afterwards that was written or said, seemed to confirm it. I was deceived on every hand."

" Ah that I had known !" said Mademoiselle, compassionately. " But you,—what was it to you ? You did not then know your sister—not that she is your sister——"

" He wished to prevent my knowing her, don't you see ?" said Evelyn, hurriedly, " and all these years she has been in my mind—and how do I know but in that of others too—as a poor distraught creature ; — well, never mind, that is not to the point. You will understand,

Mademoiselle, that it was to clear off this suspicion, with whomsoever it exists, that I was obliged to request your information. To be once whispered about—to be called insane——”

“Captain Evelyn,” said Mademoiselle, solemnly. “I now understand altogether. Then listen to me. If Kate Newbattle is or ever was insane, may you, and I, and all we love, be touched with the same insanity! I am but a poor, frail woman myself,” with a genuine tear in her eye, and ineffable pathos in her tone, “but I know how to admire, adore nobleness. When this poor misused Kate takes her place among the saints of heaven, may she intercede for us,” sobbed Mademoiselle, forgetful that she was a Protestant—a descendant of the persecuted Vaudois—when she was in Manchester,—“may she remember those who were her friends, though far, oh far beneath her, here! Since so high, so holy a position is before her, I do not grudge the dear Kate all that she has suffered. Not in vain were her sad hours. No, I take not from her one tear—one pang.”

Evelyn took her hand; he could not speak.

“So?” said Mademoiselle, softly,—“so?”

“Even so, my good friend. Wish me God-

speed ; and if your wishes are as efficacious as your memory and your observation——” he tried to smile, but his lips were trembling.

“ But see,” said Mademoiselle, “ has she had more then to bear ? This too ? ”

“ She has had more to bear than you can conceive,—more than I dare to think of. God forgive us all ; her father who neglected her, my mother who ill-treated her, I who forsook her, Pollaxfen who blackened her. Yes indeed, Mademoiselle, I mean all I say ; so far I will tell you,—for you have shown that you deserve to hear secrets,—I had already met Kate and won her love, and we had parted, before I heard Pollaxfen’s story. Do not ask me more, for to no one have I told so much ; but that is the simple truth. Excuses I might offer in abundance ; but as I cannot accept them myself, neither can I ask you to do so. A time may come——”

“ Yes, indeed,” cried Mademoiselle, joyfully. “ A time may come,—must come—shall come. *Courage, mon ami*, the past years have not been wasted ; you will yet win your bride ; and you will receive her improved in cheerfulness, in piety, in her French accent and modulations——”

“Oh, stop!” said Evelyn, laughing; “if she have attained those, I shall have nothing left to desire. I must be off. Mademoiselle, you have shown yourself a very father-confessor in the matter of silence; you told no one but Bertha, who told Marjorie, who told me—the house that Jack built, you see,—well, all I want to say is, that if Miss Newbattle after this be favourable to me,” taking refuge in formality—“or indeed, either way, I shall feel bound to inform you; and—and I know I have your good wishes and sympathy, whatever happens. Good-bye. Many, many thanks.”

It took him all the time he had at command to get back to the Victoria Station before the train left. He was just not too late, however, reached Liverpool in time to make all arrangements before the London express came in, and was awaiting it on the platform at the appointed hour.

Two pairs of eyes were severally and furtively on the look-out.

He might be Kate's, but he should still give to Marjorie some of his attention and company; and accordingly, all the well-known airs and graces were in immediate operation.

“Please, my shawl, Rupert. No, I have no bag, thank you; that tiresome Coleman forgot it. Am I a fright? Is my hair tumbling down? We are so hot and stupid; I do hope we are not to be obliged to scamper off down to the boat before we have had a moment’s quiet, and before we have made ourselves fit to be seen?”

On this point she was reassured instantly. The “Countess of Galloway,” Rupert had found out, was on that evening not to start for an hour later than advertised, owing to—he did not know what; he had, however, been down to see, and that was the intelligence received. Accordingly, he had ordered dinner at the Adelphi, had engaged rooms, and thought they would all be glad of the two hours’ rest, to say nothing of the refreshment.

It appeared that the latter was just what Marjorie did *not* want.

The moment she was informed of what had been done, he was scolded for his pains. She turned up her lips at the bare mention of dinner. Who wanted a great hot dinner? Always the stupidest thing in the world; and just then, when everything was tiresome and disagreeable, to have to sit down to dinner

would be the climax of misery. She wanted to walk about and see the place. She had heard so much of the Liverpool Docks and the river Mersey; and why, at any rate, should they be condemned to keep within doors on that frizzling summer evening?

“We have a glorious summer night before us,” answered Evelyn, with a ring of anticipation in his voice that did not find an echo within any other breast. “Keep up your spirits, Marjorie; you will see the Docks and the Mersey, and all, from the deck of the ‘Countess of Galloway,’ for I daresay none of us will go below till we are past the Isle of Man. Now then. Is that all?”

He had handed each out as he was speaking; and, as Lady Olivia’s man and maid were busy clearing away parcels and packages inside the carriage, he was about to escort the ladies to a fly, when Kate, uttering an exclamation, darted back through the open door, and pounced on something which had fallen beneath the seat on which she had been sitting.

“Is that your ticket?” said Evelyn. “Have you not given it up?” He had not addressed her before, studiously turning to his mother and

Marjorie ; but her startled air and sudden movement now made him think there might be something in which he could render assistance.

“ It was not my ticket, thank you.” She was attempting to thrust the thing, whatever it was, into her pocket as she spoke : but the pocket was difficult to find among the frills of a thin summer gown ; and who shall portray the feelings of the unlucky maiden when, in springing again off the step, her eye, simultaneously with Evelyn’s, fell on a small square white packet in the act of slipping through a treacherous plaiting which had no bottom ? In vain she put out her hand,—the next instant it had fallen between the carriage-wheels ; and oh, how devoutly did she hope that it had fallen out of reach as well as out of view ! For what is it ? The little cardboard-book, containing the rose, bound by the spun thread.

It had escaped from her bosom, where it had lain so well concealed all those years, to betray her thus ! She had opened the fastenings at her throat on account of the sultriness of the atmosphere ; and somehow or other, in her hasty rearrangement of collar and ribbon, as the train neared Liverpool, she must have jerked it out,

—the shiny folds of her dress had arrested it nowhere, and it had eventually reached the floor.

It was now apparently lost. Bad enough, that,—but oh, agony of agonies, Evelyn was projecting a rescue! Anything, anything rather than that he should be the one to discover what the missing valuable was, and, furthermore, be the one to bring it to her! Certainly nothing was visible from where she stood, and she would not indulge herself in searching with her eye, confining all her energies towards preventing any one's descending; but how unfortunate that there should be room at all for a man to go down! It was certainly dangerous; and, “Pray, *pray*, don't go,” she cried. “It is nothing, really *nothing* to trouble about. Oh, Rupert,” catching his arm, “don't think of such a thing——.” He had jumped down, laughing as she spoke: he had no idea of what he was going to find; but since it was evidently some treasure on which considerable store was set, or so much perturbation would not have been evinced, he was not going off, leaving it behind. Why should he? There was no hurry, and he liked doing something for Kate. Down he jumped, and put his head under the carriage.

“ I *tell* you it does not matter,” reiterated the poor girl, in desperation. “ How can you be so—oh, Marjorie, he is so very foolish ! There is nothing to make him put himself in such danger,—it is sheer madness ”—turning away, unable to bear the moment.

“ Considering that the train can’t well go off without smashing down the whole station,” said Marjorie, scornfully, “ he is, indeed, in imminent danger. Don’t be a goose, Kate. And don’t make a scene. Here he is, safe and sound, with not even a bone broken.”

“ And nothing to show for it,” said Evelyn, appearing from beneath. “ Thanks, Madge, I can get up all right. As it was not your ticket, Kate, I suppose it was nothing that very much mattered ? ”

By his look, his mien, she knew that he had not searched in vain. He had found, and secreted, and understood. She could only bow her head,—she could not utter a word.

“ She got quite a fright,” said Marjorie. “ She thought a great big engine would come up and say ‘ Boh ! ’ in your ear when you were down amongst the bogies. I could not persuade her that she should ever see you return to the land of the living.”

“*You* were not alarmed, then?” He was walking forward, leading the way with her, whilst her wretched sister tottered along by herself behind. “You would have been quite resigned to seeing your poor squire torn to pieces before your eyes?” continued Evelyn, scarcely knowing what he said, and only feeling that he must say something, and must keep himself from saying it to his other companion. “You are a very cool sort of person, Madge. I believe you would have emulated the queen of the tournament who threw her favour to be picked up by her knight from among the wild beasts.”

“Oh no; my knights are too many, for any single one to be of sufficient worth. I might throw them ‘a scatter,’ such as used to be done for us children, and see which survived, perhaps. But as for you, you were acting knight for Kate, not for me,—and much you made of it! Risked your reputation as a good finder, if you risked nothing else, and lost even that!”

Lady Olivia wondered what had kept them all, but was quite satisfied, though nobody told her. She was the only one who really endeavoured to make herself agreeable at this junct-

ture—no one of the others thinking of or caring for aught but his or her own concerns.

And for two, at least, the excuse was sufficient. Evelyn was in a tumult of joy—Kate of shame and grief.

It seemed to her as though one short ten minutes before, she had been almost happy. She had certainly been composed, steadfast, mistress of herself, and able to face the future, if not with glad hopes and bright anticipations, at least with fortitude and resolution.

Vain was all now. He knew. Her weakness, her folly had been made manifest ; and all her late philosophical justification of the feeling she entertained for Evelyn withered up under the breath of this humiliating, agonising revelation. Years had passed ; and he had wished the old story forgotten, and had called on her to blot out the past ; and she had to all appearance agreed, and had let him suppose that no deeply cherished remembrance was ever again to hang about her heart and haunt her dreams ; she had kept her secret so that none had ever guessed it : but now, ah now, what must he think ?

He had saved her as much as he could. He

had either left the relic where it was, or had hidden it about his own person. In either case, by the very act, by the quickness with which he had come to a conclusion concerning its disposal, he had shown how much he thought of it. It had told its own tale, and told it instantaneously,—since he had not been out of their sight for more than a minute—an awful minute.

She wondered how she moved, and talked, and sat up by Lady Olivia's side, upright, and showing nothing amiss, as they drove to the hotel.

Evelyn walked—another piece of consideration. He would not face her, would not be at the door in time to hand them out. That, at least, she was to be spared. Yes, he was always kind, always thoughtful, had always the finest sense of what would please or pain.

Only once he had been at fault, and she would not think of that. She would gather together all her energies for the present, swallow her bitter pill as best she could, and resolve that for the next few hours, at any rate, she would not yield a thought to repining. Afterwards—oh, she could hardly bear to think of what solitude must bring!

Must he henceforth look upon her as a sickly sentimentalist, or a lovelorn damsel? Which was the worst, which the most humbling—the most abasing? Trying not to think, it seemed as though she had never thought so fast and furiously in her life.

And Marjorie had perhaps never before been so pertinacious and exacting in her demands on her sister's attention, as she was during the next half-hour. Kate's eye, ear, and hands, were wanted incessantly. She must do this, and do that; and she was called upon for something or other every half-minute. What had become of the tail-comb? Where had her *chatelaine* been laid down? What was to be done without a pin-cushion?

The contents of the one travelling-bag were turned out before her; the glass and the wash-hand-stand were given up to her; and yet she went on.

“Oh do be quiet!” said poor Kate at last. “Take what you want; I have given you everything; I can do no more.”

“How cross you are! I am tired as well as you, but I don't sit with my head against the bed-post, moping.”

Meeting no response, she resumed, “Perhaps it was as well that we had not to go on all at once. Rupert did his best, I daresay; and at least it is something only to get clean again. These summer journeys are so tiresome. Why don’t you set to work, Kate? You will be late. You have not done a thing, and here am I all ready!”

“As soon as you go, I will begin.”

“Just what you always say. You are the most unpunctual creature in the world; and it all comes of putting off, and putting off. The water will be quite cold in the basin——”

——“So much the better.”

“Well, I shall go. Come, show me the sitting-room. I have forgotten which it is.”

“The last but one, I think; but I forget, too. Go in next door, and Coleman will find it for you.”

“Oh, nonsense! I’m sure you know. It is only that you are lazy, and can’t be troubled to rise. Come, get up; it will do you good to make the effort. At any rate, we can poke out the room together. I can’t go poking about by myself.”

Her sister rose wearily.

“Now, then, you ask,” whispered Marjorie, as they saw a group of attendants at the far end of the gallery; and she found it a good joke, after they had traversed the entire distance, to be reconducted to the door precisely opposite that which they had just quitted.

At last Kate was free to sit down and sigh.

It was something to have even that momentary exemption from her taskmaster, and to be allowed to lay her head again upon the friendly bed-post, and moan. Further than that she durst not give way,—fresh trials were awaiting her close at hand, and only a brief interval could be conceded to silence, and an inner cry of the sore spirit for help and strength from above. But she was thankful even for that respite.

Evelyn was in the sitting-room with the other two, and the soup and fish were already on the table, when Kate appeared.

“All so nice,” said Lady Olivia, chattily. “Come, Kate, we have waited for you, but we must put off no longer. We have just an hour, Rupert says. We must start at half-past eight.”

“That will be doing it comfortably,” said Rupert. “James is on the spot now, and the

captain is to send him up, if there be the slightest chance of their getting off sooner.”

“Most thoughtfully arranged,” protested his mother. “I do not know what we should have done without Rupert; do you, girls? This soup is really very good, and so are the nice little rolls.”

“And so is the nice little sunset,—getting up on purpose,” put in Marjorie. “Ho, Kate, you have got a glory round your head! Look, mamma! look, Rupert! does she not remind you of the pictures of the saints?”

“Yes,” said Rupert, in rather a low tone,—“very much.”

It seemed to Kate that he spoke compassionately, tenderly; and her heart swelled at the thought, “He only pities me; he is so kind and good,—he does not blame nor sneer at my absurdity, nor yet feel elated at my expense.”

“And now it has died away,” cried Marjorie. “And now that Kate is no longer encircled by a halo of sanctity, we can perceive that she has a very tumultuous head of hair, and that one plait is coming down.”

Kate raised her hand.

“That touched her up,” continued Marjorie,

in a tone expressive of "for all that she affects not to care, she is mundane beneath." "That is not the side, madam," she went on, aloud. "Now how do you suppose it is going to keep up, just because it is tucked in beneath the rest? It may do so till after dinner; but you must go to Coleman before we start."

All through the meal she plied her sister with questions and comments; as fast as Evelyn, who neither looked at nor spoke to his right-hand neighbour, introduced fresh topics, Marjorie handed them, as it were, across the table. He thought her possessed. Even Lady Olivia was not allowed to take any share in the conversation, while Kate was being perpetually forced to speak. He was not to know that it had become visible at length to the young lady's perceptions that there was something wrong of which she had not been told,—that her sister was suffering, and Rupert was trying to shield her; and that this mysterious bond between the two was, to her, the outsider—the one whom neither had appealed to, nor taken into confidence—instigating to annoyance and petty tyranny. What right had that silly Kate to look so wan and woe-begone, and sit without opening

her lips? What was it to Rupert if she did, that he must needs constitute himself her champion? Were they not having it all their own way? And was it not she who ought rather to have been pitied and petted,—she who was going away from every one of those who cared for her, and to whom she had just said “Farewell” for many a day to come? Kate surely had nothing to complain of; yet she caught Rupert eyeing her sister’s bent head, whenever he thought no one was looking his way, in a manner that showed there was something underneath.

She felt that he exerted himself to amuse the other two, solely that the one for whom he was really concerned might be freed from importunity. Much he cared, or they either, for the improvements, the emigrant-ships, and all the valuable information which he brought lustily to the front! As fast as she repelled his batteries, he charged her with fresh ones,—it was all done with a purpose.

And of all things, it was insupportable that she, Marjorie Newbattle,—who had lately been having nothing but flattery and adulation served out to her in unstinted measure,—should be placed in so atrocious a position. By holding

her peace and eating her dinner, she would indeed far better have sustained her dignity than by drawing down upon her head the vituperations of the sufferers; but that was just what her provoked and purblind spirit was slow to perceive,—she felt bound, as she thought, to vindicate her rights, and assert herself somebody; and accordingly, she chattered, flourished, and whisked about from one subject to another, saying every single thing she could think of to vex her sister and put Evelyn out of countenance, till both of them heartily wished her anywhere else, and were almost equally thankful when the repast was over.

To Kate its durance must have been trying in any case; but she owed an increase of wretchedness to Marjorie. It was Marjorie who twice pointed out that her plate went away untouched; Marjorie obliged her to speak, when articulation was hardly possible; Marjorie called their step-mother's attention to her state.

“And oh, your hair!” cried she, at length. “Go at once, Kate, to Coleman, or you will be too late.” (Rupert should not have the chance of keeping guard in that preposterous way any longer at present.) “Coleman really must attend

to you, my dear,” she asseverated, “for I do assure you that go as you are, you cannot ; you are not fit to be seen.”

The command opened an avenue for escape, which was embraced only too gladly. Coleman, however, already bustling about, collecting, folding, and by no means inclined for hair-dressing, needed all the sight of the patient, pale face, to prevent an outburst of remonstrance.

“Lor’, Miss Kate,” she cried, moved to pity. “Do tell ! you’re ill now, aren’t you ? Whatever is the matter ? Is it the railway ? or,” confidentially, “are you afraid of the sea ? I would go with you by train, Miss, that I would,” continued she, with a brisk thought for herself, since she hated steamboats and smells, as she had already told James. “Do say now ; shall I go and see about it ?”

But the overture was not accepted, and the dark plait was fastened up again, and all stray locks brushed smoothly down, without any excuse being offered for the heavy eyes and sorrowful brow they shaded. Even a second friendly offer — that of “drops” — was declined.

“We are off,” said Marjorie, coming in.

“Rupert goes with mamma and me, and mamma says will you follow with Coleman when you are ready? There is no need to hurry, but mamma insists on going now. Coleman, will you go to her? Oh, Kate, do just look me over. Am I all right? Have I got everything? Will you look round after we are gone?”

That, her sister thought, might be left to the maid. As soon as the sounds of departure died away, she rose, resolved to return to the deserted sitting-room, to be away from the coming and going of the attendants, and to have another few minutes' breathing-space in which to drop the mask. It might be long ere she could snatch another moment's solitude, and the strain on every faculty which must be persevered in for many hours to come, was terrible to think of. She would not think. But at least she would be alone; and alone, might dare to be herself. She hurried across the passage.

Oh the relief! Yet the next moment she repented having indulged in it.

The place where he had sat, from which she had every little while met his eye, whence his kind voice had seemed in every syllable to intercede for mercy on her behalf,—for an end to be

put to the senseless persecution of her unfeeling sister,—oh, it was too much!

She threw herself half out of the open window,—it had a balcony, and was many storeys high, so she could not be spied upon,—and gave way at last.

Tears gushed from her eyes, sobs burst from her lips. Her very hands were drenched, her face disfigured, within a few short minutes. Were she to die for it, she could not now restrain the pent-up sluice which had broken loose and overleapt all barriers at last. It seemed as if every additional second made her less able to acquire that hold upon herself which she well knew it was so terribly necessary must be regained almost immediately,—for in her sharpest anguish recollection was not obscured, but was loud in caution and remonstrance.

All was vain.

She struggled for breath as well as for self-control. To expose herself to the vulgar curiosity of men and maid servants was not to be thought of; she must be able to move when summoned,—have strength to walk down-stairs without exciting observation,—and steadiness of

speech wherewith to answer questions, and give orders if need be, without her voice betraying her.

That there had been tears, might be seen—she supposed must be seen,—but at least a check must be put upon the tempest which was rending every fibre.

And she could put none.

The power was not there. Again and again she strove to clear her face, wiping away as fast as it rose, the blinding stream that threatened to become a torrent,—again and again she put forth her little hands to grasp supports which should enable her to steady the feeble limbs, whose trembling increased momentarily,—but all energy of will seemed failing, resolution was of no avail, and she was at her very worst when the door opened.

It was not Coleman,—it was a man's step,—and so far well. It was probably some one come to take away the dinner things; and since, in that case, no demands needed to be made upon her, she could keep her position, with her back turned to the table and the door. She drew a breath, and tried to let it escape gently, and she crumpled up in her hand the

handkerchief, which was soaked through. It was possible that nothing unusual might be noticed.

The man came nearer, but no clatter of dishes nor moving of chairs followed; he walked straight up behind the breathless figure in the window,—she had but a moment’s time for consciousness of whom it must be, and the next he was holding her to his heart. “My Kate!—my Kate!”

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE TURN OF THE TIDE.

“Great floods have flown
 From simple sources.”
 —*All's Well that ends Well.*

SHE was locked in arms that could have been none other than a lover's; and yet so dizzy and blind was she, and so confusing and bewildering was the transition from that anguish, which had been almost insupportable, to this deliverance, which was scarce comprehensible, that the well-nigh broken-hearted girl could only lay down her head upon his breast, and feel as if, in closing her eyes there, she could be willing to open them no more on earth.

He seemed to understand; for some minutes she was suffered to feel only the strain of that mute embrace, and to dwell upon the solitary expression which had preceded it; and it was

she herself who first attempted to break the spell which seemed to hold them both.

She struggled feebly to free herself.

“Stay a moment, Kate. There. It is past, all past. Hush, lie still. . . . I will not let you go. My darling,” in her ear, “mine, at last, and for ever. I have you, and will keep you, and none shall ever come between us more.”

“Rupert,—Rupert——”

“Don’t speak, Kate. Don’t rise, and don’t speak. I know all that you would say.”

“I——” she tried for more, but none came.

“You wish to tell me you are all my own, don’t you? Yes. I know it must be ‘yes.’ That is the only word I will listen to just now. Kate, I am yours, yours only, yours wholly, yours till death. My first, my last, my only love. . . . Now, have you anything to say, Kate? If not, be quiet and still. There are yet a few minutes before we need go. I have found my time at last.”

She was indeed scarcely capable of releasing herself had she wished it; and she could not wish it. Her sobbing lips, her streaming eyes, were better where they were, her quivering frame needed all the support he gave it.

And since he was obeyed, since she proved herself amenable to the authority of her captor, he could show himself an indulgent one. He did not command her to be silent, and at the same instant implore her to speak. He did not bid her lie still, and change her position every minute. He held her close, and was himself motionless and mute, while the labouring breath came and went, by slow degrees, more evenly; and the shuddering sighs that had at first escaped, one by one sank away. A gentle relaxation stole over the whole exhausted system,—there was a long pause, a calm,—it seemed almost as if she had passed out of the death-struggle into the haven beyond.

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At length,—and indeed the only wonder was how they had been so long without interruption,—messengers burst in excited and indignant.

“Miss Kate, I thought you had been down—oh, Captain Evelyn,” said Coleman, with a sudden change of tone; “I—I beg your pardon, sir,” for Evelyn had barely time to loose the form he held, ere they were detected behind the window-curtain. “I—I’m sure,” stammered the maid, fairly aghast at what she had dis-

covered, "I did not know where Miss Kate was, and have hunted her up and down,—for they told me she was outside, and her ladyship has been gone full twenty minutes, and Miss Kate and I was to follow her immediately!"

"No fears. I have arranged to have due warning if the boat is ready to start sooner than she was expected to be."

"But, sir! Sooner! It's nine o'clock now."

"Is it? We may as well go then. Take my arm, dear," the last words not being for Coleman, we may be sure. "Can you walk now?" bending over his charge as the maid disappeared.

"That's right. No one is here to notice. You must face the world for a few minutes, dearest: try to mind as little as you can; it will not be for long. I know how brave you can be."

As they drove down to the Docks, he strove to divert her attention, and make self-command less of an effort, by keeping up a vigorous though desultory commentary on the objects of interest they passed, renewing the subjects started an hour before with Marjorie, but now with what different feelings! As he talked, leaning over her to point hither and thither,

and ever turning round to draw forth the low responses which met with such earnest and immediate attention, he could pour love and consolation into her eyes, which had nothing to do with the long-winded, prosaic explanations.

Those were for the benefit of the third person, who discreetly gave the two opposite only the side and back view of her straw-bonnet, being to all appearance engrossed with outdoor objects. It is to be hoped she benefited by the dissertation, for it did not do Kate much good.

It kept her quiet, however, and enabled her, perhaps, to bear better than she might otherwise have done, her sudden load of happiness. This might have been almost too great, its touch might have been too nearly that of pain, had she been altogether able at once to realise it.

As it was, she hardly knew where she went, or what she was doing. All consciousness of the past and future was engulfed in the strange present,—all other emotions lost in one. Every touch of Evelyn's hand, every fond gaze and impassioned murmur, carried a kind of soothing ecstasy to her heart—not the most subtle movement, nor the faintest inflection of tenderness, passed unmarked,—but to all besides she was

insensible, inaccessible,—she could neither see nor feel beyond his presence.

Not for a moment did he quit her.

Servants and baggage might find their own way from the place where the fly drew up to the side-dock where the little steamer was already puffing out her smoke preparatory to the start,—he would have nothing to do with either.

Coleman paid the driver, well aware of what she was about, and followed, without a word, the direction taken by Evelyn through the racketing scene, though it was perhaps as ill-advised a path as could well have been chosen. Coleman was a woman of wisdom, and she had made up her mind that she would like to stay at Carnochan.

At length, however, her spirit did rebel on finding herself alone in a dark lumber-shed, full of clattering noises, and with nothing to be seen or heard of her companions.

“And just suppose I lose the boat, all along of them and their sweethearting!” said she to herself. “No one will believe but what it is my fault. This is real nonsense, Captain Evelyn, and so I shall let you know when I can get at you.”

However, a civil porter coming up to the rescue, and himself offering to conduct the helpless abigail on board, she was restored to serenity even without the promised vent for her indignation.

Kate had passed through the same gloomy waste before her, and found the place a paradise.

It was enchanted ground whereon she trod ; the rattle of chains and hammers, the din, the turmoil, the hurrying to and fro, were nothing to her ; they were lost in some guiding whisper, some low inquiry. Every step of her progress, every halt made or difficulty encountered, was henceforth united to some exquisite association. The narrow pathway, the grimy passage, the slippery ascent, all meant some new delight ; and even the reproachful faces of her sister and step-mother, confronting her as she stepped at length on board, could not destroy or awaken her from her trance.

“ We have been here such a long time ”—the elder lady greeted them thus, immediately,—“ that we really had begun to fear something was wrong. I am glad to see you at last ; but I hope you have *some* reason to give,” looking from one to the other.

“A very good reason,” replied her son, readily. “I found Kate quite overdone when I went back for her, and I would not let her set off on the instant. I knew we had lots of time.”

“Kate not well? Oh, that alters the question. But, my dear, what was the matter? You do not look well indeed——”

“She is better now. She will be all right by-and-by,” Rupert again interposed. “You got down comfortably, I hope? And Marjorie saw the Docks? What an evening! This is but a little boat, ma’am——”

“Very,” said poor Lady Olivia, disconsolately.

“But,” said Evelyn, “we shall do very well when we have got our things together. Let us find a seat to begin with.”

It was plain that no more was to be said about Kate, and the topic could certainly not compete in interest with her own comfort, in his mother’s opinion. He had therefore no difficulty in drawing her off to the discussion of where they were to sit, and how soon the boat would start. The latter point was soon settled; the ropes were actually being unwound as he spoke, and a few minutes later the attentive

James came round to suggest that if his mistress would not mind coming to the steerage part of the little vessel, she would be more comfortable in a place that he had found for her there, than where she was.

Evelyn inspected and approved. The whole fore part of the boat was a vast pile of empty boxes; and by pulling out one or two of these from the extreme front, a retired nook, away from every disagreeable, and sheltered by high banks on every side, could be converted by the addition of rugs, wrappers, and shawls, into a couch not unworthy of their acceptance.

He and the footman set to work, and Lady Olivia was laughingly content. She stepped daintily up the steps to her throne, as she called it: the evening was so mild and still, the air so balmy, and the view across the water so beautiful, that she would not think of going below for some time. It was quite refreshing; and her spirits,—which had rather sunk under the first impressions of the steamer, and the absence of her son to reason these away,—now revived.

She sat between the girls, Evelyn boldly telling Kate to make room for him by her.

How should his mother note anything in that,

or know that he had drawn a certain little hand away from its rightful place, and held it in his own, beneath the covering which was spread over them all? Marjorie declared the stupid hot blanket was not needed; but Lady Olivia thought it gave a comfortable air to the whole, and Evelyn assured her she was right.

He sedulously explained all that was going on.

The "Countess" took some time to get through the narrow windings of her dock, during which they were called upon to take notice of all the various performances; and though Marjorie jeered, she could not prevent the flow of questions and answers, nor the genuine animation of Lady Olivia, who would have taken interest in a dead dog, had her son called upon her to do so.

Thus he kept his Kate quiet.

He did not ask *her* to look. Now and then, when both the others had turned their heads aside, he had his reward—he could behold and meet the smile which his own smile had the delightful power of drawing forth; but, for the most part, he left her in peace to let her eyes wander—through a misty veil if they would—over the beauteous prospect.

Sitting where they did,—“from their cosy nest,”—according to Lady Olivia, they faced the mouth of the river, and every five minutes brought more and more of the gleaming ocean, with its broad horizon, into view.

“How beautiful!” whispered Kate at last. “How very, very beautiful!” They were the first words she had spoken since the party settled down, and they were called forth by the matchless scene which met the eye about an hour after starting.

The sun had set some time, and a faint moon, scarcely visible in the clear pale sky, had crept softly up. The water lay like a sheet of glass on every side; here and there they passed a becalmed vessel with its spread sails reflected, motionless and still; and not a sound save the monotonous throb of their own busy wheels broke the silence.

“Is it beautiful?” replied Evelyn, clasping tighter the hand he held, and unable to prevent something of the feelings which stirred within from entering into his tone. “I am so glad——” he stopped abruptly, afraid of saying too much.

Afterwards, when Lady Olivia had retired to

her cabin, and the gathering dusk threw those left behind into a shadow dark enough, he behaved very badly to Marjorie, for he stole his arm round the slender waist near him, right under the unsuspecting sister's nose, and then was by way of laying himself out to please and amuse her! Would she not have a shawl? It was not so warm as it had been, he and Kate were quite glad of the long plaid between them. No wonder that, all being so nicely arranged, he was willing to let Madge stay if she chose, and could even exert himself to keep up chit-chat with her.

Explanations could wait, while he held Kate thus.

He was in no hurry; they had hours of moonlight and leisure before them, and nothing but tranquillity around.

"Who would go below on such a night?" cried Marjorie. "The very thought is horror. Let us sit up till daybreak, and see the sun rise. It will not be later than four o'clock, and I have never been in bed before four of late."

"As you please," replied Evelyn, rather dismayed. "But I think you will hardly care to

sit up till four, however pleasant you might find it to *dance* till then."

"I detest early hours."

"I detest—nothing." He laid his head back, smiling to himself,—but when called upon instantly to declare what he meant, had no declaration to make.

After that, further efforts failed to rouse him.

He had done his best for Marjorie; but if the result of all his well-adjusted sentences and elaborate attentions were to be this, that she was disposed to stay where she was till daybreak, they should cease. He would have nothing to do with such an idea. It was certainly not for her to sit up, whoever did.

But perhaps Kate thought otherwise; she was, at least, scared, and ready herself to fly, when on a sudden Marjorie took the initiative, and, wearied with her own ineffectual efforts, proclaimed that both were tired, and would do well to beat a retreat.

"Very good," said Rupert, disengaging himself with alacrity, and rising before his former attitude could have been too minutely noted. "I thought you would find it so. I'll see you

down, Madge. You stay here, Kate. I shan't be away above a minute."

"Are you not coming, Kate?" Marjorie stood still, and looked back.

"If—if somebody will help me." And her sister endeavoured to rise.

"Take care," cried Marjorie. "Take care. What are you doing? You will bring all those boxes down upon you pell-mell! Do not be so clumsy. There you go. Do sit still, till Rupert helps you down."

"Sit still," added Rupert, but in a different tone. "I am not going to help you down yet awhile. I am going to take Marjorie off, but that is no reason why you or I should go. Let each one please him or her self—eh, Madge? That's my rule," with a cool stare into her affronted face.

And she had to be thus politely escorted off the field, and shut up in the little dusty cabin below, and know that he had gone back to the glittering moonlight, and to the one he had chosen! She had been willingly permitted to retire, but Kate had been absolutely refused permission to follow! It was not very pleasant to receive his cheerful "Good night" and think of this,—but

Marjorie had cared little enough about inflicting such unpleasantness on others, and it was only fair that she should have her turn. She might frown and bite her lip as she heard him turn and spring up the little stair again, as though too impatient to be gone, to delay a moment where he was; but few will pity her. She would have kept him even then, if she could.

And Kate was listening for that returning footstep with her heart in her mouth.

A new experience had now to be gone through. She had calmed down into something of a dreamy state during the past hour or two; she had learned to look solemnly into the face of the great marvel that had befallen her; and she would have been well content to have gone on journeying thus, sunk in her own thoughts, or listening with inward rapture too deep for expression, to the tones of that dear voice. Other voices might mingle with his; Lady Olivia and Marjorie might speak as well as he; she was grateful that they did, and let her be silent: she thought she wanted no more.

Ah, but Rupert did.

Now he could not only press her to his side, but give her all his looks, his words, his kisses.

No fears of any prying inquisitiveness from mother or sister now ; no alarms from strangers ; no calls to part hurriedly ; no demands to attend to others. Only the tread of a solitary passenger, pacing up and down the narrow line of deck on one side their barricade ; only the distant echoes of mirth arising at odd intervals from a group gathered on the gangway above ; only the sea and sky before them.

Presently calmer speech and more connected utterances began to succeed the first impassioned outbreak. He could dwell on the great, the almost inconceivable surprise afforded him by the sight of the little packet underneath the railway-carriage ; on the instantaneous conviction thereby conveyed to his mind ; on the necessity for its immediate concealment ; next, on the misery of seeing her suffer, and of being unable to assure her that her grief was needless ; and finally, on the diplomacy which had secured to them that brief meeting in the hotel parlour. He had been unable longer to endure the thought of what she was enduring ; he had got the others off—what excuse he had offered he could not remember, but he had escaped from their hold, and rushed back,—as it appeared, just in time.

On her part she could only listen, smile, and weep.

He spoke of that terrible hour, but it seemed to her that other hours had been scarcely less terrible. She did not grudge their pains, did not wish unsuffered one throe that had preceded such a birth of sweetness; all was forgotten, all forgiven, ere he had even sued for mercy.

Gradually one thing after another dropped out.

“I have so much to say,” said Evelyn. “Where shall I begin, and where shall I end? Never mind, there is all night long to say it in. You will stay with me yet awhile, Kate,—two hours, three hours? Numbers of people are about, dear; they are not thinking of going below at all. See what a moon!—and you never look more lovely than by moonlight. Let me see you, Kate; turn your face this way,—I am going to tell you something. Since you and I parted on the lonely Galloway shore,—the shore that is coming into sight now, if there were light to see it by,—I have been with beauties of many lands, and known that they were beauties, and admired them, and criticised them, but I have never been able to trifle away even a passing hour in doing homage to a woman. I have

danced with them, sung to them, done my best to please and even to love them ; but whenever it came to that last point, and I would have begun in earnest, the very first sound of my own voice, tuned appropriately to the occasion, sickened me. The thought of you——” He stopped.

“Of me !” whispered Kate, as though to herself,—“of me !”

“Yes, you, my heaven-sent messenger. You, whom I had taught to love, but could not teach to deceive. You, who had given me your heart, and had had to take it back bruised and wounded to your breast again. You, whom I dreaded to think of,—I cannot explain to you why to-night, Kate,—you have had enough to bear already this day—and we will not enter on what has kept us all these years apart ; you shall hear it all by-and-by. But of this I can solemnly assure you, my darling, I have been faithful to your memory through it all. You have been ever before me as I saw you on that day when, to my amazement, you stood up inspired with a power and strength beyond your own, and awed me back. How you opened my eyes, and showed me my own baseness by

the light of your nobility ! I had never dreamed of your taking things as you did ; I thought I was sure of you ; I had a conviction that you were being carried along by the current, as I was,—and even at a greater pace, for I reckoned on all the vehement impetuosity of your nature—all the force of your strong passions—to lend their aid. On my part, I was merely bent on gratifying my love without having to encounter opposition and remonstrance,—idiot that I was—it seems to be now perfectly inconceivable that I should have minded it,—but with you, revenge, self-vindication, and pride, must all, I felt, have been on my side. They were—I know they were. I know I tempted you. And you stood there, my brave, beautiful darling, and mastered yourself and me. Your look, the cry which sprang from you when you understood all that my selfish proposal included ; the little hand that would have struck me if I had dared to touch it afterwards,—could I ever forget it all ? At that moment only, I believe my heart was yours. Yes, dear, it is so ; all that had preceded it had been but a fever of admiration and sympathy—a mingling of one sensation with another,—but none of them

worthy of the name of love. I lost you, and as surely as I lost, I loved. . . . Then came the end, Kate, and that end riveted the scene upon my heart for ever. The horror of that sight, when I thought I had killed you! And then the hour that followed! Oh, my darling, your bleeding mouth—your dim, discoloured eyes! Hush, hush! I will not, then; I will not.” His own hands were trembling, and his voice was breaking. It was well to pause. “I hardly thought you could continue to care for me,” subjoined Evelyn, after a time. “At first I felt almost certain that, with you, to despise was to drive from your affections. You must remember with what emphasis you had invariably pointed out to me that it was only that which in itself was worthy of esteem and honour, which could be truly beloved; you used to tell me this, when I was trying to reconcile you to those who had treated you so cruelly, young and tender as you were—such a child——. Well, never mind that; but was it not so? I remember that, whatever might have been my private opinions, I did not at the time care to avow them. However, by-and-by I plucked up courage again, Kate, and

I was coming down to your sister's wedding so gladly and hopefully, when,—dare I tell you what kept me back? I had not meant to do so to-night; but perhaps you would be easier if you knew the whole?"

"Tell me anything—everything."

"You will not mind?"

"Nothing now," said Kate. "Nothing now."

Softening the story as well as he could, he gave it: it could not but shock and sadden, but he had the satisfaction of perceiving that, after the first natural impulse of startled indignation, she dwelt less on her own loss and Evelyn's credulity, than on Pollaxfen's guilt.

That seemed to amaze and disturb her greatly.

"All these years!" she said,—"all these years!"

"Recollect that he had no idea of the harm he was doing. Although," added Evelyn, frankly, "I daresay it would not have made any difference if he had. He merely intended preventing anything that might take place between us; had he known that he was annulling vows that were already registered in my heart, he—well, we won't pry into what his feelings might have been."

“And that was why you left England?”

“That was why, yes. I do not say that that was why I stayed away; for, once embarked on the campaign, you know—and it began a couple of years after I was out—I had, of course, to see it through. And jolly good fun it was. But as soon as it was over, I began to think of you again, always having your image on my brain, yet with the dread that it must be there only as a tormentor. How madly I pursued Pollaxfen’s insinuated idea! The merest turns of a phrase in Lady Olivia’s letters were enough at times to seem perfect confirmation of the worst. So then I tried to give you a successor, and you have heard with what results. It was of no use, Kate,—of no manner of use. And at last back I came to England, and you know the rest. What did you think of my behaviour in London? Did you not discover that I was straining at the leash, ever longing to be at your feet, and ever kept back by all these doubts and fears? I imagined all had been only too plain to you.”

“Sometimes, just for a moment, I did—did fancy,—but then I had taken it into my head——”

“It? What? Taken what?”

“I thought there was some one else.”

“Some one else? Good gracious, child, I never spoke to any one else!”

No response.

“What do you mean, Kate?”

“You will not ask me to repeat all my foolish fancies, Rupert. I was mistaken, and that is all,” hanging her head a little.

“That is hardly ‘all’; that is the truth, but not the whole truth, quibbler. However, I think I guess what it means; and you were very, very much mistaken, my fair oracle. In fact, you had no one but yourself to thank for your ‘foolish fancies’; you and my mother were so possessed with the idea that only one of Lady Olivia’s troublesome daughters could be the attraction—at least in the matrimonial line—that it was useless to try to open your eyes. Poor Madge! What, *I* care for that shallow girl! Well, don’t look at me so reproachfully, else I shall be tempted to go on, just to get some more of such glances; but truly, love, she is the last person in the world to have been my lode-star. I amused myself with her at times,—for that I have already done penance, sweet,—but my real object was to be near you. I

had to establish my footing in the house, don't you see? I meant to be the privileged person, allowed to attend wherever you went, to come and go when you were alone, to fret myself whenever you spoke to any other man, and whenever you turned away from me. And I was not the only one," continued Evelyn, smiling. "If Miss Marjorie only knew it, there were others besides me who came on her invitation, and placed themselves at her disposal, that they might have a chance of getting near the unget-at-able elder sister. Why, Kate, you froze us all! You had such blind faith in Marjorie, that it seemed to you nobody could come near the house but on her account! Well, she is your sister, and I won't be hard upon her, but she vastly overrates her own charms. It is better, Kate,—my own incomparable Kate,—to underrate them. Your admirers outnumber hers, and your lover—— Look here," he cried, all at once, "do you remember that day when I put my hand over yours on the carriage-door? What right had you to leave the little warm thing there if you thought I was in love with Marjorie?"

"You were talking to her, and I hoped——"

“Now, Kate!”

“I thought,” said Kate, correcting herself, blushing, “that you did not know what you were doing. You sent me home afterwards.”

“Ay, I did; you know why, now. And then I drove on with her. Why not? I had no pleasure in being with other people, and no suspicion of your taking ‘fancies’ into your head. No one but your own little foolish self ever hinted at such a thing.”

“Did they not?”

“And some of them had a very good notion of how matters really stood.”

By-and-by it was, “Did you read my letters, Kate?”

Read them! She could only smile at the idea, remembering the many devices of one kind and another by which Lady Olivia had been induced to refer to, and reproduce the Indian epistles.

“I thought you would. I had no reason to suppose it, but I had the presumption to believe that you would always take an interest in me. Eh, what are you laughing at? Mocking me, are you? Well, it does sound odd now, doesn’t it? But I can tell you, *that* was all I ever

thought of then ; and so, when I was writing,— I was a good son in writing to my mother, now, was I not ? you will own that, Kate ?—always when I was at my letters, I said to myself, ‘ Will Kate hear of this ? ’ and ‘ What will Kate think of that ? ’ I hoped, I fancied that perhaps—perhaps you might discover——” hesitating.

“ What ? ” whispered Kate in his ear.

“ Did you discover anything, dear ? Did you learn from them that I was not quite the thoughtless fellow I had been when you first knew me ? Was there anything in them—to tell you——”

“ Oh yes, there was, Rupert ; there was.”

“ That I had come to look upon life differently. Before I met you I had never known—I had never thought—Kate, you know what Lady Olivia is ? ”

“ I know.”

“ She is my mother, and what has she ever done for me that a mother should ? As a child I had never seen her read her Bible, nor been brought to say my prayers beside her knee. I have known some Christian mothers since, and when I was in the house with them—some of our officers’ wives they were—it used to make

me feel—I can't tell you what I felt—all was so different. My poor mother had only cared to see me finely dressed, and able to hold up my head and answer back when I was spoken to, and that I should make friends with boys, noblemen's sons, and — but you understand what I mean. She had never given my character or principles a thought. I declare, Kate, the only wonder is that I did not grow up worse than I did! However, I was bad enough; and I don't say it to reproach her, God knows, but only that you, who were the first person I had ever known who, to my knowledge, acted in my presence according to the dictates of your conscience, in opposition to your will, may see how strange and new such a thing was to me. I could not at all comprehend it at first; and though I afterwards woke to a sensation of reverence, longing, self-abasement—in short, though love was kindled then and there, I still only thought of you as a splendid visionary, counterbalancing the angelic enthusiasm by which you were at times possessed, by being very mortal indeed at others. In which phase to love you best, I knew not; probably the one would have been incomplete without the other. However, it was not till

afterwards, till I fell in with other people,—men like myself, young and hearty, not likely to be victimised by morbid fancies, or carried away by sentiment, yet living the life I felt you knew of,—that I ever thought such a life could be a real and practical one. Evidently, they found it so ; and they were some of the first men in our regiment. When we had to go to the front they were just the same as the rest of us, cheerful, sensible, rather enjoying it, you know,—well, it's a fact ; you can't help enjoying it, Kate,—and they made no long mouths, nor anything disagreeable. There was nothing extra put on the occasion ; they were just as they always were ; and somehow, I got to going with them more and more, and never after lost sight of the truths I learnt then. But you were the first, dear ; to you, my darling, I owe all happiness, for this world, and for the next."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

CONCLUSION.

“Smiling noon, for sullen morrow,
Years of joy for hours of sorrow.”

—*Rokeby.*

IF Kate had been blest before, words cannot paint her emotions at the close of this nocturnal conference.

True, she had all along—that is, from the date of Evelyn’s return to England—noted that his habits and modes of expression were not such as could spring from any other source than that of all good,—the discovery had been one to cause her many a tear of thankfulness,—but to hear such a change—and change it was—asccribed to her,—to learn that in that past hour, when her own need had been the sorest, and her own repentance that of the returning prodigal, she had unconsciously stretched out her hand to save

another soul, and that soul the one beloved of all on earth,—oh, it was too much!

Her cup had been full; it now ran over.

It seemed as though she had not needed more—as though she could not contain more; and yet the Hand that was raining down riches from above, could not stint itself.

Sleep was not to be thought of.

All the other occupants of the little cabin were slumbering when, at length, the laggard stole softly in, and she smiled to herself at her stealthy tread and cautious movements; but, although some turned and raised their heads, she succeeded in lying down without disturbance, and passing the few hours that elapsed before bustle again began on board, in such a delirium of bliss as may perhaps be imagined.

Rest it could hardly be called; not for a moment could she close her eyes, or at least sink into unconsciousness;—but what did it matter? It would be all rest hereafter. Trials and troubles might come—so she told herself (but trials and troubles were at a very low computation at the moment)—nothing could tear up her great tree by the roots again.

Rupert hers, and owing all to her! Hence-

forth they were to be not only one in heart, but in soul, in spirit;—surely if ever a happy girl might be pardoned for seeing the future shadowless, and the present perfect,—and also for lying awake talking nonsense to herself, when she ought to have been recruiting her strength after such a series of harrowing events as she had undergone that day,—it was the newly-betrothed Kate Newbattle.

Marjorie came up on deck next morning, rosy and renovated, after an excellent night's repose; but she was disgusted anew at the careless "Good morning, Madge," with which Rupert passed her by, and hurried forward to ask Kate how she did?

Whatever might be his intentions, he had no business to behave like that, nor to turn his back both on his mother and herself, while he shawled up her sister so earnestly. As if they did not all alike need a wrap in the chill atmosphere of the early morning.

"You must not take cold; recollect that the sun has not warmed the air yet," Rupert was saying, as he fastened the brooch-pin; but it did not seem to occur to him that the air had not been warmed for other people either.

Lady Olivia was really shivering, and her unnatural son needed to have the fact brought under his notice. She had found the cabin too hot, but she almost repented having left it, and only his proposal himself to make and to bring her a cup of coffee, restored her equanimity. She liked his coffee, he knew,—he had learned the art of making it in the East,—and every one brightened up at the proposal.

He now cheerfully suggested that he should purvey for the party; but even as he did so, Marjorie fancied a sinister meaning in the “You will be the better of it,” which was spoken as he was arranging his overcoat around his sister’s feet.

He was very tiresome; and as for Kate, she was still more ridiculous. Her foolish face was suffused with a perfectly unintelligible glow; and although she had been so “overdone” the evening before, and had sat up to any hour of the night after it, her cheeks were quite pink, and her eyes bright. What was there to make Rupert solicitous in that? It seemed to her that there was very little occasion for all his shawls and his questions; and she felt as if she must say something disagreeable, or die for it,

when Kate, instead of answering readily that she was quite well, and putting an end to the whole thing, merely smiled without a word, and permitted him to fuss over her as if she liked it.

“I did not know we had an invalid on board,” observed Miss Marjorie, disdainfully. “And, upon my word, I have always heard that it was the night air, not the morning air, that gave people cold. But Kate seems to think otherwise.”

Poor Marjorie! She had some excuse for being ill-tempered. She did not understand, you see, the length to which matters had gone; and it may as well be said here at once, that when she did, she behaved much better; but ignorant as she was during the journey, feeling herself of no account to anybody, without being made the recipient of any justifiable secret for such neglect, it is hardly to be wondered at that she did not like it.

Evelyn's smile at her little *feu* nearly upset her altogether. It said so plainly — “Very true; you have hit the mark. We had a jolly time, I admit. And you are quite right in supposing that Kate has a high opinion of night air,—so have I.”

He remembered to put no sugar in Kate's coffee, and sweetened her sister's till it nearly sickened her, though both had an equal distaste for it. He was imperative about the bread-and-butter on one plate alone, though Marjorie could have eaten more than she got. He brought Kate a chair on which to lean, — and seated himself upon it.

Every minute his conduct provoked fresh comparisons ; and pervading all, there was an air of protection and possession, which was even more annihilating than the anxious looks of the previous evening.

In short, Evelyn was reckless, and did not mind what he did, or what people thought.

He had not achieved much more than Kate had in the way of repose, but such a loss was nothing to him. He was going down in triumph to the home of his beloved ; he had won his cause, which he had only, at most, hoped there to plead ; and he could snap his fingers at all circumspection. But for Lady Olivia, Marjorie would have been told at once what had happened, but it was deemed advisable by both that Lady Olivia should receive the information during some quiet hour ; and accordingly, they

would not slight her by giving her step-daughter any advantage.

Nor, indeed, did either feel that Marjorie had deserved it. She might very well wait a day or two; she had shown no sympathy, exhibited no sisterly affection; she had not even evinced common kindness when it was plain that Kate was in trouble; and Kate must now confess, in her own heart, that she never received from the child whom she had once so fondly cherished, anything but disappointment. This was nothing new; she had long ceased to expect much from Marjorie, and had grown by degrees to be too well accustomed to her selfishness and waywardness, to let their manifestation in the present instance interfere with her hour of joy.

Indeed it may be doubted whether she noticed anything amiss.

The green shades of St Mary's Isle, which called forth the admiration of the party as the little vessel steamed into harbour, were welcome, as betokening an end to the sail, to only two out of the four; but ere the long drive to Carnochan was accomplished, Evelyn had learned to watch impatiently for every passing mile-stone.

He had had to take his place, as ill-luck

would have it, opposite Lady Olivia, and was thus reduced to a feast of memory and imagination, which, richly as it might have sated at another hour, was poor compensation for the loss of present smiles and glances. Silently he sat back in his corner during the weary jogging over hill and dale, which seemed to own no prospect of termination; and Marjorie's refusal to get out and walk with him up the steep ascents, cut off even the chance of his opening the wrong door, and thus forcing her to change seats as they re-entered the carriage.

That would have improved matters; as it was, he had no satisfaction.

Carnochan reached, however, all was well again. His eye brightened, but it fell upon another eye and cheek whose feverish brilliancy he could too well interpret; and although suspicion and anxiety on this account were at an end, care and affection were not. The submissive Kate was immediately under orders to breakfast in her own room, and remain there until fully rested.

Lady Olivia, indeed, recommended a like course to everybody.

The peremptory whisper met with her warm

approval; for, "After our most successful journey," she pronounced, "a few hours rest in the heat of the day will enable us all to meet again at five o'clock, quite refreshed, and able for a stroll or a drive before dinner."

It had been felt, as has been said, that it would be well, before informing her of what had taken place, to wait until other interests and excitements had subsided. At present she was full of one thing and another,—the plants which had come down for her greenhouse, the china for her boudoir, the hangings for her bed; had more been added to this, it would have been too much.

So at least pleaded Evelyn. "A few hours," he said,—“a few hours only, and she shall hear all, dear Kate, *all*; but you know what it will be when she does. Let us have this one evening in peace. It will fortify us for the hubbub to come. No, you need not be afraid,” taking her hand; “you may trust me now, that I shall keep back nothing, — but,” with a smile, “I confess I tremble still!”

Lady Olivia was on in front with the head-gardener, the stroll she had proposed having been carried into effect. They had adjourned

to the garden, leaving only Marjorie within doors, since she did not see much force in accompanying the party; and gradually the two, who had dropped behind, allowed the distance to increase between them and the others. At length they turned, as it were absently, down a side-path.

“It must have been here,” said Evelyn, suddenly, “that Mademoiselle had her grand view of Pollaxfen. See, Kate, from the vinery,—she said the pots hid her—there they are,—she had a magnificent point of vantage from whence to observe. Here is the road—eh—wasn’t it? She knows it is; I see by her face,” laughing as he bent forward. “And that is the door whereby she fled. I have it all,” stopping to survey the spot.

She could not but own he was correct.

“It is a good door,” continued her lover, eyeing it; “it is a pity that it should only serve your turn once. Come,” stepping forward, and laying his hand upon the latch,—“come, my nestling, take another flight. Nobody wants us, and we want nobody. Let us go round the lake; and to-morrow you must show me some of the woody walks I heard so much about when

we fished the burn together. And the lake itself too. There is only one boat, I know; we'll go to the island sometimes, keeping the boat with us — shall we, Kate? We'll defy them to summon us home before we are ready, eh?"

They had had their ramble, and were returning in haste begotten of conscious dilatoriness, when whom should they meet point-blank but the trusty Maxwell.

Maxwell was on his way to the house, to pay his respects, bring his papers, and spy out the land.

"Sorry I could do nothing for you about that — hum — ha — last letter you wrote, Miss Kate," he began cheerily, after civilities had passed. "But I guessed how it would be. Pollaxfen will not let us alone, as long as he can put a finger in the pot to stir the wrong way. And you wrote yourself, afterwards?"

"Yes, I did," said Miss Newbattle, in some confusion. "It seemed my only chance, Mr Maxwell; and it would have been of no use troubling you again."

"And he refused you to yourself! He's 'no blate,' as we say in Scotland," turning to her

companion. "He's a tough customer, Captain Evelyn, that can refuse—well, I daresay she's told you?" cautiously.

"Yes."

"That can refuse a young lady the use of her own money, when not a halfpenny of it can come to him or his," with a thought of Bertha and her baby, on whose account he had not refused, himself.

"Mr Pollaxfen would tell you that he was actuated by a sense of duty," replied Evelyn, with great gravity.

Maxwell grinned. "Very likely, very likely indeed, that he would *tell* me so. He would not stick at telling—hum—ha"—nodding the rest—"be they great or small."

"And he wrote to you again?" said Kate.

"Wrote to say that he was not to be pestered by personal applications from you on any subject,—set him up! That's all we get by having anything to do with——"

"Never mind, Mr Maxwell. We will ask nothing more from him than we can help."

"Right there, Miss Kate; right you are, there. That's the safe plan. Ask nothing, and nothing can be denied you. Blessed are they,

you know—eh? Blessed are they that expect nothing, for they shall not be disappointed. That was my father's axiom. And, troth! we'll get nothing from Mr Harold Pollaxfen, whether we expect it or not!"

"But I was sorry for the poor farmers, the Comlines," he went on, when the laugh had subsided; "they deserved better at our hands. And it was hard on them that they should have to bear the brunt—that yon impudent jackanapes should take this opportunity of plaguing you."

"They have not suffered. Captain Evelyn," said Kate, with a happy look, "has taken care of that. He was with us at the time, and—and——"

"And lent her the five hundred," said Evelyn, smiling, "which he expects to receive again some day. It does not very much matter when, Mr Maxwell."

"Indeed?" cried the lawyer, backing almost into the water. "Indeed? Is it possible? Bless my soul, Captain Evelyn, what—what—what am I to think?"

"What you please," replied Evelyn, looking proudly down on the light figure by his side.

“Think as much as you like, and you won’t go far wrong ; will he, Kate ?”

“Oho !” cried Maxwell. “Aha ! That’s it, is it ? Now I know where I am ! Nay, Miss Kate, don’t turn away. I’m your father’s old friend ; let me wish you joy ; and if I’m the first to do so——”

——“You *are* the first,” interposed Evelyn. “And that is the meaning of these blushes. She will grow used to it, Mr Maxwell ; and you and I, I hope, will soon become better acquainted. At present I am going to be guilty of the rudeness of asking you to put off your visit to Carnochan to another day, if it be not inconvenient, since we have not yet told Lady Olivia anything, and it might come out——”

——“Ay, ay ; and it would, to a morality. For when it’s not business, Captain Evelyn, when it’s not business,—the whilk I divulge to no man, be he who he may,—when it’s a matter of domesticity, or friendship, I’m no hand at keeping a secret. My wife says that I’m not what could be called a sieve, for I’m just a big pipe,—what’s in at my ear is out at my mouth before you’ve well lost sight of it !

Ha, ha! I'll away home, then. Good-bye, good-bye. And best wishes, and many of them to you both."

"And now," added the old man to himself as he posted off, as hard as he could go, down the avenue,—“and now I know where I am!”

Bertha's chance might go to the winds—he had never reckoned on it—he was ready at once to believe that he had never thought of it,—since another marriage was to come off, and since the rare luck of being the first to hear and the first to tell the news had fallen to him, he could cheerfully exclaim, “And now I know where I am!”

Now he had a polter for Pollaxfen. For, once upon the track, he had soon made Bertha confess to all she knew of the subject, and it was, as we know, confirmatory of his own suspicions.

How many letters, therefore, he inwardly composed, informing the pestilent trustee of the news,—how vehemently he racked his brains for a pretext to write, and how earnestly he cast about in his mind for terms that should be unpalatable, and parentheses that should carry a prick,—history sayeth not.

Pollaxfen spat upon the letter.

He was not refined, but he might have stopped short of that,—more especially as no one but himself knew that he had done so. To Grubber, who came to see how he took the news, he began to rail savagely at his late wife's relations, but found to his amazement that Grubber, who had just been over in Manchester, entirely declined to listen.

“Seems to me you must have been spooney in that quarter yourself,” sneered the widower.

“There was no *seeming* about you,” retorted his friend.

Pollaxfen stared at him, and demanded what he meant?

“Every one knows now why you abuse the Newbattles; and Captain Evelyn is not likely to hold his tongue about the story you invented for him.”

“Story!” cried Pollaxfen, turning white. “What in the name of—— Confound you! What the devil——”

“Oh, there's no good in swearing,” replied Grubber, virtuously. “It won't unsay the libel you perpetrated five years ago, and it won't shut Evelyn's mouth either.”

“It shall shut yours at any rate, you d——d impertinent blackguard——”

Whereupon Grubber, who had done quite as well as even Mademoiselle, who had coached him, could have expected, had up with his cane in a moment, and found it suited his hand exactly.

It did not in the least disturb him that he was attacking a defenceless adversary, nor did it grieve his spirit that, whereas he himself was a burly giant, Pollaxfen was barely five feet seven. Because of the latter's being unarmed and a pigmy, was he to escape chastisement, if he told lies?

Not so. And between ourselves, I am disposed to agree with him; while, as for Mademoiselle, her raptures and ecstasy over the affair were as great as though her hero had been a second Bonaparte. She never ceased to chant his praises, and ring the changes on his valour; and as Grubber himself was no whit behind her in his own astonishment at the feat he had performed, he made, on his next entry to Springfield, a never-to-be-effaced impression on the heart of his rich cousin. It ended in his becoming master of the territory on

which he had received such an ovation, and as he was deeply imbued with the belief that he owed all his good-luck to Mademoiselle, and as she was equally confident that she owed hers to him, they were always the best of friends, and would never listen for a moment to a word against each other.

Mademoiselle continued to be indispensable even after her pupil's marriage. She wrote the notes, superintended the cookery, arranged the dress, and gave an air of *ton* to the household generally. What Lady Olivia Newbattle had said and thought had its full weight there, and the five years spent at Carnochan stamped the governess indubitably as a woman of fashion. Lady Olivias were not rife in the neighbourhood; and from hearing so much of this exalted personage, of her rules, opinions, and beliefs, Mrs Grubber felt quite supported by the conviction that she knew at least one member of the aristocracy.

Nor did her husband plume himself much less on having actually sat at the same table with the august family, and having partaken of their long-tailed bird and defaced *blanc-mange*, in the room where the windows were, according to

his instructress, twenty feet deep, than on the drubbing he had afterwards had the privilege of bestowing on the *quondam* bridegroom, on whose invitation he had been present.

It was the latter consideration, however, which procured for him a call from Captain Evelyn on one occasion.

“And he never made any resistance?” said he, having confessed that he had come to hear the truth of the report which had been sent him in answer to his promised communication to Mademoiselle.

“You gave him a downright caning, and left him half-dead on the floor, and he never sent you a line afterwards, nor tried any other plan?”

“He did nothing but howl and curse; oh, it was horrible!” said Grubber. “He was always such a fellow for bad language, you know.”

“And you gave it him well?”

Grubber smiled.

“Gave it him well!” quoth Maxwell, when he heard of the affair. “I’se warrant he did! I remember the fellow—a perfect Goliath. The half of him would have demolished Pollaxfen; it was sheer spendthrift waste to take the whole!”

And how did Lady Olivia take the news ?

Just during the first half-hour, just until she had made out how far and in what manner the marriage would affect herself, and until she could be certain that London was, after all, the only place in the world that one could really *live* in, and that Carnochan and Evelyn Towers would be only delightful as resorts for a short time in the summer months—just so long did it take to reconcile her to the most charming, desirable, suitable alliance that had ever been made !

Dear Kate ! Dearest Rupert ! Her only son, and her sweetest daughter !

“ Was ever parent so fortunate ? ” she wrote, “ Was ever mother in such an enviable position ? I lose neither,—I seem to gain both.

“ The dear homes in which I have passed so many happy years are neither of them lost to me,—no stranger on either hand will look coldly as I enter the halls, in each of which I was myself a bride. I shall never be suffered to feel myself an intruder, as long as Kate is mistress of Evelyn Towers, and Rupert master of Carnochan.”

And that was all !

Never in his life, long as he had known his mother, had Evelyn met with a like surprise. After the experience of thirty-four years, he had yet something to learn in the peculiar temperament of Lady Olivia.

And the kind old Comlines ?

How great was their joy, how hearty their sympathy, may be imagined by all. Evelyn took his wife straight off to the Muirland Farm on their wedding-day—no one knowing whither they had gone, nor where they were to be found,—and they spent many days there, revisiting all their old haunts, and recalling what had taken place at each one.

It was in September, and the days were mild, cloudy, and windy, as they were meant to be by the two who were one in their desire to be there, reviving the memories that were so dear to both. Every night the wind rose and raved overhead, and the spray flew inland, and drifted up against the window-panes, to the delight of Evelyn, for whom the recollection was fraught with an inconceivable charm. His content at being allowed thus to begin his honeymoon was extreme. He took his companion, as of old, to the moor and the shore, listened with her to

the music of the plunging falls, and gazed on the fern-tufted walls of shining rock, which seemed to hem them in from the noisy world beyond. How glorious, how incredible it was to be there again with Kate; and to find, after all those years, the old farmhouse, with its orchard, and its burn, its resounding cliffs and rolling billows—above all, its kind and faithful inhabitants—the same as they had ever been!

He could hardly believe what his eyes saw and his ears heard; he had feared so much, and hoped so little.

Nor was Evelyn himself altered in any outward circumstance.

The same winning good-humour,—the same infectious gaiety and frankness of demeanour which had won all hearts of old,—was still his leading characteristic; but those who knew him well, and met him in his daily path, could perceive that, whereas he had formerly lived to please and be pleased,—to be benevolent, agreeable, kind, and in his turn enjoy the fruits of so happy a disposition,—he now habitually thought and acted from higher motives; for Christian principle lent a sobriety of purpose and nobility of aim to a life which had hitherto been devoted

merely to the pleasant passing away of hour by hour.

He had been a bewitching trifler ; he was still light-hearted and jocund,—but he was also a sensible, rational man.

In Kate, however, was manifested the more open change.

Instead of the proud, self-reliant girl whom he had first met in that sequestered spot six years before, and whose beauty had then and thereafter been marred by sullenness, and scorched by fierce passions, here was now a lovely, shy, and tender flower, opening every petal gladly to his touch.

Yet she was half reluctant too. On the first evening, as he placed her in the ancient, well-remembered chintz-covered arm-chair in the ingle-neuk, and, drawing his own to her side, boldly laid his hand on hers, she durst not look around.

Afterwards they got on better ; for the spinning-wheel was brought from its corner, and he must needs have his lesson ; and between scolding and whispering, and this and that, he made her quite merry again. The charge he took of his bride ; the delight he had in her ; the author-

ity he assumed over her,—were, according to Mr Comline, “a sicht for sair een;” while the gudewife, betwixt laughing and crying,—merriment at the young couple’s expense, and thanksgiving that she had been permitted to be a witness of their happiness,—had her apron at her eyes, behind the door, all day long.

“An’ ’deed it was weel they cam’ when they did,” she said, afterwards; “for an they hadna, my gudeman wad hae lost the last bit o’ cheeriness he had i’ this warld. He was a wee thing dwining at the time; but the sicht o’ thae twa was just a cordial and healing balm to mak’ him fain an’ hearty for the time. ’Twas but the bleeze-up o’ the caunel in its socket, though,—he never was aboot again; and the Muirland Farm had nae maister afore the neist summer was ower.”

It passed into other hands; and the two women were bidden to come to Carnochan until their next small dwelling was ready for their use. This gave rise to the following little scene, which, whether to his credit or not, it must be confessed was witnessed by Evelyn with unmitigated relish.

He had come upon the two sisters in the

triangle,—for Lady Olivia and Marjorie were down on a visit,—and as he had opened the door, his ear had caught the sound of an altercation within. There was Marjorie pouting, and Kate regarding her with flashing eye and scornful lip.

“Heyday!” said Evelyn, “What’s this?”

“Do speak to Kate,” cried Marjorie, getting her voice in first. “She is so tiresome and unkind. Here are the Algernon Heskeths say they can come for two nights this week,—Kate told me to ask them—and now she won’t let them come!”

“Marjorie!” from Kate.

“Well, you won’t. Of course we could not have the Algernon Heskeths and your old farm people here at the same time,—and she says, Rupert, that she would rather have old Dame Comline than the Algernon Heskeths!”

“I would,—a thousand times.”

“But at any rate, for my sake——”

“Marjorie, I told you why. If I were to put off my old friends, the best friends I ever had, they would not have a roof to cover them this week. They were most unwilling to come; it was we, Rupert and I, who pressed them,—but

now they have nowhere else to go! Had we let them alone, they would have made other arrangements."

"Such nonsense asking them at all!" muttered her sister.

"And now to cast them off!"—Rupert heard the tone with keen enjoyment.

"Will you speak to her, Rupert? She will listen to you."

"I speak? No, no. Fight your own battles. Now then, Kate."

"What could a week signify?" pursued Marjorie, renewing the attack.

"Nothing,—to your people. Get them to change. But if you like them still to come, I tell you, Marjorie, that Lizzie and her mother will be in no one's way. My old friend will sit up here, and Rupert and I, and any one who likes, can come in and see her: she will have her meals with Kennet; I have arranged with Kennet for that, and——"

"And the daughter?"

"The daughter has sat at our table before now, as you can remember very well. I have told you all this before; and now you can do as you choose about the Algernon Heskeths."

“ You said you would not have them.”

“ Marjorie, I did *not* !”

“ Oh, fie !” interposed Rupert. But he looked at his wife with a smile that boded no good to her sister. “ Oh, fie ! Naughty Kate !”

“ Dear Rupert, she really is very naughty,” said Marjorie, plaintively. “ She — oh, you are laughing at me ? If that is to be the way——”

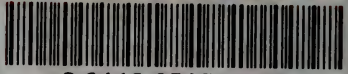
If that were to be the way it was time she took herself off ; she could not stand nonsense ; and to see Rupert take her sister’s face between his hands and look into her eyes like that, was really quite improper. What next ?

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“ The old Adam,” whispered Rupert, when he had kissed and comforted, encouraged and applauded. “ The old Adam still, sweet Kate. What ! mustn’t I then ? Oh, but forgive me this once ; it was so very, very nice to hear it !”

THE END.

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