Forgotten Books

www.forgottenbooks.com

Copyright © 2016 FB &c Ltd.
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law.

SHIRLEY.

A Tale.

BY

CURRER BELL,

AUTHOR OF "JANE EYRE."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

SMITH, ELDER AND CO., 65, CORNHILL.

1849.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY STEWART AND MURRAY,
OLD BAILEY.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH 1

CHAPTER II.

THE WEST WIND BLOWS 31

CHAPTER III.

OLD COPY-BOOKS 43

CHAPTER IV.

THE FIRST BLUE-STOCKING 72

CHAPTER V.

PHŒBE 109

CHAPTER VI.

LOUIS MOORE 142

CHAPTER VII.

PAGE

RUSHEDGE, A CONFESSIONAL 155

CHAPTER VIII.

UNCLE AND NIECE 177

CHAPTER IX.

THE SCHOOLBOY AND THE WOOD-NYMPH . . . 201

CHAPTER X.

MARTIN'S TACTICS 218

CHAPTER XI.

CASE OF DOMESTIC PERSECUTION. — REMARKABLE INSTANCE OF PIOUS PERSEVERANCE IN THE DISCHARGE OF RELIGIOUS DUTIES 234

CHAPTER XII.

WHEREIN MATTERS MAKE SOME PROGRESS, BUT NOT MUCH 245

CHAPTER XIII.

WRITTEN IN THE SCHOOLROOM 265

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WINDING-UP 297

SHIRLEY.

CHAPTER I.

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

THE future sometimes seems to sob a low warning of the events it is bringing us, like some gathering though yet remote storm, which, in tones of the wind, in flushings of the firmament, in clouds strangely torn, announces a blast strong to strew the sea with wrecks; or commissioned to bring in fog the yellow taint of pestilence, covering white Western isles with the poisoned exhalations of the East, dimming the lattices of English homes with the breath of Indian plague. At other times this Future bursts suddenly, as if a rock had rent, and in it a grave had opened, whence issues the body of one that slept. Ere you are aware, you stand face to face with a shrouded and unthought-of Calamity—a new Lazarus.

Caroline Helstone went home from Hollow's

cottage in good health, as she imagined. On waking the next morning, she felt oppressed with unwonted languor: at breakfast, at each meal of the following day, she missed all sense of appetite: palatable food was as ashes and sawdust to her.

"Am I ill?" she asked, and looked at herself in the glass. Her eyes were bright, their pupils dilated, her cheeks seemed rosier and fuller than usual. "I look well; why can I not eat?"

She felt a pulse beat fast in her temples: she felt too her brain in strange activity: her spirits were raised: hundreds of busy and broken, but brilliant thoughts engaged her mind: a glow rested on them, such as tinged her complexion.

Now followed a hot, parched, thirsty, restless night. Towards morning one terrible dream seized her like a tiger: when she woke, she felt and knew she was ill.

How she had caught the fever (fever it was), she could not tell. Probably in her late walk home, some sweet, poisoned breeze, redolent of honey-dew and miasma, had passed into her lungs and veins, and finding there already a fever of mental excitement, and a languor of long conflict and habitual sadness, had fanned the spark to flame, and left a well-lit fire behind it.

It seemed, however, but a gentle fire: after two hot days and worried nights, there was no violence in the symptoms, and neither her uncle, nor Fanny, nor the doctor, nor Miss Keeldar, when she called,

had any fear for her: a few days would restore her, every one believed.

The few days passed, and—though it was still thought it could not long delay—the revival had not begun. Mrs. Pryor, who had visited her daily, —being present in her chamber one morning when she had been ill a fortnight—watched her very narrowly for some minutes: she took her hand, and placed her finger on her wrist; then, quietly leaving the chamber, she went to Mr. Helstone's study. With him she remained closeted a long time—half the morning. On returning to her sick young friend, she laid aside shawl and bonnet: she stood a while at the bedside, one hand placed in the other, gently rocking herself to and fro, in an attitude and with a movement habitual to her. At last she said,—

"I have sent Fanny to Fieldhead to fetch a few things for me, such as I shall want during a short stay here: it is my wish to remain with you till you are better. Your uncle kindly permits my attendance: will it to yourself be acceptable, Caroline?"

"I am sorry you should take such needless trouble. I do not feel very ill, but I cannot refuse resolutely: it will be such comfort to know you are in the house, to see you sometimes in the room; but don't confine yourself on my account, dear Mrs. Pryor.—Fanny nurses me very well."

Mrs. Pryor—bending over the pale little sufferer —was now smoothing the hair under her cap, and

gently raising her pillow. As she performed these offices, Caroline, smiling, lifted her face to kiss her.

"Are you free from pain? Are you tolerably at ease?" was inquired in a low, earnest voice, as the self-elected nurse yielded to the caress.

"I think I am almost happy."

"You wish to drink? Your lips are parched."

She held a glass filled with some cooling beverage to her mouth.

"Have you eaten anything to-day, Caroline?"

"I cannot eat."

"But soon your appetite will return: it *must* return: that is, I pray God it may!"

In laying her again on the couch, she encircled her in her arms; and while so doing, by a movement which seemed scarcely voluntary, she drew her to her heart, and held her close gathered an instant.

"I shall hardly wish to get well, that I may keep you always," said Caroline.

Mrs. Pryor did not smile at this speech: over her features ran a tremor, which for some minutes she was absorbed in repressing.

"You are more used to Fanny than to me," she remarked, ere long. "I should think my attendance must seem strange, officious?"

"No: quite natural, and very soothing. You must have been accustomed to wait on sick people, ma'am. You move about the room so softly, and you speak so quietly, and touch me so gently."

"I am dexterous in nothing, my dear. You will often find me awkward, but never negligent."

Negligent, indeed, she was not. From that hour, Fanny and Eliza became cyphers in the sick-room: Mrs. Pryor made it her domain: she performed all its duties; she lived in it day and night. The patient remonstrated,—faintly, however, from the first, and not at all ere long: loneliness and gloom were now banished from her bedside; protection and solace sat there instead. She and her nurse coalesced in wondrous union. Caroline was usually pained to require or receive much attendance: Mrs. Pryor, under ordinary circumstances, had neither the habit nor the art of performing little offices of service; but all now passed with such ease—so naturally, that the patient was as willing to be cherished as the nurse was bent on cherishing: no sign of weariness in the latter ever reminded the former that she ought to be anxious. There was, in fact, no very hard duty to perform; but a hireling might have found it hard.

With all this care, it seemed strange the sick girl did not get well; yet such was the case: she wasted like any snow-wreath in thaw; she faded like any flower in drought. Miss Keeldar, on whose thoughts danger or death seldom intruded, had at first entertained no fears at all for her friend; but seeing her change and sink from time to time when she paid her visits, alarm clutched her heart. She went to Mr. Helstone and expressed herself with so much

energy, that that gentleman was at last obliged, however unwillingly, to admit the idea that his niece was ill of something more than a migraine; and when Mrs. Pryor came and quietly demanded a physician, he said she might send for two, if she liked. One came, but that one was an oracle: he delivered a dark saying of which the future was to solve the mystery, wrote some prescriptions, gave some directions—the whole with an air of crushing authority—pocketed his fee, and went. Probably, he knew well enough he could do no good; but didn't like to say so.

Still, no rumour of serious illness got wind in the neighbourhood. At Hollow's-cottage it was thought that Caroline had only a severe cold, she having written a note to Hortense to that effect; and Mademoiselle contented herself with sending two pots of currant jam, a receipt for a tisane, and a note of advice.

Mrs. Yorke being told that a physician had been summoned, sneered at the hypochondriac fancies of the rich and idle, who, she said, having nothing but themselves to think about, must needs send for a doctor if only so much as their little finger ached.

The "rich and idle," represented in the person of Caroline, were meantime falling fast into a condition of prostration, whose quickly consummated debility puzzled all who witnessed it, except one; for that one alone reflected how liable is the undermined structure to sink in sudden ruin.

Sick people often have fancies inscrutable to ordinary attendants, and Caroline had one which even her tender nurse could not at first explain. On a certain day in the week, at a certain hour, she would—whether worse or better—entreat to be taken up and dressed, and suffered to sit in her chair near the window. This station she would retain till noon was past: whatever degree of exhaustion or debility her wan aspect betrayed, she still softly put off all persuasion to seek repose until the church-clock had duly tolled mid-day: the twelve strokes sounded, she grew docile, and would meekly lie down. Returned to the couch, she usually buried her face deep in the pillow, and drew the coverlets close round her, as if to shut out the world and sun, of which she was tired: more than once, as she thus lay, a slight convulsion shook the sick-bed, and a faint sob broke the silence round it. These things were not unnoted by Mrs. Pryor.

One Tuesday morning, as usual, she had asked leave to rise, and now she sat wrapped in her white dressing-gown, leaning forward in the easy-chair, gazing steadily and patiently from the lattice. Mrs. Pryor was seated a little behind, knitting as it seemed, but, in truth, watching her. A change crossed her pale mournful brow, animating its languor; a light shot into her faded eyes, reviving their lustre; she half rose and looked earnestly out. Mrs. Pryor, drawing softly near, glanced over her shoulder. From this window was visible the church-

yard, beyond it the road, and there, riding sharply by, appeared a horseman. The figure was not yet too remote for recognition: Mrs. Pryor had long sight; she knew Mr. Moore. Just as an intercepting rising ground concealed him from view, the clock struck twelve.

"May I lie down again?" asked Caroline.

Her nurse assisted her to bed: having laid her down and drawn the curtain, she stood listening near. The little couch trembled, the suppressed sob stirred the air. A contraction as of anguish altered Mrs. Pryor's features; she wrung her hands; half a groan escaped her lips. She now remembered that Tuesday was Whinbury market-day: Mr. Moore must always pass the Rectory on his way thither, just ere noon of that day.

Caroline wore continually round her neck a slender braid of silk, attached to which was some trinket. Mrs. Pryor had seen the bit of gold glisten; but had not yet obtained a fair view of it. Her patient never parted with it: when dressed it was hidden in her bosom; as she lay in bed she always held it in her hand. That Tuesday afternoon the transient doze—more like lethargy than sleep—which sometimes abridged the long days, had stolen over her: the weather was hot: while turning in febrile restlessness, she had pushed the coverlets a little aside; Mrs. Pryor bent to replace them; the small, wasted hand lying nerveless on the sick girl's breast, clasped as usual her jealously-guarded treasure: those fingers

whose attenuation it gave pain to see, were now relaxed in sleep: Mrs. Pryor gently disengaged the braid, drawing out a tiny locket—a slight thing it was, such as it suited her small purse to purchase: under its crystal face appeared a curl of black hair—too short and crisp to have been severed from a female head.

Some agitated movement occasioned a twitch of the silken chain: the sleeper started and woke. Her thoughts were usually now somewhat scattered on waking; her look generally wandering. Half-rising, as if in terror, she exclaimed:—

"Don't take it from me, Robert! Don't! It is my last comfort—let me keep it. I never tell any one whose hair it is—I never show it."

Mrs. Pryor had already disappeared behind the curtain: reclining far back in a deep arm-chair by the bedside, she was withdrawn from view. Caroline looked abroad into the chamber: she thought it empty. As her stray ideas returned slowly, each folding its weak wings on the mind's sad shore, like birds exhausted,—beholding void, and perceiving silence round her, she believed herself alone. Collected, she was not yet: perhaps healthy self-possession and self-control were to be hers no more; perhaps that world the strong and prosperous live in had already rolled from beneath her feet for ever: so, at least, it often seemed to herself. In health, she had never been accustomed to think aloud; but now words escaped her lips unawares.

"Oh! I *should* see him once more before all is over: Heaven *might* favour me thus far!" she cried. "God grant me a little comfort before I die!" was her humble petition.

"But he will not know I am ill, till I am gone; and he will come when they have laid me out, and I am senseless, cold, and stiff.

"What can my departed soul feel then? Can it see or know what happens to the clay? Can spirits, through any medium, communicate with living flesh? Can the dead at all revisit those they leave? Can they come in the elements? Will wind, water, fire lend me a path to Moore?

"Is it for nothing the wind sounds almost articulately sometimes—sings as I have lately heard it sing at night—or passes the casement sobbing, as if for sorrow to come? Does nothing, then, haunt it—nothing inspire it?

"Why, it suggested to me words one night: it poured a strain which I could have written down, only I was appalled, and dared not rise to seek pencil and paper by the dim watch-light.

"What is that electricity they speak of, whose changes make us well or ill; whose lack or excess blasts; whose even balance revives? What are all those influences that are about us in the atmosphere, that keep playing over our nerves like fingers on stringed instruments, and call forth now a sweet note, and now a wail—now an exultant swell, and, anon, the saddest cadence?"

"*Where is* the other world? In *what* will another life consist? Why do I ask? Have I not cause to think that the hour is hasting but too fast when the veil must be rent for me? Do I not know the Grand Mystery is likely to burst prematurely on me? Great Spirit! in whose goodness I confide; whom, as my Father, I have petitioned night and morning from early infancy, help the weak creation of thy hands! Sustain me through the ordeal I dread and must undergo! Give me strength! Give me patience! Give me—oh! *give me* FAITH!"

She fell back on her pillow. Mrs. Pryor found means to steal quietly from the room: she re-entered it soon after, apparently as composed as if she had really not overheard this strange soliloquy.

The next day several callers came. It had become known that Miss Helstone was worse. Mr. Hall and his sister Margaret arrived; both, after they had been in the sickroom, quitted it in tears: they had found the patient more altered than they expected. Hortense Moore came. Caroline seemed stimulated by her presence: she assured her, smiling, she was not dangerously ill; she talked to her in a low voice, but cheerfully: during her stay, excitement kept up the flush of her complexion: she looked better.

"How is Mr. Robert?" asked Mrs. Pryor, as Hortense was preparing to take leave.

"He was very well when he left."

"Left! Is he gone from home?"

It was then explained that some police intelligence about the rioters of whom he was in pursuit, had, that morning, called him away to Birmingham, and probably a fortnight might elapse ere he returned.

"He is not aware that Miss Helstone is very ill?"

"Oh! no. He thought, like me, that she had only a bad cold."

After this visit, Mrs. Pryor took care not to approach Caroline's couch for above an hour: she heard her weep, and dared not look on her tears.

As evening closed in, she brought her some tea. Caroline, opening her eyes from a moment's slumber, viewed her nurse with an unrecognising glance.

"I smelt the honeysuckles in the glen this summer-morning," she said, "as I stood at the counting-house window."

Strange words like these from pallid lips pierce a loving listener's heart more poignantly than steel. They sound romantic, perhaps, in books: in real life, they are harrowing.

"My darling, do you know me?" said Mrs. Pryor.

"I went in to call Robert to breakfast: I have been with him in the garden: he asked me to go: a heavy dew has refreshed the flowers: the peaches are ripening."

"My darling! my darling!" again and again repeated the nurse.

"I thought it was daylight—long after sunrise: it looks dark—is the moon not set?"

That moon, lately risen, was gazing full and mild upon her: floating in deep blue space, it watched her unclouded.

"Then it is not morning? I am not at the cottage? Who is this?—I see a shape at my bedside."

"It is myself—it is your friend—your nurse—your——. Lean your head on my shoulder: collect yourself." (In a lower tone.) "Oh God, take pity! Give *her* life, and *me* strength! Send me courage—teach me words!"

Some minutes passed in silence. The patient lay mute and passive in the trembling arms—on the throbbing bosom of the nurse.

"I am better now," whispered Caroline, at last, "much better—I feel where I am: this is Mrs. Pryor near me: I was dreaming—I talk when I wake up from dreams: people often do in illness. How fast your heart beats, ma'am! Do not be afraid."

"It is not fear, child; only a little anxiety, which will pass. I have brought you some tea, Cary; your uncle made it himself. You know he says he can make a better cup of tea than any housewife can. Taste it. He is concerned to hear that you eat so little: he would be glad if you had a better appetite."

"I am thirsty: let me drink."

She drank eagerly.

"What o'clock is it, ma'am?" she asked.

"Past nine."

"Not later? Oh! I have yet a long night before me; but the tea has made me strong: I will sit up."

Mrs. Pryor raiséd her, and arranged her pillows.

"Thank Heaven! I am not always equally miserable, and ill, and hopeless. The afternoon has been bad since Hortense went: perhaps the evening may be better. It is a fine night, I think? The moon shines clear."

"Very fine: a perfect summer night. The old church-tower gleams white almost as silver."

"And does the churchyard look peaceful?"

"Yes, and the garden also: dew glistens on the foliage."

"Can you see many long weeds and nettles amongst the graves; or do they look turfy and flowery?"

"I see closed daisy-heads, gleaming like pearls on some mounds. Thomas has mown down the dock-leaves and rank grass, and cleared all away."

"I always like that to be done: it soothes one's mind to see the place in order: and, I dare say, within the church just now that moonlight shines as softly as in my room. It will fall through the east window full on the Helstone monument. When I close my eyes I seem to see poor papa's epitaph in black letters on the white marble. There is plenty of room for other inscriptions underneath."

"William Farren came to look after your flowers this morning: he was afraid, now you cannot tend them yourself, they would be neglected. He has

taken two of your favourite plants home to nurse for you."

"If I were to make a will, I would leave William all my plants; Shirley my trinkets—except one, which must not be taken off my neck; and you, ma'am, my books." (After a pause.) "Mrs. Pryor, I feel a longing wish for something."

"For what, Caroline?"

"You know I always delight to hear you sing: sing me a hymn just now: sing that hymn which begins,—

'Our God, our help in ages past,—
Our hope for years to come;
Our shelter from the stormy blast;
Our refuge, haven, home!'"

Mrs. Pryor at once complied.

No wonder Caroline liked to hear her sing: her voice, even in speaking, was sweet and silver-clear; in song, it was almost divine: neither flute nor dulcimer has tones so pure. But the tone was secondary compared to the expression which trembled through it—a tender vibration from a feeling heart.

The servants in the kitchen, hearing the strain, stole to the stair-foot to listen: even old Helstone as he walked in the garden, pondering over the unaccountable and feeble nature of women, stood still amongst his borders to catch the mournful melody more distinctly. Why it reminded him of his forgotten dead wife, he could not tell; nor why it made him more concerned than he had hitherto been for Caroline's fading girlhood. He was glad to

recollect that he had promised to pay Wynne, the magistrate, a visit that evening. Low spirits and gloomy thoughts were very much his aversion: when they attacked him he usually found means to make them march in double-quick time. The hymn followed him faintly as he crossed the fields: he hastened his customary sharp pace, that he might get beyond its reach.

"Thy word commands our flesh to dust,—
'Return, ye sons of men;'
All nations rose from earth at first,
And turn to earth again.

"A thousand ages in thy sight
Are like an ev'ning gone;
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun.

"Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly, forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day.

"Like flowery fields, the nations stand,
Fresh in the morning light;
The flowers beneath the mower's hand
Lie withering ere 't is night.

"Our God, our help in ages past,—
Our hope for years to come;
Be thou our guard while troubles last,—
O Father, be our home!"

"Now sing a song—a Scottish song," suggested Caroline, when the hymn was over,—"'Ye banks and braes o' bonny Doon.'"

Again Mrs. Pryor obeyed, or essayed to obey. At

the close of the first stanza she stopped; she could get no further: her full heart flowed over.

"You are weeping at the pathos of the air: come here, and I will comfort you," said Caroline, in a pitying accent. Mrs. Pryor came: she sat down on the edge of her patient's bed, and allowed the wasted arms to encircle her.

"You often soothe me, let me soothe you," murmured the young girl, kissing her cheek. "I hope," she added, "it is not for me you weep?"

No answer followed.

"Do you think I shall not get better? I do not feel *very* ill—only weak."

"But your mind, Caroline: your mind is crushed; your heart is almost broken: you have been so neglected, so repulsed, left so desolate."

"I belief grief is, and always has been, my worst ailment. I sometimes think, if an abundant gush of happiness came on me, I could revive yet."

"Do you wish to live?"

"I have no object in life."

"You love me, Caroline?"

"Very much,—very truly,—inexpressibly sometimes: just now, I feel as if I could almost grow to your heart."

"I will return directly, dear," remarked Mrs. Pryor, as she laid Caroline down.

Quitting her, she glided to the door, softly turned the key in the lock, ascertained that it was fast, and came back. She bent over her. She threw back

the curtain to admit the moonlight more freely. She gazed intently on her face.

"Then, if you love me," said she, speaking quickly, with an altered voice: "if you feel as if—to use your own words—you could 'grow to my heart,' it will be neither shock nor pain for you to know that *that* heart is the source whence yours was filled; that from *my* veins issued the tide which flows in *yours*; that you are *mine*—my daughter—my own child."

"Mrs. Pryor——!"

"My own child!"

"That is—that means—you have adopted me?"

"It means that, if I have given you nothing else, I at least gave you life; that I bore you—nursed you; that I am your true mother: no other woman can claim the title—it is *mine*."

"But Mrs. James Helstone—but my father's wife, whom I do not remember ever to have seen, she is my mother?"

"She *is* your mother: James Helstone was *my* husband. I say you are *mine*. I have proved it. I thought perhaps you were all his, which would have been a cruel dispensation for me: I find it is *not* so. God permitted me to be the parent of my child's mind: it belongs to me: it is my property—my *right*. These features are James's own. He had a fine face when he was young, and not altered by error. Papa, my darling, gave you your blue eyes and soft brown hair: he gave you the oval

of your face and the regularity of your lineaments: the outside *he* conferred; but the heart and the brain are *mine*: the germs are from *me*, and they are improved, they are developed to excellence. I esteem and approve my child as highly as I do most fondly love her."

"Is what I hear true? Is it no dream?"

"I wish it were as true that the substance and colour of health were restored to your cheek."

"My own mother! is she one I can be so fond of as I can of you? People generally did not like her, so I have been given to understand."

"They told you that? Well, your mother now tells you, that, not having the gift to please people generally, for their approbation she does not care: her thoughts are centered in her child: does that child welcome or reject her?"

"But if you *are* my mother, the world is all changed to me. Surely I can live—I should like to recover——"

"You *must* recover. You drew life and strength from my breast when you were a tiny, fair infant, over whose blue eyes I used to weep, fearing I beheld in your very beauty the sign of qualities that had entered my heart like iron, and pierced through my soul like a sword. Daughter! we have been long parted: I return now to cherish you again."

She held her to her bosom: she cradled her in

her arms: she rocked her softly, as if lulling a young child to sleep.

"My mother! My own mother!"

The offspring nestled to the parent: that parent, feeling the endearment and hearing the appeal, gathered her closer still. She covered her with noiseless kisses: she murmured love over her, like a cushat fostering its young.

There was silence in the room for a long while.

* * * *

"Does my uncle know?"

"Your uncle knows: I told him when I first came to stay with you here."

"Did you recognise me when we first met at Fieldhead?"

"How could it be otherwise? Mr. and Miss Helstone being announced, I was prepared to see my child."

"It was that then which moved you: I saw you disturbed."

"You saw nothing, Caroline: I can cover my feelings. You can never tell what an age of strange sensation I lived, during the two minutes that elapsed between the report of your name and your entrance. You can never tell how your look, mien, carriage shook me."

"Why? Were you disappointed?"

"What will she be like? I had asked myself; and when I saw what you were like, I could have dropped."

"Mama, why?"

"I trembled in your presence. I said I will never own her: she shall never know me."

"But I said and did nothing remarkable. I felt a little diffident at the thought of an introduction to strangers, that was all."

"I soon saw you were diffident; that was the first thing which reassured me: had you been rustic, clownish, awkward, I should have been content."

"You puzzle me."

"I had reason to dread a fair outside, to mistrust a popular bearing, to shudder before distinction, grace, and courtesy. Beauty and affability had come in my way when I was recluse, desolate, young, and ignorant: a toil-worn governess perishing of uncheered labour, breaking down before her time. These, Caroline, when they smiled on me, I mistook for angels! I followed them home, and when into their hands I had given without reserve my whole chance of future happiness, it was my lot to witness a transfiguration on the domestic hearth: to see the white mask lifted, the bright disguise put away, and opposite me sat down——oh God! I *have* suffered!"

She sank on the pillow.

"I *have* suffered! None saw,—none knew: there was no sympathy—no redemption—no redress!"

"Take comfort, mother: it is over now."

"It is over, and not fruitlessly. I tried to keep the word of His patience: He kept me in the days

of my anguish. I was afraid with terror—I was troubled: through great tribulation He brought me through to a salvation revealed in this last time. My fear had torment—He has cast it out: He has given me in its stead perfect love . . . . . But, Caroline——"

Thus she invoked her daughter after a pause.

"Mother!"

"I charge you, when you next look on your father's monument, to respect the name chiselled there. To you he did only good. On you he conferred his whole treasure of beauties; nor added to them one dark defect. All *you* derived from him is excellent. You owe him gratitude. Leave, between him and me, the settlement of our mutual account: meddle not: God is the arbiter. This world's laws never came near us—never! They were powerless as a rotten bulrush to protect me!—impotent as idiot babblings to restrain him! As you said, it is all over now: the grave lies between us. There he sleeps,—in that church! To his dust I say this night, what I have never said before, 'James, slumber peacefully! See! your terrible debt is cancelled! Look! I wipe out the long, black account with my own hand! James, your child atones: this living likeness of you,—this thing with your perfect features,—this one good gift you gave me has nestled affectionately to my heart, and tenderly called me 'mother.' Husband! rest forgiven!"

"Dearest mother, that is right! Can papa's spirit hear us? Is he comforted to know that we still love him?"

"I said nothing of love: I spoke of forgiveness. Mind the truth, child,—I said nothing of love! On the threshold of eternity, should he be there to see me enter, will I maintain that."

"Oh, mother! you must have suffered!"

"Oh, child! the human heart *can* suffer. It can hold more tears than the ocean holds waters. We never know how deep—how wide it is, till misery begins to unbind her clouds, and fill it with rushing blackness."

"Mother, forget."

"Forget!" she said, with the strangest spectre of a laugh. "The North pole will rush to the South, and the headlands of Europe be locked into the bays of Australia, ere I forget."

"Hush, mother! rest!—be at peace!"

And the child lulled the parent, as the parent had erst lulled the child. At last, Mrs. Pryor wept: she then grew calmer. She resumed those tender cares agitation had for a moment suspended. Replacing her daughter on the couch, she smoothed the pillow and spread the sheet. The soft hair whose locks were loosened, she re-arranged, the damp brow she refreshed with a cool fragrant essence.

"Mama, let them bring a candle, that I may see you; and tell my uncle to come into this room by-and-by: I want to hear him say that I am your

daughter: and, mama, take your supper here; don't leave me for one minute to-night."

"Oh, Caroline! it is well you are gentle. You will say to me go, and I shall go; come, and I shall come; do this, and I shall do it. You inherit a certain manner as well as certain features. It will be always 'mama' prefacing a mandate: softly spoken though, from you, thank God! Well" (she added, under her breath), "he spoke softly too, once, —like a flute breathing tenderness; and then, when the world was not by to listen, discords that split the nerves and curdled the blood,—sounds to inspire insanity."

"It seems so natural, mama, to ask you for this and that. I shall want nobody but you to be near me, or to do anything for me; but do not let me be troublesome: check me, if I encroach."

"You must not depend on me to check you: you must keep guard over yourself. I have little moral courage: the want of it is my bane. It is that which has made me an unnatural parent,—which has kept me apart from my child during the ten years which have elapsed since my husband's death left me at liberty to claim her: it was that which first unnerved my arms and permitted the infant I might have retained a while longer, to be snatched prematurely from their embrace."

"How, mama?"

"I let you go as a babe, because you were pretty, and I feared your loveliness; deeming it the stamp

of perversity. They sent me your portrait, taken at eight years old; that portrait confirmed my fears. Had it shown me a sunburnt little rustic—a heavy, blunt-featured, commonplace child — I should have hastened to claim you; but there, under the silver paper, I saw blooming the delicacy of an aristocratic flower—'little lady' was written on every trait. I had too recently crawled from under the yoke of the fine gentleman—escaped, galled, crushed, paralyzed, dying—to dare to encounter his still finer and most fairy-like representative. My sweet little lady overwhelmed me with dismay: her air of native elegance froze my very marrow. In my experience I had not met with truth, modesty, good principle as the concomitants of beauty. A form so straight and fine, I argued, must conceal a mind warped and cruel. I had little faith in the power of education to rectify such a mind; or rather, I entirely mistrusted my own ability to influence it. Caroline, I dared not undertake to rear you: I resolved to leave you in your uncle's hands. Matthewson Helstone I knew, if an austere, was an upright man. He and all the world thought hardly of me for my strange, unmotherly resolve, and I deserved to be misjudged."

"Mama, why did you call yourself Mrs. Pryor?"

"It was a name in my mother's family. I adopted it that I might live unmolested. My married name recalled too vividly my married life: I could not bear it. Besides, threats were uttered of forcing me to return to bondage: it could not be; rather a bier

for a bed—the grave for a home. My new name sheltered me: I resumed under its screen my old occupation of teaching. At first, it scarcely procured me the means of sustaining life; but how savoury was hunger when I fasted in peace! How safe seemed the darkness and chill of an unkindled hearth, when no lurid reflection from terror crimsoned its desolation! How serene was solitude, when I feared not the irruption of violence and vice!"

"But, mama, you have been in this neighbourhood before. How did it happen, that when you reappeared here with Miss Keeldar, you were not recognised?"

"I only paid a short visit, as a bride, twenty years ago; and then I was very different to what I am now—slender, almost as slender as my daughter is at this day: my complexion—my very features are changed; my hair, my style of dress—everything is altered. You cannot fancy me a slim young person, attired in scanty drapery of white muslin, with bare arms, bracelets and necklace of beads, and hair disposed in round Grecian curls above my forehead?"

"You must, indeed, have been different. Mama, I heard the front door open: if it is my uncle coming in, just ask him to step up-stairs, and let me hear his assurance that I am truly awake and collected, and not dreaming or delirious."

The Rector, of his own accord, was mounting the stairs; and Mrs. Pryor summoned him to his niece's apartment.

"She 's not worse, I hope?" he inquired, hastily.

"I think her better: she is disposed to converse—she seems stronger."

"Good!" said he, brushing quickly into the room. "Ha, Cary! how do? Did you drink my cup of tea? I made it for you just as I like it myself."

"I drank it every drop, uncle: it did me good—it has made me quite alive. I have a wish for company, so I begged Mrs. Pryor to call you in."

The respected ecclesiastic looked pleased, and yet embarrassed. He was willing enough to bestow his company on his sick niece for ten minutes, since it was her whim to wish it; but what means to employ for her entertainment, he knew not: he hemmed—he fidgeted."

"You 'll be up in a trice," he observed, by way of saying something. "The little weakness will soon pass off; and then you must drink port-wine—a pipe, if you can—and eat game and oysters: I 'll get them for you, if they are to be had anywhere. Bless me! we 'll make you as strong as Samson before we 've done with you."

"Who is that lady, uncle, standing beside you at the bed-foot?"

"Good God!" he ejaculated. "She 's not wandering—is she, ma'am?"

Mrs. Pryor smiled.

"I am wandering in a pleasant world," said Caroline, in a soft, happy voice, "and I want you to tell

me whether it is real or visionary. What lady is that? Give her a name, uncle?"

"We must have Dr. Rile again, ma'am, or, better still, MacTurk: he's less of a humbug. Thomas must saddle the pony, and go for him."

"No: I don't want a doctor; mama shall be my only physician. Now, do you understand, uncle?"

Mr. Helstone pushed up his spectacles from his nose to his forehead, handled his snuff-box, and administered to himself a portion of the contents. Thus fortified, he answered briefly:—

"I see daylight. You 've told her then, ma'am?"

"And is it *true?*" demanded Caroline, rising on her pillow. "Is she *really* my mother?"

"You won't cry, or make any scene, or turn hysterical, if I answer Yes?"

"Cry? I'd cry if you said *No.* It would be terrible to be disappointed now. But give her a name: how do you call her?"

"I call this stout lady in a quaint black dress, who looks young enough to wear much smarter raiment, if she would—I call her Agnes Helstone: she married my brother James, and is his widow."

"And my mother?"

"What a little sceptic it is! Look at her small face, Mrs. Pryor, scarcely larger than the palm of my hand, alive with acuteness and eagerness." (To Caroline).—"She had the trouble of bringing you into the world, at any rate: mind you show your duty to her by quickly getting well, and repairing the

waste of these cheeks. Heigho! she used to be plump: what she has done with it all, I can't, for the life of me, divine."

"If *wishing* to get well will help me, I shall not be long sick. This morning, I had no reason and no strength to wish it."

Fanny here tapped at the door, and said that supper was ready.

"Uncle, if you please, you may send me a little bit of supper—anything you like, from your own plate. That is wiser than going into hysterics,—is it not?"

"It is spoken like a sage, Cary: see if I don't cater for you judiciously. When women are sensible—and, above all, intelligible—I can get on with them. It is only the vague, superfine sensations, and extremely wire-drawn notions, that put me about. Let a woman ask me to give her an edible or a wearable—be the same a roc's egg or the breastplate of Aaron, a share of St. John's locusts and honey or the leathern girdle about his loins—I can, at least, understand the demand: but when they pine for they know not what—sympathy—sentiment—some of these indefinite abstractions—I can't do it: I don't know it; I haven't got it. Madam, accept my arm."

Mrs. Pryor signified that she should stay with her daughter that evening. Helstone, accordingly, left them together. He soon returned, bringing a plate in his own consecrated hand.

"This is chicken," he said; "but we 'll have par-

tridge to-morrow. Lift her up, and put a shawl over her. On my word, I understand nursing. Now, here is the very same little silver fork you used when you first came to the Rectory: that strikes me as being what you may call a happy thought—a delicate attention. Take it, Cary, and munch away cleverly."

Caroline did her best. Her uncle frowned to see that her powers were so limited: he prophesied, however, great things for the future; and as she praised the morsel he had brought, and smiled gratefully in his face, he stooped over her pillow, kissed her, and said, with a broken, rugged accent,—

"Good-night, bairnie! God bless thee!"

Caroline enjoyed such peaceful rest that night, circled by her mother's arms, and pillowed on her breast, that she forgot to wish for any other stay; and though more than one feverish dream came to her in slumber, yet, when she woke up panting, so happy and contented a feeling returned with returning consciousness, that her agitation was soothed almost as soon as felt.

As to the mother, she spent the night like Jacob at Peniel. Till break of day, she wrestled with God in earnest prayer.

CHAPTER II.

THE WEST WIND BLOWS.

NOT always do those who dare such divine conflict prevail. Night after night the sweat of agony may burst dark on the forehead; the supplicant may cry for mercy with that soundless voice the soul utters when its appeal is to the Invisible. "Spare my beloved," it may implore. "Heal my life's life. Rend not from me what long affection entwines with my whole nature. God of heaven—bend—hear—be clement!" And after this cry and strife, the sun may rise and see him worsted. That opening morn, which used to salute him with the whisper of zephyrs, the carol of skylarks, may breathe, as its first accents, from the dear lips which colour and heat have quitted,—

"Oh! I have had a suffering night. This morning I am worse. I have tried to rise. I cannot. Dreams I am unused to have troubled me."

Then the watcher approaches the patient's pillow, and sees a new and strange moulding of the familiar features, feels at once that the insufferable moment

draws nigh, knows that it is God's will his idol shall be broken, and bends his head, and subdues his soul to the sentence he cannot avert, and scarce can bear.

Happy Mrs. Pryor! She was still praying, unconscious that the summer sun hung above the hills, when her child softly woke in her arms. No piteous, unconscious moaning—sound which so wastes our strength that, even if we have sworn to be firm, a rush of unconquerable tears sweeps away the oath—preceded her waking. No space of deaf apathy followed. The first words spoken were not those of one becoming estranged from this world, and already permitted to stray at times into realms foreign to the living. Caroline evidently remembered with clearness what had happened.

"Mama, I have slept *so* well. I only dreamed and woke twice."

Mrs. Pryor rose with a start that her daughter might not see the joyful tears called into her eyes by that affectionate word "mama," and the welcome assurance that followed it.

For many days the mother dared rejoice only with trembling. That first revival seemed like the flicker of a dying lamp: if the flame streamed up bright one moment, the next it sank dim in the socket. Exhaustion followed close on excitement.

There was always a touching endeavour to *appear* better, but too often ability refused to second will; too often the attempt to bear up failed: the effort to

eat, to talk, to look cheerful, was unsuccessful. Many an hour passed, during which Mrs. Pryor feared that the chords of life could never more be strengthened, though the time of their breaking might be deferred.

During this space, the mother and daughter seemed left almost alone in the neighbourhood. It was the close of August: the weather was fine—that is to say, it was very dry and very dusty, for an arid wind had been blowing from the east this month past: very cloudless, too, though a pale haze, stationary in the atmosphere, seemed to rob of all depth of tone the blue of heaven, of all freshness the verdure of earth, and of all glow the light of day. Almost every family in Briarfield was absent on an excursion. Miss Keeldar and her friends were at the sea-side; so were Mrs. Yorke's household. Mr. Hall and Louis Moore, between whom a spontaneous intimacy seemed to have arisen, the result, probably, of harmony of views and temperament, were gone "up north" on a pedestrian excursion to the Lakes. Even Hortense, who would fain have staid at home and aided Mrs. Pryor in nursing Caroline, had been so earnestly entreated by Miss Mann to accompany her once more to Wormwood Wells, in the hope of alleviating sufferings greatly aggravated by the insalubrious weather, that she felt obliged to comply: indeed, it was not in her nature to refuse a request that at once appealed to her goodness of heart, and—by a con-

fession of dependency—flattered her amour-propre. As for Robert, from Birmingham he had gone on to London, where he still sojourned.

So long as the breath of Asiatic deserts parched Caroline's lips and fevered her veins, her physical convalescence could not keep pace with her returning mental tranquillity; but there came a day when the wind ceased to sob at the eastern gable of the Rectory, and at the oriel window of the church. A little cloud like a man's hand arose in the west; gusts from the same quarter drove it on and spread it wide; wet and tempest prevailed a while. When that was over the sun broke out genially, heaven regained its azure, and earth its green: the livid cholera-tint had vanished from the face of nature: the hills rose clear round the horizon, absolved from that pale malaria-haze.

Caroline's youth could now be of some avail to her, and so could her mother's nurture: both—crowned by God's blessing, sent in the pure west wind blowing soft as fresh through the ever-open chamber lattice — rekindled her long-languishing energies. At last Mrs. Pryor saw that it was permitted to hope—a genuine, material convalescence had commenced. It was not merely Caroline's smile which was brighter, or her spirits which were cheered, but a certain look had passed from her face and eye—a look dread and indescribable, but which will easily be recalled by those who have watched the couch of dangerous disease. Long before the

emaciated outlines of her aspect began to fill, or its departed colour to return, a more subtle change took place: all grew softer and warmer. Instead of a marble mask and glassy eye, Mrs. Pryor saw laid on the pillow a face pale and wasted enough, perhaps more haggard than the other appearance, but less awful; for it was a sick, living girl—not a mere white mould, or rigid piece of statuary.

Now, too, she was not always petitioning to drink. The words, "I am *so* thirsty," ceased to be her plaint. Sometimes, when she had swallowed a morsel, she would say it had revived her: all descriptions of food were no longer equally distasteful; she could be induced, sometimes, to indicate a preference. With what trembling pleasure and anxious care did not her nurse prepare what was selected! How she watched her as she partook of it!

Nourishment brought strength. She could sit up. Then she longed to breathe the fresh air, to revisit her flowers, to see how the fruit had ripened. Her uncle, always liberal, had bought a garden-chair for her express use: he carried her down in his own arms, and placed her in it himself, and William Farren was there to wheel her round the walks, to show her what he had done amongst her plants, to take her directions for further work.

William and she found plenty to talk about: they had a dozen topics in common; interesting to them, unimportant to the rest of the world. They took a similar interest in animals, birds, insects, and plants:

they held similar doctrines about humanity to the lower creation; and had a similar turn for minute observation on points of natural history. The nest and proceedings of some ground-bees, who had burrowed in the turf under an old cherry-tree, was one subject of interest; the haunts of certain hedge-sparrows, and the welfare of certain pearly eggs and callow fledglings, another.

Had "Chambers' Jonrnal" existed in those days, it would certainly have formed Miss Helstone's and Farren's favourite periodical. She would have subscribed for it; and to him each number would duly have been lent: both would have put implicit faith, and found great savour in its marvellous anecdotes of animal sagacity.

This is a digression; but it suffices to explain why Caroline would have no other hand than William's to guide her chair, and why his society and conversation sufficed to give interest to her garden-airings.

Mrs. Pryor, walking near, wondered how her daughter could be so much at ease with a "man of the people." *She* found it impossible to speak to him otherwise than stiffly. She felt as if a great gulf lay between her caste and his; and that to cross it, or meet him half-way, would be to degrade herself. She gently asked Caroline,—

"Are you not afraid, my dear, to converse with that person so unreservedly? He may presume and become troublesomely garrulous."

"William presume, mama? You don't know him. He never presumes: he is altogether too proud and sensitive to do so. William has very fine feelings."

And Mrs. Pryor smiled sceptically at the naïve notion of that rough-handed, rough-headed, fustian-clad clown having "fine feelings."

Farren, for his part, showed Mrs. Pryor only a very sulky brow. He knew when he was misjudged, and was apt to turn unmanageable to such as failed to give him his due.

The evening restored Caroline entirely to her mother, and Mrs. Pryor liked the evening; for then, alone with her daughter, no human shadow came between her and what she loved. During the day, she would have her stiff demeanour and cool moments, as was her wont. Between her and Mr. Helstone, a very respectful but most rigidly cerc-monious intercourse was kept up: anything like familiarity would have bred contempt at once in one or both these personages; but by dint of strict civility and well-maintained distance, they got on very smoothly.

Towards the servants, Mrs. Pryor's bearing was not uncourteous, but shy, freezing, ungenial. Perhaps it was diffidence rather than pride which made her appear so haughty; but, as was to be expected, Fanny and Eliza failed to make the distinction, and she was unpopular with them accordingly. She felt the effect produced: it rendered her

at times dissatisfied with herself for faults she could not help; and with all else, dejected, chill, and taciturn.

This mood changed to Caroline's influence, and to that influence alone. The dependent fondness of her nursling, the natural affection of her child, came over her suavely: her frost fell away; her rigidity unbent: she grew smiling and pliant. Not that Caroline made any wordy profession of love—that would ill have suited Mrs. Pryor: she would have read therein the proof of insincerity; but she hung on her with easy dependence; she confided in her with fearless reliance: these things contented the mother's heart.

She liked to hear her daughter say, "Mama, do this." "Please, mama, fetch me that." "Mama, read to me." "Sing a little, mama."

Nobody else—not one living thing—had ever so claimed her services, so looked for help at her hand. Other people were always more or less reserved and stiff with her, as she was reserved and stiff with them; other people betrayed consciousness of, and annoyance at her weak points: Caroline no more showed such wounding sagacity or reproachful sensitiveness now, than she had done when a suckling of three months old.

Yet Caroline could find fault. Blind to the constitutional defects that were incurable, she had her eyes wide open to the acquired habits that were susceptible of remedy. On certain points she would quite artlessly lecture her parent; and that parent,

instead of being hurt, felt a sensation of pleasure in discovering that the girl *dared* lecture her; that she was so much at home with her.

"Mama, I am determined you shall not wear that old gown any more; its fashion is not becoming: it is too strait in the skirt. You shall put on your black silk every afternoon; in that you look nice: it suits you; and you shall have a black satin dress for Sundays—a real satin—not a satinet or any of the shams. And, mama, when you get the new one, mind you must wear it."

"My dear, I thought of the black silk serving me as a best dress for many years yet, and I wished to buy you several things."

"Nonsense, mama: my uncle gives me cash to get what I want: you know he is generous enough; and I have set my heart on seeing you in a black satin. Get it soon, and let it be made by a dressmaker of my recommending; let me choose the pattern. You always want to disguise yourself like a grandmother: you would persuade one that you are old and ugly,—not at all! On the contrary, when well dressed and cheerful, you are very comely indeed. Your smile is so pleasant, your teeth are so white, your hair is still such a pretty light colour. And then you speak like a young lady, with such a clear, fine tone, and you sing better than any young lady I ever heard. Why do you wear such dresses and bonnets, mama, such as nobody else ever wears?"

"Does it annoy you, Caroline?"

"Very much: it vexes me even. People say you are miserly; and yet you are not, for you give liberally to the poor and to religious societies: though your gifts are conveyed so secretly and quietly, that they are known to few except the receivers. But I will be your lady's-maid myself: when I get a little stronger I will set to work, and you must be good, mama, and do as I bid you."

And Caroline, sitting near her mother, rearranged her muslin handkerchief, and resmoothed her hair.

"My own mama," then she went on, as if pleasing herself with the thought of their relationship, "who belongs to me, and to whom I belong! I am a rich girl now: I have something I can love well, and not be afraid of loving. Mama, who gave you this little broach? Let me unpin it and look at it."

Mrs. Pryor, who usually shrank from meddling fingers and near approach, allowed the license complacently.

"Did papa give you this, mama?"

"My sister gave it me,—my only sister, Cary. Would that your aunt Caroline had lived to see her niece!"

"Have you nothing of papa's?—no trinket, no gift of his?"

"I have one thing."

"That you prize?"

"That I prize."

"Valuable and pretty?"

"Invaluable and sweet to me."

"Shew it, mama. Is it here or at Fieldhead?"

"It is talking to me now, leaning on me: its arms are round me."

"Ah, mama! you mean your teazing daughter, who will never let you alone; who, when you go into your room, cannot help running to seek for you; who follows you up-stairs and down, like a dog."

"Whose features still give me such a strange thrill sometimes. I half fear your fair looks yet, child."

"You don't; you can't. Mama, I am sorry papa was not good: I do so wish he had been. Wickedness spoils and poisons all pleasant things: it kills love. If you and I thought each other wicked, we could not love each other, could we?"

"And if we could not trust each other, Cary?"

"How miserable we should be! Mother, before I knew you, I had an apprehension that you were not good, that I could not esteem you: that dread damped my wish to see you; and now my heart is elate because I find you perfect,—almost; kind, clever, nice. Your sole fault is that you are old-fashioned, and of that I shall cure you. Mama, put your work down: read to me. I like your southern accent: it is so pure, so soft. It has no rugged burr, no nasal twang, such as almost every one's voice here in the north has. My uncle and Mr. Hall say that you are a fine reader, mama. Mr. Hall said he never heard any lady read with such propriety of expression, or purity of accent."

"I wish I could reciprocate the compliment, Cary; but really, the first time I heard your truly excellent friend read and preach, I could not understand his broad, northern tongue."

"Could you understand me, mama? Did I seem to speak roughly?"

"No: I almost wished you had, as I wished you had looked unpolished. Your father, Caroline, naturally spoke well; quite otherwise than your worthy uncle: correctly, gently, smoothly. You inherit the gift."

"Poor papa! When he was so agreeable, why was he not good?"

"Why, he was *as* he was—and, happily, of that you, child, can form no conception—I cannot tell: it is a deep mystery. The key is in the hands of his Maker; there I leave it."

"Mama, you will keep stitching, stitching away: put down the sewing; I am an enemy to it. It cumbers your lap, and I want it for my head: it engages your eyes, and I want them for a book. Here is your favourite—Cowper."

These importunities were the mother's pleasure. If ever she delayed compliance, it was only to hear them repeated, and to enjoy her child's soft, half-playful, half-petulant urgency. And then, when she yielded, Caroline would say, archly,—

"You will spoil me, mama. I always thought I should like to be spoiled, and I find it very sweet."

So did Mrs. Pryor.

CHAPTER III.

OLD COPY-BOOKS.

By the time the Fieldhead party returned to Briarfield, Caroline was nearly well. Miss Keeldar, who had received news by post of her friend's convalescence, hardly suffered an hour to elapse between her arrival at home and her first call at the Rectory.

A shower of rain was falling gently yet fast on the late flowers and russet autumn shrubs, when the garden-wicket was heard to swing open, and Shirley's well-known form passed the window. On her entrance, her feelings were evinced in her own peculiar fashion. When deeply moved, by serious fears or joys, she was not garrulous. The strong emotion was rarely suffered to influence her tongue; and even her eyé refused it more than a furtive and fitful conquest. She took Caroline in her arms, gave her one look, one kiss, then said:—

"You are better."

And a minute after,—"I see you are safe now,

but take care. God grant your health may be called on to sustain no more shocks!"

She proceeded to talk fluently about the journey. In the midst of vivacious discourse, her eye still wandered to Caroline: there spoke in its light a deep solicitude, some trouble, and some amaze.

"She may be better," it said; "but how weak she still is! What peril she has come through!"

Suddenly her glance reverted to Mrs. Pryor: it pierced her through.

"When will my governess return to me?" she asked.

"May I tell her all?" demanded Caroline of her mother. Leave being signified by a gesture, Shirley was presently enlightened on what had happened in her absence.

"Very good!" was the cool comment. "Very good! But it is no news to me."

"What! Did you know?"

"I guessed long since the whole business. I have heard somewhat of Mrs. Pryor's history—not from herself, but from others. With every detail of Mr. James Helstone's career and character, I was acquainted: an afternoon's sitting and conversation with Miss Mann had rendered me familiar therewith: also he is one of Mrs. Yorke's warning-examples—one of the blood-red lights she hangs out to scare young ladies from matrimony. I believe I should have been sceptical about the truth of the portrait traced by such fingers—both these ladies

take a dark pleasure in offering to view the dark side of life—but I questioned Mr. Yorke on the subject, and he said,—'Shirley, my woman, if you want to know aught about yond' James Helstone, I can only say he was a man-tiger. He was handsome, dissolute, soft, treacherous, courteous, cruel——' Don't cry, Cary; we 'll say no more about it."

"I am not crying, Shirley; or if I am, it is nothing—go on: you are no friend if you withhold from me the truth: I hate that false plan of disguising, mutilating the truth."

"Fortunately, I have said pretty nearly all that I have to say, except that your uncle himself confirmed Mr. Yorke's words: for he too scorns a lie, and deals in none of those conventional subterfuges that are shabbier than lies."

"But papa is dead: they should let him alone now."

"They should—and we *will* let him alone. Cry away, Cary, it will do you good: it is wrong to check natural tears; besides, I choose to please myself by sharing an idea that at this moment beams in your mother's eye while she looks at you: every drop blots out a sin. Weep—your tears have the virtue which the rivers of Damascus lacked: like Jordan, they can cleanse a leprous memory."

"Madam," she continued, addressing Mrs. Pryor, "did you think I could be daily in the habit of seeing you and your daughter together—marking your marvellous similarity in many points—observing,

pardon me—your irrepressible emotions in the presence and still more in the absence of your child, and not form my own conjectures? I formed them, and they are literally correct. I shall begin to think myself shrewd."

"And you said nothing?" observed Caroline, who soon regained the quiet control of her feelings.

"Nothing. I had no warrant to breathe a word on the subject. *My* business it was not: I abstained from making it such."

"You guessed so deep a secret, and did not hint that you guessed it?"

"Is that so difficult?"

"It is not like you."

"How do you know?"

"You are not reserved. You are frankly communicative."

"I may be communicative, yet know where to stop. In showing my treasure, I may withhold a gem or two—a curious, unbought, graven stone—an amulet, of whose mystic glitter I rarely permit even myself a glimpse. Good-day."

Caroline thus seemed to get a view of Shirley's character under a novel aspect. Ere long, the prospect was renewed: it opened upon her.

No sooner had she regained sufficient strength to bear a change of scene—the excitement of a little society—than Miss Keeldar sued daily for her presence at Fieldhead. Whether Shirley had become

wearied of her honoured relatives, is not known: she did not say she was; but she claimed and retained Caroline with an eagerness which proved that an addition to that worshipful company was not unwelcome.

The Sympsons were Church people: of course, the Rector's niece was received by them with courtesy. Mr. Sympson proved to be a man of spotless respectability, worrying temper, pious principles, and worldly views; his lady was a very good woman, patient, kind, well-bred. She had been brought up on a narrow system of views—starved on a few prejudices: a mere handful of bitter herbs; a few preferences, soaked till their natural flavour was extracted, and with no seasoning added in the cooking; some excellent principles, made up in a stiff raised-crust of bigotry, difficult to digest: far too submissive was she to complain of this diet, or to ask for a crumb beyond it.

The daughters were an example to their sex. They were tall, with a Roman nose a-piece. They had been educated faultlessly. All they did was well done. History, and the most solid books, had cultivated their minds. Principles and opinions they possessed which could not be mended. More exactly-regulated lives, feelings, manners, habits, it would have been difficult to find anywhere. They knew by heart a certain young-ladies'-school-room code of laws on language, demeanour, &c.; themselves never deviated from its curious little pragmatical provisions;

and they regarded with secret, whispered horror, all deviations in others. The Abomination of Desolation was no mystery to them: they had discovered that unutterable Thing in the characteristic others call Originality. Quick were they to recognise the signs of this evil; and wherever they saw its trace—whether in look, word, or deed; whether they read it in the fresh, vigorous style of a book, or listened to it in interesting, unhackneyed, pure, expressive language—they shuddered—they recoiled: danger was above their heads—peril about their steps. What was this strange Thing? Being unintelligible, it must be bad. Let it be denounced and chained up.

Henry Sympson—the only son, and youngest child of the family—was a boy of fifteen. He generally kept with his tutor; when he left him, he sought his cousin Shirley. This boy differed from his sisters: he was little, lame, and pale; his large eyes shone somewhat languidly in a wan orbit: they were, indeed, usually rather dim—but they were capable of illumination: at times, they could not only shine, but blaze: inward emotion could likewise give colour to his cheek and decision to his crippled movements. Henry's mother loved him; she thought his peculiarities were a mark of election: he was not like other children, she allowed; she believed him regenerate—a new Samuel—called of God from his birth: he was to be a clergyman. Mr. and the Misses Sympson, not understanding the youth, let

him much alone. Shirley made him her pet; and he made Shirley his playmate.

In the midst of this family-circle—or rather outside it—moved the tutor—the satellite.

Yes: Louis Moore was a satellite of the house of Sympson: connected, yet apart; ever attendant—ever distant. Each member of that correct family treated him with proper dignity. The father was austerely civil, sometimes irritable; the mother, being a kind woman, was attentive, but formal; the daughters saw in him an abstraction, not a man. It seemed, by their manner, that their brother's tutor did not live for them. They were learned: so was he—but not for them. They were accomplished: he had talents too, imperceptible to their senses. The most spirited sketch from his fingers was a blank to their eyes; the most original observation from his lips fell unheard on their ears. Nothing could exceed the propriety of their behaviour.

I should have said, nothing could have equalled it; but I remembered a fact which strangely astonished Caroline Helstone. It was—to discover that her cousin had absolutely *no* sympathizing friend at Fieldhead: that to Miss Keeldar he was as much a mere teacher, as little a gentleman, as little a man, as to the estimable Misses Sympson.

What had befallen the kind-hearted Shirley that she should be so indifferent to the dreary position of a fellow-creature thus isolated under her roof? She was not, perhaps, haughty to him, but she never

noticed him: she let him alone. He came and went, spoke or was silent, and she rarely recognised his existence.

As to Louis Moore himself, he had the air of a man used to this life, and who had made up his mind to bear it for a time. His faculties seemed walled up in him, and were unmurmuring in their captivity. He never laughed; he seldom smiled; he was uncomplaining. He fulfilled the round of his duties scrupulously. His pupil loved him; he asked nothing more than civility from the rest of the world. It even appeared that he would accept nothing more: in that abode at least; for when his cousin Caroline made gentle overtures of friendship, he did not encourage them; he rather avoided than sought her. One living thing alone, besides his pale, crippled scholar, he fondled in the house, and that was the ruffianly Tartar; who, sullen and impracticable to others, acquired a singular partiality for him: a partiality so marked that sometimes, when Moore, summoned to a meal, entered the room and sat down unwelcomed, Tartar would rise from his lair at Shirley's feet, and betake himself to the taciturn tutor. Once—but once—she noticed the desertion; and holding out her white hand, and speaking softly, tried to coax him back. Tartar looked, slavered, and sighed, as his manner was, but yet disregarded the invitation, and coolly settled himself on his haunches at Louis Moore's side. That gentleman drew the dog's big, black-muzzled head on

to his knee, patted him, and smiled one little smile to himself.

An acute observer might have remarked, in the course of the same evening, that after Tartar had resumed his allegiance to Shirley, and was once more couched near her foot-stool, the audacious tutor by one word and gesture fascinated him again. He pricked up his ears at the word; he started erect at the gesture, and came, with head lovingly depressed, to receive the expected caress: as it was given, the significant smile again rippled across Moore's quiet face.

"Shirley," said Caroline, one day, as they two were sitting alone in the summer-house, "did you know that my cousin Louis was tutor in your uncle's family before the Sympsons came down here?"

Shirley's reply was not so prompt as her responses usually were, but at last she answered,—

"Yes,—of course: I knew it well."

"I thought you must have been aware of the circumstance."

"Well! what then?"

"It puzzles me to guess how it chanced that you never mentioned it to me."

"Why should it puzzle you?"

"It seems odd. I cannot account for it. You talk a great deal,—you talk freely. How was that circumstance never touched on?"

"Because it never was," and Shirley laughed.

"You are a singular being!" observed her friend: "I thought I knew you quite well: I begin to find myself mistaken. You were silent as the grave about Mrs. Pryor; and now, again, here is another secret. But why you made it a secret is the mystery to me."

"I never made it a secret: I had no reason for so doing. If you had asked me who Henry's tutor was, I would have told you: besides, I thought you knew."

"I am puzzled about more things than one in this matter: you don't like poor Louis,—why? Are you impatient at what you perhaps consider his *servile* position? Do you wish that Robert's brother were more highly placed?"

"Robert's brother, indeed!" was the exclamation, uttered in a tone like the accents of scorn; and, with a movement of proud impatience, Shirley snatched a rose from a branch peeping through the open lattice.

"Yes," repeated Caroline, with mild firmness; "Robert's brother. He *is* thus closely related to Gérard Moore of the Hollow, though nature has not given him features so handsome, or an air so noble as his kinsman; but his blood is as good, and he is as much a gentleman, were he free."

"Wise, humble, pious Caroline!" exclaimed Shirley, ironically. "Men and angels, hear her! We should not despise plain features, nor a laborious yet honest occupation, should we? Look at the subject of your panegyric,—he is there in the garden," she

continued, pointing through an aperture in the clustering creepers; and by that aperture Louis Moore was visible, coming slowly down the walk.

"He is not ugly, Shirley," pleaded Caroline; "he is not ignoble; he is sad: silence seals his mind; but I believe him to be intelligent; and be certain, if he had not something very commendable in his disposition, Mr. Hall would never seek his society as he does."

Shirley laughed: she laughed again; each time with a slightly sarcastic sound. "Well, well," was her comment. "On the plea of the man being Cyril Hall's friend, and Robert Moore's brother, we 'll just tolerate his existence—won't we, Cary? You believe him to be intelligent, do you? Not quite an idiot—eh? Something commendable in his disposition! id est, not an absolute ruffian. Good! Your representations have weight with me; and to prove that they have, should he come this way I will speak to him."

He approached the summer-house: unconscious that it was tenanted, he sat down on the step. Tartar, now his customary companion, had followed him, and he couched across his feet.

"Old boy!" said Louis, pulling his tawny ear, or rather the mutilated remains of that organ, torn and chewed in a hundred battles, "the autumn sun shines as pleasantly on us as on the fairest and richest. This garden is none of ours, but we enjoy its greenness and perfume, don't we?"

He sat silent, still caressing Tartar, who slobbered with exceeding affection. A faint twittering commenced among the trees round: something fluttered down as light as leaves: they were little birds, which lighting on the sward at shy distance, hopped as if expectant.

"The small brown elves actually remember that I fed them the other day," again soliloquized Louis. "They want some more biscuit: to-day, I forgot to save a fragment. Eager little sprites, I have not a crumb for you."

He put his hand in his pocket and drew it out empty.

"A want easily supplied," whispered the listening Miss Keeldar.

She took from her reticule a morsel of sweet-cake: for that repository was never destitute of something available to throw to the chickens, young ducks, or sparrows; she crumbled it, and bending over his shoulder, put the crumbs into his hand.

"There," said she; "there is a Providence for the improvident."

"This September afternoon is pleasant," observed Louis Moore, as—not at all discomposed—he calmly cast the crumbs on to the grass.

"Even for you?"

"As pleasant for me as for any monarch."

"You take a sort of harsh, solitary triumph in drawing pleasure out of the elements, and the inanimate and lower animate creation."

"Solitary, but not harsh. With animals I feel I am Adam's son: the heir of him to whom dominion was given over 'every living thing that moveth upon the earth.' Your dog likes and follows me; when I go into that yard, the pigeons from your dove-cot flutter at my feet; your mare in the stable knows me as well as it knows you, and obeys me better."

"And my roses smell sweet to you, and my trees give you shade."

"And," continued Louis, "no caprice can withdraw these pleasures from me: they are *mine*."

He walked off: Tartar followed him, as if in duty and affection bound, and Shirley remained standing on the summer-house step. Caroline saw her face as she looked after the rude tutor: it was pale, as if her pride bled inwardly.

"You see," remarked Caroline, apologetically, "his feelings are so often hurt, it makes him morose."

"You see," retorted Shirley, with ire, "he is a topic on which you and I shall quarrel if we discuss it often; so drop it henceforward and for ever."

"I suppose he has more than once behaved in this way," thought Caroline to herself; "and that renders Shirley so distant to him: yet I wonder she cannot make allowance for character and circumstances: I wonder the general modesty, manliness, sincerity of his nature, do not plead with her in his

behalf. She is not often so inconsiderate—so irritable.

The verbal testimony of two friends of Caroline's to her cousin's character augmented her favourable opinion of him. William Farren, whose cottage he had visited in company with Mr. Hall, pronounced him a "real gentleman:" there was not such another in Briarfield: he—William—"could do aught for that man. And then to see how t' bairns liked him, and how t' wife took to him first minute she saw him: he never went into a house but t' childer wor about him directly: them little things wor like as if they 'd a keener sense nor grown-up folks i' finding out folks' natures."

Mr. Hall, in answer to a question of Miss Helstone's, as to what he thought of Louis Moore, replied promptly, that he was the best fellow he had met with since he left Cambridge.

"But he is so grave," objected Caroline.

"Grave! The finest company in the world! Full of odd, quiet, out-of-the-way humour. Never enjoyed an excursion so much in my life as the one I took with him to the Lakes. His understanding and tastes are so superior, it does a man good to be within their influence; and as to his temper and nature, I call them fine."

"At Fieldhead he looks gloomy, and, I believe, has the character of being misanthropical."

"Oh! I fancy he is rather out of place there—in

a false position. The Sympsons are most estimable people, but not the folks to comprehend him: they think a great deal about form and ceremony, which are quite out of Louis's way."

"I don't think Miss Keeldar likes him."

"She doesn't know him—she doesn't know him; otherwise, she has sense enough to do justice to his merits."

"Well, I suppose she doesn't know him," mused Caroline to herself, and by this hypothesis she endeavoured to account for what seemed else unaccountable. But such simple solution of the difficulty was not left her long: she was obliged to refuse Miss Keeldar even this negative excuse for her prejudice.

One day she chanced to be in the school-room with Henry Sympson, whose amiable and affectionate disposition had quickly recommended him to her regard. The boy was busied about some mechanical contrivance: his lameness made him fond of sedentary occupation: he began to ransack his tutor's desk for a piece of wax, or twine, necessary to his work. Moore happened to be absent. Mr. Hall, indeed, had called for him to take a long walk. Henry could not immediately find the object of his search: he rummaged compartment after compartment; and, at last opening an inner drawer, he came upon—not a ball of cord, or a lump of bees'-wax—but a little bundle of small marble-coloured cahiers, tied with tape. Henry looked at them:—

"What rubbish Mr. Moore stores up in his desk!" he said: "I hope he won't keep my old exercises so carefully."

"What is it?"

"Old copy-books."

He threw the bundle to Caroline. The packet looked so neat externally, her curiosity was excited to see its contents.

"If they are only copy-books, I suppose I may open them?"

"Oh! yes; quite freely. Mr. Moore's desk is half mine—for he lets me keep all sorts of things in it—and I give you leave."

On scrutiny, they proved to be French compositions, written in a hand peculiar but compact, and exquisitely clean and clear. The writing was recognisable: she scarcely needed the further evidence of the name signed at the close of each theme, to tell her whose they were. Yet that name astonished her: "Shirley Keeldar, Sympson Grove, ——shire" (a southern county), and a date four years back.

She tied up the packet, and held it in her hand, meditating over it. She half felt as if, in opening it, she had violated a confidence.

"They are Shirley's, you see," said Henry, carelessly.

"Did *you* give them to Mr. Moore? She wrote them with Mrs. Pryor, I suppose?"

"She wrote them in my school-room at Sympson

Grove, when she lived with us there. Mr. Moore taught her French: it is his native language."

"I know . . . . . Was she a good pupil, Henry?"

"She was a wild, laughing thing, but pleasant to have in the room: she made lesson-time charming. She learned fast—you could hardly tell when or how. French was nothing to her: she spoke it quick—quick; as quick as Mr. Moore himself."

"Was she obedient? Did she give trouble?"

"She gave plenty of trouble in a way: she was giddy, but I liked her. I'm desperately fond of Shirley."

"*Desperately* fond—you small simpleton! You don't know what you say."

"I *am desperately* fond of her: she is the light of my eyes: I said so to Mr. Moore last night."

"He would reprove you for speaking with exaggeration."

"He didn't. He never reproves and reproves, as girls' governesses do. He was reading, and he only smiled into his book, and said that if Miss Keeldar was no more than that, she was less than he took her to be; for I was but a dim-eyed, short-sighted, little chap. I'm afraid I am a poor unfortunate, Miss Caroline Helstone. I am a cripple, you know."

"Never mind, Henry, you are a very nice little fellow; and if God has not given you health and strength, he has given you a good disposition, and an excellent heart and brain."

"I shall be despised. I sometimes think both Shirley and you despise me."

"Listen, Henry. Generally, I don't like schoolboys: I have a great horror of them. They seem to me little ruffians, who take an unnatural delight in killing and tormenting birds, and insects, and kittens, and whatever is weaker than themselves; but you are so different, I am quite fond of you. You have almost as much sense as a man (far more, God wot," she muttered to herself, "than many men); you are fond of reading, and you can talk sensibly about what you read."

"I *am* fond of reading. I know I have sense, and I know I have feeling."

Miss Keeldar here entered.

"Henry," she said, "I have brought your lunch here: I shall prepare it for you myself."

She placed on the table a glass of new milk, a plate of something which looked not unlike leather, and an utensil which resembled a toasting-fork.

"What are you two about," she continued, "ransacking Mr. Moore's desk?"

"Looking at your old copy-books," returned Caroline.

"My old copy-books?"

"French exercise-books. Look here! They must be held precious: they are kept carefully."

She shewed the bundle. Shirley snatched it up:

"Did not know one was in existence," she said. "I thought the whole lot had long since lit the

kitchen-fire, or curled the maid's hair at Sympson-grove. What made you keep them, Henry?"

"It is not my doing: I should not have thought of it: it never entered my head to suppose copy-books of value. Mr. Moore put them by in the inner drawer of his desk: perhaps he forgot them."

"C'est cela; he forgot them, no doubt," echoed Shirley. "They are extremely well written," she observed, complacently.

"What a giddy girl you were, Shirley, in those days! I remember you so well: a slim, light creature whom, though you were so tall, I could lift off the floor. I see you with your long, countless curls on your shoulders, and your streaming sash. You used to make Mr. Moore lively, that is, at first: I believe you grieved him after a while."

Shirley turned the closely written pages and said nothing. Presently she observed, "That was written one winter afternoon. It was a description of a snow-scene."

"I remember," said Henry; "Mr. Moore, when he read it, cried 'voilà le Français gagné!' He said it was well done. Afterwards you made him draw, in sepia, the landscape you described."

"You have not forgotten then, Hal?"

"Not at all. We were all scolded that day for not coming down to tea when called. I can remember my tutor sitting at his easel, and you standing behind him, holding the candle, and watch-

ing him draw the snowy cliff, the pine, the deer couched under it, and the half-moon hung above."

"Where are his drawings, Harry? Caroline should see them."

"In his portfolio; but it is padlocked: he has the key."

"Ask him for it when he comes in."

"You should ask him, Shirley; you are shy of him now: you are grown a proud lady to him, I notice that."

"Shirley, you are a real enigma," whispered Caroline in her ear. "What queer discoveries I make day by day now! I, who thought I had your confidence. Inexplicable creature! even this boy reproves you."

"I have forgotten 'Auld Langsyne,' you see, Harry," said Miss Keeldar, answering young Sympson, and not heeding Caroline.

"Which you never should have done. You don't deserve to be a man's morning star, if you have so short a memory."

"A man's morning star indeed! and by 'a man,' is meant your worshipful self, I suppose? Come, drink your new milk while it is warm."

The young cripple rose and limped towards the fire: he had left his crutch near the mantelpiece.

"My poor lame darling!" murmured Shirley, in her softest voice, aiding him.

"Whether do you like me or Mr. Sam Wynne

best, Shirley?" inquired the boy, as she settled him in an arm-chair.

"Oh, Harry! Sam Wynne is my aversion: you are my pet."

"Me or Mr. Malone?"

"You again, a thousand times."

"Yet, they are great whiskered fellows, six feet high each."

"Whereas, as long as you live, Harry, you will never be anything more than a little pale lameter."

"Yes, I know."

"You need not be sorrowful. Have I not often told you who was almost as little, as pale, as suffering as you, and yet potent as a giant, and brave as a lion?"

"Admiral Horatio?"

"Admiral Horatio, Viscount Nelson, and Duke of Bronti: great at heart as a Titan; gallant and heroic as all the world and age of chivalry; leader of the might of England; commander of her strength on the deep; hurler of her thunder over the flood."

"A great man: but I am not warlike, Shirley: and yet my mind is so restless, I burn day and night—for what—I can hardly tell—to be—to do—to suffer, I think."

"Harry, it is your mind, which is stronger and older than your frame, that troubles you. It is a captive. It lies in physical bondage. But it will work its own redemption yet. Study carefully, not only books but the world. You love nature; love

her without fear. Be patient—wait the course of time. You will not be a soldier or a sailor, Henry; but, if you live, you will be—listen to my prophecy—you will be an author—perhaps, a poet."

"An author! It is a flash—a flash of light to me! I will—I *will!* I'll write a book that I may dedicate it to you."

"You will write it, that you may give your soul its natural release. Bless me! what am I saying? more than I understand, I believe, or can make good. Here, Hal; here is your toasted oat-cake—eat and live!"

"Willingly!" Here cried a voice outside the open window, "I know that fragrance of meal bread. Miss Keeldar, may I come in and partake?"

"Mr. Hall" (it was Mr. Hall, and with him was Louis Moore, returned from their walk), "there is a proper luncheon laid out in the dining-room, and there are proper people seated round it: you may join that society and share that fare if you please; but if your ill-regulated tastes lead you to prefer ill-regulated proceedings, step in here, and do as we do."

"I approve the perfume, and therefore shall suffer myself to be led by the nose," returned Mr. Hall, who presently entered, accompanied by Louis Moore. That gentleman's eye fell on his desk, pillaged.

"Burglars!" said he. "Henry, you merit the ferule."

"Give it to Shirley and Caroline—they did it," was alleged with more attention to effect than truth.

"Traitor and false witness!" cried both the girls. "We never laid hands on a thing, except in the spirit of laudable inquiry."

"Exactly so," said Moore, with his rare smile. "And what have you ferreted out, in your 'spirit of laudable inquiry?'"

He perceived the inner drawer open.

"This is empty," said he. "Who has taken——?"

"Here! here!" Caroline hastened to say; and she restored the little packet to its place. He shut it up; he locked it in with a small key attached to his watch-guard; he restored the other papers to order, closed the repository, and sat down without further remark.

"I thought you would have scolded much more, sir," said Henry. "The girls deserve reprimand."

"I leave them to their own consciences."

"It accuses them of crimes intended as well as perpetrated, sir. If I had not been here, they would have treated your portfolio as they have done your desk; but I told them it was padlocked."

"And will you have lunch with us?" here interposed Shirley, addressing Moore, and desirous, as it seemed, to turn the conversation.

"Certainly, if I may."

"You will be restricted to new milk and Yorkshire oat-cake."

"Va—pour le lait frais!" said Louis. "But for your oat-cake——!" and he made a grimace.

"He cannot eat it," said Henry: "he thinks it is like bran, raised with sour yeast."

"Come, then, by special dispensation, we will allow him a few cracknels; but nothing less homely."

The hostess rang the bell and gave her frugal orders, which were presently executed. She herself measured out the milk, and distributed the bread round the cozy circle now enclosing the bright little school-room fire. She then took the post of toaster-general; and kneeling on the rug, fork in hand, fulfilled her office with dexterity. Mr. Hall, who relished any homely innovation on ordinary usages, and to whom the husky oat-cake was from custom suave as manna—seemed in his best spirits. He talked and laughed gleefully—now with Caroline, whom he had fixed by his side, now with Shirley, and again with Louis Moore. And Louis met him in congenial spirit: he did not laugh much, but he uttered in the quietest tone the wittiest things. Gravely spoken sentences, marked by unexpected turns and a quite fresh flavour and poignancy, fell easily from his lips. He proved himself to be—what Mr. Hall had said he was—excellent company. Caroline marvelled at his humour, but still more at his entire self-possession. Nobody there present seemed to impose on him a sensation of unpleasant restraint: nobody seemed a bore—a check—a chill to him; and yet there was the cool and lofty Miss

Keeldar kneeling before the fire, almost at his feet.

But Shirley was cool and lofty no longer—at least not at this moment. She appeared unconscious of the humility of her present position—or if conscious, it was only to taste a charm in its lowliness. It did not revolt her pride that the group to whom she voluntarily officiated as handmaid should include her cousin's tutor: it did not scare her that while she handed the bread and milk to the rest, she had to offer it to him also; and Moore took his portion from her hand as calmly as if he had been her equal.

"You are overheated now," he said, when she had retained the fork for some time: "let me relieve you."

And he took it from her with a sort of quiet authority, to which she submitted passively—neither resisting him nor thanking him.

"I should like to see your pictures, Louis," said Caroline, when the sumptuous luncheon was discussed. "Would not you, Mr. Hall?"

"To please you, I should; but, for my own part, I have cut him as an artist. I had enough of him in that capacity in Cumberland and Westmoreland. Many a wetting we got amongst the mountains because he would persist in sitting on a camp-stool, catching effects of rain-clouds, gathering mists, fitful sunbeams, and what not."

"Here is the portfolio," said Henry, bringing it

in one hand, and leaning on his crutch with the other.

Louis took it, but he still sat as if he wanted another to speak. It seemed as if he would not open it unless the proud Shirley deigned to show herself interested in the exhibition.

"He makes us wait to whet our curiosity," she said.

"You understand opening it," observed Louis, giving her the key. "You spoiled the lock for me once—try now."

He held it: she opened it; and, monopolizing the contents, had the first view of every sketch herself. She enjoyed the treat—if treat it were—in silence, without a single comment. Moore stood behind her chair and looked over her shoulder, and when she had done, and the others were still gazing, he left his post and paced through the room.

A carriage was heard in the lane—the gate-bell rang: Shirley started.

"There are callers," she said, "and I shall be summoned to the room. A pretty figure—as they say—I am to receive company: I and Henry have been in the garden gathering fruit half the morning. Oh, for rest under my own vine and my own fig-tree! Happy is the slave-wife of the Indian chief, in that she has no drawing-room duty to perform, but can sit at ease weaving mats, and stringing beads, and peacefully flattening her picaninny's head in an unmolested corner of her wigwam. I'll emigrate to the western woods."

Louis Moore laughed.

"To marry a White Cloud or a Big Buffalo; and after wedlock to devote yourself to the tender task of digging your lord's maize-field, while he smokes his pipe or drinks fire-water."

Shirley seemed about to reply, but here the school-room door unclosed, admitting Mr. Sympson. That personage stood aghast when he saw the group around the fire.

"I thought you alone, Miss Keeldar," he said. "I find quite a party."

And evidently from his shocked, scandalized air—had he not recognised in one of the party, a clergyman—he would have delivered an extempore philippic on the extraordinary habits of his niece: respect for the cloth arrested him.

"I merely wished to announce," he proceeded, coldly, "that the family from De Walden Hall, Mr., Mrs., the Misses, and Mr. Sam Wynne are in the drawing-room." And he bowed, and withdrew.

"The family from De Walden Hall! Couldn't be a worse set," murmured Shirley.

She sat still, looking a little contumacious, and very much indisposed to stir. She was flushed with the fire; her dark hair had been more than once dishevelled by the morning wind that day; her attire was a light, neatly fitting, but amply flowing dress of muslin; the shawl she had worn in the garden was still draped in a careless fold round her. Indolent, wilful, picturesque, and singularly pretty was her

aspect—prettier than usual, as if some soft inward emotion—stirred who knows how?—had given new bloom and expression to her features.

"Shirley—Shirley, you ought to go," whispered Caroline.

"I wonder why?"

She lifted her eyes, and saw in the glass over the fireplace, both Mr. Hall and Louis Moore gazing at her gravely.

"If," she said, with a yielding smile—"if a majority of the present company maintain that the De Walden Hall people have claims on my civility, I will subdue my inclinations to my duty. Let those who think I ought to go, hold up their hands."

Again consulting the mirror, it reflected an unanimous vote against her.

"You must go," said Mr. Hall, "and behave courteously, too. You owe many duties to society. It is not permitted you to please only yourself."

Louis Moore assented with a low "Hear! hear!"

Caroline, approaching her, smoothed her wavy curls, gave to her attire a less artistic and more domestic grace, and Shirley was put out of the room, protesting still, by a pouting lip, against her dismissal.

"There is a curious charm about her," observed Mr. Hall, when she was gone. "And now," he added, "I must away, for Sweeting is off to see his mother, and there are two funerals."

"Henry, get your books; it is lesson-time," said Moore, siting down to his desk.

"A curious charm!" repeated the pupil, when he and his master were left alone. "True. Is she not a kind of white witch?" he asked.

"Of whom are you speaking, sir?"

"Of my cousin Shirley."

"No irrelevant questions. Study in silence."

Mr. Moore looked and spoke sternly—sourly. Henry knew this mood: it was a rare one with his tutor; but when it came he had an awe of it: he obeyed.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FIRST BLUE-STOCKING.

MISS KEELDAR and her uncle had characters that would not harmonize,—that never had harmonized. He was irritable, and she was spirited; he was despotic, and she liked freedom; he was worldly, and she, perhaps, romantic.

Not without purpose had he come down to Yorkshire: his mission was clear, and he intended to discharge it conscientiously. he anxiously desired to have his niece married; to make for her a suitable match; give her in charge to a proper husband, and wash his hands of her for ever.

The misfortune was, from infancy upwards, Shirley and he had disagreed on the meaning of the words "suitable" and "proper." She never yet had accepted his definition; and it was doubtful whether, in the most important step of her life, she would consent to accept it.

The trial soon came.

Mr. Wynne proposed in form for his son, Samuel Fawthrop Wynne.

"Decidedly suitable! Most proper!" pronounced Mr. Sympson. "A fine unencumbered estate; real substance; good connections. *It must be done!*"

He sent for his niece to the oak-parlour; he shut himself up there with her alone; he communicated the offer; he gave his opinion; he claimed her consent.

It was withheld.

"No: I shall not marry Samuel Fawthrop Wynne."

"I ask why? I must have a reason. In all respects he is more than worthy of you."

She stood on the hearth; she was pale as the white marble slab and cornice behind her; her eyes flashed large, dilated, unsmiling.

"And *I* ask in what sense that young man is worthy of *me?*"

"He has twice your money,—twice your common sense;—equal connections,—equal respectability"

"Had he my money counted five score times, I would take no vow to love him."

"Please to state your objections."

"He has run a course of despicable, commonplace profligacy. Accept that as the first reason why I spurn him."

"Miss Keeldar, you shock me!"

"That conduct alone sinks him in a gulf of immeasurable inferiority. His intellect reaches no standard I can esteem:—there is a second stumbling-block. His views are narrow; his feelings are blunt; his tastes are coarse; his manners vulgar."

"The man is a respectable, wealthy man. To refuse him is presumption on your part."

"I refuse, point-blank! Cease to annoy me with the subject: I forbid it!"

"Is it your intention ever to marry, or do you prefer celibacy?"

"I deny your right to claim an answer to that question."

"May I ask if you expect some man of title—some peer of the realm—to demand your hand?"

"I doubt if the peer breathes on whom I would confer it."

"Were there insanity in the family, I should believe you mad. Your eccentricity and conceit touch the verge of frenzy."

"Perhaps, ere I have finished, you will see me overleap it."

"I anticipate no less. Frantic and impracticable girl! Take warning!—I dare you to sully our name by a misalliance!"

"*Our* name! Am *I* called Sympson?"

"God be thanked that you are not! But be on your guard!—I will not be trifled with!"

"What, in the name of common law and common sense, would you, or could you do, if my pleasure led me to a choice you disapproved?"

"Take care! take care!" (warning her with voice and hand that trembled alike.)

"Why? What shadow of power have *you* over me? Why should I fear you?"

"Take care, madam!"

"Scrupulous care I will take, Mr. Sympson. Before I marry, I am resolved to esteem—to admire—to *love*."

"Preposterous stuff!—indecorous!—unwomanly!"

"To love with my whole heart. I know I speak in an unknown tongue; but I feel indifferent whether I am comprehended or not."

"And if this love of yours should fall on a beggar?"

"On a beggar it will never fall. Mendicancy is not estimable."

"On a low clerk, a play-actor, a play-writer, or—or——"

"Take courage, Mr. Sympson! Or what?"

"Any literary scrub, or shabby, whining artist."

"For the scrubby, shabby, whining, I have no taste: for literature and the arts, I have. And there I wonder how your Fawthrop Wynne would suit me? He cannot write a note without orthographical errors; he reads only a sporting paper: he was the booby of Stilbro' grammar school!"

"Unladylike language! Great God!—to what will she come?" He lifted hands and eyes.

"Never to the altar of Hymen with Sam Wynne."

"To what will she come? Why are not the laws more stringent, that I might compel her to hear reason?"

"Console yourself, uncle. Were Britain a serfdom, and you the Czar, you could not *compel* me to

this step. *I* will write to Mr. Wynne. Give yourself no further trouble on the subject."

Fortune is proverbially called changeful, yet her caprice often takes the form of repeating again and again a similar stroke of luck in the same quarter. It appeared that Miss Keeldar—or her fortune—had by this time made a sensation in the district, and produced an impression in quarters by her unthought of. No less than three offers followed Mr. Wynne's—all more or less eligible. All were in succession pressed on her by her uncle, and all in succession she refused. Yet amongst them was more than one gentleman of unexceptionable character, as well as ample wealth. Many besides her uncle asked what she meant, and whom she expected to entrap, that she was so insolently fastidious.

At last, the gossips thought they had found the key to her conduct, and her uncle was sure of it; and, what is more, the discovery showed his niece to him in quite a new light, and he changed his whole deportment to her accordingly.

Fieldhead had, of late, been fast growing too hot to hold them both: the suave aunt could not reconcile them; the daughters froze at the view of their quarrels: Gertrude and Isabella whispered by the hour together in their dressing-room, and became chilled with decorous dread if they chanced to be left alone with their audacious cousin. But, as I

have said, a change supervened: Mr. Sympson was appeased and his family tranquillized.

The village of Nunnely has been alluded to: its old church, its forest, its monastic ruins. It had also its Hall, called the Priory—an older, a larger, a more lordly abode than any Briarfield or Whinbury owned; and, what is more, it had its man of title—its baronet, which neither Briarfield nor Whinbury could boast. This possession—its proudest and most prized—had for years been nominal only: the present baronet, a young man hitherto resident in a distant province, was unknown on his Yorkshire estate.

During Miss Keeldar's stay at the fashionable watering-place of Cliffbridge, she and her friends had met with and been introduced to Sir Philip Nunnely. They encountered him again and again on the sands, the cliffs, in the various walks, sometimes at the public balls of the place. He seemed solitary; his manner was very unpretending—too simple to be termed affable; rather timid than proud: he did not *condescend* to their society—he seemed *glad* of it.

With any unaffected individual, Shirley could easily and quickly cement an acquaintance. She walked and talked with Sir Philip; she, her aunt, and cousins, sometimes took a sail in his yacht. She liked him because she found him kind and modest, and was charmed to feel she had the power to amuse him.

One slight drawback there was—where is the

friendship without it?—Sir Philip had a literary turn: he wrote poetry, sonnets, stanzas, ballads. Perhaps Miss Keeldar thought him a little too fond of reading and reciting these compositions; perhaps she wished the rhyme had possessed more accuracy—the measure more music—the tropes more freshness—the inspiration more fire: at any rate, she always winced when he recurred to the subject of his poems, and usually did her best to divert the conversation into another channel.

He would beguile her to take moonlight walks with him on the bridge, for the sole purpose, as it seemed, of pouring into her ear the longest of his ballads: he would lead her away to sequestered rustic seats, whence the rush of the surf to the sands was heard soft and soothing; and when he had her all to himself, and the sea lay before them, and the scented shade of gardens spread round, and the tall shelter of cliffs rose behind them, he would pull out his last batch of sonnets, and read them in a voice tremulous with emotion. He did not seem to know, that though they might be rhyme, they were not poetry. It appeared by Shirley's downcast eye and disturbed face that she knew it, and felt heartily mortified by the single foible of this good and amiable gentleman.

Often she tried, as gently as might be, to wean him from this fanatic worship of the Muses: it was his monomania—on all ordinary subjects he was sensible enough; and fain was she to engage him in

ordinary topics. He questioned her sometimes about his place at Nunnely; she was but too happy to answer his interrogatories at length: she never wearied of describing the antique Priory, the wild sylvan park, the hoary church and hamlet; nor did she fail to counsel him to come down and gather his tenantry about him in his ancestral halls.

Somewhat to her surprise, Sir Philip followed her advice to the letter; and actually, towards the close of September, arrived at the Priory.

He soon made a call at Fieldhead, and his first visit was not his last: he said—when he had achieved the round of the neighbourhood—that under no roof had he found such pleasant shelter as beneath the massive oak-beams of the gray manor-house of Briarfield: a cramped, modest dwelling enough, compared with his own—but he liked it.

Presently, it did not suffice to sit with Shirley in her panelled parlour, where others came and went, and where he could rarely find a quiet moment to show her the latest production of his fertile muse; he must have her out amongst the pleasant pastures, and lead her by the still waters. Tête-à-tête ramblings she shunned; so he made parties for her to his own grounds, his glorious forest; to remoter scenes—woods severed by the Wharfe, vales watered by the Aire.

Such assiduity covered Miss Keeldar with distinction. Her uncle's prophetic soul anticipated a splendid future: he already scented the time afar off

when, with nonchalant air, and left foot nursed on his right knee, he should be able to make dashingly-familiar allusion to his "nephew the baronet." Now, his niece dawned upon him no longer "a mad girl," but a "most sensible woman." He termed her, in confidential dialogues with Mrs. Sympson, "a truly superior person: peculiar, but very clever." He treated her with exceeding deference; rose reverently to open and shut doors for her; reddened his face, and gave himself headaches, with stooping to pick up gloves, handkerchiefs, and other loose property, whereof Shirley usually held but insecure tenure. He would cut mysterious jokes about the superiority of woman's wit over man's wisdom; commence obscure apologies for the blundering mistake he had committed respecting the generalship, the tactics, of "a personage not a hundred miles from Fieldhead:" in short, he seemed elate as any "midden-cock on pattens."

His niece viewed his manœuvres, and received his inuendos, with phlegm: apparently, she did not above half comprehend to what aim they tended. When plainly charged with being the preferred of the baronet, she said, she believed he did like her, and for her part she liked him: she had never thought a man of rank—the only son of a proud, fond mother—the only brother of doting sisters—could have so much goodness, and, on the whole, so much sense.

Time proved, indeed, that Sir Philip liked her. Perhaps he had found in her that "curious charm" noticed by Mr. Hall. He sought her presence more

and more; and, at last, with a frequency that attested it had become to him an indispensable stimulus. About this time, strange feelings hovered round Fieldhead; restless hopes and haggard anxieties haunted some of its rooms. There was an unquiet wandering of some of the inmates among the still fields round the mansion; there was a sense of expectancy that kept the nerves strained.

One thing seemed clear. Sir Philip was not a man to be despised: he was amiable; if not highly intellectual, he was intelligent. Miss Keeldar could not affirm of him—what she had so bitterly affirmed of Sam Wynne—that his feelings were blunt, his tastes coarse, and his manners vulgar. There was sensibility in his nature; there was a very real, if not a very discriminating, love of the arts; there was the English gentleman in all his deportment: as to his lineage and wealth, both were, of course, far beyond her claims.

His appearance had at first elicited some laughing, though not ill-natured, remarks from the merry Shirley. It was boyish; his features were plain and slight; his hair sandy; his stature insignificant. But she soon checked her sarcasm on this point; she would even fire up if any one else made uncomplimentary allusion thereto. He had "a pleasing countenance," she affirmed; "and there was that in his heart which was better than three Roman noses, than the locks of Absalom, or the proportions of Saul." A spare and rare shaft she still reserved for his unfortu-

nate poetic propensity: but, even here, she would tolerate no irony save her own.

In short, matters had reached a point which seemed fully to warrant an observation made about this time by Mr. Yorke, to the tutor, Louis.

"'Yond' brother Robert of yours seems to me to be either a fool or a madman. Two months ago, I could have sworn he had the game all in his own hands; and there he runs the country, and quarters himself up in London for weeks together, and by the time he comes back, he'll find himself checkmated. Louis, 'There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune; but, once let slip, never returns again.' I'd write to Robert, if I were you, and remind him of that."

"Robert had views on Miss Keeldar?" inquired Louis, as if the idea were new to him.

"Views I suggested to him myself, and views he might have realized, for she liked him."

"As a neighbour?"

"As more than that. I have seen her change countenance and colour at the mere mention of his name. Write to the lad, I say, and tell him to come home. He is a finer gentleman than this bit of a baronet, after all."

"Does it not strike you, Mr. Yorke, that for a mere pennyless adventurer to aspire to a rich woman's hand is presumptuous—contemptible?"

"Oh! if you are for high notions, and double-refined sentiment, I've naught to say. I'm a plain,

practical man myself; and if Robert is willing to give up that royal prize to a lad-rival—a puling slip of aristocracy—I am quite agreeable. At *his* age, in *his* place, with *his* inducements, I would have acted differently. Neither baronet, nor duke, nor prince should have snatched my sweetheart from me without a struggle. But you tutors are such solemn chaps: it is almost like speaking to a parson to consult with you."

Flattered and fawned upon as Shirley was just now, it appeared she was not absolutely spoiled—that her better nature did not quite leave her. Universal report had indeed ceased to couple her name with that of Moore, and this silence seemed sanctioned by her own apparent oblivion of the absentee; but that she had not *quite* forgotten him—that she still regarded him, if not with love yet with interest—seemed proved by the increased attention which at this juncture of affairs a sudden attack of illness induced her to show that tutor-brother of Robert's, to whom she habitually bore herself with strange alternations of cool reserve and docile respect: now sweeping past him in all the dignity of the monied heiress and prospective Lady Nunnely, and anon accosting him as abashed school-girls are wont to accost their stern professors: bridling her neck of ivory, and curling her lip of carmine, if he encountered her glance, one minute; and the next submitting to the grave rebuke of his eye, with as

much contrition as if he had the power to inflict penalties in case of contumacy.

Louis Moore had perhaps caught the fever, which for a few days laid him low, in one of the poor cottages of the district, which he, his lame pupil, and Mr. Hall, were in the habit of visiting together. At any rate he sickened, and after opposing to the malady a taciturn resistance for a day or two, was obliged to keep his chamber.

He lay tossing on his thorny bed one evening, Henry, who would not quit him, watching faithfully beside him, when a tap—too light to be that of Mrs. Gill or the housemaid—summoned young Sympson to the door.

"How is Mr. Moore to-night?" asked a low voice from the dark gallery.

"Come in and see him yourself."

"Is he asleep?"

"I wish he could sleep. Come and speak to him, Shirley."

"He would not like it."

But the speaker stepped in, and Henry, seeing her hesitate on the threshold, took her hand and drew her to the couch.

The shaded light showed Miss Keeldar's form but imperfectly, yet it revealed her in elegant attire. There was a party assembled below, including Sir Philip Nunnely; the ladies were now in the drawing-room, and their hostess had stolen from them to visit Henry's tutor. Her pure white dress, her fair

arms and neck, the trembling chainlet of gold circling her throat, and quivering on her breast, glistened strangely amid the obscurity of the sick-room. Her mien was chastened and pensive: she spoke gently.

"Mr. Moore, how are you to-night?"

"I have not been very ill, and am now better."

"I heard that you complained of thirst: I have brought you some grapes: can you taste one?"

"No: but I thank you for remembering me."

"Just one."

From the rich cluster that filled a small basket held in her hand, she severed a berry and offered it to his lips. He shook his head and turned aside his flushed face.

"But what then can I bring you instead? You have no wish for fruit; yet I see that your lips are parched. What beverage do you prefer?"

"Mrs. Gill supplies me with toast and water: I like it best."

Silence fell for some minutes.

"Do you suffer? Have you pain?"

"Very little."

"What made you ill?"

Silence.

"I wonder what caused this fever? To what do you attribute it?"

"Miasma perhaps—malaria. This is autumn, a season fertile in fevers."

"I hear you often visit the sick in Briarfield, and

Nunnely too, with Mr. Hall: you should be on your guard: temerity is not wise."

"That reminds me, Miss Keeldar, that perhaps you had better not enter this chamber, or come near this couch. I do not believe my illness is infectious: I scarcely fear (with a sort of smile) *you* will take it; but why should you run even the shadow of a risk? Leave me."

"Patience: I will go soon; but I should like to do something for you before I depart—any little service——"

"They will miss you below."

"No, the gentlemen are still at table."

"They will not linger long: Sir Philip Nunnely is no wine-bibber, and I hear him just now pass from the dining-room to the drawing-room."

"It is a servant."

"It is Sir Philip, I know his step."

"Your hearing is acute."

"It is never dull, and the sense seems sharpened at present. Sir Philip was here to tea last night. I heard you sing to him some song which he had brought you. I heard him, when he took his departure at eleven o'clock, call you out on to the pavement, to look at the evening star."

"You must be nervously sensitive."

"I heard him kiss your hand."

"Impossible!"

"No; my chamber is over the hall, the window just above the front door; the sash was a little

raised, for I felt feverish: you stood ten minutes with him on the steps: I heard your discourse, every word, and I heard the salute. Henry, give me some water."

"Let me give it him."

But he half rose to take the glass from young Sympson, and declined her attendance.

"And can I do nothing?"

"Nothing; for you cannot guarantee me a night's peaceful rest, and it is all I at present want."

"You do not sleep well?"

"Sleep has left me."

"Yet you said you were not very ill?"

"I am often sleepless when in high health."

"If I had power, I would lap you in the most placid slumber; quite deep and hushed, without a dream."

"Blank annihilation! I do not ask that."

"With dreams of all you most desire."

"Monstrous delusions! The sleep would be delirium, the waking, death."

"Your wishes are not so chimerical: you are no visionary?"

"Miss Keeldar, I suppose you think so; but my character is not, perhaps, quite as legible to you as a page of the last new novel might be."

"That is possible . . . . But this sleep: I *should* like to woo it to your pillow—to win for you its favour. If I took a book and sat down, and read some pages——? I can well spare half an hour."

"Thank you, but I will not detain you."

"I would read softly."

"It would not do. I am too feverish and excitable to bear a soft, cooing, vibrating voice close at my ear. You had better leave me."

"Well, I will go."

"And no good-night?"

"Yes, sir, yes, Mr. Moore, good-night." (Exit Shirley).

"Henry, my boy, go to bed now: it is time you had some repose."

"Sir, it would please me to watch at your bedside all night."

"Nothing less called for: I am getting better: there, go."

"Give me your blessing, sir."

"God bless you, my best pupil!"

"You never call me your dearest pupil!"

"No, nor ever shall."

Possibly Miss Keeldar resented her former teacher's rejection of her courtesy: it is certain she did not repeat the offer of it. Often as her light step traversed the gallery in the course of a day, it did not again pause at his door; nor did her "cooing, vibrating voice" disturb a second time the hush of the sick-room. A sick-room, indeed, it soon ceased to be; Mr. Moore's good constitution quickly triumphed over his indisposition: in a few days he shook it off, and resumed his duties as tutor.

That "Auld Langsyne" had still its authority both with preceptor and scholar, was proved by the manner in which he sometimes promptly passed the distance she usually maintained between them, and put down her high reserve with a firm, quiet hand.

One afternoon the Sympson family were gone out to take a carriage airing. Shirley, never sorry to snatch a reprieve from their society, had remained behind, detained by business, as she said. The business—a little letter-writing—was soon despatched after the yard-gates had closed on the carriage: Miss Keeldar betook herself to the garden.

It was a peaceful autumn day. The gilding of the Indian summer mellowed the pastures far and wide. The russet woods stood ripe to be stript, but were yet full of leaf. The purple of heath-bloom, faded but not withered, tinged the hills. The beck wandered down to the Hollow, through a silent district; no wind followed its course, or haunted its woody borders. Fieldhead gardens bore the seal of gentle decay. On the walks, swept that morning, yellow leaves had fluttered down again. Its time of flowers, and even of fruits, was over; but a scantling of apples enriched the trees; only a blossom here and there, expanded pale and delicate amidst a knot of faded leaves.

These single flowers—the last of their race—Shirley culled as she wandered thoughtfully amongst the beds. She was fastening into her girdle a hue-

less and scentless nosegay, when Henry Sympson called to her as he came limping from the house.

"Shirley, Mr. Moore would be glad to see you in the school-room and to hear you read a little French, if you have no more urgent occupation."

The messenger delivered his commission very simply, as if it were a mere matter of course.

"Did Mr. Moore tell you to say that?"

"Certainly: why not? And now, do come, and let us once more be as we were at Sympson-grove. We used to have pleasant school-hours in those days."

Miss Keeldar, perhaps, thought that circumstances were changed since then; however, she made no remark, but after a little reflection quietly followed Henry.

Entering the school-room, she inclined her head with a decent obeisance, as had been her wont in former times; she removed her bonnet, and hung it up beside Henry's cap. Louis Moore sat at his desk, turning the leaves of a book, open before him, and marking passages with his pencil; he just moved, in acknowledgment of her curtsey, but did not rise.

"You proposed to read to me a few nights ago," said he. "I could not hear you then; my attention is now at your service. A little renewed practice in French may not be unprofitable: your accent, I have observed, begins to rust."

"What book shall I take?"

"Here are the posthumous works of St. Pièrre,

Read a few pages of the 'Fragments de l'Amazone.'"

She accepted the chair which he had placed in readiness near his own—the volume lay on his desk—there was but one between them; her sweeping curls drooped so low as to hide the page from him.

"Put back your hair," he said.

For one moment, Shirley looked not quite certain whether she would obey the request or disregard it: a flicker of her eye beamed furtive on the professor's face; perhaps if he had been looking at her harshly or timidly, or if one undecided line had marked his countenance, she would have rebelled, and the lesson had ended there and then; but he was only awaiting her compliance—as calm as marble, and as cool. She threw the veil of tresses behind her ear. It was well her face owned an agreeable outline, and that her cheek possessed the polish and the roundness of early youth, or, thus robbed of a softening shade, the contours might have lost their grace. But what mattered that in the present society? Neither Calypso nor Eucharis cared to fascinate Mentor.

She began to read. The language had become strange to her tongue; it faltered: the lecture flowed unevenly, impeded by hurried breath, broken by Anglicised tones. She stopped.

"I can't do it. Read me a paragraph, if you please, Mr. Moore."

What *he* read, *she* repeated: she caught his accent in three minutes.

"Très bien," was the approving comment at the close of the piece.

"C'est presque le Français rattrapé, n'est-ce pas?"

"You could not write French as you once could, I daresay ——?"

"Oh! no. I should make strange work of my concords now."

"You could not compose the devoir of "La Première Femme Savante?"

"Do you still remember that rubbish?"

"Every line."

"I doubt you."

"I will engage to repeat it word for word."

"You would stop short at the first line."

"Challenge me to the experiment."

"I challenge you."

He proceeded to recite the following: he gave it in French, but we must translate, on pain of being unintelligible to some readers.

"And it came to pass when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose."

This was in the dawn of time, before the morning stars were set, and while they yet sang together.

The epoch is so remote, the mists and dewy gray of matin twilight veil it with so vague an obscurity, that all distinct feature of custom, all clear line of

locality, evade perception and baffle research. It must suffice to know that the world then existed; that men peopled it; that man's nature, with its passions, sympathies, pains, and pleasures, informed the planet and gave it soul.

A certain tribe colonized a certain spot on the globe; of what race this tribe—unknown: in what region that spot—untold. We usually think of the East when we refer to transactions of that date; but who shall declare that there was no life in the West, the South, the North? What is to disprove that this tribe, instead of camping under palm-groves in Asia, wandered beneath island oak-woods rooted in our own seas of Europe?

It is no sandy plain, nor any circumscribed and scant oasis I seem to realize. A forest valley, with rocky sides and brown profundity of shade, formed by tree crowding on tree, descends deep before me. Here, indeed, dwell human beings, but so few, and in alleys so thick branched and overarched, they are neither heard nor seen. Are they savage?—doubtless. They live by the crook and the bow: half shepherds, half hunters, their flocks wander wild as their prey. Are they happy?—no: not more happy than we are at this day. Are they good?—no: not better than ourselves: their nature is our nature,—human both. There is one in this tribe too often miserable,—a child bereaved of both parents. None cares for this child: she is fed sometimes, but oftener forgotten: a hut rarely receives her; the hollow

tree and chill cavern are her home. Forsaken, lost, and wandering, she lives more with the wild beast and bird than with her own kind. Hunger and cold are her comrades: sadness hovers over, and solitude besets her round. Unheeded and unvalued, she should die; but she both lives and grows: the green wilderness nurses her, and becomes to her a mother: feeds her on juicy berry, on saccharine root and nut.

There is something in the air of this clime which fosters life kindly: there must be something, too, in its dews, which heals with sovereign balm. Its gentle seasons exaggerate no passion, no sense; its temperature tends to harmony; its breezes, you would say, bring down from heaven the germ of pure thought, and purer feeling. Not grotesquely fantastic are the forms of cliff and foliage; not violently vivid the colouring of flower and bird: in all the grandeur of these forests there is repose; in all their freshness there is tenderness.

The gentle charm vouchsafed to flower and tree,—bestowed on deer and dove,—has not been denied to the human nursling. All solitary, she has sprung up straight and graceful. Nature cast her features in a fine mould; they have matured in their pure, accurate first lines, unaltered by the shocks of disease. No fierce dry blast has dealt rudely with the surface of her frame; no burning sun has crisped or withered her tresses: her form gleams ivory-white through the trees; her hair flows plenteous, long, and glossy; her eyes, not dazzled by vertical fires, beam in the

shade large and open, and full and dewy: above those eyes, when the breeze bares her forehead, shines an expanse fair and ample,—a clear, candid page, whereon knowledge, should knowledge ever come, might write a golden record. You see in the desolate young savage nothing vicious or vacant; she haunts the wood harmless and thoughtful: though of what one so untaught can think, it is not easy to divine.

On the evening of one summer day, before the Flood, being utterly alone—for she had lost all trace of her tribe, who had wandered leagues away, she knew not where,—she went up from the vale, to watch Day take leave and Night arrive. A crag, overspread by a tree, was her station: the oak-roots, turfed and mossed, gave a seat; the oak-boughs, thick-leaved, wove a canopy.

Slow and grand the Day withdrew, passing in purple fire, and parting to the farewell of a wild, low chorus from the woodlands. Then Night entered, quiet as death: the wind fell, the birds ceased singing. Now every nest held happy mates, and hart and hind slumbered blissfully safe in their lair.

The girl sat, her body still, her soul astir; occupied, however, rather in feeling than in thinking,—in wishing, than hoping,—in imagining, than projecting. She felt the world, the sky, the night, boundlessly mighty. Of all things, herself seemed to herself the centre,—a small, forgotten atom of life, a spark of soul, emitted inadvertent from the great creative

source, and now burning unmarked to waste in the heart of a black hollow. She asked, was she thus to burn out and perish, her living light doing no good, never seen, never needed,—a star in an else starless firmament,—which nor shepherd, nor wanderer, nor sage, nor priest, tracked as a guide, or read as a prophecy? Could this be, she demanded, when the flame of her intelligence burned so vivid; when her life beat so true, and real, and potent; when something within her stirred disquieted, and restlessly asserted a God-given strength, for which it insisted she should find exercise?

She gazed abroad on Heaven and Evening: Heaven and Evening gazed back on her. She bent down, searching bank, hill, river, spread dim below. All she questioned responded by oracles: she heard,—she was impressed; but she could not understand. Above her head she raised her hands joined together.

"Guidance—help—comfort—come!" was her cry.

There was no voice, nor any that answered.

She waited, kneeling, stedfastly looking up. Yonder sky was sealed: the solemn stars shone alien and remote.

At last, one over-stretched chord of her agony slacked: she thought Something above relented: she felt as if Something far round drew nigher: she heard as if Silence spoke. There was no language, no word, only a tone.

Again—a fine, full, lofty tone, a deep, soft sound, like a storm whispering, made twilight undulate.

Once more, profounder, nearer, clearer, it rolled harmonious.

Yet, again——a distinct voice passed between Heaven and Earth.

"Eva!"

If Eva were not this woman's name, she had none. She rose.

"Here am I."

"Eva!"

"Oh, Night! (it can be but Night that speaks) I am here!"

The voice, descending, reached Earth.

"Eva!"

"Lord!" she cried, "behold thine handmaid!"

She had her religion: all tribes held some creed.

"I come: a Comforter!"

"Lord, come quickly!"

The Evening flushed full of hope: the Air panted; the Moon—rising before—ascended large, but her light showed no shape.

"Lean towards me, Eva. Enter my arms; repose thus."

"Thus I lean, O Invisible, but felt! And what art thou?"

"Eva, I have brought a living draught from Heaven. Daughter of Man, drink of my cup!"

"I drink—it is as if sweetest dew visited my lips in a full current. My arid heart revives: my affliction is lightened: my strait and struggle are

gone. And the night changes! the wood, the hill, the moon, the wide sky—all change!"

"All change, and for ever. I take from thy vision, darkness: I loosen from thy faculties, fetters: I level in thy path, obstacles: I, with my presence, fill vacancy: I claim as mine the lost atom of life: I take to myself the spark of soul—burning, heretofore, forgotten!"

"Oh, take me! Oh, claim me! This is a god."

"This is a Son of God: one who feels himself in the portion of life that stirs you: he is suffered to reclaim his own, and so to foster and aid that it shall not perish hopeless."

"A Son of God! Am I indeed chosen?"

"Thou only in this land. I saw thee that thou wert fair: I knew thee that thou wert mine. To me it is given to rescue, to sustain, to cherish, mine own. Acknowledge in me that Seraph, on earth, named Genius."

"My glorious Bridegroom! True Dayspring from on high! All I would have, at last I possess. I receive a revelation. The dark hint, the obscure whisper, which have haunted me from childhood, are interpreted. Thou art He I sought. God-born, take me, thy bride!"

"Unhumbled, I can take what is mine. Did I not give from the altar the very flame which lit Eva's being? Come again into the heaven whence thou wert sent."

That Presence, invisible, but mighty, gathered her in like a lamb to the fold; that voice, soft but all pervading, vibrated through her heart like music. Her eye received no image; and yet a sense visited her vision and her brain as of the serenity of stainless air, the power of sovereign seas, the majesty of marching stars, the energy of colliding elements, the rooted endurance of hills wide-based, and, above all, as of the lustre of heroic beauty rushing victorious on the Night, vanquishing its shadows like a diviner Sun.

Such was the bridal-hour of Genius and Humanity. Who shall rehearse the tale of their after-union? Who shall depict its bliss and bale? Who shall tell how He, between whom and the Woman God put enmity, forged deadly plots to break the bond or defile its purity? Who shall record the long strife between Serpent and Seraph? How still the Father of Lies insinuated evil into good—pride into wisdom—grossness into glory—pain into bliss—poison into passion? How the "dreadless Angel" defied, resisted, and repelled? How, again and again, he refined the polluted cup, exalted the debased emotion, rectified the perverted impulse, detected the lurking venom, baffled the frontless temptation—purified, justified, watched, and withstood? How, by his patience, by his strength, by that unutterable excellence he held from God—his Origin—this faithful Seraph fought for Humanity a good fight through Time; and, when Time's course closed, and Death

was encountered at the end, barring with fleshless arm the portals of Eternity, how Genius still held close his dying bride, sustained her through the agony of the passage, bore her triumphant into his own home—Heaven; restored her, redeemed, to Jehovah—her Maker; and at last, before Angel and Archangel, crowned her with the crown of Immortality?

Who shall, of these things, write the chronicle?

"I never could correct that composition," observed Shirley, as Moore concluded. "Your censor-pencil scored it with condemnatory lines, whose signification I strove vainly to fathom."

She had taken a crayon from the tutor's desk, and was drawing little leaves, fragments of pillars, broken crosses, on the margin of the book.

"French may be half-forgotten, but the habits of the French lesson are retained, I see," said Louis: "my books would now, as erst, be unsafe with you. My newly-bound St. Pierre would soon be like my Racine: Miss Keeldar, her mark—traced on every page."

Shirley dropped her crayon as if it burned her fingers.

"Tell me what were the faults of that devoir?" she asked. "Were they grammatical errors, or did you object to the substance?"

"I never said that the lines I drew were indica-

tions of faults at all. You would have it that such was the case, and I refrained from contradiction."

"What else did they denote?"

"No matter now."

"Mr. Moore," cried Henry, "make Shirley repeat some of the pieces she used to say so well by heart."

"If I ask for any, it will be 'Le Cheval Dompté,'" said Moore, trimming with his penknife the pencil Miss Keeldar had worn to a stump.

She turned aside her head; the neck, the clear cheek, forsaken by their natural veil, were seen to flush warm.

"Ah! she has not forgotten, you see, sir," said Henry, exultant. "She knows how naughty she was."

A smile, which Shirley would not permit to expand, made her lip tremble; she bent her face, and hid it half with her arms half in her curls, which, as she stooped, fell loose again.

"Certainly, I was a rebel!" she answered.

"A rebel!" repeated Henry. "Yes: you and papa had quarrelled terribly, and you set both him and mama, and Mrs. Pryor, and everybody, at defiance: you said he had insulted you ——"

"He *had* insulted me," interposed Shirley.

"And you wanted to leave Sympson Grove directly. You packed your things up, and papa threw them out of your trunk; mama cried—Mrs. Pryor cried; they both stood wringing their hands

begging you to be patient, and you knelt on the floor, with your things and your upturned box before you, looking, Shirley—looking—why, in one of *your* passions. Your features, in such passions, are not distorted; they are fixed, but quite beautiful: you scarcely look angry, only resolute, and in a certain haste; yet one feels that, at such times, an obstacle cast across your path would be split as with lightning. Papa lost heart, and called Mr. Moore."

"Enough, Henry."

"No: it is not enough. I hardly know how Mr. Moore managed, except that I recollect he suggested to papa that agitation would bring on his gout; and then he spoke quietly to the ladies, and got them away; and afterwards he said to you, Miss Shirley, that it was of no use talking or lecturing now, but that the tea-things were just brought into the school-room, and he was very thirsty, and he would be glad if you would leave your packing for the present and come and make a cup of tea for him and me. You came: you would not talk at first; but soon you softened and grew cheerful. Mr. Moore began to tell us about the Continent, the war, and Buonaparte; subjects we were both fond of listening to. After tea he said we should neither of us leave him that evening: he would not let us stray out of his sight, lest we should again get into mischief. We sat one on each side of him: we were so happy. I never passed so pleasant an evening. The next day he gave you, missy, a lecture of an hour, and wound

it up by marking you a piece to learn in Bossuet as a punishment-lesson,—"Le Cheval Dompté." You learned it instead of packing up, Shirley. We heard no more of your running away. Mr. Moore used to teaze you on the subject for a year afterwards."

"She never said a lesson with greater spirit," subjoined Moore. "She then, for the first time, gave me the treat of hearing my native tongue spoken without accent by an English girl."

"She was as sweet as summer-cherries for a month afterwards," struck in Henry: "a good, hearty quarrel always left Shirley's temper better than it found it."

"You talk of me as if I were not present," observed Miss Keeldar, who had not yet lifted her face.

"Are you sure you *are* present?" asked Moore: "there have been moments since my arrival here, when I have been tempted to inquire of the lady of Fieldhead if she knew what had become of my former pupil?"

"She is here now."

"I see her, and humble enough; but I would neither advise Harry, nor others, to believe too implicitly in the humility which one moment can hide its blushing face like a modest little child, and the next lift it pale and lofty as a marble Juno."

"One man in times of old, it is said, imparted vitality to the statue he had chiselled. Others may have the contrary gift of turning life to stone."

Moore paused on this observation before he replied to it. His look, at once struck and meditative, said, "A strange phrase: what may it mean?" He turned it over in his mind, with thought deep and slow, as some German pondering metaphysics.

"You mean," he said, at last, "that some men inspire repugnance, and so chill the kind heart."

"Ingenious!" responded Shirley. "If the interpretation pleases you, you are welcome to hold it valid. *I* don't care."

And with that she raised her head, lofty in look, and statue-like in hue, as Louis had described it.

"Behold the metamorphosis!" he said: "scarce imagined ere it is realized: a lowly nymph develops to an inaccessible goddess. But Henry must not be disappointed of his recitation, and Olympia will deign to oblige him. Let us begin."

"I have forgotten the very first line."

"Which I have not. *My* memory, if a slow, is a retentive one. I acquire deliberately both knowledge and liking: the acquisition grows into my brain, and the sentiment into my breast; and it is not as the rapid springing produce which, having no root in itself, flourishes verdurous enough for a time, but too soon falls withered away. Attention, Henry! Miss Keeldar consents to favour you. "Voyez ce Cheval ardent et impétueux," so it commences."

Miss Keeldar did consent to make the effort; but she soon stopped.

"Unless I heard the whole repeated, I cannot continue it," she said.

"Yet it was quickly learned, 'soon gained, soon gone,'" moralized the tutor. He recited the passage deliberately, accurately, with slow, impressive emphasis.

Shirley, by degrees, inclined her ear as he went on. Her face, before turned from him, *re*turned towards him. When he ceased, she took the word up as if from his lips: she took his very tone; she seized his very accent; she delivered the periods as he had delivered them: she reproduced his manner, his pronunciation, his expression.

It was now her turn to petition.

"Recall 'Le Songe d'Athalie,'" she entreated, "and say it."

He said it for her; she took it from him; she found lively excitement in the pleasure of making his language her own: she asked for further indulgence; all the old school-pieces were revived, and with them Shirley's old school-days.

He had gone through some of the best passages of Racine and Corneille, and then had heard the echo of his own deep tones in the girl's voice, that modulated itself faithfully on his:—"Le Chène et le Roseau,"

recited, well recited by the tutor, and the pupil had animatedly availed herself of the lesson. Perhaps a simultaneous feeling seized them now, that their enthusiasm had kindled to a glow, which the slight

fuel of French poetry no longer sufficed to feed; perhaps they longed for a trunk of English oak to be thrown as a Yule log to the devouring flame. Moore observed,—

"And these are our best pieces! And we have nothing more dramatic, nervous, natural!"*

* Remember, reader, that the modern French school of poetry (such as it is) was yet unknown: Lamartine, and Victor Hugo, and Millevoye had their rhymes and their renown to make. Otherwise Louis Moore might partly have satisfied the longing of his strong lungs and large heart by demanding, in his deepest tone:

"Quels, sont ces bruits sourds?
Ecoutez vers l'onde
Cette voix profonde,
Qui pleure toujours,
Et qui toujours gronde.
Quoiqu'un son plus clair
Parfois l'interrompe,
Le vent de la mer
Souffle dans sa trompe."

Or he might have revelled in the rude vigour of Barbier:

"O Corse à cheveux plats, que la France était belle
Au grand soleil de Messidor!
C'était une cavale indomptable et rebelle
Sans frein d'acier ni rênes d'or.
Une jument sauvage, à la croupe rustique
Fumant encore du sang des rois,
Mais fière, et d'un pied libre heurtant le sol antique
Libre, pour la première fois.

"Jamais aucune main n'avait passé sur elle
Pour la flétrir et l'outrager,
Jamais ses larges flanes n'avaient porté la selle
Ni le harnais de l'étranger.
Tout son poil était vierge, et belle, vagabonde
L'œil haut, la croupe en mouvement,
Sur ses jarrets dressés, elle effrayait le monde
Du bruit de son hennissement."

And then he smiled and was silent. His whole nature seemed serenely alight: he stood on the hearth, leaning his elbow on the mantel-piece, musing not unblissfully.

Twilight was closing on the diminished autumn day: the school-room windows—darkened with creeping plants, from which no high October winds had as yet swept the sere foliage—admitted scarce a gleam of sky; but the fire gave light enough to talk by.

And now Louis Moore addressed his pupil in French; and she answered, at first, with laughing hesitation and in broken phrase: Moore encouraged while he corrected her; Henry joined in the lesson; the two scholars stood opposite the master, their arms round each other's waists: Tartar, who long since had craved and obtained admission, sat sagely in the centre of the rug, staring at the blaze which burst fitful from morsels of coal among the red cinders: the group were happy enough, but—

> "Pleasures are like poppies spread;
> You seize the flower—its bloom is shed."

The dull, rumbling sound of wheels was heard on the pavement in the yard.

"It is the carriage returned," said Shirley; "and dinner must be just ready, and I am not dressed."

A servant came in with Mr. Moore's candle and tea: for the tutor and his pupil usually dined at luncheon time.

"Mr. Sympson and the ladies are returned," she said, "and Sir Philip Nunnely is with them."

"How you did start, and how your hand trembled, Shirley!" said Henry, when the maid had closed the shutter and was gone. "But I know why—don't you, Mr. Moore? I know what papa intends. He is a little ugly man, that Sir Philip: I wish he had not come: I wish sisters and all of them had stayed at De Walden Hall to dine. Shirley should once more have made tea for you and me, Mr. Moore, and we would have had a happy evening of it."

Moore was locking up his desk, and putting away his St. Pierre,—"That was *your* plan—was it, my boy?"

"Don't you approve it, sir?"

"I approve nothing Utopian. Look Life in its iron face: stare Reality out of its brassy countenance. Make the tea, Henry; I shall be back in a minute."

He left the room: so did Shirley, by another door.

CHAPTER V.

PHŒBE.

SHIRLEY probably got on pleasantly with Sir Philip that evening, for the next morning she came down in one of her best moods.

"Who will take a walk with me?" she asked, after breakfast. "Isabella and Gertrude — will you?"

So rare was such an invitation from Miss Keeldar to her female cousins, that they hesitated before they accepted it. Their mama, however, signifying acquiescence in the project, they fetched their bonnets, and the trio set out.

It did not suit these three young persons to be thrown much together: Miss Keeldar liked the society of few ladies: indeed, she had a cordial pleasure in that of none except Mrs. Pryor and Caroline Helstone. She was civil, kind, attentive even to her cousins; but still she usually had little to say to them. In the sunny mood of this particular morning, she contrived to entertain even the Misses Sympson. Without deviating from her wonted rule of discussing with them only ordinary themes, she

imparted to these themes an extraordinary interest: the sparkle of her spirit glanced along her phrases.

What made her so joyous? All the cause must have been in herself. The day was not bright; it was dim—a pale, waning autumn day: the walks through the dun woods were damp; the atmosphere was heavy, the sky overcast; and yet, it seemed that in Shirley's heart lived all the light and azure of Italy, as all its fervour laughed in her gray English eye.

Some directions necessary to be given to her foreman, John, delayed her behind her cousins as they neared Fieldhead on their return; perhaps an interval of twenty minutes elapsed between her separation from them and her re-entrance into the house: in the mean time she had spoken to John, and then she had lingered in the lane at the gate. A summons to luncheon called her in: she excused herself from the meal, and went up-stairs.

"Is not Shirley coming to luncheon?" asked Isabella: "she said she was hungry."

An hour after, as she did not quit her chamber, one of her cousins went to seek her there. She was found sitting at the foot of the bed, her head resting on her hand: she looked quite pale, very thoughtful, almost sad.

"You are not ill?" was the question put.

"A little sick," replied Miss Keeldar.

Certainly, she was not a little changed from what she had been two hours before.

This change, accounted for only by those three words, explained no otherwise; this change—whencesoever springing, effected in a brief ten minutes—passed like no light summer cloud. She talked when she joined her friends at dinner, talked as usual; she remained with them during the evening; when again questioned respecting her health, she declared herself perfectly recovered: it had been a mere passing faintness; a momentary sensation, not worth a thought: yet it was felt there was a difference in Shirley.

The next day—the day—the week—the fortnight after—this new and peculiar shadow lingered on the countenance, in the manner of Miss Keeldar. A strange quietude settled over her look, her movements, her very voice. The alteration was not so marked as to court or permit frequent questioning, yet it *was* there, and it would not pass away: it hung over her like a cloud which no breeze could stir or disperse. Soon it became evident that to notice this change was to annoy her. First, she shrunk from remark; and, if persisted in, she, with her own peculiar hauteur, repelled it. "Was she ill?" The reply came with decision.

"I *am not*."

"Did anything weigh on her mind? Had anything happened to affect her spirits?"

She scornfully ridiculed the idea. "What did they mean by spirits? She had no spirits, black or white, blue or gray, to affect."

"Something must be the matter—she was so altered."

"She supposed she had a right to alter at her ease. She knew she was plainer: if it suited her to grow ugly, why need others fret themselves on the subject?"

"There must be a cause for the change—what was it?"

She peremptorily requested to be let alone.

Then she would make every effort to appear quite gay, and she seemed indignant at herself that she could not perfectly succeed: brief, self-spurning epithets burst from her lips when alone: "Fool! Coward!" she would term herself. "Poltroon!" she would say, "if you must tremble—tremble in secret! Quail where no eye sees you!"

"How dare you"—she would ask herself—"how dare you show your weakness and betray your imbeeile anxieties? Shake them off: rise above them: if you cannot do this, hide them."

And to hide them, she did her best. She once more became resolutely lively in company. When weary of effort and forced to relax, she sought solitude: not the solitude of her chamber—she refused to mope, shut up between four walls—but that wilder solitude which lies out of doors, and which she could chase, mounted on Zoë, her mare. She took long rides of half a day. Her uncle disapproved, but he dared not remonstrate: it was never pleasant to face Shirley's anger, even when she was healthy and

gay; but now that her face showed thin, and her large eye looked hollow, there was something in the darkening of that face and kindling of that eye which touched as well as alarmed.

To all comparative strangers who, unconscious of the alterations in her spirits, commented on the alteration in her looks, she had one reply:

"I am perfectly well: I have not an ailment."

And health, indeed, she must have had, to be able to bear the exposure to the weather she now encountered. Wet or fair, calm or storm, she took her daily ride over Stilbro' Moor, Tartar keeping up at her side, with his wolf-like gallop, long and untiring. Twice—three times, the eyes of gossips—those eyes which are everywhere: in the closet and on the hill-top—noticed that instead of turning on Rush-edge, the top-ridge of Stilbro' Moor, she rode forwards all the way to the town. Scouts were not wanted to mark her destination there; it was ascertained that she alighted at the door of one Mr. Pearson Hall, a solicitor, related to the Vicar of Nunnely: this gentleman and his ancestors had been the agents of the Keeldar family for generations back: some people affirmed that Miss Keeldar was become involved in business speculations connected with Hollow's Mill; that she had lost money and was constrained to mortgage her land: others conjectured that she was going to be married, and that the settlements were preparing.

Mr. Moore and Henry Sympson were together in the school-room: the tutor was waiting for a lesson which the pupil seemed busied in preparing.

"Henry, make haste! the afternoon is getting on."

"Is it, sir?"

"Certainly. Are you nearly ready with that lesson?"

"No."

"Not *nearly* ready?"

"I have not construed a line."

Mr. Moore looked up: the boy's tone was rather peculiar.

"The task presents no difficulties, Henry; or if it does, bring them to me: we will work together."

"Mr. Moore, I can do no work."

"My boy, you are ill."

"Sir, I am not worse in bodily health than usual, but my heart is full."

"Shut the book. Come hither, Harry. Come to the fireside."

Harry limped forward; his tutor placed him a chair: his lips were quivering, his eyes brimming. He laid his crutch on the floor, bent down his head, and wept.

"This distress is not occasioned by physical pain, you say, Harry? You have a grief:—tell it me."

"Sir, I have such a grief as I never had before. I wish it could be relieved in some way: I can hardly bear it."

"Who knows but, if we talk it over, we may

relieve it. What is the cause? Whom does it concern?"

"The cause, sir, is Shirley: it concerns Shirley."

"Does it? . . . . You think her changed?"

"All who know her think her changed: you, too, Mr. Moore."

"Not seriously,—no. I see no alteration but such as a favourable turn might repair in a few weeks: besides, her own word must go for something: she says she is well."

"There it is, sir: as long as she maintained she was well, I believed her. When I was sad out of her sight, I soon recovered spirits in her presence. Now . . . . ."

"Well, Harry, now . . . .? Has she said anything to you? You and she were together in the garden two hours this morning: I saw her talking, and you listening. Now, my dear Harry! if Miss Keeldar has said she is ill, and enjoined you to keep her secret, do not obey her. For her life's sake, avow everything. Speak, my boy!"

"*She* say she is ill! I believe, sir, if she were dying, she would smile, and aver 'Nothing ails me.'"

"What have you learned, then? What new circumstance . . . . .?"

"I have learned that she has just made her will."

"Made her will!"

The tutor and the pupil were silent.

"She told you that?" asked Moore, when some minutes had elapsed.

"She told me quite cheerfully: not as an ominous circumstance, which I felt it to be. She said I was the only person besides her solicitor, Pearson Hall, and Mr. Helstone and Mr. Yorke, who knew anything about it; and to me, she intimated, she wished specially to explain its provisions."

"Go on, Harry."

"'Because,' she said, looking down on me with her beautiful eyes,—oh! they *are* beautiful, Mr. Moore! I love them,—I love her! She is my star! Heaven must not claim her! She is lovely in this world, and fitted for this world. Shirley is not an angel; she is a woman, and she shall live with men. Seraphs shall not have her! Mr. Moore—if one of the 'sons of God,' with wings wide and bright as the sky, blue and sounding as the sea, having seen that she was fair, descended to claim her, his claim should be withstood—withstood by me—boy and cripple as I am!"

"Henry Sympson, go on, when I tell you."

"'Because,' she said, 'if I made no will, and died before you, Harry, all my property would go to you; and I do not intend that it should be so, though your father would like it. But you,' she said, 'will have his whole estate, which is large—larger than Fieldhead; your sisters will have nothing, so I have left them some money: though I do not love them, both together, half so much as I love one lock of your fair hair.' She said these words, and she called me her 'darling,' and let me kiss her. She went on

to tell me that she had left Caroline Helstone some money, too; that this manor-house, with its furniture and books, she had bequeathed to me, as she did not choose to take the old family place from her own blood; and that all the rest of her property, amounting to about twelve thousand pounds, exclusive of the legacies to my sisters and Miss Helstone, she had willed, not to me, seeing I was already rich, but to a good man, who would make the best use of it that any human being could do: a man, she said, that was both gentle and brave, strong and merciful; a man that might not profess to be pious, but she knew he had the secret of religion pure and undefiled before God. The spirit of love and peace was with him: he visited the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and kept himself unspotted from the world. Then she asked, 'Do you approve what I have done, Harry?' I could not answer,—my tears choked me, as they do now."

Mr. Moore allowed his pupil a moment to contend with and master his emotion: he then demanded:—

"What else did she say?"

"When I had signified my full consent to the conditions of her will, she told me I was a generous boy, and she was proud of me: 'And now,' she added, 'in case anything should happen, you will know what to say to Malice when she comes whispering hard things in your ear, insinuating that Shirley has wronged you; that she did not love you. You will know that I *did* love you, Harry; that no

sister could have loved you better, my own treasure.' Mr. Moore, sir, when I remember her voice, and recall her look, my heart beats as if it would break its strings. She *may* go to heaven before me—if God commands it, she *must*; but the rest of my life —and my life will not be long—I am glad of that now—shall be a straight, quick, thoughtful, journey in the path her step has pressed. I thought to enter the vault of the Keeldars before her: should it be otherwise, lay my coffin by Shirley's side."

Moore answered him with a weighty calm, that offered a strange contrast to the boy's perturbed enthusiasm.

"You are wrong, both of you—you harm each other. If youth once falls under the influence of a shadowy terror, it imagines there will never be full sunlight again—its first calamity it fancies will last a lifetime. What more did she say? Anything more?"

"We settled one or two family points between ourselves."

"I should rather like to know what ——?"

"But, Mr. Moore, you smile—*I* could not smile to see Shirley in such a mood."

"My boy, I am neither nervous, nor poetic, nor inexperienced. I see things as they are: you don't, as yet. Tell me these family points."

"Only, sir, she asked me whether I considered myself most of a Keeldar or a Sympson; and I answered I was Keeldar to the core of the heart,

and to the marrow of the bones. She said she was glad of it; for, besides her, I was the only Keeldar left in England, and then we agreed on some matters."

"Well?"

"Well, sir, that if I lived to inherit my father's estate, and her house, I was to take the name of Keeldar, and to make Fieldhead my residence. Henry Shirley Keeldar I said I would be called: and I will. Her name and her manor-house are ages old, and Sympson and Sympson-Grove are of yesterday."

"Come, you are neither of you going to heaven yet. I have the best hopes of you both, with your proud distinctions—a pair of half-fledged eaglets. Now, what is your inference from all you have told me? put it into words."

"That Shirley thinks she is going to die."

"She referred to her health?"

"Not once; but I assure you she is wasting: her hands are growing quite thin, and so is her cheek."

"Does she ever complain to your mother or sisters?"

"Never. She laughs at them when they question her. Mr. Moore, she is a strange being—so fair and girlish: not a man-like woman at all—not an Amazon, and yet lifting her head above both help and sympathy."

"Do you know where she is now, Henry? Is she in the house, or riding out?"

"Surely not out, sir—it rains fast."

"True: which, however, is no guarantee that she is not at this moment cantering over Rushedge. Of late she has never permitted weather to be a hinderance to her rides."

"You remember, Mr. Moore, how wet and stormy it was last Wednesday? so wild, indeed, that she would not permit Zoë to be saddled; yet the blast she thought too tempestuous for her mare, she herself faced on foot: that afternoon she walked nearly as far as Nunnely. I asked her, when she came in, if she was not afraid of taking cold. 'Not I,' she said, 'it would be too much good luck for me. I don't know, Harry; but the best thing that could happen to me would be to take a good cold and fever, and so pass off like other Christians.' She is reckless, you see, sir."

"Reckless, indeed! Go and find out where she is; and if you can get an opportunity of speaking to her, without attracting attention, request her to come here a minute."

"Yes, sir."

He snatched his crutch, and started up to go.

"Harry!"

He returned.

"Do not deliver the message formally. Word it as, in former days, you would have worded an ordinary summons to the school-room."

"I see, sir; she will be more likely to obey."

"And Harry——"

"Sir?"

"I will call you when I want you: till then, you are dispensed from lessons."

He departed. Mr. Moore, left alone, rose from his desk.

"I can be very cool and very supercilious with Henry," he said. "I can seem to make light of his apprehensions, and look down 'du haut de ma grandeur' on his youthful ardour. To *him* I can speak as if, in my eyes, they were both children. Let me see if I can keep up the same rôle with her. I have known the moment when I seemed about to forget it; when Confusion and Submission seemed about to crush me with their soft tyranny; when my tongue faltered, and I have almost let the mantle drop, and stood in her presence, not master—no—but something else. I trust I shall never so play the fool: it is well for a Sir Philip Nunnely to redden when he meets her eye: he may permit himself the indulgence of submission—he may even without disgrace suffer his hand to tremble when it touches hers; but if one of her farmers were to show himself susceptible and sentimental, he would merely prove his need of a strait waistcoat. So far I have always done very well. She has sat near me, and I have not shaken—more than my desk. I have encountered her looks and smiles like—why like a tutor, as I am. Her hand I never yet touched—never underwent that test. Her farmer or her footman I am not—no serf nor servant of hers have I ever been; but I am poor,

and it behoves me to look to my self-respect—not to compromise an inch of it. What did she mean by that allusion to the cold people who petrify flesh to marble? It pleased me—I hardly know why—I would not permit myself to inquire—I never do indulge in scrutiny either of her language or countenance; for if I did, I should sometimes forget Common Sense and believe in Romance. A strange, secret ecstacy steals through my veins at moments: I 'll not encourage—I 'll not remember it. I am resolved, as long as may be, to retain the right to say with Paul—' I am not mad, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.' "

He paused—listening.

" Will she come, or will she not come?" he inquired. " How will she take the message? naïvely or disdainfully? like a child or like a queen? Both characters are in her nature.

" If she comes, what shall I say to her? How account, firstly, for the freedom of the request? Shall I apologize to her? I could in all humility; but would an apology tend to place us in the positions we ought relatively to occupy in this matter? I *must* keep up the professor, otherwise—I hear a door—." He waited. Many minutes passed.

" She will refuse me. Henry is entreating her to come: she declines. My petition is presumption in her eyes: let her *only* come, I can teach her to the contrary. I would rather she were a little perverse—it will steel me. I prefer her, cuirassed in pride,

armed with a taunt. Her scorn startles me from my dreams—I stand up myself. A sarcasm from her eyes or lips puts strength into every nerve and sinew I have. Some step approaches, and not Henry's . . . ."

The door unclosed; Miss Keeldar came in. The message, it appeared, had found her at her needle: she brought her work in her hand. That day she had not been riding out: she had evidently passed it quietly. She wore her neat indoor dress and silk apron. This was no Thalestris from the fields, but a quiet domestic character from the fireside. Mr. Moore had her at advantage: he should have addressed her at once in solemn accents, and with rigid mien; perhaps he would, had she looked saucy; but her air never showed less of crânerie: a soft kind of youthful shyness depressed her eyelid and mantled on her cheek. The tutor stood silent.

She made a full stop between the door and his desk.

"Did you want me, sir?" she asked.

"I ventured, Miss Keeldar, to send for you—that is, to ask an interview of a few minutes."

She waited: she plyed her needle.

"Well sir (not lifting her eyes)—what about?"

"Be seated, first. The subject I would broach is one of some moment: perhaps I have hardly a right to approach it: it is possible I ought to frame an apology: it is possible no apology can excuse me. The liberty I have taken arises from a conversa-

tion with Henry. The boy is unhappy about your health: all your friends are unhappy on that subject. It is of your health I would speak."

"I am quite well," she said briefly.

"Yet changed."

"That matters to none but myself. We all change."

"Will you sit down? Formerly, Miss Keeldar, I had some influence with you—have I any now? May I feel that what I am saying is not accounted positive presumption?"

"Let me read some French, Mr. Moore, or I will even take a spell at the Latin grammar, and let us proclaim a truce to all sanitary discussions."

"No—no: it is time there were discussions."

"Discuss away, then, but do not choose me for your text; I am a healthy subject."

"Do you not think it wrong to affirm, and re-affirm, what is substantially untrue?"

"I say I am well: I have neither cough, pain, nor fever."

"Is there no equivocation in that assertion? Is it the direct truth?"

"The direct truth."

Louis Moore looked at her earnestly.

"I can myself," he said, "trace no indications of actual disease; but why, then, are you altered?"

"*Am* I altered?"

"We will try: we will seek a proof."

"How?"

"I ask, in the first place, do you sleep as you used to?"

"I do not: but it is not because I am ill."

"Have you the appetite you once had?"

"No: but it is not because I am ill."

"You remember this little ring fastened to my watch-chain? It was my mother's, and is too small to pass the joint of my little finger. You have many a time sportively purloined it: it fitted your fore-finger. Try now."

She permitted the test: the ring dropped from the wasted little hand. Louis picked it up, and re-attached it to the chain. An uneasy flush coloured his brow. Shirley again said:—

"It is not because I am ill."

"Not only have you lost sleep, appetite, and flesh," proceeded Moore, "but your spirits are always at ebb: besides, there is a nervous alarm in your eye—a nervous disquiet in your manner: these peculiarities were not formerly yours."

"Mr. Moore, we will pause here. You have exactly hit it: I am nervous. Now, talk of something else. What wet weather we have! Steady, pouring rain!"

"*You* nervous! Yes: and if Miss Keeldar is nervous, it is not without a cause. Let me reach it. Let me look nearer. The ailment is not physical: I have suspected that. It came in one moment. I know the day. I noticed the change. Your pain is mental."

"Not at all: it is nothing so dignified—merely nervous. Oh! dismiss the topic."

"When it is exhausted: not till then. Nervous alarms should always be communicated, that they may be dissipated. I wish I had the gift of persuasion, and could incline you to speak willingly. I believe confession, in your case, would be half-equivalent to cure."

"No," said Shirley, abruptly: "I wish that were at all probable; but I am afraid it is not."

She suspended her work a moment. She was now seated. Resting her elbow on the table, she leaned her head on her hand. Mr. Moore looked as if he felt he had at last gained some footing in this difficult path. She was serious, and in her wish was implied an important admission; after that, she could no longer affirm that *nothing* ailed her.

The tutor allowed her some minutes for repose and reflection, ere he returned to the charge: once, his lips moved to speak; but he thought better of it, and prolonged the pause. Shirley lifted her eye to his: had he betrayed injudicious emotion, perhaps obstinate persistence in silence would have been the result; but he looked calm, strong, trustworthy.

"I had better tell *you* than my aunt," she said, "or than my cousins, or my uncle: they would all make such a bustle—and it is that very bustle I dread; the alarm, the flurry, the éclat: in short, I never liked to be the centre of a small domestic whirlpool. You can bear a little shock—eh?"

"A great one, if necessary."

Not a muscle of the man's frame moved, and yet his large heart beat fast in his deep chest. What was she going to tell him? Was irremediable mischief done?

"Had I thought it right to go to you, I would never have made a secret of the matter one moment," she continued: "I would have told at once, and asked advice."

"Why was it not right to come to me?"

"It might be *right*—I do not mean that; but I could not do it. I seemed to have no title to trouble you: the mishap concerned me only—I wanted to keep it to myself, and people will not let me. I tell you, I hate to be an object of worrying attention, or a theme for village-gossip. Besides, it may pass away without result—God knows!"

Moore, though tortured with suspense, did not demand a quick explanation; he suffered neither gesture, glance, nor word, to betray impatience. His tranquillity tranquillized Shirley; his confidence reassured her.

"Great effects may spring from trivial causes," she remarked, as she loosened a bracelet from her wrist; then, unfastening her sleeve, and partially turning it up,—

"Look here, Mr. Moore."

She shewed a mark in her white arm; rather a deep, though healed up indentation: something between a burn and a cut.

"I would not shew that to any one in Briarfield but you, because you can take it quietly."

"Certainly there is nothing in the little mark to shock: its history will explain."

"Small as it is, it has taken my sleep away, and made me nervous, thin, and foolish; because, on account of that little mark, I am obliged to look forward to a possibility that has its terrors."

The sleeve was readjusted; the bracelet replaced.

"Do you know that you try me?" he said, smiling. "I am a patient sort of man, but my pulse is quickening."

"Whatever happens, you will befriend me, Mr Moore. You will give me the benefit of your self-possession, and not leave me at the mercy of agitated cowards?"

"I make no promise now. Tell me the tale, and then exact what pledge you will."

"It is a very short tale. I took a walk with Isabella and Gertrude one day, about three weeks ago. They reached home before me: I stayed behind to speak to John. After leaving him, I pleased myself with lingering in the lane, where all was very still and shady: I was tired of chattering to the girls, and in no hurry to rejoin them. As I stood leaning against the gate-pillar, thinking some very happy thoughts about my future life—for that morning I imagined that events were beginning to turn as I had long wished them to turn——"

"Ah! Nunnely had been with her the evening before!" thought Moore, parenthetically.

"I heard a panting sound; a dog came running up the lane. I know most of the dogs in this neighbourhood; it was Phœbe, one of Mr. Sam Wynne's pointers. The poor creature ran with her head down, her tongue hanging out; she looked as if bruised and beaten all over. I called her; I meant to coax her into the house, and give her some water and dinner; I felt sure she had been ill-used: Mr. Sam often flogs his pointers cruelly. She was too flurried to know me; and when I attempted to pat her head, she turned and snatched at my arm. She bit it so as to draw blood, then ran panting on. Directly after, Mr. Wynne's keeper came up, carrying a gun. He asked if I had seen a dog, I told him I had seen Phœbe.

"'You had better chain up Tartar, ma'am,' he said, 'and tell your people to keep within the house; I am after Phœbe to shoot her, and the groom is gone another way. She is raging mad.'

Mr. Moore leaned back in his chair, and folded his arms across his chest; Miss Keeldar resumed her square of silk canvass, and continued the creation of a wreath of Parmese violets.

"And you told no one, sought no help, no cure: you would not come to me?"

"I got as far as the school-room door; there my courage failed: I preferred to cushion the matter."

"Why? What can I demand better in this world than to be of use to you?"

"I had no claim."

"Monstrous! And you did nothing?"

"Yes: I walked straight into the laundry, where they are ironing most of the week, now that I have so many guests in the house. While the maid was busy crimping or starching, I took an Italian iron from the fire, and applied the light scarlet glowing tip to my arm: I bored it well in: it cauterized the little wound. Then I went up-stairs."

"I daresay you never once groaned?"

"I am sure I don't know. I was very miserable. Not firm or tranquil at all, I think: there was no calm in my mind."

"There was calm in your person. I remember listening the whole time we sat at luncheon, to hear if you moved in the room above: all was quiet."

"I was sitting at the foot of the bed, wishing Phœbe had not bitten me."

"And alone! You like solitude."

"Pardon me."

"You disdain sympathy."

"Do I, Mr. Moore?"

"With your powerful mind, you must feel independent of help, of advice, of society."

"So be it—since it pleases you."

She smiled. She pursued her embroidery carefully and quickly; but her eyelash twinkled, and then it glittered, and then a drop fell.

Mr. Moore leaned forward on his desk, moved his chair, altered his attitude.

"If it is not so," he asked, with a peculiar, mellow change in his voice, "how is it, then?"

"I don't know."

"You do know, but you won't speak: all must be locked up in yourself."

"Because it is not worth sharing."

"Because nobody can give the high price you require for your confidence. Nobody is rich enough to purchase it. Nobody has the honour, the intellect, the power you demand in your adviser. There is not a shoulder in England on which you would rest your hand for support—far less a bosom which you would permit to pillow your head. Of course you must live alone."

"I *can* live alone, if need be. But the question is not how to live—but how to die alone. That strikes me in a more grisly light."

"You apprehend the effects of the virus ——? You anticipate an indefinitely threatening, dreadful doom ——?"

She bowed.

"You are very nervous and womanish."

"You complimented me two minutes since on my powerful mind."

"You are very womanish. If the whole affair were coolly examined and discussed, I feel assured it would turn out that there is no danger of your dying at all."

"Amen! I am very willing to live, if it please God. I have felt life sweet."

"How can it be otherwise than sweet with your endowments and nature? Do you truly expect that you will be seized with hydrophobia, and die raving mad?"

"I *expect* it, and have *feared* it. Just now, I fear nothing."

"Nor do I, on your account. I doubt whether the smallest particle of virus mingled with your blood: and if it did, let me assure you that—young, healthy, faultlessly sound as you are—no harm will ensue. For the rest, I shall inquire whether the dog was really mad. I hold she was not mad."

"Tell nobody that she bit me."

"Why should I, when I believe the bite innocuous as a cut of this penknife? Make yourself easy: *I* am easy, though I value your life as much as I do my own chance of happiness in eternity. Look up."

"Why, Mr. Moore?"

"I wish to see if you are cheered. Put your work down: raise your head."

"There ——"

"Look at me. Thank you! And is the cloud broken?"

"I fear nothing."

"Is your mind restored to its own natural sunny clime?"

"I am very content: but I want your promise."

"Dictate."

"You know, in case the worst I *have* feared should happen, they will smother me. You need not smile: they will—they always do. My uncle will be full of horror, weakness, precipitation; and that is the only expedient which will suggest itself to him. Nobody in the house will be self-possessed but you: now promise to befriend me—to keep Mr. Sympson away from me—not to let Henry come near, lest I should hurt him. Mind—*mind* that you take care of yourself, too: but I shall not injure you, I know I shall not. Lock the chamber-door against the surgeons—turn them out, if they get in. Let neither the young nor the old Mac Turk lay a finger on me; nor Mr. Graves, their colleague; and, lastly, if I give trouble, with your own hand administer to me a strong narcotic: such a sure dose of laudanum as shall leave no mistake. *Promise to do this.*"

Moore left his desk, and permitted himself the recreation of one or two turns through the room. Stopping behind Shirley's chair, he bent over her, and said, in a low, emphatic voice,—

"I promise all you ask—without comment, without reservation."

"If female help is needed, call in my housekeeper, Mrs. Gill: let her lay me out, if I die. She is attached to me. She wronged me again and again, and again and again I forgave her. She now loves me, and would not defraud me of a pin: confidence

has made her honest; forbearance has made her kindhearted. At this day, I can trust both her integrity, her courage, and her affection. Call her; but keep my good aunt and my timid cousins away. Once more, promise."

"I promise."

"That is good in you," she said, looking up at him as he bent above her, and smiling.

"Is it good? Does it comfort?"

"Very much."

"I will be with you—I and Mrs. Gill only—in any, in every extremity where calm and fidelity are needed. No rash or coward hand shall meddle."

"Yet you think me childish?"

"I do."

"Ah! you despise me."

"Do we despise children?"

"In fact, I am neither so strong, nor have I such pride in my strength as people think, Mr. Moore; nor am I so regardless of sympathy; but when I have any grief, I fear to impart it to those I love, lest it should pain them; and to those whom I view with indifference, I cannot condescend to complain. After all, you should not taunt me with being childish; for if you were as unhappy as I have been for the last three weeks, you too would want some friend."

"We all want a friend, do we not?"

"All of us that have anything good in our natures."

"Well, you have Caroline Helstone."

"Yes. . . . . And you have Mr. Hall.

"Yes. . . . . Mrs. Pryor is a wise, good woman: she can counsel you when you need counsel."

"For your part, you have your brother Robert."

"For any right-hand defections, there is the Rev. Matthewson Helstone, M.A., to lean upon; for any left-hand fallings off, there is Hiram Yorke, Esq. Both elders pay you homage."

"I never saw Mrs. Yorke so motherly to any young man as she is to you. I don't know how you have won her heart; but she is more tender to you than she is to her own sons. You have, besides, your sister, Hortense."

"It appears, we are both well provided."

"It appears so."

"How thankful we ought to be!"

"Yes."

"How contented!"

"Yes."

"For my part, I am almost contented just now, and very thankful. Gratitude is a divine emotion: it fills the heart, but not to bursting: it warms it, but not to fever. I like to taste leisurely of bliss: devoured in haste, I do not know its flavour."

Still leaning on the back of Miss Keeldar's chair, Moore watched the rapid motion of her fingers, as the green and purple garland grew beneath them. After a prolonged pause, he again asked,—

"Is the shadow *quite* gone?"

"Wholly. As I *was* two hours since, and as I *am* now, are two different states of existence. I believe, Mr. Moore, griefs and fears nursed in silence grow like Titan infants."

"You will cherish such feelings no more in silence?"

"Not if I dare speak."

"In using the word '*dare*,' to whom do you allude?"

"To you."

"How is it applicable to me?"

"On account of your austerity and shyness."

"Why am I austere and shy?"

"Because you are proud."

"Why am I proud?"

"I should like to know: will you be good enough to tell me?"

"Perhaps, because I am poor, for one reason: poverty and pride often go together."

"That is such a nice reason: I should be charmed to discover another that would pair with it. Mate that turtle, Mr. Moore."

"Immediately. What do you think of marrying to sober Poverty many-tinted Caprice?"

"Are you capricious?"

"*You* are."

"A libel. I am steady as a rock: fixed as the Polar Star."

"I look out at some early hour of the day, and see a fine, perfect rainbow, bright with promise,

gloriously spanning the beclouded welkin of life. An hour afterwards I look again—half the arch is gone, and the rest is faded. Still later, the stern sky denies that it ever wore so benign a symbol of hope."

"Well, Mr. Moore, you should contend against these changeful humours: they are your besetting sin. One never knows where to have you."

"Miss Keeldar, I had once—for two years—a pupil who grew very dear to me. Henry is dear, but she was dearer. Henry never gives me trouble; she—well—she did. I think she vexed me twenty-three hours out of the twenty-four ——"

"She was never with you above three hours, or at the most six at a time."

"She sometimes spilled the draught from my cup, and stole the food from my plate; and when she had kept me unfed for a day (and that did not suit me, for I am a man accustomed to take my meals with reasonable relish, and to ascribe due importance to the rational enjoyment of creature comforts) ——"

"I know you do. I can tell what sort of dinners you like best—perfectly well. I know precisely the dishes you prefer ——"

"She robbed these dishes of flavour, and made a fool of me besides. I like to sleep well. In my quiet days, when I was my own man, I never quarrelled with the night for being long, nor cursed my bed for its thorns. She changed all this."

"Mr. Moore——"

"And having taken from me peace of mind, and ease of life, she took from me herself; quite coolly,—just as if, when she was gone, the world would be all the same to me. I knew I should see her again at some time. At the end of two years, it fell out that we encountered again under her own roof, where she was mistress. How do you think she bore herself towards me, Miss Keeldar?"

"Like one who had profited well by lessons learned from yourself."

"She received me haughtily: she meted out a wide space between us, and kept me aloof by the reserved gesture, the rare and alienated glance, the word calmly civil."

"She was an excellent pupil! Having seen you distant, she at once learned to withdraw. Pray, sir, admire, in her hauteur, a careful improvement on your own coolness."

"Conscience, and honour, and the most despotic necessity, dragged me apart from her, and kept me sundered with ponderous fetters. She was free: she might have been clement."

"Never free to compromise her self-respect: to seek where she had been shunned."

"Then she was inconsistent: she tantalized as before. When I thought I had made up my mind to seeing in her only a lofty stranger, she would suddenly show me such a glimpse of loving simplicity —she would warm me with such a beam of reviving sympathy, she would gladden an hour with converse

so gentle, gay, and kindly—that I could no more shut my heart on her image, than I could close that door against her presence. Explain why she distressed me so."

"She could not bear to be quite outcast; and then she would sometimes get a notion into her head, on a cold, wet day, that the school-room was no cheerful place, and feel it incumbent on her to go and see if you and Henry kept up a good fire; and once there, she liked to stay."

"But she should not be changeful: if she came at all, she should come oftener."

"There is such a thing as intrusion."

"To-morrow, you will not be as you are to-day."

"I don't know. Will you?"

"I am not mad, most noble Berenice! We may give one day to dreaming, but the next we must awake; and I shall awake, to purpose, the morning you are married to Sir Philip Nunnely. The fire shines on you and me, and shows us very clearly in the glass, Miss Keeldar; and I have been gazing on the picture all the time I have been talking. Look up! What a difference between your head and mine!—I look old for thirty!"

"You are so grave; you have such a square brow; and your face is sallow. I never regard you as a young man, nor as Robert's junior."

"Don't you? I thought not. Imagine Robert's clear-cut, handsome face looking over my shoulder.

Does not the apparition make vividly manifest the obtuse mould of my heavy traits? There!" (he started) "I have been expecting that wire to vibrate this last half hour."

The dinner-bell rang, and Shirley rose.

"Mr. Moore," she said, as she gathered up her silks, "have you heard from your brother lately? Do you know what he means by staying in town so long? Does he talk of returning?"

"He talks of returning; but what has caused his long absence I cannot tell. To speak the truth, I thought none in Yorkshire knew better than yourself why he was reluctant to come home."

A crimson shadow passed across Miss Keeldar's cheek.

"Write to him, and urge him to come," she said. "I know there has been no impolicy in protracting his absence thus far: it is good to let the mill stand, while trade is so bad; but he must not abandon the county."

"I am aware," said Louis, "that he had an interview with you the evening before he left, and I saw him quit Fieldhead afterwards. I read his countenance, or *tried* to read it. He turned from me. I divined that he would be long away. Some fine slight fingers have a wondrous knack at pulverizing a man's brittle pride. I suppose Robert put too much trust in his manly beauty and native gentlemanhood. Those are better off who, being destitute of advantage, cannot cherish

delusion. But I will write, and say you advise his return."

"Do not say *I* advise his return, but that his return is advisable."

The second bell rang, and Miss Keeldar obeyed its call.

CHAPTER VI.

LOUIS MOORE.

LOUIS MOORE was used to a quiet life: being a quiet man, he endured it better than most men would: having a large world of his own in his own head and heart, he tolerated confinement to a small, still corner of the real world very patiently.

How hushed is Fieldhead this evening! All but Moore — Miss Keeldar, the whole family of the Sympsons, even Henry—are gone to Nunnely. Sir Philip would have them come: he wished to make them acquainted with his mother and sisters, who are now at the Priory. Kind gentleman as the Baronet is, he asked the Tutor too; but the Tutor would much sooner have made an appointment with the ghost of the Earl of Huntingdon, to meet him, and a shadowy ring of his merry men, under the canopy of the thickest, blackest, oldest oak in Nunnely Forest. Yes, he would rather have appointed tryste with a phantom abbess, or mist-pale nun, among the wet and weedy relics of that ruined sanctuary of theirs, mouldering in the core of the wood. Louis Moore

longs to have something near him to-night: but not the boy-baronet, nor his benevolent but stern mother, nor his patrician sisters, nor one soul of the Sympsons.

This night is not calm: the equinox still struggles in its storms. The wild rains of the day are abated: the great single cloud disparts and rolls away from heaven, not passing and leaving a sea all sapphire, but tossed buoyant before a continued, long-sounding, high-rushing moonlight tempest. The Moon reigns glorious, glad of the gale; as glad as if she gave herself to his fierce caress with love. No Endymion will watch for his goddess to-night: there are no flocks out on the mountains; and it is well, for to-night she welcomes Æolus.

Moore—sitting in the school-room—heard the storm roar round the other gable, and along the hall-front: this end was sheltered. He wanted no shelter; he desired no subdued sounds, or screened position.

"All the parlours are empty," said he: "I am sick at heart of this cell."

He left it, and went where the casements, larger and freer than the branch-screened lattice of his own apartment, admitted unimpeded the dark-blue, the silver-fleeced, the stirring and sweeping vision of the autumn night-sky. He carried no candle: unneeded was lamp or fire: the broad and clear, though cloud-crossed and fluctuating beam of the moon shone on every floor and wall.

Moore wanders through all the rooms: he seems

following a phantom from parlour to parlour. In the oak-room he stops; this is not chill, and polished, and fireless like the salon: the hearth is hot and ruddy; the cinders tinkle in the intense heat of their clear glow; near the rug is a little work-table, a desk upon it, a chair near it.

Does the vision Moore has tracked occupy that chair? You would think so, could you see him standing before it. There is as much interest now in his eye, and as much significance in his face, as if in this household solitude he had found a living companion, and was going to speak to it.

He makes discoveries. A bag, a small satin bag, hangs on the chair-back. The desk is open, the keys are in the lock; a pretty seal, a silver pen, a crimson berry or two of ripe fruit on a green leaf, a small, clean, delicate glove—these trifles at once decorate and disarrange the stand they strew. Order forbids details in a picture: she puts them tidily away; but details give charm.

Moore spoke.

"Her mark," he said: "here she has been—careless, attractive thing!—called away in haste, doubtless, and forgetting to return and put all to rights. Why does she leave fascination in her foot-prints? Whence did she acquire the gift to be heedless, and never offend? There is always something to chide in her, and the reprimand never settles in displeasure on the heart; but, for her lover or her husband, when it had trickled a while in words, would natu-

rally melt from his lips in a kiss. Better pass half an hour in remonstrating with her, than a day in admiring or praising any other woman alive. Am I muttering?—soliloquizing? Stop that."

He did stop it. He stood thinking; and then he made an arrangement for his evening's comfort.

He dropped the curtains over the broad window and regal moon: he shut out Sovereign and Court and Starry Armies; he added fuel to the hot but fast-wasting fire; he lit a candle, of which there were a pair on the table; he placed another chair opposite that near the work-stand, and then he sat down. His next movement was to take from his pocket a small, thick book of blank paper; to produce a pencil; and to begin to write in a cramp, compact hand. Come near, by all means, Reader: do not be shy: stoop over his shoulder fearlessly, and read as he scribbles.

"It is nine o'clock; the carriage will not return before eleven, I am certain. Freedom is mine till then: till then, I may occupy her room; sit opposite her chair; rest my elbow on her table; have her little mementos about me.

"I used rather to like Solitude—to fancy her a somewhat quiet and serious, yet fair nymph; an Oread, descending to me from lone mountain-passes; something of the blue mist of hills in her array, and of their chill breeze in her breath—but much, also, of their solemn beauty in her mien. I once could court her serenely, and imagine my heart easier when I held her to it—all mute, but majestic.

"Since that day I called S. to me in the school-room, and she came and sat so near my side; since she opened the trouble of her mind to me—asked my protection—appealed to my strength: since that hour, I abhor Solitude. Cold abstraction—fleshless skeleton—daughter—mother—and mate of Death!

"It is pleasant to write about what is near and dear as the core of my heart: none can deprive me of this little book, and, through this pencil, I can say to it what I will—say what I dare utter to nothing living—say what I dare not *think* aloud.

"We have scarcely encountered each other since that evening. Once, when I was alone in the drawing-room, seeking a book of Henry's, she entered, dressed for a concert at Stilbro'. Shyness—*her* shyness, not *mine*—drew a silver veil between us. Much cant have I heard and read about 'maiden modesty;' but, properly used, and not hackneyed, the words are good and appropriate words: as she passed to the window, after tacitly but gracefully recognising me, I could call her nothing in my own mind save 'stainless virgin:' to my perception, a delicate splendour robed her, and the modesty of girlhood was her halo. I may be the most fatuitous, as I am one of the plainest, of men; but, in truth, that shyness of hers touched me exquisitely: it flattered my finest sensations. I looked a stupid block, I dare say: I was alive with a life of Paradise, as she turned *her* glance from *my* glance, and softly averted her head to hide the suffusion of her cheek.

"I know this is the talk of a dreamer—of a rapt, romantic lunatic: I *do* dream: I *will* dream now and then; and if she has inspired romance into my prosaic composition, how can I help it?

"What a child she is sometimes! What an unsophisticated, untaught thing! I see her now, looking up into my face, and entreating me to prevent them from smothering her, and to be sure and give her a strong narcotic: I see her confessing that she was not so self-sufficing, so independent of sympathy, as people thought: I see the secret tear drop quietly from her eyelash. She said I thought her childish—and I did. She imagined I despised her.—Despised her! it was unutterably sweet to feel myself at once near her and above her: to be conscious of a natural right and power to sustain her, as a husband should sustain his wife.

"I worship her perfections; but it is her faults, or at least her foibles, that bring her near to me—that nestle her to my heart—that fold her about with my love—and that for a most selfish, but deeply-natural reason: these faults are the steps by which I mount to ascendancy over her. If she rose a trimmed, artificial mound, without inequality, what vantage would she offer the foot? It is the natural hill, with its mossy breaks and hollows, whose slope invites ascent—whose summit it is pleasure to gain.

"To leave metaphor. It delights my eye to look on her: she suits me: if I were a king, and she the housemaid that swept my palace-stairs—across all

that space between us—my eye would recognise her qualities; a true pulse would beat for her in my heart, though an unspanned gulf made acquaintance impossible. If I were a gentleman, and she waited on me as a servant, I could not help liking that Shirley. Take from her her education—take her ornaments, her sumptuous dress—all extrinsic advantages—take all grace, but such as the symmetry of her form renders inevitable; present her to me at a cottage-door, in a stuff gown; let her offer me there a draught of water, with that smile—with that warm good-will with which she now dispenses manorial hospitality—I should like her. I should wish to stay an hour: I should linger to talk with that rustic. I should not feel as I *now* do: I should find in her nothing divine; but whenever I met the young peasant, it would be with pleasure—whenever I left her, it would be with regret.

"How culpably careless in her to leave her desk open, where I know she has money! In the lock hang the keys of all her repositories, of her very jewel-casket. There is a purse in that little satin bag: I see the tassel of silver beads hanging out. That spectacle would provoke my brother Robert: all her little failings would, I know, be a source of irritation to him; if they vex me, it is a most pleasurable vexation: I delight to find her at fault, and were I always resident with her, I am aware she would be no niggard in thus ministering to my enjoyment. She would just give me something to do;

to rectify: a theme for my tutor-lectures. I never lecture Henry; never feel disposed to do so: if he does wrong,—and that is very seldom, dear excellent lad!—a word suffices: often I do no more than shake my head; but the moment her 'minois mutin' meets my eye, expostulatory words crowd to my lips: from a taciturn man, I believe she would transform me into a talker. Whence comes the delight I take in that talk? It puzzles myself sometimes: the more crâne, malin, taquin is her mood, consequently the clearer occasion she gives me for disapprobation, the more I seek her, the better I like her. She is never wilder than when equipped in her habit and hat; never less manageable than when she and Zoë come in fiery from a race with the wind on the hills; and I confess it—to this mute page I may confess it—I have waited an hour in the court, for the chance of witnessing her return, and for the dearer chance of receiving her in my arms from the saddle. I have noticed (again, it is to this page only I would make the remark) that she will never permit any man but myself to render her that assistance. I have seen her politely decline Sir Philip Nunnely's aid: she is always mighty gentle with her young baronet; mighty tender of his feelings, forsooth, and of his very thin-skinned amour-propre: I have marked her haughtily reject Sam Wynne's. Now I know—my heart knows it, for it has felt it—that she resigns herself to me unreluctantly: is she conscious how my strength rejoices to serve her? I myself am not her slave,—I

declare it,—but my faculties gather to her beauty, like the genii to the glisten of the Lamp. All my knowledge, all my prudence, all my calm, and all my power, stand in her presence humbly waiting a task. How glad they are when a mandate comes! What joy they take in the toil she assigns! Does she know it?

"I have called her careless: it is remarkable that her carelessness never compromises her refinement; indeed, through this very loophole of character, the reality, depth, genuineness of that refinement may be ascertained: a whole garment sometimes covers meagreness and malformation; through a rent sleeve, a fair, round arm may be revealed. I have seen and handled many of her possessions, because they are frequently astray. I never saw anything that did not proclaim the lady: nothing sordid, nothing soiled; in one sense she is as scrupulous as, in another, she is unthinking: as a peasant girl, she would go ever trim and cleanly. Look at the pure kid of this little glove,—at the fresh, unsullied satin of the bag.

"What a difference there is between S. and that pearl C. H.! Caroline, I fancy, is the soul of conscientious punctuality and nice exactitude; she would precisely suit the domestic habits of a certain fastidious kinsman of mine: so delicate, dexterous, quaint, quick, quiet; all done to a minute, all arranged to a strawbreadth: she would suit Robert; but what could *I* do with anything so nearly faultless? *She* is my equal; poor as myself; she is certainly pretty: a little

Raffaelle head hers; Raffaelle in feature, quite English in expression: all insular grace and purity; but where is there anything to alter, anything to endure, anything to reprimand, to be anxious about? There she is, a lily of the valley, untinted, needing no tint. What change could improve her? What pencil dare to paint? *My* sweetheart, if I ever have one, must bear nearer affinity to the rose: a sweet, lively delight guarded with prickly peril. *My* wife, if I ever marry, must stir my great frame with a sting now and then: she must furnish use to her husband's vast mass of patience. I was not made so enduring to be mated with a lamb: I should find more congenial responsibility in the charge of a young lioness or leopardess. I like few things sweet, but what are likewise pungent; few things bright, but what are likewise hot. I like the summer-day, whose sun makes fruit blush and corn blanch. Beauty is never so beautiful as when, if I teaze it, it wreathes back on me with spirit. Fascination is never so imperial as when, roused and half-ireful, she threatens transformation to fierceness. I fear I should tire of the mute, monotonous innocence of the lamb; I should ere long feel as burdensome the nestling dove which never stirred in my bosom; but my patience would exult in stilling the flutterings and training the energies of the restless merlin. In managing the wild instincts of the searce manageable 'bête fauve,' my powers would revel.

"Oh, my pupil! Oh, Peri! too mutinous for

heaven—too innocent for hell! never shall I do more than see, and worship, and wish for thee. Alas! knowing I could make thee happy, will it be my doom to see thee possessed by those who have not that power?

"However kindly the hand—if it is feeble, it cannot bend Shirley; and she must be bent: it cannot curb her, and she must be curbed.

"Beware! Sir Philip Nunnely! I never see you walking or sitting at her side, and observe her lips compressed, or her brow knit, in resolute endurance of some trait of your character which she neither admires nor likes; in determined toleration of some weakness she believes atoned for by a virtue, but which annoys her, despite that belief: I never mark the grave glow of her face, the unsmiling sparkle of her eye, the slight recoil of her whole frame when you draw a little too near, and gaze a little too expressively, and whisper a little too warmly: I never witness these things, but I think of the fable of Semele reversed.

"It is not the daughter of Cadmus I see; nor do I realize her fatal longing to look on Jove in the majesty of his godhead. It is a priest of Juno that stands before me, watching late and lone at a shrine in an Argive temple. For years of solitary ministry, he has lived on dreams: there is divine madness upon him: he loves the idol he serves, and prays day and night that his frenzy may be fed, and that the Ox-eyed may smile on her votary. She has heard;

she will be propitious. All Argos slumbers. The doors of the temple are shut; the priest waits at the altar.

"A shock of heaven and earth is felt—not by the slumbering city; only by that lonely watcher, brave and unshaken in his fanaticism. In the midst of silence, with no preluding sound, he is wrapt in sudden light. Through the roof—through the rent, wide-yawning, vast, white-blazing blue of heaven above, pours a wondrous descent—dread as the down-rushing of stars. He has, what he asked: withdraw—forbear to look—I am blinded. I hear in that fane an unspeakable sound—would that I could not hear it! I see an insufferable glory burning terribly between the pillars. Gods be merciful, and quench it!

"A pious Argive enters to make an early offering n the cool dawn of morning. There was thunder in the night: the bolt felt here. The shrine is shivered: the marble pavement round, split and blackened. Saturnia's statue rises chaste, grand, untouched: at her feet, piled ashes lie pale. No priest remains: he who watched will be seen no more.

* * * * *

"There is the carriage! Let me lock up the desk and pocket the keys: she will be seeking them to-morrow: she will have to come to me. I hear her—

"'Mr. Moore, have you seen my keys?'

"So she will say in her clear voice, speaking with reluctance, looking ashamed, conscious that this is the twentieth time of asking. I will tantalize her: keep her with me, expecting, doubting; and when I *do* restore them, it shall not be without a lecture. Here is the bag, too, and the purse; the glove—pen—seal. She shall wring them all out of me slowly and separately: only by confession, penitence, entreaty. I never can touch her hand, or a ringlet of her head, or a ribbon of her dress, but I will make privileges for myself: every feature of her face, her bright eyes, her lips, shall go through each change they know, for my pleasure: display each exquisite variety of glance and curve, to delight—thrill—perhaps, more hopelessly to enchain me. If I *must* be her slave, I will not lose my freedom for nothing."

He locked the desk, pocketed all the property, and went.

CHAPTER VII.

RUSHEDGE, A CONFESSIONAL.

EVERYBODY said it was high time for Mr. Moore to return home: all Briarfield wondered at his strange absence, and Whinbury and Nunnely brought each its separate contribution of amazement.

Was it known why he stayed away? Yes: it was known twenty—forty times over; there being, at least, forty plausible reasons adduced to account for the unaccountable circumstance. Business, it was not—*that* the gossips agreed: he had achieved the business on which he departed long ago: his four ringleaders he had soon scented out and run down; he had attended their trial, heard their conviction and sentence, and seen them safely shipped prior to transportation.

This was known at Briarfield: the newspapers had reported it: the "Stilbro' Courier" had given every particular, with amplifications. None applauded his perseverance or hailed his success; though the mill-owners were glad of it, trusting that the terrors of Law vindicated would henceforward paralyze the sinister valour of disaffection. Disaffection, however,

was still heard muttering to himself. He swore ominous oaths over the drugged beer of alehouses, and drank strange toasts in fiery British gin.

One report affirmed that Moore *dared* not come to Yorkshire: he knew his life was not worth an hour's purchase, if he did.

"I'll tell him that," said Mr. Yorke, when his foreman mentioned the rumour; "and if *that* does not bring him home full-gallop—nothing will."

Either that or some other motive prevailed, at last, to recall him. He announced to Joe Scott the day he should arrive at Stilbro', desiring his hackney to be sent to the "George" for his accommodation; and Joe Scott having informed Mr. Yorke, that gentleman made it in his way to meet him.

It was market-day: Moore arrived in time to take his usual place at the market dinner. As something of a stranger—and as a man of note and action—the assembled manufacturers received him with a certain distinction. Some—who in public would scarcely have dared to acknowledge his acquaintance, lest a little of the hate and vengeance laid up in store for him should perchance have fallen on them—in private hailed him as in some sort their champion. When the wine had circulated, their respect would have kindled to enthusiasm, had not Moore's unshaken nonchalance held it in a damp, low, smouldering state.

Mr. Yorke—the permanent president of these dinners—witnessed his young friend's bearing with exceeding complacency. If one thing could stir his temper or excite his contempt more than another, it

was to see a man befooled by flattery, or elate with popularity. If one thing smoothed, soothed, and charmed him especially, it was the spectacle of a public character incapable of relishing his publicity: *incapable*, I say; disdain would but have incensed—it was indifference that appeased his rough spirit.

Robert, leaning back in his chair, quiet and almost surly, while the clothiers and blanket-makers vaunted his prowess and rehearsed his deeds—many of them interspersing their flatteries with coarse invectives against the operative class—was a delectable sight for Mr. Yorke. His heart tingled with the pleasing conviction that these gross eulogiums shamed Moore deeply, and made him half scorn himself and his work. On abuse, on reproach, on calumny, it is easy to smile; but painful indeed is the panegyric of those we contemn. Often had Moore gazed with a brilliant countenance over howling crowds from a hostile hustings: he had breasted the storm of unpopularity with gallant bearing and soul elate; but he drooped his head under the half-bred tradesmen's praise, and shrank chagrined before their congratulations.

Yorke could not help asking him how he liked his supporters, and whether he did not think they did honour to his cause. "But it is a pity, lad," he added, "that you did not hang these four samples of the Unwashed. If you had managed *that* feat, the gentry here would have riven the horses out of the coach, yoked to a score of asses, and drawn you into Stilbro' like a conquering general."

Moore soon forsook the wine, broke from the party, and took the road. In less than five minutes

Mr. Yorke followed him: they rode out of Stilbro' together.

It was early to go home, but yet it was late in the day: the last ray of the sun had already faded from the cloud-edges, and the October night was casting over the moorlands the shadow of her approach.

Mr. Yorke—moderately exhilarated with his moderate libations, and not displeased to see young Moore again in Yorkshire, and to have him for his comrade during the long ride home—took the discourse much to himself. He touched briefly, but scoffingly on the trials and the conviction; he passed thence to the gossip of the neighbourhood, and, ere long, he attacked Moore on his own personal concerns.

"Bob, I believe you are worsted; and you deserve it. All was smooth. Fortune had fallen in love with you: she had decreed you the first prize in her wheel—twenty thousand pounds: she only required that you should hold your hand out and take it. And what did you do? You called for a horse and rode a-hunting to Warwickshire. Your sweetheart—Fortune, I mean—was perfectly indulgent. She said, 'I'll excuse him: he's young.' She waited like 'Patience on a monument,' till the chase was over, and the vermin-prey run down. She expected you would come back then and be a good lad: you might still have had her first prize.

"It capped her beyond expression, and me too, to find that, instead of thundering home in a break-neck gallop, and laying your assize-laurels at her feet, you coolly took coach up to London. What

you have done there, Satan knows: nothing in this world, I believe, but sat and sulked: your face was never lily-fair, but it is olive-green now. You 're not as bonnie as you were, man."

"And who is to have this prize you talk so much about?"

"Only a baronet: that is all. I have not a doubt in my own mind you've lost her: she will be Lady Nunnely before Christmas."

"Hem! Quite probable."

"But she need not to have been. Fool of a lad! I swear you might have had her!"

"By what token, Mr. Yorke?"

"By every token. By the light of her eyes, the red of her cheeks: red they grew when your name was mentioned, though of custom they are pale."

"My chance is quite over, I suppose?"

"It ought to be; but try: it is worth trying. I call this Sir Philip milk and water. And then he writes verses, they say—tags rhymes. *You* are above that, Bob, at all events."

"Would you advise me to propose, late as it is, Mr. Yorke? at the eleventh hour?"

"You can but make the experiment, Robert. If she has a fancy for you—and, on my conscience, I believe she has, or had—she will forgive much. But my lad, you are laughing: is it at me? You had better girn at your own perverseness. I see, however, you laugh at the wrong side of your mouth: you have as sour a look at this moment as one need wish to see."

"I have so quarrelled with myself, Yorke. I have so kicked against the pricks, and struggled in a strait waistcoat, and dislocated my wrists with wrenching them in handcuffs, and battered my hard head, by driving it against a harder wall."

"Ha! I'm glad to hear that. Sharp exercise yon'! I hope it has done you good; ta'en some of the self-conceit out of you?"

"Self-conceit! What is it? Self-respect, self-tolerance, even, what are they? Do you sell the articles? Do you know anybody who does? Give an indication: they would find in me a liberal chapman. I would part with my last guinea this minute to buy."

"Is it so with you, Robert? I find that spicy. I like a man to speak his mind. What has gone wrong?"

"The machinery of all my nature; the whole enginery of this human mill: the boiler, which I take to be the heart, is fit to burst."

"That suld be putten i' print: it 's striking. It 's almost blank verse. Ye 'll be jingling into poetry just e' now. If the afflatus comes, give way, Robert; never heed me: I 'll bear it this whet (time)."

"Hideous, abhorrent, base blunder! You may commit in a moment what you will rue for years—what life cannot cancel."

"Lad, go on. I call it pie, nuts, sugar-candy. I like the taste uncommonly. Go on: it will do you good to talk: the moor is before us now, and there is no life for many a mile round."

"I *will* talk. I am not ashamed to tell. There is

a sort of wild cat in my breast, and I choose that you shall hear how it can yell."

"To me it is music. What grand voices you and Louis have! When Louis sings—tones off like a soft, deep bell, I 've felt myself tremble again. The night is still: it listens: it is just leaning down to you, like a black priest to a blacker penitent. Confess, lad: smooth naught down: be candid as a convicted, justified, sanctified methody at an experience-meeting. Make yourself as wicked as Beelzebub: it will ease your mind."

"As mean as Mammon, you would say. Yorke, if I got off horseback and laid myself down across the road, would you have the goodness to gallop over me—backwards and forwards—about twenty times?"

"Wi' all the pleasure in life, if there were no such thing as a coroner's inquest."

"Hiram Yorke, I certainly believed she loved me. I have seen her eyes sparkle radiantly when she has found me out in a crowd: she has flushed up crimson when she has offered me her hand, and said, 'How do you do, Mr. Moore?'

"My name had a magical influence over her: when others uttered it, she changed countenance,—I know she did. She pronounced it herself in the most musical of her many musical tones. She was cordial to me; she took an interest in me; she was anxious about me; she wished me well; she sought, she seized every opportunity to benefit me. I considered, paused, watched, weighed, wondered: I could come to but one conclusion—this is love.

"I looked at her, Yorke: I saw, in her, youth and a species of beauty. I saw power in her. Her wealth offered me the redemption of my honour and my standing. I owed her gratitude. She had aided me substantially and effectually by a loan of five thousand pounds. Could I remember these things? Could I believe she loved me? Could I hear wisdom urge me to marry her, and disregard every dear advantage, disbelieve every flattering suggestion, disdain every well-weighed counsel, turn and leave her? Young, graceful, gracious,—my benefactress, attached to me, enamoured of me,—I used to say so to myself: dwell on the word; mouth it over and over again; swell over it with a pleasant, pompous complacency,—with an admiration dedicated entirely to myself, and unimpaired even by esteem for her: indeed, I smiled in deep secrecy at her naïveté and simplicity, in being the first to love, and to show it. That whip of yours seems to have a good heavy handle, Yorke: you can swing it about your head and knock me out of the saddle, if you choose. I should rather relish a loundering whack."

"Tak' patience, Robert, till the moon rises, and I can see you. Speak plain out,—did you love her, or not? I could like to know: I feel curious."

"Sir .... Sir—I say—she is very pretty, in her own style, and very attractive. She has a look, at times, of a thing made out of fire and air, at which I stand and marvel, without a thought of clasping and kissing it. I felt in her a powerful magnet to my interest and vanity: I never felt as if nature meant her to be my other and better self. When a question

on that head rushed upon me, I flung it off, saying brutally, I should be rich with her, and ruined without her: vowing I would be practical, and not romantic."

"A very sensible resolve. What mischief came of it, Bob?"

"With this sensible resolve, I walked up to Fieldhead one night last August: it was the very eve of my departure for Birmingham,—for—you see—I wanted to secure fortune's splendid prize: I had previously despatched a note, requesting a private interview. I found her at home, and alone.

"She received me without embarrassment, for she thought I came on business: *I* was embarrassed enough, but determined. I hardly know how I got the operation over; but I went to work in a hard, firm fashion,—frightful enough, I daresay. I sternly offered myself—my fine person—with my debts, of course, as a settlement.

"It vexed me; it kindled my ire, to find that she neither blushed, trembled, nor looked down. She responded:—

"'I doubt whether I have understood you, Mr. Moore.'

"And I had to go over the whole proposal twice, and word it as plainly as A B C, before she would fully take it in. And then, what did she do? Instead of faltering a sweet Yes, or maintaining a soft, confused silence (which would have been as good) she started up, walked twice fast through the room, in the way that *she* only does, and no other woman, and ejaculated,—

"'God bless me!'

"Yorke, I stood on the hearth, backed by the mantelpiece; against it I leaned, and prepared for anything—everything. I knew my doom, and I knew myself. There was no misunderstanding her aspect and voice. She stopped and looked at me.

"'God bless me!' she pitilessly repeated, in that shocked, indignant, yet saddened accent. 'You have made a strange proposal:—strange from *you*: and if you knew how strangely you worded it, and looked it, you would be startled at yourself. You spoke like a brigand who demanded my purse, rather than like a lover who asked my heart.'

"A queer sentence, was it not, Yorke? and I knew, as she uttered it, it was true as queer. Her words were a mirror in which I saw myself.

"I looked at her, dumb and wolfish: she at once enraged and shamed me.

"'Gérard Moore, you know you don't love Shirley Keeldar.' I might have broken out into false-swearing: vowed that I did love her; but I could not lie in her pure face: I could not perjure myself in her truthful presence. Besides, such hollow oaths would have been vain as void: she would no more have believed me than she would have believed the ghost of Judas, had he broken from the night and stood before her. Her female heart had finer perceptions than to be cheated into mistaking my half-coarse, half-cold admiration, for true-throbbing, manly love.

"What next happened? you will say, Mr. Yorke.

"Why, she sat down in the window-seat and cried. She cried passionately: her eyes not only rained, but

lightened. They flashed, open, large, dark, haughty, upon me: they said—'You have pained me: you have outraged me: you have deceived me.'

"She added words soon to looks.

"'I *did* respect—I *did* admire—I *did* like you,' she said: 'yes—as much as if you were my brother: and *you*—*you* want to make a speculation of me. You would immolate me to that mill—your Moloch!'

"I had the common sense to abstain from any word of excuse—any attempt at palliation: I stood to be scorned.

"Sold to the devil for the time being, I was certainly infatuated: when I did speak, what do you think I said?

"'Whatever my own feelings were, I was persuaded *you* loved *me*, Miss Keeldar.'

"Beautiful!—was it not? She sat quite confounded. 'Is it Robert Moore that speaks?' I heard her mutter. 'Is it a man—or something lower?'

"'Do you mean,' she asked aloud—'do you mean you thought I loved you as we love those we wish to marry?'

"It *was* my meaning; and I said so.

"'You conceived an idea obnoxious to a woman's feelings,' was her answer: 'you have announced it in a fashion revolting to a woman's soul. You insinuate that all the frank kindness I have shown you has been a complicated, a bold, and an immodest manœuvre to ensnare a husband: you imply that at last you come here out of pity to offer me your hand, because I have courted you. Let me say this:—

Your sight is jaundiced: you have seen wrong. Your mind is warped: you have judged wrong. Your tongue betrays you: you now speak wrong. I never loved you. Be at rest there. My heart is as pure of passion for you as yours is barren of affection for me.'

"I hope I was answered, Yorke?

"'I seem to be a blind, besotted sort of person,' was my remark.

"'*Loved* you!' she cried. 'Why, I have been as frank with you as a sister—never shunned you—never feared you. You cannot,' she affirmed, triumphantly—'you cannot make me tremble with your coming, nor accelerate my pulse by your influence.'

"I alleged, that often, when she spoke to me, she blushed, and that the sound of my name moved her.

"'Not for *your* sake!' she declared, briefly: I urged explanation, but could get none.

"'When I sat beside you at the school-feast, did you think I loved you then? When I stopped you in Maythorn-lane, did you think I loved you then? When I called on you in the counting-house—when I walked with you on the pavement—did you think I loved you then?'

"So she questioned me: and I said, I did.

"By the Lord! Yorke—she rose—she grew tall—she expanded and refined almost to flame: there was a trembling all through her, as in live coal, when its vivid vermilion is hottest.

"'That is to say, that you have the worst opinion of me: that you deny me the possession of all I value most. That is to say, that I am a traitor to all

my sisters: that I have acted as no woman can act, without degrading herself and her sex: that I have sought where the incorrupt of my kind naturally scorn and abhor to seek.' She and I were silent, for many a minute. 'Lucifer—Star of the Morning!' she went on, 'thou art fallen. You—once high in my esteem—are hurled down: you—once intimate in my friendship—are cast out. Go!'

"I went not: I had heard her voice tremble—seen her lip quiver: I knew another storm of tears would fall; and then, I believed, some calm and some sunshine must come, and I would wait for it.

"As fast, but more quietly than before, the warm rain streamed down: there was another sound in her weeping—a softer, more regretful sound. While I watched, her eyes lifted to me a gaze more reproachful than haughty—more mournful than incensed.

"'Oh, Moore!' said she: 'it was worse than Et tu, Brute!'

"I relieved myself by what should have been a sigh, but it became a groan. A sense of Cain-like desolation made my breast ache.

"'There has been error in what I have done,' I said, 'and it has won me bitter wages; which I will go and spend far from her who gave them.'

"I took my hat. All the time, I could not have borne to depart so; and I believed she would not let me. Nor would she, but for the mortal pang I had given her pride, that cowed her compassion and kept her silent.

"I was obliged to turn back of my own accord

when I reached the door, to approach her and to say, 'Forgive me.'

"'I could, if there was not myself to forgive, too,' was her reply; 'but to mislead a sagacious man so far, I must have done wrong.'

"I broke out suddenly with some declamation I do not remember: I know that it was sincere, and that my wish and aim were to absolve her to herself: in fact, in her case, self-accusation was a chimera.

"At last, she extended her hand. For the first time, I wished to take her in my arms and kiss her. I *did* kiss her hand many times.

"'Some day we shall be friends again,' she said, 'when you have had time to read my actions and motives in a true light, and not so horribly to misinterpret them. Time may give you the right key to all: then, perhaps, you will comprehend me; and then we shall be reconciled.'

"Farewell drops rolled slow down her cheeks: she wiped them away.

"'I am sorry for what has happened—deeply sorry,' she sobbed. So was I, God knows! Thus were we severed."

"A queer tale!" commented Mr. Yorke.

"I'll do it no more," vowed his companion: "never more will mention marriage to a woman, unless I feel love. Henceforth, Credit and Commerce may take care of themselves. Bankruptcy may come when it lists. I have done with slavish fear of disaster. I mean to work diligently, wait patiently, bear steadily. Let the worst come—I will take an axe and an emigrant's berth, and go out

with Louis to the West—he and I have settled it. No woman shall ever again look at me as Miss Keeldar looked—ever again feel towards me as Miss Keeldar felt: in no woman's presence will I ever again stand at once such a fool and such a knave—such a brute and such a puppy."

"Tut!" said the imperturbable Yorke, "you make too much of it; but still, I say, I am capped: firstly, that she did not love you; and, secondly, that you did not love her. You are both young; you are both handsome; you are both well enough for wit, and even for temper—take you on the right side: what ailed you, that you could not agree?"

"We never *have* been—never *could* be *at home* with each other, Yorke. Admire each other as we might at a distance, still we jarred when we came very near. I have sat at one side of a room and observed her at the other; perhaps in an excited, genial moment, when she had some of her favourites round her: her old beaux, for instance, yourself and Helstone, with whom she is so playful, pleasant, and eloquent. I have watched her when she was most natural, most lively, and most lovely; my judgment has pronounced her beautiful: beautiful she is, at times, when her mood and her array partake of the splendid. I have drawn a little nearer, feeling that our terms of acquaintance gave me the right of approach; I have joined the circle round her seat, caught her eye, and mastered her attention; then we have conversed; and others—thinking me, perhaps, peculiarly privileged—have withdrawn by degrees, and left us alone. Were we happy thus

left? For myself, I must say, No. Always a feeling of constraint came over me; always I was disposed to be stern and strange. We talked politics and business: no soft sense of domestic intimacy ever opened our hearts, or thawed our language, and made it flow easy and limpid. If we had confidences, they were confidences of the counting-house, not of the hearth. Nothing in her cherished affection in me—made me better, gentler: she only stirred my brain and whetted my acuteness: she never crept into my heart or influenced its pulse; and for this good reason, no doubt, because I had not the secret of making her love me."

"Well, lad, it is a queer thing. I might laugh at thee, and reckon to despise thy refinements; but as it is dark night and we are by ourselves, I don't mind telling thee that thy talk brings back a glimpse of my own past life. Twenty-five years ago, I tried to persuade a beautiful woman to love me, and she would not. I had not the key to her nature: she was a stone wall to me, doorless and windowless."

"But you loved *her*, Yorke: you worshipped Mary Cave: your conduct, after all, was that of a man—never of a fortune-hunter."

"Ay! I *did* love her; but then she was beautiful as the moon we do *not* see to-night: there is naught like her in these days: Miss Helstone, maybe, has a look of her, but nobody else."

"Who has a look of her?"

"That black-coated tyrant's niece; that quiet, delicate Miss Helstone. Many a time I have put on my spectacles to look at the lassie in church, because

she has gentle blue een, wi' long lashes; and, when she sits in shadow, and is very still and very pale, and is, happen, about to fall asleep wi' the length of the sermon and the heat of the biggin'—she is as like one of Canova's marbles as aught else."

"Was Mary Cave in that style?"

"Far grander! Less lass-like and flesh-like. You wondered why she hadn't wings and a crown. She was a stately, peaceful angel—was my Mary."

"And you could not persuade her to love you?"

"Not with all I could do; though I prayed Heaven many a time, on my bended knees, to help me."

"Mary Cave was not what you think her, Yorke—I have seen her picture at the Rectory. She is no angel, but a fair, regular-featured, taciturn-looking woman—rather too white and lifeless for my taste. But—supposing she had been something better than she was——"

"Robert," interrupted Yorke, "I could fell you off your horse at this moment. However, I'll hold my hand. Reason tells me you are right, and I am wrong. I know well enough that the passion I still have is only the remnant of an illusion. If Miss Cave had possessed either feeling or sense, she could not have been so perfectly impassible to my regard as she showed herself—she must have preferred me to that copper-faced despot."

"Supposing, Yorke, she had been educated (no women were educated in those days); supposing she had possessed a thoughtful, original mind, a love of knowledge, a wish for information, which she took

an artless delight in receiving from your lips, and having measured out to her by your hand; supposing her conversation—when she sat at your side—was fertile, varied, imbued with a picturesque grace and genial interest, quiet-flowing but clear and bounteous; supposing that when you stood near her by chance, or when you sat near her by design, comfort at once became your atmosphere, and content your element; supposing that whenever her face was under your gaze, or her idea filled your thoughts, you gradually ceased to be hard and anxious, and pure affection, love of home, thirst for sweet discourse, unselfish longing to protect and cherish, replaced the sordid, cankering calculations of your trade; supposing—with all this—that many a time, when you had been so happy as to possess your Mary's little hand, you had felt it tremble as you held it—just as a warm little bird trembles when you take it from its nest; supposing you had noticed her shrink into the background on your entrance into a room, yet if you sought her in her retreat she welcomed you with the sweetest smile that ever lit a fair virgin face, and only turned her eyes from the encounter of your own, lest their clearness should reveal too much; supposing, in short, your Mary had been—not cold, but modest; not vacant, but reflective; not obtuse, but sensitive; not inane, but innocent; not prudish, but pure—would you have left her to court another woman for her wealth?"

Mr. Yorke raised his hat, wiped his forehead with his handkerchief.

"The moon is up," was his first not quite

relevant remark, pointing with his whip across the moor. "There she is, rising into the haze, staring at us wi' a strange red glower. She is no more silver than old Helstone's brow is ivory. What does she mean by leaning her cheek on Rushedge i' that way, and looking at us wi' a scowl and a menace?"

"Yorke, if Mary had loved you silently, yet faithfully—chastely, yet fervently—as you would wish your wife to love, would you have left her?"

"Robert!" he lifted his arm: he held it suspended and paused. "Robert! this is a queer world, and men are made of the queerest dregs that Chaos churned up in her ferment. I might swear sounding oaths—oaths that would make the poachers think there was a bittern booming in Bilberry Moss—that, in the case you put, Death only should have parted me from Mary. But I have lived in the world fifty-five years; I have been forced to study human nature; and—to speak a dark truth—the odds are, if Mary had loved and not scorned me; if I had been secure of her affection, certain of her constancy, been irritated by no doubts, stung by no humiliations—the odds are" (he let his hand fall heavy on the saddle)—"the odds are, I should have left her!"

They rode side by side in silence. Ere either spoke again, they were on the other side of Rushedge: Briarfield lights starred the purple skirt of the moor. Robert, being the youngest, and having less of the past to absorb him than his comrade, recommenced first.

"I believe—I daily find it proved—that we can get nothing in this world worth keeping, not so much

as a principle or a conviction, except out of purifying flame, or through strengthening peril. We err; we fall; we are humbled—then we walk more carefully. We greedily eat and drink poison out of the gilded cup of vice, or from the beggar's wallet of avarice; we are sickened, degraded; everything good in us rebels against us; our souls rise bitterly indignant against our bodies; there is a period of civil war; if the soul has strength, it conquers and rules thereafter."

"What art thou going to do now, Robert? What are thy plans?"

"For my private plans, I'll keep them to myself; which is very easy, as at present I have none: no private life is permitted a man in my position, a man in debt. For my public plans, my views are a little altered. While I was in Birmingham, I looked a little into reality, considered closely, and at their source, the causes of the present troubles of this country; I did the same in London. Unknown, I could go where I pleased, mix with whom I would. I went where there was want of food, of fuel, of clothing; where there was no occupation and no hope. I saw some, with naturally elevated tendencies and good feelings, kept down amongst sordid privations and harassing griefs. I saw many originally low, and to whom lack of education left scarcely anything but animal wants, disappointed in those wants, ahungered, athirst, and desperate as famished animals: I saw what taught my brain a new lesson, and filled my breast with fresh feelings. I have no intention to profess more softness or sentiment than I have

hitherto professed; mutiny and ambition I regard as I have always regarded them: I should resist a riotous mob just as heretofore: I should open on the scent of a runaway ringleader as eagerly as ever, and run him down as relentlessly, and follow him up to condign punishment as rigorously; but I should do it now chiefly for the sake and the security of those he misled. Something there is to look to, Yorke, beyond a man's personal interest: beyond the advancement of well-laid schemes; beyond even the discharge of dishonouring debts. To respect himself, a man must believe he renders justice to his fellowmen. Unless I am more considerate to ignorance, more forbearing to suffering than I have hitherto been, I shall scorn myself as grossly unjust. What now?" he said, addressing his horse which, hearing the ripple of water, and feeling thirsty, turned to a way-side trough, where the moonbeam was playing in a crystal eddy.

"Yorke," pursued Moore, "ride on: I must let him drink."

Yorke accordingly rode slowly forwards, occupying himself, as he advanced, in discriminating, amongst the many lights now spangling the distance, those of Briarmains. Stilbro' Moor was left behind; plantations rose dusk on either hand; they were descending the hill; below them lay the valley with its populous parish: they felt already at home.

Surrounded no longer by heath, it was not startling to Mr. Yorke to see a hat rise, and to hear a voice speak behind the wall. The words, however, were peculiar.

"When the wicked perisheth, there is shouting," it said; and added, "As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more (with a deeper growl); terrors take hold of him as waters; hell is naked before him. He shall die without knowledge."

A fierce flash and sharp crack violated the calm of night. Yorke, ere he turned, knew the four convicts of Birmingham were avenged.

CHAPTER VIII.

UNCLE AND NIECE.

THE die was cast. Sir Philip Nunnely knew it: Shirley knew it: Mr. Sympson knew it. That evening, when all the Fieldhead family dined at Nunnely Priory, decided the business.

Two or three things conduced to bring the baronet to a point. He had observed that Miss Keeldar looked pensive and delicate. This new phase in her demeanour smote him on his weak or poetic side: a spontaneous sonnet brewed in his brain; and while it was still working there, one of his sisters persuaded his ladye-love to sit down to the piano and sing a ballad—one of Sir Philip's own ballads. It was the least elaborate, the least affected—out of all comparison the best of his numerous efforts.

It chanced that Shirley, the moment before, had been gazing from a window down on the park; she had seen that stormy moonlight which "le Professeur Louis" was, perhaps, at the same instant contemplating from her own oak-parlour lattice; she had seen the isolated trees of the domain—broad, strong, spreading oaks, and high-towering heroic beeches—

wrestling with the gale. Her ear had caught the full roar of the forest lower down; the swift rushing of clouds, the moon, to the eye, hasting swifter still, had crossed her vision: she turned from sight and sound—touched, if not rapt—wakened, if not inspired.

She sang, as requested. There was much about love in the ballad: faithful love that refused to abandon its object; love that disaster could not shake; love that, in calamity, waxed fonder, in poverty clung closer. The words were set to a fine old air—in themselves they were simple and sweet: perhaps, when read, they wanted force; when *well* sung, they wanted nothing. Shirley sang them well: she breathed into the feeling, softness; she poured round the passion, force: her voice was fine that evening; its expression dramatic: she impressed all, and charmed one.

On leaving the instrument, she went to the fire, and sat down on a seat—semi-stool, semi-cushion: the ladies were round her—none of them spoke. The Misses Sympson and the Misses Nunnely looked upon her, as quiet poultry might look on an egret, an ibis, or any other strange fowl. What made her sing so? *They* never sang so. Was it *proper* to sing with such expression, with such originality—so unlike a school-girl? Decidedly not: it was strange; it was unusual. What was *strange* must be *wrong*; what was *unusual* must be *improper*. Shirley was judged.

Moreover, old Lady Nunnely eyed her stonily from her great chair by the fireside: her gaze said,—

"This woman is not of mine, or my daughter's kind: I object to her as my son's wife."

Her son catching the look, read its meaning: he grew alarmed: what he so wished to win, there was danger he might lose. He must make haste.

The room they were in had once been a picture-gallery. Sir Philip's father—Sir Monckton—had converted it into a saloon; but still it had a shadowy, long-withdrawing look. A deep recess with a window—a recess that held one couch, one table, and a fairy cabinet, formed a room within a room. Two persons standing there might interchange a dialogue, and, so it were neither long nor loud, none be the wiser.

Sir Philip induced two of his sisters to perpetrate a duet; he gave occupation to the Misses Sympson: the elder ladies were conversing together. He was pleased to remark that, meantime, Shirley rose to look at the pictures. He had a tale to tell about one ancestress, whose dark beauty seemed as that of a flower of the south: he joined her, and began to tell it.

There were mementos of the same lady in the cabinet adorning the recess; and while Shirley was stooping to examine the missal and the rosary on the inlaid shelf, and while the Misses Nunnely indulged in a prolonged screech, guiltless of expression, pure of originality, perfectly conventional and absolutely unmeaning, Sir Philip stooped too, and whispered a few hurried sentences. At first, Miss Keeldar was struck so still, you might have fancied that whisper a charm which had changed her to a statue; but she

presently looked up and answered. They parted. Miss Keeldar returned to the fire, and resumed her seat: the baronet looked after her, then went and stood behind his sisters. Mr. Sympson—Mr. Sympson only—had marked the pantomime.

That gentleman drew his own conclusions. Had he been as acute as he was meddling, as profound as he was prying, he might have found that in Sir Philip's face whereby to correct his inference. Ever shallow, hasty, and positive, he went home quite cock-a-hoop.

He was not a man that kept secrets well: when elate on a subject, he could not avoid talking about it. The next morning, having occasion to employ his son's tutor as his secretary, he must needs announce to him, in mouthing accents, and with much flimsy pomp of manner, that he had better hold himself prepared for a return to the south, at an early day, as the important business which had detained him (Mr. Sympson) so long in Yorkshire, was now on the eve of fortunate completion: his anxious and laborious efforts were likely, at last, to be crowned with the happiest success: a truly eligible addition was about to be made to the family connections."

"In Sir Philip Nunnely?" Louis Moore conjectured.

Whereupon Mr. Sympson treated himself simultaneously to a pinch of snuff and a chuckling laugh, checked only by a sudden choke of dignity, and an order to the tutor to proceed with business.

For a day or two, Mr. Sympson continued as bland as oil; but also he seemed to sit on pins, and

his gait, when he walked, emulated that of a hen treading a hot girdle. He was for ever looking out of the window, and listening for chariot-wheels: Bluebeard's wife—Sisera's mother—were nothing to him. He waited when the matter should be opened in form; when himself should be consulted; when lawyers should be summoned; when settlement discussions, and all the delicious worldly fuss should pompously begin.

At last there came a letter; he himself handed it to Miss Keeldar out of the bag: he knew the handwriting; he knew the crest on the seal. He did not see it opened and read, for Shirley took it to her own room; nor did he see it answered, for she wrote her reply shut up, and was very long about it,—the best part of a day. He questioned her whether it was answered; she responded "Yes."

Again he waited—waited in silence—absolutely not daring to speak: kept mute by something in Shirley's face,—a very awful something—inscrutable to him as the writing on the wall to Belshazzar. He was moved more than once to call Daniel, in the person of Louis Moore, and to ask an interpretation; but his dignity forbade the familiarity. Daniel himself, perhaps, had his own private difficulties connected with that baffling bit of translation: he looked like a student for whom grammars are blank, and dictionaries dumb.

Mr. Sympson had been out, to while away an anxious hour in the society of his friends at De Walden Hall. He returned a little sooner than was

expected; his family and Miss Keeldar were assembled in the oak-parlour; addressing the latter, he requested her to step with him into another room: he wished to have with her a "*strictly* private interview."

She rose, asking no questions, and professing no surprise.

"Very well, sir," she said, in the tone of a determined person, who is informed that the dentist is come to extract that large double tooth of his, from which he has suffered such a purgatory this month past. She left her sewing and her thimble in the window-seat, and followed her uncle where he led.

Shut into the drawing-room, the pair took seats, each in an arm-chair, placed opposite, a few yards between them.

"I have been to De Walden Hall," said Mr. Sympson. He paused. Miss Keeldar's eyes were on the pretty white and green carpet. *That* information required no response: she gave none.

"I have learned," he went on, slowly,—"I have learned a circumstance which surprises me."

Resting her cheek on her forefinger, she waited to be told *what* circumstance.

"It seems that Nunnely Priory is shut up; that the family are gone back to their place in ——shire. It seems that the baronet—that the baronet—that Sir Philip himself has accompanied his mother and sisters."

"Indeed!" said Shirley.

"May I ask if you share the amazement with which I received this news?"

"No, sir."

"*Is* it news to you?"

"Yes, sir."

"I mean—I mean—" pursued Mr. Sympson, now fidgetting in his chair, quitting his hitherto brief and tolerably clear phraseology, and returning to his customary wordy, confused, irritable style; "I mean to have a *thorough* explanation. I will *not* be put off. I—I—shall *insist* on being heard; and on—on having my own way. My questions *must* be answered. I will have clear, satisfactory replies. I am not to be trifled with. Silence!

"It is a strange and an extraordinary thing—a very singular—a most odd thing! I thought all was right: knew no other: and there—the family are gone!"

"I suppose, sir, they had a right to go."

"*Sir Philip is gone!*" (with emphasis).

Shirley raised her brows: "Bon voyage!" said she.

"This will not do: this must be altered, ma'am."

He drew his chair forward; he pushed it back; he looked perfectly incensed, and perfectly helpless.

"Come, come, now, uncle," expostulated Shirley, "do not begin to fret and fume, or we shall make no sense of the business. Ask me what you want to know: I am as willing to come to an explanation as you: I promise you truthful replies."

"I want—I demand to know, Miss Keeldar, whether Sir Philip has made you an offer?"

"He has."

"You avow it?"

"I avow it. But now, go on: consider that point settled."

"He made you an offer that night we dined at the Priory?"

"It is enough to say that he made it. Go on."

"He proposed in the recess—in the room that used to be a picture-gallery—that Sir Monckton converted into a saloon?"

No answer.

"You were both examining a cabinet: I saw it all: my sagacity was not at fault—it never is. Subsequently, you received a letter from him. On what subject—of what nature were the contents?"

"No matter."

"Ma'am, is that the way in which you speak to me?"

Shirley's foot tapped quick on the carpet.

"There you sit, silent and sullen—*you* who promised truthful replies!"

"Sir, I have answered you thus far: proceed."

"I should like to see that letter."

"You *cannot* see it."

"I *must* and *shall*, ma'am. I am your guardian."

"Having ceased to be a ward, I have no guardian."

"Ungrateful being! Reared by me as my own daughter ——"

"Once more, uncle, have the kindness to keep to the point. Let us both remain cool. For my part, I do not wish to get into a passion; but, you know, once drive me beyond certain bounds, I care little what I say: I am not then soon checked. Listen! You have asked me whether Sir Philip made me an offer:

that question is answered. What do you wish to know next?"

"I desire to know whether you accepted or refused him?—and know it I will."

"Certainly: you ought to know it. I refused him."

"Refused him! You—*you*, Shirley Keeldar, *refused* Sir Philip Nunnely?"

"I did."

The poor gentleman bounced from his chair, and first rushed, and then trotted, through the room.

"There it is! There it is! There it is!"

"Sincerely speaking, I am sorry, uncle, you are so disappointed."

Concession—contrition—never do any good with some people. Instead of softening and conciliating, they but embolden and harden them: of that number was Mr. Sympson.

"*I* disappointed! What is it to me? Have *I* an interest in it? You would insinuate, perhaps, that I have motives?"

"Most people have motives, of some sort, for their actions."

"She accuses me to my face! I—that have been a parent to her—she charges with bad motives!"

"*Bad* motives, I did not say."

"And now you prevaricate. You have no principles!"

"Uncle, you tire me: I want to go away."

"Go you shall not! I will be answered. What are your intentions, Miss Keeldar?"

"In what respect?"

"In respect of matrimony."

"To be quiet—and to do just as I please."

"Just as you please! The words are to the last degree indecorous."

"Mr. Sympson, I advise you not to become insulting: you know, I will not bear that."

"You read French. Your mind is poisoned with French novels. You have imbibed French principles."

"The ground you are treading now returns a mighty hollow sound under your feet. Beware!"

"It will end in infamy, sooner or later: I have foreseen it all along."

"Do you assert, sir, that something in which *I* am concerned will end in infamy?"

"That it will—that it will. You said just now you would act as you please. You acknowledge no rules—no limitations."

"Silly stuff! and vulgar as silly!"

"Regardless of decorum, you are prepared to fly in the face of propriety."

"You tire me, uncle."

"What, madam—*what* could be your reasons for refusing Sir Philip?"

"At last, there is another sensible question: I shall be glad to reply to it. Sir Philip is too young for me: I regard him as a boy: all his relations—his mother, especially—would be annoyed if he married me: such a step would embroil him with them: I am not his equal in the world's estimation."

"Is that all?"

"Our dispositions are not compatible."

"Why, a more amiable gentleman never breathed."

"He is very amiable—very excellent—truly estimable, but *not my master*: not in one point. I could not trust myself with his happiness: I would not undertake the keeping of it for thousands: I will accept no hand which cannot hold me in check."

"I thought you liked to do as you please: you are vastly inconsistent."

"When I promise to obey, it shall be under the conviction that I can keep that promise: I could not obey a youth like Sir Philip. Besides, he would never command me: he would expect me always to rule—to guide, and I have no taste whatever for the office."

"*You* no taste for swaggering, and subduing, and ordering, and ruling?"

"Not my husband: only my uncle."

"Where is the difference?"

"There *is* a slight difference: that is certain. And I know full well, any man who wishes to live in decent comfort with me as a husband must be able to control me."

"I wish you had a real tyrant."

"A tyrant would not hold me for a day—not for an hour. I would rebel—break from him—defy him."

"Are you not enough to bewilder one's brain with your self-contradiction?"

"It is evident I bewilder your brain."

"You talk of Sir Philip being young: he is two-and-twenty."

"My husband must be thirty, with the sense of forty."

"You had better pick out some old man—some white-headed or bald-headed swain."

"No, thank you."

"You could lead some doting fool: you might pin him to your apron."

"I might do that with a boy; but it is not my vocation. Did I not say I prefer a *master?* One in whose presence I shall feel obliged and disposed to be good. One whose control my impatient temper must acknowledge. A man whose approbation can reward—whose displeasure punish me. A man I shall feel it impossible not to love, and very possible to fear."

"What is there to hinder you from doing all this with Sir Philip? He is a baronet; a man of rank, property, connections, far above yours. If you talk of intellect, he is a poet: he writes verses; which you, I take it, cannot do, with all your cleverness."

"Neither his title, wealth, pedigree, nor poetry, avail to invest him with the power I describe. These are feather-weights: they want ballast: a measure of sound, solid, practical sense would have stood him in better stead with me."

"You and Henry rave about poetry: you used to catch fire like tinder on the subject when you were a girl."

"Oh! uncle, there is nothing really valuable in this world, there is nothing glorious in the world to come, that is not poetry!"

"Marry a poet, then, in God's name!"

"Show him me, and I will."

"Sir Philip."

"Not at all. You are almost as good a poet as he."

"Madam, you are wandering from the point."

"Indeed, uncle, I wanted to do so; and I shall be glad to lead you away with me. Do not let us get out of temper with each other: it is not worth while."

"Out of temper, Miss Keeldar! I should be glad to know who is out of temper?"

"*I* am not, yet."

"If you mean to insinuate that *I* am, I consider that you are guilty of impertinence."

"You will be soon, if you go on at that rate."

"There it is! With your pert tongue, you would try the patience of a Job."

"I know I should."

"No levity, Miss! This is not a laughing matter. It is an affair I am resolved to probe thoroughly, convinced that there is mischief at the bottom. You described just now, with far too much freedom for your years and sex, the sort of individual you would prefer as a husband.—Pray, did you paint from the life?"

Shirley opened her lips; but instead of speaking, she only glowed rose-red.

"I shall have an answer to that question," affirmed Mr. Sympson, assuming vast courage and consequence on the strength of this symptom of confusion.

"It was an historical picture, uncle, from several originals."

"Several originals! Bless my heart!"

"I have been in love several times."

"This is cynical."

"With heroes of many nations."

"What next ——?"

"And philosophers."

"She is mad ——"

"Don't ring the bell, uncle; you will alarm my aunt."

"Your poor dear aunt, what a niece has she!"

"Once I loved Socrates."

"Pooh! No trifling, ma'am."

"I admired Themistocles, Leonidas, Epaminondas."

"Miss Keeldar ——"

"To pass over a few centuries, Washington was a plain man, but I liked him: but, to speak of the actual present ——"

"Ah! the actual present."

"To quit crude school-girl fancies, and come to realities."

"Realities! That is the test to which you shall be brought, ma'am."

"To avow before what altar I now kneel—to reveal the present idol of my soul ——"

"You will make haste about it, if you please; it is near luncheon time, and confess *you shall*."

"Confess, I must: my heart is full of the secret; it must be spoken: I only wish you were Mr. Helstone instead of Mr. Sympson, you would sympathize with me better."

"Madam—it is a question of common sense and common prudence, not of sympathy and sentiment, and so on. Did you say it was Mr. Helstone?"

"Not precisely, but as near as may be: they are rather alike."

"I will know the name—I will have particulars."

"They positively *are* rather alike; their very faces are not dissimilar—a pair of human falcons—and dry, direct, decided both. But my hero is the mightier of the two: his mind has the clearness of the deep sea, the patience of its rocks, the force of its billows."

"Rant and fustian!"

"I daresay he can be harsh as a saw-edge, and gruff as a hungry raven."

"Miss Keeldar, does the person reside in Briarfield? answer me that."

"Uncle—I am going to tell you—his name is trembling on my tongue."

"Speak, girl!"

"That was well said, uncle. 'Speak, girl!' it is quite tragic. England has howled savagely against this man, uncle; and she will one day roar exultingly over him. He has been unscared by the howl, and he will be unelated by the shout."

"I said she was mad—she is."

"This country will change and change again in her demeanour to him: he will never change in his duty to her. Come, cease to chafe, uncle, I'll tell you his name."

"You shall tell me, or ——"

"Listen! Arthur Wellesley, Lord Wellington."

Mr. Sympson rose up furious: he bounced out of the room, but immediately bounced back again, shut the door, and resumed his seat.

"Ma'am, you *shall* tell me *this*: will your principles permit you to marry a man without money—a man below you?"

"Never a man below me."

(In a high voice.) "Will you, Miss Keeldar, marry a poor man?"

"What right have you, Mr. Sympson, to ask me?"

"I insist upon knowing."

"You don't go the way to know."

"My family respectability shall not be compromised."

"A good resolution: keep it."

"Madam, it is *you* who shall keep it."

"Impossible, sir, since I form no part of your family."

"Do you disown us?"

"I disdain your dictatorship."

"Whom *will* you marry, Miss Keeldar?"

"Not Mr. Sam Wynne, because I scorn him: not Sir Philip Nunnely, because I *only* esteem him."

"Whom have you in your eye?"

"Four rejected candidates."

"Such obstinacy could not be, unless you were under improper influence."

"What do you mean? There are certain phrases potent to make my blood boil, improper influence! What old woman's cackle is that?"

"Are you a young lady?"

"I am a thousand times better: I am an honest woman, and as such I will be treated."

"Do you know (leaning mysteriously forward, and

speaking with ghastly solemnity), do you know the whole neighbourhood teams with rumours respecting you and a bankrupt tenant of yours—the foreigner Moore?".

"Does it?"

"It does. Your name is in every mouth."

"It honours the lips it crosses, and I wish to the gods it may purify them."

"Is it *that* person who has power to influence you?"

"Beyond any whose cause you have advocated."

"Is it he you will marry?"

"He is handsome, and manly, and commanding."

"You declare it to my face. The Flemish knave! The low trader!"

"He is talented, and venturous, and resolute. Prince is on his brow, and ruler in his bearing."

"She glories in it! She conceals nothing! No shame, no fear!"

"When we speak the name of Moore, shame should be forgotten and fear discarded: the Moores know only honour and courage."

"I say she is mad."

"You have taunted me till my blood is up. You have worried me till I turn again."

"That Moore is the brother of my son's tutor. Would you let the Usher call you Sister?"

Bright and broad shone Shirley's eye, as she fixed it on her questioner now.

"No: no. Not for a province of possession,—not for a century of life."

"You cannot separate the husband from his family."

"What, then?"

"Mr. Louis Moore's sister you will be."

"Mr. Sympson. . . . . I am sick at heart with all this weak trash: I will bear no more. Your thoughts are not my thoughts, your aims are not my aims, your gods are not my gods. We do not view things in the same light; we do not measure them by the same standard; we hardly speak in the same tongue. Let us part.

"It is not," she resumed, much excited. "It is not that I hate you; you are a good sort of man: perhaps you mean well in your way; but we cannot suit: we are ever at variance. You annoy me with small meddling, with petty tyranny; you exasperate my temper, and make and keep me passionate. As to your small maxims, your narrow rules, your little prejudices, aversions, dogmas, bundle them off: Mr. Sympson—go, offer them a sacrifice to the deity you worship; I'll none of them: I wash my hands of the lot. I walk by another creed, light, faith, and hope than you."

"Another creed! I believe she is an infidel."

"An infidel to *your* religion; an atheist to *your* god."

"*An—atheist!!!*"

"Your god, sir, is the World. In my eyes, you too, if not an infidel, are an idolater: I conceive that you ignorantly worship: in all things you appear to me too superstitious. Sir, your god, your great Bel, your fish-tailed Dagon, rises before me as a demon. You, and such as you, have raised him to a throne, put on him a crown, given him a sceptre.

Behold how hideously he governs! See him busied at the work he likes best—making marriages. He binds the young to the old, the strong to the imbecile. He stretches out the arm of Mezentius, and fetters the dead to the living. In his realm, there is hatred—secret hatred: there is disgust—unspoken disgust: there is treachery—family treachery: there is vice—deep, deadly, domestic vice. In his dominions, children grow unloving between parents who have never loved: infants are nursed on deception from their very birth; they are reared in an atmosphere corrupt with lies. Your god rules at the bridal of kings—look at your royal dynasties! your deity is the deity of foreign aristocracies—analyze the blue blood of Spain! Your god is the Hymen of France—what is French domestic life? All that surrounds him hastens to decay: all declines and degenerates under his sceptre. *Your* god is a masked Death."

"This language is terrible! My daughters and you must associate no longer, Miss Keeldar: there is danger in such companionship. Had I known you a little earlier—but, extraordinary as I thought you, I could not have believed——"

"Now, sir, do you begin to be aware that it is useless to scheme for me? That, in doing so, you but sow the wind to reap the whirlwind? I sweep your cobweb-projects from my path, that I may pass on unsullied. I am anchored on a resolve you cannot shake. My heart, my conscience shall dispose of my hand—*they only*. Know this at last."

Mr. Sympson was becoming a little bewildered.

"Never heard such language!" he muttered again

and again. "Never was so addressed in my life—never was so used."

"You are quite confused, sir. You had better withdraw, or I will."

He rose hastily.

"We must leave this place: they must pack up at once."

"Do not hurry my aunt and cousins: give them time."

"No more intercourse: she's not proper."

He made his way to the door; he came back for his handkerchief; he dropped his snuff-box: leaving the contents scattered on the carpet, he stumbled out: Tartar lay outside across the mat—Mr. Sympson almost fell over him: in the climax of his exasperation he hurled an oath at the dog, and a coarse epithet at his mistress.

"Poor Mr. Sympson! He is both feeble and vulgar," said Shirley to herself. "My head aches, and I am tired," she added; and leaning her head upon a cushion, she softly subsided from excitement to repose. One, entering the room a quarter of an hour afterwards, found her asleep. When Shirley had been agitated, she generally took this natural refreshment: it would come at her call.

The intruder paused in her unconscious presence, and said—"Miss Keeldar."

Perhaps his voice harmonized with some dream into which she was passing—it did not startle, it hardly roused her: without opening her eyes, she but turned her head a little, so that her cheek and profile, before hidden by her arm, became visible:

she looked rosy, happy, half-smiling, but her eye-lashes were wet: she had wept in slumber; or perhaps, before dropping asleep, a few natural tears had fallen after she had heard that epithet: no man—no woman is always strong, always able to bear up against the unjust opinion — the vilifying word: calumny, even from the mouth of a fool, will sometimes cut into unguarded feelings. Shirley looked like a child that had been naughty and punished, but was now forgiven and at rest.

"Miss Keeldar," again said the voice: this time it woke her; she looked up and saw at her side Louis Moore—not close at her side, but standing, with arrested step, two or three yards from her.

"Oh, Mr. Moore!" she said; "I was afraid it was my uncle again: he and I have quarrelled."

"Mr. Sympson should let you alone," was the reply: "can he not see that you are as yet far from strong?"

"I assure you he did not find me weak: I did not cry when he was here."

"He is about to evacuate Fieldhead—so he says. He is now giving orders to his family: he has been in the schoolroom issuing commands in a manner which, I suppose, was a continuation of that with which he has harassed you."

"Are you and Henry to go?"

"I believe, as far as Henry is concerned, that was the tenor of his scarcely-intelligible directions; but he may change all to-morrow: he is just in that mood when you cannot depend on his consistency for two consecutive hours: I doubt whether he will leave

you for weeks yet. To myself he addressed some words which will require a little attention and comment by-and-by, when I have time to bestow on them. At the moment he came in, I was busied with a note I had got from Mr. Yorke—so fully busied that I cut short the interview with him somewhat abruptly: I left him raving: here is the note—I wish you to see it—it refers to my brother Robert." And he looked at Shirley.

"I shall be glad to hear news of him: is he coming home?"

"He is come: he is in Yorkshire: Mr. Yorke went yesterday to Stilbro' to meet him."

"Mr. Moore—something is wrong——?"

"Did my voice tremble? He is now at Briarmains—and I am going to see him."

"What has occurred?"

"If you turn so pale I shall be sorry I have spoken. It might have been worse: Robert is not dead, but much hurt."

"Oh! sir; it is you who are pale. Sit down near me."

"Read the note—let me open it."

Miss Keeldar read the note: it briefly signified that last night Robert Moore had been shot at from behind the wall of Milldean plantation, at the foot of the Brow; that he was wounded severely, but it was hoped not fatally: of the assassin, or assassins, nothing was known—they had escaped. "No doubt," Mr. Yorke observed, "it was done in revenge: it was a pity ill-will had ever been raised; but that could not be helped now."

"He is my only brother," said Louis, as Shirley returned the note. "I cannot hear unmoved that ruffians have laid in wait for him, and shot him down like some wild beast from behind a wall."

"Be comforted: be hopeful. He will get better —I know he will."

Shirley, solicitous to soothe, held her hand over Mr. Moore's, as it lay on the arm of the chair: she just touched it lightly, scarce palpably.

"Well, give me your hand," he said; "it will be for the first time: it is in a moment of calamity—give it me."

Awaiting neither consent nor refusal, he took what he asked.

"I am going to Briarmains now," he went on. "I want you to step over to the Rectory, and tell Caroline Helstone what has happened: will you do this? she will hear it best from you."

"Immediately," said Shirley, with docile promptitude. "Ought I to say that there is no danger?"

"Say so."

"You will come back soon, and let me know more?"

"I will either come or write."

"Trust me for watching over Caroline. I will communicate with your sister, too; but, doubtless, she is already with Robert?"

"Doubtless; or will be soon. Good-morning, now."

"You will bear up, come what may?"

"We shall see that."

Shirley's fingers were obliged to withdraw from

the Tutor's: Louis was obliged to relinquish that hand folded, clasped, hidden in his own.

"I thought I should have had to support her," he said, as he walked towards Briarmains, "and it is she who has made me strong. That look of pity—that gentle touch! No down was ever softer—no elixir more potent! It lay like a snow-flake: it thrilled like lightning. A thousand times I have longed to possess that hand—to have it in mine. I *have* possessed it—for five minutes I held it. Her fingers and mine can never be strangers more—having met once, they must meet again."

CHAPTER IX.

THE SCHOOLBOY AND THE WOOD-NYMPH.

BRIARMAINS being nearer than the Hollow, Mr. Yorke had conveyed his young comrade there. He had seen him laid in the best bed of the house, as carefully as if he had been one of his own sons. The sight of his blood, welling from the treacherously-inflicted wound, made him indeed the son of the Yorkshire gentleman's heart. The spectacle of the sudden event; of the tall, straight shape prostrated in its pride across the road; of the fine southern head laid low in the dust; of that youth in prime flung at once before him pallid, lifeless, helpless—this was the very combination of circumstances to win for the victim Mr. Yorke's liveliest interest.

No other hand was there to raise—to aid; no other voice to question kindly; no other brain to concert measures: he had to do it all himself. This utter dependence of the speechless, bleeding youth (as a youth he regarded him) on his benevolence, secured that benevolence most effectually. Well did Mr. Yorke like to have power, and to use it: he

had now between his hands, power over a fellow-creature's life: it suited him.

No less perfectly did it suit his saturnine better-half: the incident was quite in her way, and to her taste. Some women would have been terror-struck to see a gory man brought in over their threshold. and laid down in their hall in the "howe of the night." There, you would suppose, was subject-matter for hysterics. No: Mrs. Yorke went into hysterics when Jessie would not leave the garden to come to her knitting, or when Martin proposed starting for Australia, with a view to realize freedom, and escape the tyranny of Matthew; but an attempted murder near her door—a half-murdered man in her best bed—set her straight, cheered her spirits, gave her cap the dash of a turban.

Mrs. Yorke was just the woman who, while rendering miserable the drudging life of a simple maid-servant, would nurse like a heroine a hospital full of plague patients. She almost loved Moore: her tough heart almost yearned towards him, when she found him committed to her charge,—left in her arms, as dependent on her as her youngest-born in the cradle. Had she seen a domestic, or one of her daughters, give him a draught of water, or smooth his pillow, she would have boxed the intruder's ears. She chased Jessie and Rose from the upper realm of the house: she forbade the housemaids to set their foot in it.

Now, if the accident had happened at the Rectory gates, and old Helstone had taken in the martyr, neither Yorke nor his wife would have pitied him:

they would have adjudged him right served for his tyranny and meddling: as it was, he became, for the present, the apple of their eye.

Strange! Louis Moore was permitted to come,—to sit down on the edge of the bed, and lean over the pillow,—to hold his brother's hand, and press his pale forehead with his fraternal lips: and Mrs. Yorke bore it well. She suffered him to stay half the day there; she once suffered him to sit up all night in the chamber; she rose herself at five o'clock of a wet November morning, and with her own hands lit the kitchen fire, and made the brothers a breakfast, and served it to them herself. Majestically arrayed in a boundless flannel wrapper, a shawl, and her nightcap, she sat and watched them eat, as complacently as a hen beholds her chickens feed. Yet she gave the cook warning that day for venturing to make and carry up to Mr. Moore a bason of sago-gruel; and the housemaid lost her favour because, when Mr. Louis was departing, she brought him his surtout aired from the kitchen, and, like a "forward piece," as she was, helped him on with it, and accepted, in return, a smile, a "thank you, my girl," and a shilling. Two ladies called one day, pale and anxious, and begged earnestly, humbly, to be allowed to see Mr. Moore one instant: Mrs. Yorke hardened her heart, and sent them packing,—not without opprobrium.

But how was it when Hortense Moore came?—not so bad as might have been expected: the whole family of the Moores really seemed to suit Mrs. Yorke so as no other family had ever suited her. Hortense and

she possessed an exhaustless mutual theme of conversation in the corrupt propensities of servants. Their views of this class were similar: they watched them with the same suspicion, and judged them with the same severity. Hortense, too, from the very first, showed no manner of jealousy of Mrs. Yorke's attentions to Robert: she let her keep the post of nurse with little interference; and, for herself, found ceaseless occupation in fidgeting about the house, holding the kitchen under surveillance, reporting what passed there, and, in short, making herself generally useful. Visitors, they both of them agreed in excluding sedulously from the sick-room. They held the young millowner captive, and hardly let the air breathe or the sun shine on him.

Mr. MacTurk, the surgeon to whom Moore's case had been committed, pronounced his wound of a dangerous, but, he trusted, not of a hopeless character. At first, he wished to place with him a nurse of his own selection; but this neither Mrs. Yorke nor Hortense would hear of: they promised faithful observance of directions. He was left, therefore, for the present, in their hands.

Doubtless, they executed the trust to the best of their ability; but something got wrong: the bandages were displaced, or tampered with; great loss of blood followed. MacTurk, being summoned, came with steed afoam. He was one of those surgeons whom it is dangerous to vex: abrupt in his best moods; in his worst, savage. On seeing Moore's state, he relieved his feelings by a little flowery language, with which it is not necessary to strew the present page.

A bouquet or two of the choicest blossoms fell on the unperturbed head of one Mr. Graves, a stony young assistant, he usually carried about with him; with a second nosegay he gifted another young gentleman in his train: an interesting fac-simile of himself, being, indeed, his own son; but the full corbeille of blushing bloom fell to the lot of meddling womankind, en masse.

For the best part of one winter night, himself and satellites were busied about Moore. There, at his bedside, shut up alone with him in his chamber, they wrought and wrangled over his exhausted frame. They three were on one side of the bed, and Death on the other. The conflict was sharp: it lasted till day broke, when the balance between the belligerents seemed so equal that both parties might have claimed the victory.

At dawn, Graves and young MacTurk were left in charge of the patient, while the senior went himself in search of additional strength, and secured it in the person of Mrs. Horsfall, the best nurse on his staff. To this woman he gave Moore in charge, with the sternest injunctions respecting the responsibility laid on her shoulders. She took this responsibility stolidly, as she did also the easy chair at the bed-head. That moment she began her reign.

Mrs. Horsfall had one virtue,—orders received from MacTurk she obeyed to the letter: the Ten Commandments were less binding in her eyes than her surgeon's dictum. In other respects, she was no woman, but a dragon. Hortense Moore fell effaced before her; Mrs. Yorke withdrew—crushed: yet

both these women were personages of some dignity in their own estimation, and of some bulk in the estimation of others. Perfectly cowed by the breadth, the height, the bone, and the brawn of Mrs. Horsfall, they retreated to the back-parlour. She, for her part, sat up-stairs when she liked, and down-stairs when she preferred it: she took her dram three times a day, and her pipe of tobacco four times.

As to Moore, no one now ventured to inquire about him: Mrs. Horsfall had him at dry-nurse: it was she who was to do for him; and the general conjecture now ran that she did for him accordingly.

Morning and evening MacTurk came to see him: his case, thus complicated by a new mischance, was become one of interest in the surgeon's eyes: he regarded him as a damaged piece of clock-work, which it would be creditable to his skill to set a-going again. Graves and young MacTurk—Moore's sole other visitors — contemplated him in the light in which they were wont to contemplate the occupant for the time being of the dissecting-room at Stilbro' Infirmary.

Robert Moore had a pleasant time of it: in pain; in danger; too weak to move; almost too weak to speak; a sort of giantess his keeper; the three surgeons his sole society. Thus he lay through the diminishing days and lengthening nights of the whole drear month of November.

In the commencement of his captivity, Moore used feebly to resist Mrs. Horsfall: he hated the sight of her rough bulk, and dreaded the contact of her hard hands; but she taught him docility in a trice.

She made no account whatever of his six feet—his manly thews and sinews: she turned him in his bed as another woman would have turned a babe in its cradle. When he was good, she addressed him as "my dear," and "honey;" and when he was bad, she sometimes shook him. Did he attempt to speak when MacTurk was there, she lifted her hand and bade him "hush!" like a nurse checking a forward child. If she had not smoked—if she had not taken gin, it would have been better, he thought; but she did both. Once—in her absence—he intimated to MacTurk that "that woman was a dram-drinker."

"Pooh! my dear sir; they are all so," was the reply he got for his pains. "But Horsfall has this virtue," added the surgeon,—"drunk or sober, she always remembers to obey *me*."

At length the latter autumn passed: its fogs, its rains, withdrew from England their mourning and their tears; its winds swept on to sigh over lands far away. Behind November came deep winter; clearness, stillness, frost accompanying.

A calm day had settled into a crystalline evening; the world wore a North Pole colouring: all its lights and tints looked like the "reflets"* of white, or violet, or pale green gems. The hills wore a lilac-blue; the setting sun had purple in its red; the sky was ice, all silvered azure; when the stars rose, they were of white crystal—not gold; gray, or cerulean,

* Find me an English word as good, reader, and I will gladly dispense with the French word. Reflections won't do.

or faint emerald hues—cool, pure, and transparent—tinged the mass of the landscape.

What is this by itself in a wood no longer green, no longer even russet; a wood, neutral tint—this dark blue moving object? Why, it is a schoolboy—a Briarfield grammar-schoolboy—who has left his companions, now trudging home by the high road, and is seeking a certain tree, with a certain mossy mound at its root—convenient as a seat. Why is he lingering here?—the air is cold, and the time wears late. He sits down: what is he thinking about? Does he feel the chaste charm nature wears to-night? A pearl-white moon smiles through the gray trees: Does he care for her smile?

Impossible to say; for he is silent, and his countenance does not speak: as yet, it is no mirror to reflect sensation, but rather a mask to conceal it. This boy is a stripling of fifteen—slight and tall of his years; in his face there is as little of amenity as of servility: his eye seems prepared to note any incipient attempt to control or overreach him, and the rest of his features indicate faculties alert for resistance. Wise ushers avoid unnecessary interference with that lad. To break him in by severity would be a useless attempt; to win him by flattery would be an effort worse than useless. He is best let alone. Time will educate, and experience train him.

Professedly, Martin Yorke (it is a young Yorke, of course) tramples on the name of poetry: talk sentiment to him, and you would be answered by sarcasm. Here he is, wandering alone, waiting dutifully on Nature, while she unfolds a page of stern,

of silent, and of solemn poetry, beneath his attentive gaze.

Being seated, he takes from his satchel a book—not the Latin grammar, but a contraband volume of Fairy-tales; there will be light enough yet for an hour to serve his keen young vision: besides, the moon waits on him—her beam, dim and vague as yet, fills the glade where he sits.

He reads: he is led into a solitary mountain region; all round him is rude and desolate, shapeless, and almost colourless. He hears bells tinkle on the wind; forth-riding from the formless folds of the mist, dawns on him the brightest vision—a green-robed lady, on a snow-white palfrey; he sees her dress, her gems, and her steed; she arrests him with some mysterious question: he is spell-bound, and must follow her into Fairy-land.

A second legend bears him to the sea-shore: there tumbles in a strong tide, boiling at the base of dizzy cliffs: it rains and blows. A reef of rocks, black and rough, stretches far into the sea; all along, and among, and above these crags, dash and flash, sweep and leap, swells, wreaths, drifts of snowy spray. Some lone wanderer is out on these rocks, treading, with cautious step, the wet, wild sea-weed; glancing down into hollows where the brine lies fathoms deep and emerald-clear, and seeing there wilder, and stranger, and huger vegetation, than is found on land, with treasure of shells—some green, some purple, some pearly—clustered in the curls of the snaky plants. He hears a cry. Looking up, and forward, he sees, at the bleak point of the reef, a tall,

pale thing—shaped like man, but made of spray—transparent, tremulous, awful: it stands not alone: they are all human figures that wanton in the rocks—a crowd of foam-women—a band of white, evanescent Nereides.

Hush!—Shut the book: hide it in the satchel.—Martin hears a tread. He listens: No——Yes: Once more, the dead leaves, lightly crushed, rustle on the wood-path. Martin watches: the trees part, and a woman issues forth.

She is a lady dressed in dark silk, a veil covering her face. Martin never met a lady in this wood before—nor any female, save, now and then, a village-girl come to gather nuts. To-night, the apparition does not displease him. He observes, as she approaches, that she is neither old nor plain, but, on the contrary, very youthful; and, but that he now recognises her for one whom he has often wilfully pronounced ugly, he would deem that he discovered traits of beauty behind the thin gauze of that veil.

She passes him, and says nothing. He knew she would: all women are proud monkeys—and he knows no more conceited doll than that Caroline Helstone. The thought is hardly hatched in his mind, when the lady retraces those two steps she had got beyond him, and, raising her veil, rèposes her glance on his face, while she softly asks:—

"Are you one of Mr. Yorke's sons?"

No human evidence would ever have been able to persuade Martin Yorke that he blushed when thus addressed; yet blush he did, to the ears.

"I am," he said, bluntly; and encouraged himself to wonder, superciliously, what would come next.

"You are Martin, I think?" was the observation that followed.

It could not have been more felicitous: it was a simple sentence—very artlessly, a little timidly, pronounced; but it chimed in harmony to the youth's nature: it stilled him like a note of music.

Martin had a keen sense of his personality: he felt it right and sensible that the girl should discriminate him from his brothers. Like his father, he hated ceremony: it was acceptable to hear a lady address him as "Martin," and not Mr. Martin, or Master Martin, which form would have lost her his good graces for ever. Worse, if possible, than ceremony, was the other extreme of slipshod familiarity: the slight tone of bashfulness—the scarcely-perceptible hesitation—was considered perfectly in place.

"I am Martin," he said.

"Are your father and mother well?"—(it was lucky she did not say *papa* and *mama*: that would have undone all)—"and Rose and Jessie?"

"I suppose so."

"My cousin Hortense is still at Briarmains?"

"Oh, yes!"

Martin gave a comic half-smile and demi-groan: the half-smile was responded to by the lady, who could guess in what sort of odour Hortense was likely to be held by the young Yorkes.

"Does your mother like her?"

"They suit so well about the servants, they can't help liking each other."

"It is cold to-night."

"Why are you out so late?"

"I lost my way in this wood."

Now, indeed, Martin allowed himself a refreshing laugh of scorn.

"Lost your way in the mighty forest of Briarmains! You deserve never more to find it."

"I never was here before, and I believe I am trespassing now: you might inform against me if you chose, Martin, and have me fined: it is your father's wood."

"I should think I knew that; but since you are so simple as to lose your way, I will guide you out."

"You need not: I have got into the track now: I shall be right. Martin" (a little quickly), "how is Mr. Moore?"

Martin had heard certain rumours: it struck him that it might be amusing to make an experiment.

"Going to die. Nothing can save him. All hope flung overboard!"

She put her veil aside. She looked into his eyes, and said,—

"To die!"

"To die. All along of the women, my mother and the rest: they did something about his bandages that finished everything: he would have got better but for them. I am sure they should be arrested, cribbed, tried, and brought in for Botany Bay, at the very least."

The questioner, perhaps, did not hear this judgment: she stood motionless. In two minutes, without another word, she moved forwards: no good-

night, no further inquiry. This was not amusing, nor what Martin had calculated on: he expected something dramatic and demonstrative: it was hardly worth while to frighten the girl, if she would not entertain him in return. He called,—

"Miss Helstone!"

She did not hear or turn. He hastened after and overtook her.

"Come. Are you uneasy about what I said?"

"You know nothing about death, Martin: you are too young for me to talk to concerning such a thing."

"Did you believe me? It 's all flummery! Moore eats like three men: they are always making sago or tapioca, or something good for him: I never go into the kitchen but there is a saucepan on the fire, cooking him some dainty. I think I will play the old soldier, and be fed on the fat of the land like him."

"Martin! Martin!" here her voice trembled, and she stopped.

"It is exceedingly wrong of you, Martin: you have almost killed me."

Again she stopped: she leaned against a tree, trembling, shuddering, and as pale as death.

Martin contemplated her with inexpressible curiosity. In one sense it was, as he would have expressed it, "nuts" to him to see this: it told him so much, and he was beginning to have a great relish for discovering secrets; in another sense, it reminded him of what he had once felt when he had heard a blackbird lamenting for her nestlings, which Matthew had crushed with a stone, and that was not a pleasant

feeling. Unable to find anything very appropriate to *say*, in order to comfort her, he began to cast about in his mind what he could *do*: he smiled: the lad's smile gave wondrous transparency to his physiognomy.

"Eureka!" he cried. "I'll set all straight by-and-by. You are better now, Miss Caroline: walk forward," he urged.

Not reflecting that it would be more difficult for Miss Helstone than for himself to climb a wall or penetrate a hedge, he piloted her by a short cut which led to no gate. The consequence was he had to help her over some formidable obstacles, and, while he railed at her for helplessness, he perfectly liked to feel himself of use.

"Martin, before we separate, assure me seriously, and on your word of honour, that Mr. Moore is better."

"How very much you think of that Moore!"

"No—but—many of his friends may ask me, and I wish to be able to give an authentic answer."

"You may tell them he is well enough, only idle: you may tell them that he takes mutton-chops for dinner, and the best of arrowroot for supper. I intercepted a bason myself one night on its way upstairs, and ate half of it."

"And who waits on him, Martin? Who nurses him?"

"Nurses him?—the great baby! Why, a woman as round and big as our largest water-butt—a rough, hard-favoured old girl. I make no doubt she leads him a rich life: nobody else is let near him: he

is chiefly in the dark. It is my belief she knocks him about terribly in that chamber. I listen at the wall sometimes when I am in bed, and I think I hear her thumping him. You should see her fist: she could hold half a dozen hands like yours in her one palm. After all, notwithstanding the chops and jellies he gets, I would not be in his shoes. In fact, it is my private opinion that she eats most of what goes up on the tray to Mr. Moore. I wish she may not be starving him."

Profound silence and meditation on Caroline's part, and a sly watchfulness on Martin's.

"You never see him, I suppose, Martin?"

"I? No: I don't care to see him, for my own part."

Silence again.

"Did not you come to our house once with Mrs. Pryor, about five weeks since, to ask after him?" again inquired Martin.

"Yes."

"I dare say you wished to be shown up-stairs?"

"We *did* wish it: we entreated it; but your mother declined."

"Ay! she declined: I heard it all: she treated you as it is her pleasure to treat visitors now and then: she behaved to you rudely and harshly."

"She was not kind; for, you know Martin, we are relations, and it is natural we should take an interest in Mr. Moore. But here we must part: we are at your father's gate."

"Very well—what of that? I shall walk home with you."

"They will miss you, and wonder where you are."

"Let them . . . I can take care of myself, I suppose."

Martin knew that he had already incurred the penalty of a lecture, and dry bread for his tea. No matter, the evening had furnished him with an adventure: it was better than muffins and toast.

He walked home with Caroline. On the way he promised to see Mr. Moore, in spite of the dragon who guarded his chamber, and appointed an hour on the next day, when Caroline was to come to Briarmains Wood and get tidings of him: he would meet her at a certain tree. The scheme led to nothing: still he liked it.

Having reached home, the dry bread and the lecture were duly administered to him, and he was dismissed to bed at an early hour. He accepted his punishment with the toughest stoicism.

Ere ascending to his chamber he paid a secret visit to the dining-room, a still, cold, stately apartment, seldom used; for the family customarily dined in the back parlour. He stood before the mantelpiece, and lifted his candle to two pictures hung above—female heads: one, a type of serene beauty—happy and innocent; the other, more lovely—but forlorn and desperate.

"She looked like *that*," he said, gazing on the latter sketch, "when she sobbed, turned white, and leaned against the tree."

"I suppose," he pursued, when he was in his room, and seated on the edge of his pallet-bed,—"I suppose she is, what they call, '*in love*; yes, *in love*

with that long thing in the next chamber. Whisht! is that Horsfall clattering him? I wonder he does not yell out. It really sounds as if she had fallen on him tooth and nail; but I suppose she is making the bed. I saw her at it once—she hit into the mattresses as if she was boxing. It is queer, Zillah (they call her Zillah)—Zillah Horsfall is a woman, and Caroline Helstone is a woman: they are two individuals of the same species—not much alike though. Is she a pretty girl, that Caroline? I suspect she is—very nice to look at—something so clear in her face—so soft in her eyes. I approve of her looking at me; it does me good. She has long eyelashes: their shadow seems to rest where she gazes, and to instil peace and thought. If she behaves well, and continnes to suit me, as she has suited me to-day, I may do her a good turn. I rather relish the notion of circumventing my mother and that ogress, old Horsfall. Not that I like humouring Moore; but whatever I do I'll be paid for, and in coin of my own choosing: I know what reward I will claim—one displeasing to Moore, and agreeable to myself."

He turned into bed.

CHAPTER X.

MARTIN'S TACTICS.

It was necessary to the arrangement of Martin's plan, that he should stay at home that day. Accordingly, he found no appetite for breakfast; and, just about school-time, took a severe pain about his heart, which rendered it advisable that, instead of setting out to the grammar-school with Mark, he should succeed to his father's arm-chair by the fire-side, and also to his morning-paper. This point being satisfactorily settled, and Mark being gone to Mr. Sumner's class, and Matthew and Mr. Yorke withdrawn to the counting-house, three other exploits, nay four, remained to be achieved.

The first of these was to realize the breakfast he had not yet tasted, and with which his appetite of fifteen could ill afford to dispense; the second, third, fourth, to get his mother, Miss Moore, and Mrs. Horsfall successively, out of the way before four o'clock that afternoon.

The first was, for the present, the most pressing, since the work before him demanded an amount of

energy which the present empty condition of his youthful stomach did not seem likely to supply.

Martin knew the way to the larder; and knowing this way, he took it. The servants were in the kitchen, breakfasting solemnly with closed doors; his mother and Miss Moore were airing themselves on the lawn, and discussing the closed doors aforesaid: Martin, safe in the larder, made fastidious selection from its stores. His breakfast had been delayed—he was determined it should be recherché: it appeared to him that a variety on his usual somewhat insipid fare of bread and milk was both desirable and advisable: the savoury and the salutary he thought might be combined. There was store of rosy apples laid in straw upon a shelf; he picked out three. There was pastry upon a dish; he selected an apricot-puff and a damson tart. On the plain household bread his eye did not dwell; but he surveyed with favour some currant tea-cakes, and condescended to make choice of one. Thanks to his clasp-knife, he was able to appropriate a wing of fowl and a shce of ham; a cantlet of cold custard-pudding he thought would harmonize with these articles; and having made this final addition to his booty, he at length sallied forth into the hall.

He was already half-way across—three steps more would have anchored him in the harbour of the back-parlour—when the front door opened, and there stood Matthew. Better far had it been the Old Gentleman, in full equipage of horns, hoofs, and tail.

Matthew, sceptic and scoffer, had already failed to

subscribe a prompt belief in that pain about the heart: he had muttered some words, amongst which the phrase "shamming Abraham" had been very distinctly audible; and the succession to the arm-chair and newspaper had appeared to affect him with mental spasms: the spectacle now before him, the apples, the tarts, the tea-cake, the fowl, ham and pudding, offered evidence but too well calculated to inflate his opinion of his own sagacity.

Martin paused "interdit" one minute, one instant; the next he knew his ground, and pronounced all well. With the true perspicacity "des âmes élites," he at once saw how this—at first sight untoward event—might be turned to excellent account: he saw how it might be so handled as to secure the accomplishment of his second task, viz. the disposal of his mother. He knew that a collision between him and Matthew always suggested to Mrs. Yorke the propriety of a fit of hysterics; he further knew that, on the principle of calm succeeding to storm, after a morning of hysterics, his mother was sure to indulge in an afternoon of bed. This would accommodate him perfectly.

The collision duly took place in the hall. A dry laugh, an insulting sneer, a contemptuous taunt, met by a nonchalant but most cutting reply, were the signals. They rushed at it. Martin, who usually made little noise on these occasions, made a great deal now. In flew the servants, Mrs. Yorke, Miss Moore: no female hand could separate them: Mr. Yorke was summoned.

"Sons," said he, "one of you must leave my roof

if this occurs again: I will have no Cain and Abel strife here."

Martin now allowed himself to be taken off: he had been hurt; he was the youngest and slightest: he was quite cool, in no passion: he even smiled, content that the most difficult part of the labour he had set himself was over.

Once he seemed to flag in the course of the morning.

"It is not worth while to bother myself for that Caroline," he remarked. But, a quarter of an hour afterwards, he was again in the dining-room, looking at the head with dishevelled tresses and eyes turbid with despair.

"Yes," he said, "I made her sob, shudder, almost faint: I'll see her smile before I've done with her: besides, I want to outwit all these womenites."

Directly after dinner, Mrs. Yorke fulfilled her son's calculation, by withdrawing to her chamber. Now for Hortense.

That lady was just comfortably settled to stocking-mending in the back-parlour, when Martin—laying down a book which, stretched on the sofa (he was still indisposed, according to his own account), he had been perusing in all the voluptuous ease of a yet callow pacha—lazily introduced some discourse about Sarah, the maid at the Hollow. In the course of much verbal meandering, he insinuated information that this damsel was said to have three suitors, Frederic Murgatroyd, Jeremiah Pighills, and John-of-Mally's-of-Hannah's-of-Deb's; and that Miss Mann had affirmed she knew for a fact, that now the girl

was left in sole charge of the cottage, she often had her swains to meals, and entertained them with the best the house afforded.

It needed no more. Hortense could not have lived another hour without betaking herself to the scene of these nefarious transactions, and inspecting the state of matters in person. Mrs. Horsfall remained.

Martin, master of the field now, extracted from his mother's work-basket a bunch of keys; with these he opened the sideboard-cupboard, produced thence a black bottle and a small glass, placed them on the table, nimbly mounted the stairs, made for Mr. Moore's door, tapped, the nurse opened.

"If you please, ma'am, you are invited to step into the back-parlour, and take some refreshment: you will not be disturbed: the family are out."

He watched her down; he watched her in; himself shut the door: he knew she was safe.

The hard work was done; now for the pleasure. He snatched his cap, and away for the wood.

It was yet but half-past three; it had been a fine morning, but the sky looked dark now: it was beginning to snow; the wind blew cold: the wood looked dismal; the old tree grim. Yet Martin approved the shadow on his path: he found a charm in the spectral aspect of the doddered oak.

He had to wait: to and fro he walked, while the flakes fell faster; and the wind, which at first had but moaned, pitifully howled.

"She is long in coming," he muttered, as he glanced along the narrow track. "I wonder," he.

subjoined, "what I wish to see her so much for? She is not coming for me. But I have power over her, and I want her to come that I may use that power."

He continued his walk.

"Now," he resumed, when a further period had elapsed, "if she fails to come, I shall hate and scorn her."

It struck four: he heard the church-clock far away. A step so quick, so light, that, but for the rustling of leaves, it would scarcely have sounded on the wood-walk, checked his impatience. The wind blew fiercely now, and the thickened white storm waxed bewildering; but on she came, and not dismayed.

"Well, Martin," she said eagerly, "how is he?"

"It is queer how she thinks of *him*," reflected Martin: "the blinding snow and bitter cold are nothing to her, I believe: yet she is but a 'chitty-faced' creature, as my mother would say. I could find in my heart to wish I had a cloak to wrap her in."

Thus meditating to himself, he neglected to answer Miss Helstone.

"You have seen him?"

"No."

"Oh! You promised you would."

"I mean to do better by you than that. Didn't I say, *I* don't care to see him?"

"But now it will be so long before I get to know anything certain about him, and I am sick of waiting. Martin, *do* see him, and give him Caroline

Helstone's regards and say, she wished to know how he was, and if anything could be done for his comfort."

"I won't."

"You are changed: you were so friendly last night."

"Come: we must not stand in this wood; it is too cold."

"But, before I go, promise me to come again to-morrow with news."

"No such thing; I am much too delicate to make and keep such appointments in the winter season: if you knew what a pain I had in my chest this morning, and how I went without breakfast, and was knocked down besides, you 'd feel the impropriety of bringing me here in the snow. Come, I say."

"Are you really delicate, Martin?"

"Don't I look so?"

"You have rosy cheeks."

"That 's hectic. Will you come—or you won't?"

"Where?"

"With me. I was a fool not to bring a cloak: I would have made you cozy."

"You are going home: my nearest road lies in the opposite direction."

"Put your arm through mine. I'll take care of you."

"But, the wall—the hedge—it is such hard work climbing, and you are too slender and young to help me without hurting yourself."

"You shall through the gate."

"But ——"go

"But!—but! Will you trust me or not?"

She looked into his face.

"I think I will. Anything rather than return as anxious as I came."

"I can't answer for that. This, however, I promise you; be ruled by me, and you shall see Moore yourself."

"See him myself?"

"Yourself."

"But, dear Martin, does he know?"

"Ah! I'm dear now. No: he doesn't know."

"And your mother and the others?"

"All is right."

Caroline fell into a long silent fit of musing, but still she walked on with her guide: they came in sight of Briarmains.

"Have you made up your mind?" he asked.

She was silent.

"Decide. We are just on the spot. *I won't* see him—that I tell you—except to announce your arrival."

"Martin, you are a strange boy, and this is a strange step; but all I feel *is* and *has* been, for a long time, strange. I will see him."

"Having said that, you will neither hesitate nor retract?"

"No."

"Here we are, then. Do not be afraid of passing the parlour-window: no one will see you. My father and Matthew are at the mill; Mark is at school; the servants are in the back-kitchen; Miss Moore is at the cottage; my mother in her bed; and

Mrs. Horsfall in Paradise. Observe—I need not ring: I open the door; the hall is empty; the staircase quiet; so is the gallery: the whole house and all its inhabitants are under a spell, which I will not break till you are gone."

"Martin, I trust you."

"You never said a better word. Let me take your shawl: I will shake off the snow and dry it for you. You are cold and wet: never mind; there is a fire up-stairs. Are you ready?"

"Yes."

"Follow me."

He left his shoes on the mat; mounted the stair unshod; Caroline stole after, with noiseless step: there was a gallery, and there was a passage; at the end of that passage Martin paused before a door and tapped: he had to tap twice—thrice: a voice, known to one listener, at last said,—

"Come in."

The boy entered briskly.

"Mr. Moore, a lady called to inquire after you: none of the women were about: it is washing-day, and the maids are over the crown of the head in soap-suds in the back-kitchen; so I asked her to step up."

"Up here, sir?"

"Up here, sir; but if you object, she shall go down again."

"Is this a place, or am I a person to bring a lady to, you absurd lad?"

"No: so I'll take her off."

"Martin, you will stay here. Who is she?"

"Your grandmother from that château on the Scheldt Miss Moore talks about."

"Martin," said the softest whisper at the door, "don't be foolish."

"Is she there?" inquired Moore, hastily. He had caught an imperfect sound.

"She is there, fit to faint: she is standing on the mat, shocked at your want of filial affection."

"Martin, you are an evil cross between an imp and a page. What is she like?"

"More like me than you; for she is young and beautiful."

"You are to show her forward. Do you hear?"

"Come, Miss Caroline."

"Miss Caroline!" repeated Moore.

And when Miss Caroline entered, she was encountered in the middle of the chamber by a tall, thin, wasted figure, who took both her hands.

"I give you a quarter of an hour," said Martin, as he withdrew: "no more. Say what you have to say in that time: till it is past, I will wait in the gallery: nothing shall approach: I'll see you safe away. Should you persist in staying longer, I leave you to your fate."

He shut the door. In the gallery he was as elate as a king: he had never been engaged in an adventure he liked so well; for no adventure had ever invested him with so much importance, or inspired him with so much interest.

"You are come at last," said the meagre man, gazing on his visitress with hollow eyes.

"Did you expect me before?"

"For a month—near two months, we have been very near; and I have been in sad pain, and danger, and misery, Cary."

"I could not come."

"Couldn't you? But the Rectory and Briarmains are very near: not two miles apart."

There was pain—there was pleasure in the girl's face as she listened to these implied reproaches: it was sweet—it was bitter to defend herself.

"When I say I could not come, I mean I could not see you; for I came with mama the very day we heard what had happened. Mr. MacTurk then told us it was impossible to admit any stranger."

"But afterwards—every fine afternoon these many weeks past I have waited and listened. Something here, Cary (laying his hand on his breast), told me it was impossible but that you should think of me. Not that I merit thought; but we are old acquaintance: we are cousins."

"I came again, Robert: mama and I came again."

"Did you? Come, that is worth hearing: since you came again, we will sit down and talk about it."

They sat down. Caroline drew her chair up to his. The air was now dark with snow: an Iceland blast was driving it wildly. This pair neither heard the long "wuthering" rush, nor saw the white burden it drifted: each seemed conscious but of one thing—the presence of the other.

"So mama and you came again?"

"And Mrs. Yorke did treat us strangely. We asked to see you. 'No,' said she; 'not in my house.

I am at present responsible for his life: it shall not be forfeited for half an hour's idle gossip.' But I must not tell you all she said: it was very disagreeable. However, we came yet again—mama, Miss Keeldar, and I. This time we thought we should conquer, as we were three against one, and Shirley was on our side. But Mrs. Yorke opened such a battery."

Moore smiled. "What did she say?"

"Things that astonished us. Shirley laughed at last; I cried; mama was seriously annoyed: we were all three driven from the field. Since that time I have only walked once a day past the house, just for the satisfaction of looking up at your window, which I could distinguish by the drawn curtains. I really dare not come in."

"I *have* wished for you, Caroline."

"I did not know that. I never dreamt one instant that you thought of me. If I had but most distantly imagined such a possibility ——"

"Mrs. Yorke would still have beaten you."

"She would not. Stratagem should have been tried, if persuasion failed. I would have come to the kitchen door; the servant should have let me in; and I would have walked straight up-stairs. In fact, it was far more the fear of intrusion—the fear of yourself, that baffled me, than the fear of Mrs. Yorke."

"Only last night, I despaired of ever seeing you again. Weakness has wrought terrible depression in me—terrible depression."

"And you sit alone?"

"Worse than alone."

"But you must be getting better, since you can leave your bed?"

"I doubt whether I shall live: I see nothing for it, after such exhaustion, but decline."

"You—you shall go home to the Hollow."

"Dreariness would accompany — nothing cheerful come near me."

"I *will* alter this: this *shall* be altered, were there ten Mrs. Yorkes to do battle with."

"Cary, you make me smile."

"Do smile: smile again. Shall I tell you what I should like?"

"Tell me anything—only keep talking. I am Saul: but for music I should perish."

"I should like you to be brought to the Rectory, and given to me and mama."

"A precious gift! I have not laughed since they shot me till now."

"Do you suffer pain, Robert?"

"Not so much pain now; but I am hopelessly weak, and the state of my mind is inexpressible—dark, barren, impotent. Do you not read it all in my face? I look a mere ghost."

"Altered, yet I should have known you anywhere: but I understand your feelings: I experienced something like it. Since we met, I too have been very ill."

"*Very* ill?"

"I thought I should die. The tale of my life seemed told. Every night just at midnight I used to wake from awful dreams—and the book lay open

before me, at the last page where was written 'Finis.' I had strange feelings."

"You speak my experience."

"I believed I should never see you again; and I grew so thin—as thin as you are now: I could do nothing for myself—neither rise nor lie down; and I could not eat—yet, you see I am better."

"Comforter! sad as sweet: I am too feeble to say what I feel; but, while you speak, I *do* feel."

"Here I am at your side, where I thought never more to be: here I speak to you—I see you listen to me willingly—look at me kindly. Did I count on that? I despaired."

Moore sighed—a sigh so deep, it was nearly a groan: he covered his eyes with his hand.

"May I be spared to make some atonement!"

Such was his prayer.

"And for what?"

"We will not touch on it now, Cary: unmanned as I am, I have not the power to cope with such a topic. Was Mrs. Pryor with you during your illness?"

"Yes" (Caroline smiled brightly)—"you know she is mama?"

"I have heard: Hortense told me; but that tale too I will receive from yourself. Does she add to your happiness?"

"What! mama? She is *dear* to me; *how* dear I cannot say. I was altogether weary, and she held me up."

"I deserve to hear that in a moment when I can scarce lift my hand to my head. I deserve it."

"It is no reproach against you."

"It is a coal of fire heaped on my head; and so is every word you address to me, and every look that lights your sweet face. Come still nearer, Lina, and give me your hand—if my thin fingers do not scare you."

She took those thin fingers between her two little hands—she bent her head "et les effleura de ses lèvres" (I put that in French because the word "effleurer" is an exquisite word). Moore was much moved: a large tear or two coursed down his hollow cheek.

"I'll keep these things in my heart, Cary: that kiss I will put by, and you shall hear of it again one day."

"Come out!" cried Martin, opening the door. "Come away—you have had twenty minutes instead of a quarter of an hour."

"She will not stir yet—you hempseed."

"I dare not stay longer, Robert."

"Can you promise to return?"

"No, she can't," responded Martin. "The thing musu't become customary: I can't be troubled. It's very well for once: I'll not have it repeated."

"*You*'ll not have it repeated!"

"Hush! don't vex him—we could not have met to-day but for him: but I will come again, if it is your wish that I should come."

"It *is* my wish—my *one* wish—almost the only wish I can feel."

"Come this minute: my mother has coughed, got up, set her feet on the floor. Let her only catch

you on the stairs, Miss Caroline: you 're not to bid him good-bye" (stepping between her and Moore), —" you are to march."

" My shawl, Martin."

" I have it. I 'll put it on for you when you are in the hall."

He made them part: he would suffer no Farewell but what could be expressed in looks: he half carried Caroline down the stairs. In the hall he wrapped her shawl round her, and—but that his mother's tread then creaked in the gallery, and but that a sentiment of diffidence—the proper, natural, therefore the noble impulse of his boy's heart, held him back, he would have claimed his reward—he would have said, " Now, Miss Caroline, for all this give me one kiss." But ere the words had passed his lips, she was across the snowy road, rather skimming than wading the drifts.

" She is my debtor, and I *will* be paid."

He flattered himself that it was opportunity, not audacity, which had failed him: he misjudged the quality of his own nature, and held it for something lower than it was.

CHAPTER XI.

CASE OF DOMESTIC PERSECUTION.—REMARKABLE INSTANCE OF PIOUS PERSEVERANCE IN THE DISCHARGE OF RELIGIOUS DUTIES.

MARTIN, having known the taste of excitement, wanted a second draught; having felt the dignity of power, he loathed to relinquish it. Miss Helstone—that girl he had always called ugly, and whose face was now perpetually before his eyes, by day and by night, in dark and in sunshine—had once come within his sphere: it fretted him to think the visit might never be repeated.

Though a schoolboy, he was no ordinary schoolboy: he was destined to grow up an original. At a few years later date, he took great pains to pare and polish himself down to the pattern of the rest of the world, but he never succeeded: an unique stamp marked him always. He now sat idle at his desk in the grammar-school, casting about in his mind for the means of adding another chapter to his commenced romance: he did not yet know how many commenced life-romances are doomed never to get

beyond the first—or at most—the second chapter. His Saturday half-holiday he spent in the wood with his book of fairy legends, and that other unwritten book of his imagination.

Martin harboured an irreligious reluctance to see the approach of Sunday. His father and mother—while disclaiming community with the Establishment—failed not duly, once on the sacred day, to fill their large pew in Briarfield church with the whole of their blooming family. Theoretically, Mr. Yorke placed all sects and churches on a level; Mrs. Yorke awarded the palm to Moravians and Quakers, on account of that crown of humility by these worthies worn: neither of them were ever known, however, to set foot in a conventicle.

Martin, I say, disliked Sunday, because the morning service was long, and the sermon usually little to his taste: this Saturday afternoon, however, his woodland musings disclosed to him a new-found charm in the coming day.

It proved a day of deep snow: so deep, that Mrs. Yorke, during breakfast, announced her conviction that the children, both boys and girls, would be better at home; and her decision that, instead of going to church, they should sit silent for two hours in the back-parlour, while Rose and Martin alternately read a succession of sermons: John Wesley's Sermons: John Wesley, being a Reformer and an Agitator, had a place both in her own and her husband's favour.

"Rose will do as she pleases," said Martin, not looking up from the book which, according to his

custom then and in after-life, he was studying over his bread and milk.

"Rose will do as she is told, and Martin, too," observed the mother.

"I am going to church."

So her son replied, with the ineffable quietude of a true Yorke, who knows his will and means to have it, and who, if pushed to the wall, will let himself be crushed to death, provided no way of escape can be found—but will never capitulate.

"It is not fit weather," said the father.

No answer: the youth read studiously; he slowly broke his bread and sipped his milk.

"Martin hates to go to church, but he hates still more to obey," said Mrs. Yorke.

"I suppose I am influenced by pure perverseness?"

"Yes—you are."

"Mother—I *am not.*"

"By what, then, are you influenced?"

"By a complication of motives; the intricacies of which I should as soon think of explaining to you, as I should of turning myself inside out to exhibit the internal machinery of my frame."

"Hear Martin! Hear him!" cried Mr. Yorke. "I must see and have this lad of mine brought up to the Bar: Nature meant him to live by his tongue. Hesther, your third son must certainly be a lawyer: he has the stock in trade—brass, self-conceit, and words—words—words."

"Some bread, Rose, if you please," requested Martin, with intense gravity, serenity, phlegm: the

boy had naturally a low, plaintive voice, which, in his "dour" moods, rose scarcely above a lady's whisper: the more inflexibly stubborn the humour, the softer, the sadder the tone. He rang the bell, and gently asked for his walking shoes.

"But, Martin," urged his sire, "there is drift all the way—a man could hardly wade through it. However, lad," he continued, seeing that the boy rose as the church-bell began to toll, "this is a case wherein I would by no means balk the obdurate chap of his will. Go to church by all means. There is a pitiless wind, and a sharp, frozen sleet, besides the depth underfoot. Go out into it, since thou prefers it to a warm fireside."

Martin quietly assumed his cloak, comforter, and cap, and deliberately went out.

"My father has more sense than my mother," he pronounced. "How women miss it! They drive the nail into the flesh, thinking they are hammering away at insensate stone."

He reached church early.

"Now, if the weather frightens her (and it is a real December tempest), or if that Mrs. Pryor objects to her going out, and I should miss her after all, it will vex me: but, tempest or tornado, hail or ice, she *ought* to come; and, if she has a mind worthy of her eyes and features, she *will* come: she will be here for the chance of seeing me, as I am here for the chance of seeing her: she will want to get a word respecting her confounded sweetheart, as I want to get another flavour of what I think the essence of life: a taste of existence, with the spirit

preserved in it, and not evaporated. Adventure is to stagnation what champagne is to flat porter."

He looked round. The church was cold, silent, empty, but for one old woman. As the chimes subsided, and the single bell tolled slowly, another and another elderly parishioner came dropping in, and took his humble station in the free sittings. It is always the frailest, the oldest, and the poorest that brave the worst weather, to prove and maintain their constancy to dear old mother Church: this wild morning, not one affluent family attended, not one carriage party appeared—all the lined and cushioned pews were empty; only on the bare oaken seats sat ranged the gray-haired elders and feeble paupers.

"I'll scorn her, if she doesn't come," muttered Martin shortly and savagely to himself. The Rector's shovel-hat had passed the porch: Mr. Helstone and his clerk were in the vestry.

The bells ceased—the reading-desk was filled—the doors were closed—the service commenced: void stood the Rectory-pew—she was not there: Martin scorned her.

"Worthless thing! Vapid thing! Commonplace humbug! Like all other girls—weakly, selfish, shallow!"

Such was Martin's liturgy.

"She is not like our picture: her eyes are not large and expressive: her nose is not straight, delicate, Hellenic: her mouth has not that charm I thought it had—which, I imagined, could beguile me of sullenness in my worst moods. What is she? A thread-paper, a doll, a toy—a *girl*, in short."

So absorbed was the young cynic, he forgot to rise from his knees at the proper place, and was still in an exemplary attitude of devotion when—the litany over—the first hymn was given out. To be so caught did not contribute to soothe him: he started up red (for he was as sensitive to ridicule as any girl). To make the matter worse, the church-door had re-opened, and the aisles were filling: patter, patter, patter, a hundred little feet trotted in. It was the Sunday-scholars. According to Briarfield winter custom, these children had till now been kept where there was a warm stove, and only led into church just before the Communion and Sermon.

The little ones were settled first, and at last, when the boys and the younger girls were all arranged—when the organ was swelling high, and the choir and congregation were rising to uplift a spiritual song—a tall class of young women came quietly in, closing the procession. Their teacher, having seen them seated, passed into the Rectory-pew. The French-gray cloak and small beaver bonnet were known to Martin: it was the very costume his eyes had ached to catch. Miss Helstone had not suffered the storm to prove an impediment: after all, she was come to church. Martin probably whispered his satisfaction to his hymn-book; at any rate, he therewith hid his face two minutes.

Satisfied or not, he had time to get very angry with her again before the sermon was over; she had never once looked his way: at least, he had not been so lucky as to encounter a glance.

"If," he said—"if she takes no notice of me; if

she shows I am not in her thoughts, I shall have a worse, a meaner opinion of her than ever. Most despicable would it be to come for the sake of those sheep-faced Sunday-scholars, and not for my sake, or that long skeleton Moore's."

The sermon found an end; the benediction was pronounced; the congregation dispersed: she had not been near him.

Now, indeed, as Martin set his face homeward, he felt that the sleet was sharp, and the east wind cold.

His nearest way lay through some fields: it was a dangerous, because an untrodden way: he did not care; he would take it. Near the second stile rose a clump of trees: was that an umbrella waiting there? Yes: an umbrella held with evident difficulty against the blast: behind it fluttered a French gray cloak. Martin grinned as he toiled up the steep, encumbered field, difficult to the foot as a slope in the upper realms of Etna. There was an inimitable look in his face when, having gained the stile, he seated himself coolly thereupon, and thus opened a conference which, for his own part, he was willing to prolong indefinitely.

"I think you had better strike a bargain: exchange me for Mrs. Pryor."

"I was not sure whether you would come this way, Martin; but I thought I would run the chance: there is no such thing as getting a quiet word spoken in the church or churchyard."

"Will you agree? Make over Mrs. Pryor to my mother, and put me in her skirts?"

"As if I could understand you! What puts Mrs. Pryor into your head?"

"You call her 'mama,' don't you?"

"She *is* my mama."

"Not possible—or so inefficient, so careless a mama—I should make a five times better one. You *may* laugh: I have no objection to see you laugh: your teeth—I hate ugly teeth; but yours are as pretty as a pearl necklace, and a necklace of which the pearls are very fair, even, and well matched, too."

"Martin, what now? I thought the Yorkes never paid compliments?"

"They have not done till this generation; but I feel as if it were my vocation to turn out a new variety of the Yorke species. I am rather tired of my own ancestors: we have traditions going back for four ages—tales of Hiram, which was the son of Hiram, which was the son of Samuel, which was the son of John, which was the son of Zerubbabel Yorke. All, from Zerubbabel down to the last Hiram, were such as you see my father. Before that, there was a Godfrey: we have his picture; it hangs in Moore's bed-room: it is like me. Of his character, we know nothing; but I am sure it was different to his descendants: he has long curling dark hair; he is carefully and cavalierly dressed. Having said that he is like me, I need not add that he is handsome."

"You are not handsome, Martin."

"No; but wait a while: just let me take my time: I mean to begin from this day to cultivate, to polish, —and we shall see."

"You are a very strange—a very unaccountable boy, Martin; but don't imagine you ever will be handsome: you cannot."

"I mean to try. But we were talking about Mrs. Pryor: she must be the most unnatural mama in existence, coolly to let her daughter come out in this weather. Mine was in such a rage, because I would go to church: she was fit to fling the kitchen-brush after me."

"Mama was very much concerned about me; but I am afraid I was obstinate: I *would* go."

"To see me?"

"Exactly: I thought of nothing else. I greatly feared the snow would hinder you from coming: you don't know how pleased I was to see you all by yourself in the pew."

"*I* came to fulfil my duty, and set the parish a good example. And so you were obstinate, were you? I should like to see you obstinate, I should. Wouldn't I have you in good discipline if I owned you? Let me take the umbrella."

"I can't stay two minutes: our dinner will be ready."

"And so will ours; and we have always a hot dinner on Sundays. Roast goose to-day, with apple-pie and rice-pudding. I always contrive to know the bill of fare: well, I like these things uncommouly; but I'll make the sacrifice, if you will."

"We have a cold dinner: my uncle will allow no unnecessary cooking on the Sabbath. But I must return: the house would be in commotion, if I failed to appear."

"So will Briarmains, bless you! I think I hear my father sending out the overlooker and five of the dyers, to look in six directions for the body of his prodigal son in the snow; and my mother repenting her of her many misdeeds towards me, now I am gone."

"Martin, how is Mr. Moore?"

"*That* is what you came for—just to say that word."

"Come, tell me quickly."

"Hang him! He is no worse; but as ill-used as ever—mewed up, kept in solitary confinement. They mean to make either an idiot or a maniac of him, and take out a commission of lunacy. Horsfall starves him: you saw how thin he was."

"You were very good the other day, Martin."

"What day? I am always good—a model."

"When will you be so good again?"

"I see what you are after; but you'll not wheedle me: I am no cat's paw."

"But it must be done: it is quite a right thing, and a necessary thing."

"How you encroach! Remember, I managed the matter of my own free-will before."

"And you will again."

"I won't: the business gave me far too much trouble: I like my ease."

"Mr. Moore wishes to see me, Martin; and I wish to see him."

"I daresay" (coolly).

"It is too bad of your mother to exclude his friends."

"Tell her so."

"His own relations."

"Come and blow her up."

"You know that would advance nothing. Well, I shall stick to my point. See him I will. If you won't help me, I'll manage without help."

"Do: there is nothing like self-reliance — self-dependence."

"I have no time to reason with you now; but I consider you provoking. Good-morning."

Away she went—the umbrella shut; for she could not carry it against the wind.

"She is not vapid; she is not shallow," said Martin. "I shall like to watch, and mark how she will work her way without help. If the storm were not of snow, but of fire—such as came refreshingly down on the cities of the plain—she would go through it, to procure five minutes' speech of that Moore. Now, I consider I have had a pleasant morning: the disappointments got time on: the fears and fits of anger only made that short discourse pleasanter, when it came at last. She expected to coax me at once: she'll not manage that in one effort: she shall come again, again, and yet again. It would please me to put her in a passion—to make her cry: I want to discover how far she will go—what she will do and dare —to get her will. It seems strange and new to find one human being thinking so much about another as she thinks about Moore.—But it is time to go home: my appetite tells me the hour: won't I walk into that goose?—and we'll try whether Matthew or I shall get the largest cut of the apple-pie to-day."

CHAPTER XII.

WHEREIN MATTERS MAKE SOME PROGRESS, BUT NOT MUCH.

MARTIN had planned well: he had laid out a dexterously-concerted scheme for his private amusement; but older and wiser schemers than he are often doomed to see their finest-spun projects swept to annihilation by the sudden broom of Fate—that fell housewife, whose red arm none can control. In the present instance, this broom was manufactured out of the tough fibres of Moore's own stubborn purpose, bound tight with his will. He was now resuming his strength, and making strange head against Mrs. Horsfall. Each morning, he amazed that matron with a fresh astonishment. First, he discharged her from her valet-duties: he would dress himself. Then, he refused the coffee she brought him: he would breakfast with the family. Lastly, he forbade her his chamber. On the same day, amidst the outcries of all the women in the place, he put his head out of doors. The morning after, he followed Mr. Yorke to his counting-house, and requested an envoy to

fetch a chaise from the Red-House Inn. He was resolved, he said, to return home to the Hollow that very afternoon. Mr. Yorke, instead of opposing, aided and abetted him: the chaise was sent for, though Mrs. Yorke declared the step would be his death. It came. Moore, little disposed to speak, made his purse do duty for his tongue: he expressed his gratitude to the servants and to Mrs. Horsfall, by the chink of his coin. The latter personage approved and understood this language perfectly; it made amends for all previous contumacity: she and her patient parted the best friends in the world.

The kitchen visited and soothed, Moore betook himself to the parlour: he had Mrs. Yorke to appease; not quite so easy a task as the pacification of her housemaids. There she sat plunged in sullen dudgeon; the gloomiest speculations on the depths of man's ingratitude absorbing her thoughts. He drew near and bent over her; she was obliged to look up, if it were only to bid him "avaunt." There was beauty still in his pale, wasted features; there was earnestness, and a sort of sweetness—for he was smiling—in his hollow eyes.

"Good-bye!" he said; and as he spoke the smile glittered and melted. He had no iron mastery of his sensations now: a trifling emotion made itself apparent in his present weak state.

"And what are you going to leave us for?" she asked: "we will keep you, and do anything in the world for you, if you will only stay till you are stronger."

"Good-bye!" he again said; and added, "you

have been a mother to me: give your wilful son one embrace."

Like a foreigner, as he was, he offered her first one cheek, then the other: she kissed him.

"What a trouble—what a burden I have been to you!" he muttered.

"You are the worst trouble now, headstrong youth!" was the answer. "I wonder who is to nurse you at Hollow's cottage: your sister Hortense knows no more about such matters than a child."

"Thank God! for I have had nursing enough to last me my life."

Here the little girls came in; Jessie crying, Rose quiet, but grave. Moore took them out into the hall to soothe, pet, and kiss them. He knew it was not in their mother's nature to bear to see any living thing caressed but herself: she would have felt annoyed had he fondled a kitten in her presence.

The boys were standing about the chaise as Moore entered it; but for them he had no farewell. To Mr. Yorke he only said,—

"You have a good riddance of me: that was an unlucky shot for you, Yorke; it turned Briarmains into an hospital. Come and see me at the cottage soon."

He drew up the glass; the chaise rolled away. In half an hour he alighted at his own garden-wicket. Having paid the driver and dismissed the vehicle, he leaned on that wicket an instant, at once to rest and to muse.

"Six months ago I passed out at this gate," said

he, "a proud, angry, disappointed man; I come back sadder and wiser: weakly enough, but not worried. A cold, gray, yet quiet world lies round —a world where, if I hope little, I fear nothing. All slavish terrors of embarrassment have left me: let the worst come, I can work, as Joe Scott does, for an honourable living: in such doom, I yet see some hardship, but no degradation. Formerly, pecuniary ruin was equivalent in my eyes to personal dishonour. It is not so now: I know the difference. Ruin *is* an evil; but one for which I am prepared; the day of whose coming I know, for I have calculated. I can yet put it off six months—not an hour longer: if things by that time alter—which is not probable; if fetters, which now seem indissoluble, should be loosened from our trade (of all things the most unlikely to happen)—I might conquer in this long struggle yet—I might——Good God! what might I not do? But the thought is a brief madness: let me see things with sane eyes. Ruin will come, lay her axe to my fortune's roots, and hew them down. I shall snatch a sapling, I shall cross the sea, and plant it in American woods. Louis will go with me. Will none but Louis go? I cannot tell—I have no right to ask."

He entered the house.

It was afternoon, twilight yet out of doors: starless and moonless twilight; for, though keenly freezing with a dry black frost, heaven wore a mask of clouds congealed and fast-locked. The mill-dam too was frozen: the Hollow was very still: indoors it was already dark. Sarah had lit a good

fire in the parlour, she was preparing tea in the kitchen.

"Hortense," said Moore, as his sister bustled up to help him off with his cloak, "I am pleased to come home."

Hortense did not feel the peculiar novelty of this expression coming from her brother, who had never before called the cottage his home, and to whom its narrow limits had always heretofore seemed rather restrictive than protective: still, whatever contributed to his happiness pleased her; and she expressed herself to that effect.

He sat down, but soon rose again: he went to the window; he came back to the fire.

"Hortense!"

"Mon frère?"

"This little parlour looks very clean and pleasant: unusually bright, somehow."

"It is true, brother: I have had the whole house thoroughly and scrupulously cleaned in your absence."

"Sister, I think on this first day of your return home, you ought to have a friend or so to tea; if it were only to see how fresh and spruce you have made the little place."

"True, brother: if it were not late, I might send for Miss Mann."

"So you might; but it really is too late to disturb that good lady; and the evening is much too cold for her to come out."

"How thoughtful in you, dear Gérard! We must put it off till another day."

"I want some one to-day, dear sister: some quiet guest, who would tire neither of us."

"Miss Ainley?"

"An excellent person, they say; but she lives too far off. Tell Harry Scott to step up to the Rectory, with a request from you, that Caroline Helstone should come and spend the evening with you."

"Would it not be better to-morrow, dear brother?"

"I should like her to see the place as it is just now: its brilliant cleanliness and perfect neatness are so much to your credit."

"It might benefit her in the way of example."

"It might and must: she ought to come."

He went into the kitchen.

"Sarah, delay tea half an hour." He then commissioned her to despatch Harry Scott to the Rectory, giving her a twisted note hastily scribbled in pencil by himself, and addressed "Miss Helstone."

Scarcely had Sarah time to get impatient under the fear of damage to her toast already prepared, when the messenger returned; and with him the invited guest.

She entered through the kitchen, quietly tripped up Sarah's stairs to take off her bonnet and furs, and came down as quietly, with her beautiful curls nicely smoothed; her graceful merino dress and delicate collar all trim and spotless; her gay little work-bag in her hand. She lingered to exchange a few kindly words with Sarah; and to look at the new tortoise-shell kitten basking on the kitchen hearth; and to speak to the canary-bird, which a sudden blaze from

the fire had startled on its perch; and then she betook herself to the parlour.

The gentle salutation, the friendly welcome, were interchanged in such tranquil sort as befitted cousins meeting; a sense of pleasure, subtle and quiet as a perfume, diffused itself through the room; the newly kindled lamp burned up bright; the tray and the singing urn were brought in.

"I am pleased to come home," repeated Mr. Moore.

They assembled round the table. Hortense chiefly talked. She congratulated Caroline on the evident improvement in her health: her colour and her plump cheeks were returning, she remarked. It was true: there was an obvious change in Miss Helstone: all about her seemed elastic; depression, fear, forlornness, were withdrawn: no longer crushed, and saddened, and slow, and drooping, she looked like one who had tasted the cordial of heart's-ease, and been lifted on the wing of hope.

After tea, Hortense went up-stairs: she had not rummaged her drawers for a month past, and the impulse to perform that operation was now become resistless. During her absence, the talk passed into Caroline's hands: she took it up with ease; she fell into her best tone of conversation. A pleasing facility and elegance of language gave fresh charm to familiar topics: a new music in the always soft voice gently surprised and pleasingly captivated the listener; unwonted shades and lights of expression elevated the young countenance with character, and kindled it with animation.

"Caroline, you look as if you had heard good tidings," said Moore, after earnestly gazing at her for some minutes.

"Do I?"

"I sent for you this evening that I might be cheered; but you cheer me more than I had calculated."

"I am glad of that. And I *really* cheer you?"

"You look brightly; move buoyantly; speak musically."

"It is pleasant to be here again."

"Truly it is pleasant: I feel it so. And to see health on your cheek, and hope in your eye, is pleasant, Cary: but what is this hope, and what is the source of this sunshine I perceive about you?"

"For one thing, I am happy in mama: I love her so much, and she loves me. Long and tenderly she nursed me; now, when her care has made me well, I can occupy myself for and with her all the day. I say it is my turn to attend to her; and I *do* attend to her: I am her waiting-woman, as well as her child: I like—you would laugh if you knew what pleasure I have in making dresses and sewing for her. She looks so nice now, Robert: I will not let her be old-fashioned. And then, she is charming to talk to: full of wisdom; ripe in judgment; rich in information; exhaustless in stores her observant faculties have quietly amassed. Every day that I live with her, I like her better; I esteem her more highly; I love her more tenderly.

"*That* for one thing, then, Cary, you talk in such

a way about 'mama,' it is enough to make one jealous of the old lady."

"She is not old, Robert."

"Of the young lady, then."

"She does not pretend to be young."

"Well—of the matron. But you said 'mama's' affection was *one* thing that made you happy: now for the other thing."

"I am glad you are better."

"What besides?"

"I am glad we are friends."

"You and I?"

"Yes: I once thought we never should be."

"Cary, some day I mean to tell you a thing about myself that is not to my credit, and, consequently, will not please you."

"Ah!—don't! I cannot bear to think ill of you."

"And I cannot bear that you should think better of me than I deserve."

"Well, but I half know your 'thing:' indeed, I believe I know all about it."

"You do not."

"I believe I do."

"Whom does it concern besides me?"

She coloured; she hesitated; she was silent.

"Speak, Cary!—whom does it concern?"

She tried to utter a name, and could not.

"Tell me: there is none present but ourselves: be frank."

"But if I guess wrong?"

"I will forgive. Whisper, Cary."

He bent his ear to her lips: still she would not,

or could not, speak clearly to the point. Seeing that Moore waited, and was resolved to hear something, she at last said,—

"Miss Keeldar spent a day at the Rectory about a week since. The evening came on very wintry, and we persuaded her to stay all night."

"And you and she curled your hair together?"

"How do you know that?"

"And then you chatted; and she told you——"

"It was not at curling-hair time; so you are not as wise as you think: and besides, she did't tell me."

"You slept together afterwards?"

"We occupied the same room and bed. We did not sleep much: we talked the whole night through."

"I'll be sworn you did! and then it all came out—tant pis. I would rather you had heard it from myself."

"You are quite wrong: she did not tell me what you suspect: she is not the person to proclaim such things; but yet I inferred something from parts of her discourse: I gathered more from rumour, and I made out the rest by instinct."

"But if she did not tell you that I wanted to marry her for the sake of her money, and that she refused me indignantly and scornfully (you need neither start nor blush; nor yet need you prick your trembling fingers with your needle: that is the plain truth, whether you like it or not)—if such was not the subject of her august confidences, on what point did they turn? You say you talked the whole night through: what about?"

"About things we never thorougly discussed before,

intimate friends as we have been: but you hardly expect I should tell you?"

"Yes, yes, Cary,—you will tell me: you said we were friends; and friends should always confide in each other."

"But you are sure you won't repeat it?"

"Quite sure."

"Not to Louis?"

"Not even to Louis? What does Louis care for young ladies' secrets?"

"Robert—Shirley is a curious, magnanimous being."

"I daresay: I can imagine there are both odd points and grand points about her."

"I have found her chary in showing her feelings; but when they rush out, river-like, and pass full and powerful before you,—almost without leave from her—you gaze, wonder, you admire, and—I think—love her."

"You saw this spectacle?"

"Yes: at dead of night; when all the house was silent, and starlight, and the cold reflection from the snow glimmered in our chamber,—then I saw Shirley's heart."

"Her heart's core? Do you think she showed you that?"

"Her heart's core."

"And how was it?"

"Like a shrine,—for it was holy; like snow,—for it was pure; like flame,—for it was warm; like death,—for it was strong."

"Can she love? Tell me that."

"What think you?"

"She has loved none that have loved her yet."

"Who are those that have loved her?"

He named a list of gentlemen, closing with Sir Philip Nunnely.

"She has loved none of these."

"Yet some of them were worthy of a woman's affection."

"Of some women's; but not of Shirley's."

"Is she better than others of her sex?"

"She is peculiar, and more dangerous to take as a wife—rashly."

"I can imagine that."

"She spoke of you——"

"Oh! she did! I thought you denied it."

"She did not speak in the way you fancy; but I asked her, and I would make her tell me what she thought of you, or rather, how she felt towards you. I wanted to know: I had long wanted to know."

"So had I; but let us hear: she thinks meanly—she feels contemptuously, doubtless?"

"She thinks of you almost as highly as a woman can think of a man. You know she can be eloquent: I yet feel in fancy the glow of the language in which her opinion was conveyed."

"But how does she feel?"

"Till you shocked her (she said you had shocked her, but she would not tell me how), she felt as a sister feels towards a brother of whom she is at once fond and proud."

"I'll shock her no more, Cary, for the shock rebounded on myself till I staggered again: but that

comparison about sister and brother is all nonsense: she is too rich and proud to entertain fraternal sentiments for me."

"You don't know her, Robert; and somehow, I fancy *now* (I had other ideas formerly), that you cannot know her: you and she are not so constructed as to be able thoroughly to understand each other."

"It may be so. I esteem her; I admire her; and yet my impressions concerning her are harsh—perhaps uncharitable. I believe, for instance, that she is incapable of love ——"

"Shirley incapable of love!"

"That she will never marry: I imagine her jealous of compromising her pride, of relinquishing her power, of sharing her property."

"Shirley has hurt your amour-propre."

"She did hurt it—though I had not an emotion of tenderness, not a spark of passion for her."

"Then, Robert, it was very wicked in you to want to marry her."

"And very mean, my little pastor, my pretty priestess. I never wanted to kiss Miss Keeldar in my life, though she has fine lips, scarlet and round, as ripe cherries; or, if I did wish it, it was the mere desire of the eye."

"I doubt, now, whether you are speaking the truth: the grapes or the cherries are sour—'hung too high.'"

"She has a pretty figure, a pretty face, beautiful hair: I acknowledge all her charms and feel none of them; or only feel them in a way she would disdain. I suppose I was truly tempted, by the mere gilding

of the bait. Caroline, what a noble fellow your Robert is—great, good, disinterested, and then so pure!"

"But not perfect: he made a great blunder once, and we will hear no more about it."

"And shall we think no more about it, Cary? Shall we not despise him in our heart, gentle but just, compassionate but upright?"

"Never! We will remember that with what measure we mete it shall be measured unto us, and so we will give no scorn—only affection."

"Which won't satisfy, I warn you of that. Something besides affection—something far stronger, sweeter, warmer—will be demanded one day: is it there to give?"

Caroline was moved—much moved.

"Be calm, Lina," said Moore, soothingly; "I have no intention, because I have no right, to perturb your mind now, nor for months to come: don't look as if you would leave me: we will make no more agitating allusions: we will resume our gossip. Do not tremble: look me in the face: see! what a poor, pale, grim phantom I am—more pitiable than formidable."

She looked shyly. "There is something formidable still, pale as you are," she said, as her eye fell under his.

"To return to Shirley," pursued Moore; "is it your opinion that she is ever likely to marry?"

"She loves."

"Platonically—theoretically—all humbug!"

"She loves, what I call, sincerely."

"Did she say so?"

"I cannot affirm that she said so: no such confession as I love this man or that, passed her lips."

"I thought not."

"But the feeling made its way in spite of her, and I saw it. She spoke of one man in a strain not to be misunderstood: her voice alone was sufficient testimony. Having wrung from her an opinion on your character, I demanded a second opinion of —— another person about whom I had my conjectures; though they were the most tangled and puzzled conjectures in the world. I would *make* her speak: I shook her, I chid her, I pinched her fingers when she tried to put me off with gibes and jests in her queer, provoking way, and at last, out it came: the voice, I say, was enough; hardly raised above a whisper, and yet such a soft vehemence in its tones. There was no confession—no confidence in the matter: to these things she cannot condescend; but I am sure that man's happiness is dear to her as her own life."

"Who is it?"

"I charged her with the fact; she did not deny; she did not avow, but looked at me: I saw her eyes by the snow-gleam. It was quite enough: I triumphed over her mercilessly."

"What right had *you* to triumph? Do you mean to say *you* are fancy-free?"

"Whatever *I* am, Shirley is a bondswoman. Lioness! She has found her captor. Mistress she may be of all round her—but her own mistress she is not."

"So you exulted at recognising a fellow-slave in one so fair and imperial?"

"I did; Robert, you say right, in one so fair and imperial."

"You confess it—a *fellow*-slave?"

"I confess nothing; but I say that haughty Shirley is no more free than was Hagar."

"And who, pray, is the Abraham; the hero of a patriarch who has achieved such a conquest?"

"You still speak scornfully, and cynically, and sorely; but I will make you change your note before I have done with you."

"We will see that: can she marry this Cupidon?"

"Cupidon! he is just about as much a Cupidon as you are a Cyclops."

"Can she marry him?"

"You will see."

"I want to know his name, Cary."

"Guess it."

"Is it any one in this neighbourhood?"

"Yes, in Briarfield parish."

"Then it is some person unworthy of her. I don't know a soul in Briarfield parish her equal."

"Guess."

"Impossible. I suppose she is under a delusion, and will plunge into some absurdity after all."

Caroline smiled.

"Do *you* approve the choice?" asked Moore.

"Quite, *quite*."

"Then I *am* puzzled; for the head which owns

this bounteous fall of hazel curls is an excellent little thinking machine, most accurate in its working: it boasts a correct, steady judgment, inherited from 'mama,' I suppose."

"And I *quite* approve, and mama was charmed."

"'Mama' charmed! Mrs. Pryor. It can't be romantic then?"

"It *is* romantic, but it is also right."

"Tell me, Cary. Tell me out of pity: I am too weak to be tantalized."

"You shall be tantalized: it will do you no harm: you are not so weak as you pretend."

"I have twice this evening had some thoughts of falling on the floor at your feet."

"You had better not: I shall decline to help you up."

"And worshipping you downright. My mother was a Roman Catholic; you look like the loveliest of her pictures of the Virgin: I think I will embrace her faith, and kneel and adore."

"Robert, Robert, sit still; don't be absurd: I will go to Hortense, if you commit extravagances."

"You have stolen my senses: just now nothing will come into my mind but 'les litanies de la sainte Vièrge. Rose céleste, reine des Anges!'"

"'Tour d'ivoire, maison d'or': is not that the jargon? Well, sit down quietly, and guess your riddle."

"But, 'mama' charmed! There's the puzzle."

"I'll tell you what mama said when I told her: 'Depend upon it, my dear, such a choice will make the happiness of Miss Keeldar's life.'"

"I 'll guess once, and no more. It is old Helstone. She is going to be your aunt."

"I 'll tell my uncle; I 'll tell Shirley!" cried Caroline, laughing gleefully. "Guess again, Robert; your blunders are charming."

"It is the parson, Hall."

"Indeed, no: he is mine, if you please."

"Yours! Ay! the whole generation of women in Briarfield seemed to have made an idol of that priest: I wonder why: he is bald, sand-blind, gray-haired."

"Fanny will be here to fetch me, before you have solved the riddle, if you don't make haste."

"I 'll guess no more, I am tired: and then I don't care. Miss Keeldar may marry 'le grand Turc' for me."

"Must I whisper."

"That you must, and quickly: here comes Hortense; come near, a little nearer, my own Lina: I care for the whisper more than the words."

She whispered: Robert gave a start, a flash of the eye, a brief laugh: Miss Moore entered, and Sarah followed behind, with information that Fanny was come. The hour of converse was over.

Robert found a moment to exchange a few more whispered sentences: he was waiting at the foot of the staircase, as Caroline descended after putting on her shawl.

"Must I call Shirley a noble creature now?" he asked.

"If you wish to speak the truth, certainly."

"Must I forgive her?"

"Forgive her? Naughty Robert! Was she in the wrong, or were you?"

"Must I at length love her downright, Cary?"

Caroline looked keenly up, and made a movement towards him, something between the loving and the petulant.

"Only give the word, and I'll try to obey you."

"Indeed, you must not love her: the bare idea is perverse."

"But then she is handsome, peculiarly handsome: hers is a beauty that grows on you: you think her but graceful, when you first see her; you discover her to be beautiful, when you have known her for a year."

"It is not you who are to say these things. Now, Robert, be good."

"Oh! Cary, I have no love to give. Were the goddess of beauty to woo me, I could not meet her advances: there is no heart which I can call mine in this breast."

"So much the better: you are a great deal safer without: good-night."

"Why must you always go, Lina, at the very instant when I most want you to stay?"

"Because you most wish to retain when you are most certain to lose."

"Listen; one other word. Take care of your own heart: do you hear me?"

"There is no danger."

"I am not convinced of that: the Platonic parson, for instance."

"Who? Malone?"

"Cyril Hall: I owe more than one twinge of jealousy to that quarter."

"As to you, you have been flirting with Miss Mann: she shewed me the other day a plant you had given her. Fanny, I am ready."

CHAPTER XIII.

WRITTEN IN THE SCHOOLROOM.

LOUIS MOORE'S doubts, respecting the immediate evacuation of Fieldhead by Mr. Sympson, turned out to be perfectly well founded. The very next day after the grand quarrel about Sir Philip Nunnely, a sort of reconciliation was patched up between uncle and niece: Shirley, who could never find in her heart to be or to seem inhospitable (except in the single instance of Mr. Donne), begged the whole party to stay a little longer: she begged in such earnest, it was evident she wished it, for some reason. They took her at her word: indeed, the uncle could not bring himself to leave her quite unwatched—at full liberty to marry Robert Moore, as soon as that gentleman should be able (Mr. Sympson piously prayed this might never be the case) to reassert his supposed pretensions to her hand. They all stayed.

In his first rage against all the house of Moore, Mr. Sympson had so conducted himself towards Mr. Louis, that that gentleman—patient of labour or suffering, but intolerant of coarse insolence—had promptly resigned his post, and could now be induced

to resume and retain it only till such time as the family should quit Yorkshire: Mrs. Sympson's entreaties prevailed with him thus far; his own attachment to his pupil constituted an additional motive for concession; and probably he had a third motive, stronger than either of the other two: probably he would have found it very hard indeed to leave Fieldhead just now.

Things went on, for some time, pretty smoothly: Miss Keeldar's health was re-established; her spirits resumed their flow: Moore had found means to relieve her from every nervous apprehension; and, indeed, from the moment of giving him her confidence, every fear seemed to have taken wing: her heart became as lightsome, her manner as careless, as those of a little child, that, thoughtless of its own life or death, trusts all responsibility to its parents. He and William Farren—through whose medium he made inquiries concerning the state of Phœbe—agreed in asserting that the dog was not mad: that it was only ill-usage which had driven her from home; for it was proved that her master was in the frequent habit of chastising her violently. Their assertion might, or might not, be true: the groom and gamekeeper affirmed to the contrary; both asserting that, if hers was not a clear case of hydrophobia, there was no such disease. But to this evidence Louis Moore turned an incredulous ear: he reported to Shirley only what was encouraging: she believed him; and, right or wrong, it is certain that in her case the bite proved innocuous.

November passed; December came: the Sympsons

were now really departing; it was incumbent on them to be at home by Christmas; their packages were preparing; they were to leave in a few days. One winter evening, during the last week of their stay, Louis Moore again took out his little blank book, and discoursed with it as follows:—

"She is lovelier than ever. Since that little cloud was dispelled, all the temporary waste and wanness have vanished. It was marvellous to see how soon the magieal energy of youth raised her elastic, and revived her blooming.

"After breakfast this morning, when I had seen her, and listened to her, and—so to speak—felt her, in every sentient atom of my frame, I passed from her sunny presence into the chill drawing-room. Taking up a little gilt volume, I found it to contain a selection of lyrics. I read a poem or two: whether the spell was in me or in the verse, I know not, but my heart filled genially—my pulse rose: I glowed, notwithstanding the frost-air. I, too, am young as yet; though she said she never considered me young, I am barely thirty: there are moments when life—for no other reason than my own youth—beams with sweet hues upon me.

"It was time to go to the schoolroom: I went. That same schoolroom is rather pleasant in a morning; the sun then shines through the low lattice; the books are in order; there are no papers strewn about; the fire is clear and clean; no cinders have fallen, no ashes accumulated. I found Henry there,

and he had brought with him Miss Keeldar: they were together.

"I said she was lovelier than ever: she is. A fine rose, not deep but delicate, opens on her cheek; her eye, always dark, clear, and speaking, utters now a language I cannot render—it is the utterance, seen not heard, through which angels must have communed when there was 'silence in heaven.' Her hair was always dusk as night, and fine as silk; her neck was always fair, flexible, polished—but both have now a new charm: the tresses are soft as shadow, the shoulders they fall on wear a goddess-grace. Once I only *saw* her beauty, now I *feel* it.

"Henry was repeating his lesson to her before bringing it to me—one of her hands was occupied with the book, he held the other: that boy gets more than his share of privileges; he dares caress and is caressed. What indulgence and compassion she shows him! Too much: if this went on, Henry, in a few years, when his soul was formed, would offer it on her altar as I have offered mine.

"I saw her eyelid flitter when I came in, but she did not look up: *now* she hardly ever gives me a glance. She seems to grow silent too—to *me* she rarely speaks, and, when I am present, she says little to others. In my gloomy moments, I attribute this change to indifference,—aversion,—what not? In my sunny intervals, I give it another meaning: I say, were I her equal, I could find in this shyness—coyness, and in that coyness—love. As it is, dare I look for it? What could I do with it, if found?

"This morning I dared, at least, contrive an hour's

communion for her and me; I dared not only *wish*—but *will* an interview with her: I dared summon solitude to guard us. Very decidedly I called Henry to the door: without hesitation, I said, 'Go where you will, my boy; but, till I call you, return not here.'

"Henry, I could see, did not like his dismissal: that boy is young, but a thinker: his meditative eye shines on me strangely sometimes: he half feels what links me to Shirley; he half guesses that there is a dearer delight in the reserve with which I am treated, than in all the endearments he is allowed. The young, lame, half-grown lion would growl at me now and then, because I have tamed his lioness and am her keeper, did not the habit of discipline and the instinct of affection hold him subdued. Go, Henry; you must learn to take your share of the bitter of life with all of Adam's race that have gone before, or will come after you: your destiny can be no exception to the common lot: be grateful that your love is overlooked thus early, before it can claim any affinity to passion: an hour's fret, a pang of envy suffice to express what you feel: Jealousy hot as the sun above the line, Rage destructive as the tropic storm, the clime of your sensations ignores —as yet.

"I took my usual seat at the desk, quite in my usual way: I am blessed in that power to cover all inward ebullition with outward calm. No one who looks at my slow face can guess the vortex sometimes whirling in my heart, and engulfing thought, and wrecking prudence. Pleasant is it to have the gift to

proceed peacefully and powerfully in your course without alarming by one eccentric movement. It was not my present intention to utter one word of love to her, or to reveal one glimpse of the fire in which I wasted. Presumptuous, I never have been; presumptuous, I never will be: rather than even *seem* selfish and interested, I would resolutely rise, gird my loins, part and leave her, and seek, on the other side of the globe, a new life, cold and barren as the rock the salt tide daily washes. My design this morning was to take of her a near scrutiny—to read a line in the page of her heart: before I left, I determined to know *what* I was leaving.

"I had some quills to make into pens: most men's hands would have trembled when their hearts were so stirred; mine went to work steadily, and my voice, when I called it into exercise, was firm.

"'This day-week you will be alone at Fieldhead, Miss Keeldar.'

"'Yes: I rather think my uncle's intention to go is a settled one now.'

"'He leaves you dissatisfied.'

"'He is not pleased with me.'

"'He departs as he came—no better for his journey: this is mortifying.'

"'I trust the failure of his plans will take from him all inclination to lay new ones.'

"'In his way, Mr. Sympson honestly wished you well. All he has done, or intended to do, he believed to be for the best.'

"'You are kind to undertake the defence of a man

who has permitted himself to treat you with so much insolence.'

"'I never feel shocked at, or bear malice for, what is spoken in character; and most perfectly in character was that vulgar and violent onset against me, when he had quitted you worsted.'

"'You cease now to be Henry's tutor?'

"'I shall be parted from Henry for a while—if he and I live we shall meet again somehow, for we love each other—and be ousted from the bosom of the Sympson family for ever. Happily this change does not leave me stranded: it but hurries into premature execution designs long formed.'

"'No change finds you off your guard: I was sure, in your calm way, you would be prepared for sudden mutation. I always think you stand in the world like a solitary but watchful, thoughtful archer in a wood; and the quiver on your shoulder holds more arrows than one; your bow is provided with a second string. Such too is your brother's wont. You two might go forth homeless hunters to the loneliest western wilds; all would be well with you. The hewn tree would make you a hut, the cleared forest yield you fields from its stripped bosom, the buffalo would feel your rifle-shot, and with lowered horns and hump pay homage at your feet.'

"'And any Indian tribe of Black-feet, or Flat-heads, would afford us a bride, perhaps?'

"'No (hesitating): I think not. The savage is sordid: I think,—that is, I *hope*,— you would neither of you share your hearth with that to which you could not give your heart.'

"'What suggested the wild West to your mind, Miss Keeldar? Have you been with me in spirit when I did not see you? Have you entered into my day-dreams, and beheld my brain labouring at its scheme of a future?"

"She had separated a slip of paper for lighting tapers—a spill, as it is called—into fragments: she threw morsel by morsel into the fire, and stood pensively watching them consume. She did not speak.

"'How did you learn what you seem to know about my intentions?'

"'I know nothing: I am only discovering them now: I spoke at hazard.'

"Your hazard sounds like divination. A tutor I will never be again: never take a pupil after Henry and yourself: not again will I sit habitually at another man's table—no more be the appendage of a family. I am now a man of thirty: I have never been free since I was a boy of ten. I have such a thirst for freedom—such a deep passion to know her and call her mine—such a day-desire and night-longing to win her and possess her, I will not refuse to cross the Atlantic for her sake: her I will follow deep into virgin woods. Mine it shall not be to accept a savage girl as a slave—she could not be a wife. I know no white woman whom I love that would accompany me; but I am certain Liberty will await me, sitting under a pine: when I call her she will come to my log-house, and she shall fill my arms.'

"She could not hear me speak so unmoved, and she *was* moved. It was right—I meant to move her.

She could not answer me, nor could she look at me: I should have been sorry if she could have done either. Her cheek glowed as if a crimson flower, through whose petals the sun shone, had cast its light upon it. On the white lid and dark lashes of her downcast eye, trembled all that is graceful in the sense of half-painful, half-pleasing shame.

"Soon she controlled her emotion, and took all her feelings under command. I saw she had felt insurrection, and was waking to empire—she sat down. There was that in her face which I could read: it said, I see the line which is my limit—nothing shall make me pass it. I feel—I know how far I may reveal my feelings, and when I must clasp the volume. I have advanced to a certain distance, as far as the true and sovereign and undegraded nature of my kind permits—now here I stand rooted. My heart may break if it is baffled: let it break—it shall never dishonour me—it shall never dishonour my sisterhood in me. Suffering before degradation! death before treachery!

"I, for my part, said, 'If she were poor, I would be at her feet. If she were lowly, I would take her in my arms. Her Gold and her Station are two griffins, that guard her on each side. Love looks and longs, and dares not: Passion hovers round, and is kept at bay: Truth and Devotion are scared. There is nothing to lose in winning her—no sacrifice to make—it is all clear gain, and therefore unimaginably difficult.'

"Difficult or not, something must be done; something must be said. I could not, and would not, sit

silent with all that beauty modestly mute in my presence. I spoke thus; and still I spoke with calm: quiet as my words were, I could hear they fell in a tone distinct, round, and deep.

"'Still, I know I shall be strangely placed with that mountain nymph, Liberty. She is, I suspect, akin to that Solitude which I once wooed, and from which I now seek a divorce. These Oreads are peculiar: they come upon you with an unearthly charm, like some starlight evening; they inspire a wild but not warm delight; their beauty is the beauty of spirits: their grace is not the grace of life, but of seasons or scenes in Nature: theirs is the dewy bloom of morning—the languid flush of evening—the peace of the moon—the changefulness of clouds. I want and will have something different. This elfish splendour looks chill to my vision, and feels frozen to my touch. I am not a poet: I cannot live with abstractions. You, Miss Keeldar, have sometimes, in your laughing satire, called me a material philosopher, and implied that I live sufficiently for the substantial. Certainly I feel material from head to foot; and glorious as Nature is, and deeply as I worship her with the solid powers of a solid heart, I would rather behold her through the soft human eyes of a loved and lovely wife, than through the wild orbs of the highest goddess of Olympus.'

"'Juno could not cook a buffalo steak as you like it,' said she.

"'She could not: but I will tell you who could—some young, penniless, friendless orphan girl. I wish I could find such a one: pretty enough for me to

love, with something of the mind and heart suited to my taste: not uneducated—honest and modest. I care nothing for attainments; but I would fain have the germ of those sweet natural powers which nothing acquired can rival: any temper Fate wills,—I can manage the hottest. To such a creature as this, I should like to be first tutor and then husband. I would teach her my language, my habits, and my principles, and then I would reward her with my love.'

"'*Reward* her! lord of the creation! *Reward* her!' ejaculated she, with a curled lip.

"'And be repaid a thousandfold,'

"'If she willed it, Monseigneur.'

"'And she *should* will it.'

"'You have stipulated for any temper Fate wills. Compulsion is flint and a blow to the metal of some souls.'

"'And love the spark it elicits.'

"'Who cares for the love that is but a spark—seen flown upward, and gone?'

"'I must find my orphan girl. Tell me how, Miss Keeldar.'

"'Advertise; and be sure you add, when you describe the qualifications, she must be a good plain cook.'

"'I must find her; and when I do find her, I shall marry her.'

"'Not you!' and her voice took a sudden accent of peculiar scorn.

"I liked this: I had roused her from the pensive mood in which I had first found her: I would stir her further.

"'Why doubt it?'

"'*You* marry!'

"'Yes,—of course: nothing more evident than that I can, and shall.'

"'The contrary is evident, Mr. Moore.'

"She charmed me in this mood: waxing disdainful, half insulting, pride, temper, derision, blent in her large fine eye, that had, just now, the look of a merlin's.

"'Favour me with your reasons for such an opinion, Miss Keeldar.'

"'How will *you* manage to marry, I wonder?'

"'I shall manage it with ease and speed when I find the proper person.'

"'Accept celibacy!' (and she made a gesture with her hand as if she gave me something) 'take it as your doom!'

"'No: you cannot give what I already have. Celibacy has been mine for thirty years. If you wish to offer me a gift, a parting present, a keepsake, you must change the boon.'

"'Take worse, then!'

"'How? What?'

"I now felt, and looked, and spoke eagerly. I was unwise to quit my sheet-anchor of calm even for an instant: it deprived me of an advantage and transferred it to her. The little spark of temper dissolved in sarcasm, and eddied over her countenance in the ripples of a mocking smile.

"'Take a wife that has paid you court to save your modesty, and thrust herself upon you to spare your scruples.'

"'Only show me where.'

"'Any stout widow that has had a few husbands already, and can manage these things.'

"'She must not be rich then. Oh these riches!'

"'Never would you have gathered the produce of the gold-bearing garden. You have not courage to confront the sleepless dragon: you have not craft to borrow the aid of Atlas!'

"'You look hot and haughty.'

"'And you far haughtier. Yours is the monstrous pride which counterfeits humility.'

"'I am a dependant: I know my place.'

"'I am a woman: I know mine.'

"'I am poor: I must be proud.'

"'I have received ordinances, and own obligations stringent as yours.'

"We had reached a critical point now, and we halted and looked at each other. *She* would not give in, I felt. Beyond this, I neither felt nor saw. A few moments yet were mine: the end was coming—I heard its rush—but not come, I would dally, wait, talk, and when impulse urged, I would act. I am never in a hurry: I never was in a hurry in my whole life. Hasty people drink the nectar of existence scalding hot: I taste it cool as dew. I proceeded:—

"'Apparently, Miss Keeldar, you are as little likely to marry as myself: I know you have refused three, nay, four advantageous offers, and, I believe, a fifth. Have you rejected Sir Philip Nunnely?'

"I put this question suddenly and promptly.

"'Did you think I should take him?'

"'I thought you might.'

"'On what grounds, may I ask?'

"'Conformity of rank; age; pleasing contrast of temper, for *he* is mild and amiable; harmony of intellectual tastes.'

"'A beautiful sentence! Let us take it to pieces. "Conformity of rank."—He is quite above me: compare my grange with his palace, if you please: I am disdained by his kith and kin. "Suitability of age."—We were born in the same year; consequently, he is still a boy, while I am a woman: ten years his senior to all intents and purposes. "Contrast of temper."—Mild and amiable, is he: I —— what? Tell me.'

"'Sister of the spotted, bright, quick, fiery leopard.'

"'And you would mate me with a kid—the Millennium being yet millions of centuries from mankind; being yet, indeed, an Archangel high in the seventh heaven, uncommissioned to descend ——? Unjust barbarian! "Harmony of intellectual tastes."—He is fond of poetry, and I hate it ——'

"'Do you? That is news.'

"'I absolutely shudder at the sight of metre or at the sound of rhyme, whenever I am at the Priory or Sir Philip at Fieldhead. Harmony, indeed! When did I whip up syllabub sonnets, or string stanzas fragile as fragments of glass? and when did I betray a belief that those penny-beads were genuine brilliants?'

"'You might have the satisfaction of leading him to a higher standard—of improving his tastes.'

"'Leading and improving! teaching and tutoring! bearing and forbearing! Pah! My husband is not to be my baby. I am not to set him his daily lesson and see that he learns it, and give him a sugar-plum if he is good, and a patient, pensive, pathetic lecture if he is bad. But it is like a tutor to talk of the "satisfaction of teaching"—I suppose *you* think it the finest employment in the world. I don't—I reject it. Improving a husband! No. I shall insist upon my husband improving me, or else we part.'

"'God knows it is needed!'

"'What do you mean by that, Mr. Moore?'

"'What I say. Improvement is imperatively needed.'

"'If you were a woman you would school Monsieur, votre mari, charmingly: it would just suit you; schooling is your vocation.'

"'May I ask whether, in your present just and gentle mood, you mean to taunt me with being a tutor?'

"'Yes—bitterly; and with anything else you please: any defect of which you are painfully conscious.'

"'With being poor, for instance?'

"'Of course; that will sting you; you are sore about your poverty: you brood over that.'

"'With having nothing but a very plain person to offer the woman who may master my heart?'

"'Exactly. You have a habit of calling yourself plain. You are sensitive about the cut of your features, because they are not quite on an Apollo-

pattern. You abuse them more than is needful, in the faint hope that others may say a word in their behalf—which won't happen. Your face is nothing to boast of, certainly: not a pretty line, nor a pretty tint, to be found therein.'

"'Compare it with your own.'

"'It looks like a god of Egypt: a great sand-buried stone head; or rather I will compare it to nothing so lofty: it looks like Tartar: you are my mastiff's cousin: I think you as much like him as a man can be like a dog.'

"'Tartar is your dear companion. In summer, when you rise early, and run out into the fields to wet your feet with the dew, and freshen your cheek and uncurl your hair with the breeze, you always call him to follow you: you call him sometimes with a whistle that you learned from me. In the solitude of your wood, when you think nobody but Tartar is listening, you whistle the very tunes you imitated from my lips, or sing the very songs you have caught up by ear from my voice: I do not ask whence flows the feeling which you pour into these songs, for I know it flows out of your heart, Miss Keeldar. In the winter evenings, Tartar lies at your feet: you suffer him to rest his head on your perfumed lap; you let him couch on the borders of your satin raiment: his rough hide is familiar with the contact of your hand: I once saw you kiss him on that snow-white beauty-spot which stars his broad forehead. It is dangerous to say I am like Tartar: it suggests to me a claim to be treated like Tartar.'

"'Perhaps, sir, you can extort as much from your pennyless and friendless young orphan-girl, when you find her.'

"'Oh! could I find her such as I image her. Something to tame first, and teach afterwards: to break in, and then to fondle. To lift the destitute proud thing out of poverty; to establish power over, and then to be indulgent to the capricious moods that never were influenced and never indulged before; to see her alternately irritated and subdued about twelve times in the twenty-four hours; and perhaps, eventually, when her training was accomplished, to behold her the exemplary and patient mother of about a dozen children, only now and then lending little Louis a cordial cuff by way of paying the interest of the vast debt she owes his father. Oh!' (I went on) 'my orphan girl would give me many a kiss; she would watch on the threshold for my coming home of an evening; she would run into my arms; she would keep my hearth as bright as she would make it warm. God bless the sweet idea! Find her I must.'

"Her eyes emitted an eager flash, her lips opened; but she reclosed them, and impetuously turned away.

"'Tell me, tell me where she is, Miss Keeldar!'

"Another movement: all haughtiness, and fire, and impulse.

"'I must know. You *can* tell me. You *shall* tell me.'

"'I *never will.*'

"She turned to leave me. Could I now let her part as she had always parted from me? No: I had gone too far not to finish. I had come too near the end

not to drive home to it. All the encumbrance of doubt, all the rubbish of indecision must be removed at once, and the plain truth must be ascertained. She must take her part, and tell me what it was. I must take mine, and adhere to it.'

"'A minute, madam,' I said, keeping my hand on the door-handle before I opened it. 'We have had a long conversation this morning, but the last word has not been spoken yet: it is yours to speak it.'

"'May I pass?'

"'No. I guard the door. I would almost rather die than let you leave me just now, without speaking the word I demand.'

"'What dare you expect me to say?'

"'What I am dying and perishing to hear; what I *must* and *will* hear; what you dare not now suppress.'

"'Mr. Moore, I hardly know what you mean: you are not like yourself.'

"I suppose I hardly was like my usual self, for I scared her; that I could see: it was right; she must be scared to be won.

"'You *do* know what I mean, and for the first time I stand before you *myself*. I have flung off the tutor, and beg to introduce you to the man: and, remember, he is a gentleman.'

"She trembled. She put her hand to mine as if to remove it from the lock; she might as well have tried to loosen, by her soft touch, metal welded to metal. She felt she was powerless, and receded; and again she trembled.

"What change I underwent, I cannot explain; but out of her emotion passed into me a new spirit. I

neither was crushed nor elated by her lands and gold; I thought not of them, cared not for them: they were nothing: dross that could not dismay me. I saw only herself; her young, beautiful form; the grace, the majesty, the modesty of her girlhood.

"'My pupil,' I said.

"'My master,' was the low answer.

"'I have a thing to tell you.'

"She waited with declined brow, and ringlets drooped.

"'I have to tell you, that for four years you have been growing into your tutor's heart, and that you are rooted there now. I have to declare that you have bewitched me, in spite of sense and experience, and difference of station and estate: you have so looked, and spoken, and moved; so shown me your faults and your virtues—beauties rather; they are hardly so stern as virtues,—that I love you—love you with my life and strength. It is out now.'

"She sought what to say, but could not find a word: she tried to rally; but vainly. I passionately repeated that I loved her.

"'Well, Mr. Moore, what then?' was the answer I got; uttered in a tone that would have been petulant, if it had not faltered.

"'Have you nothing to say to me? Have you no love for me?'

"'A little bit.'

"'I am not to be tortured: I will not even play at present.'

"'I don't want to play: I want to go.'

"'I wonder you dare speak of going at this

moment. *You* go! What! with my heart in your hand, to lay it on your toilet and pierce it with your pins? From my presence you do not stir; out of my reach you do not stray, till I receive a hostage—pledge for pledge—your heart for mine.'

"'The thing you want is mislaid—lost some time since: let me go and seek it.'

"'Declare that it is where your keys often are—in my possession.'

"'You ought to know. And where are my keys, Mr. Moore: indeed and truly, I have lost them again; and Mrs. Gill wants some money, and I have none, except this sixpence.'

"She took the coin out of her apron-pocket, and showed it in her palm. I could have trifled with her; but it would not do: life and death were at stake. Mastering at once the sixpence and the hand that held it, I demanded,—

"'Am I to die without you, or am I to live for you?'

"'Do as you please: far be it from me to dictate your choice.'

"'You shall tell me with your own lips, whether you doom me to exile, or call me to hope.'

"'Go. I can bear to be left.'

"'Perhaps, I too *can* bear to leave you: but reply, Shirley, my pupil, my sovereign—reply.'

"'Die without me, if you will. Live for me, if you dare.'

"'I am not afraid of you, my leopardess: I *dare* live for and with you, from this hour till my death. Now, then, I have you: you are mine: I will never

let you go. Wherever my home be, I have chosen my wife. If I stay in England, in England you will stay; if I cross the Atlantic, you will cross it also: our lives are riveted; our lots intertwined.'

"'And are we equal then, sir? Are we equal at last?'

"'You are younger, frailer, feebler, more ignorant than I.'

"'Will you be good to me, and never tyrannize?'

"'Will you let me breathe, and not bewilder me? You must not smile at present. The world swims and changes round me. The sun is a dizzying scarlet blaze; the sky a violet vortex whirling over me.'

"I am a strong man, but I staggered as I spoke. All creation was exaggerated: colour grew more vivid; motion more rapid; life itself more vital. I hardly saw her for a moment; but I heard her voice—pitilessly sweet. She would not subdue one of her charms in compassion: perhaps she did not know what I felt.

"'You name me leopardess: remember, the leopardess is tameless,' said she.

"'Tame or fierce, wild or subdued, you are *mine*.'

"'I am glad I know my keeper, and am used to him. Only his voice will I follow; only his hand shall manage me; only at his feet will I repose.'

"I took her back to her seat, and sat down by her side: I wanted to hear her speak again: I could never have enough of her voice and her words.

"'How much do you love me?' I asked.

' "'Ah! you know: I will not gratify you: I will not flatter.'

"'I don't know half enough: my heart craves to be fed. If you knew how hungry and ferocious it is, you would hasten to stay it with a kind word or two.'

"'Poor Tartar!' said she, touching and patting my hand: 'poor fellow; stalwart friend; Shirley's pet and favourite, lie down!'

"'But I will not lie down till I am fed with one sweet word.'

"And at last she gave it.

"'Dear Louis, be faithful to me: never leave me: I don't care for life, unless I may pass it at your side.'

"'Something more.'

"She gave me a change: it was not her way to offer the same dish twice.

"'Sir!' she said, starting up, 'at your peril, you ever again name such sordid things as money, or poverty, or inequality. It will be absolutely dangerous to torment me with these maddening scruples. I defy you to do it.'

"My face grew hot. I did once more wish I were not so poor, or she were not so rich. She saw the transient misery; and then, indeed, she caressed me. Blent with torment, I experienced rapture.

"'Mr. Moore,' said she, looking up with a sweet, open, earnest countenance, 'teach me and help me to be good. I do not ask you to take off my shoulders all the cares and duties of property; but I ask you to share the burden, and to show me how to sustain my

part well. Your judgment is well-balanced; your heart is kind; your principles are sound. I know you are wise; I feel you are benevolent; I believe you are conscientious. Be my companion through life; be my guide where I am ignorant; be my master where I am faulty; be my friend always!'

"'So help me God, I will!'"

Yet again, a passage from the blank book, if you like, reader; if you don't like it, pass it over:—

"The Sympsons are gone; but not before discovery and explanation. My manner must have betrayed something, or my looks: I was quiet, but I forgot to be guarded sometimes. I stayed longer in the room than usual; I could not bear to be out of her presence; I returned to it, and basked in it, like Tartar in the sun. If she left the oak-parlour, instinctively I rose, and left it too. She chid me for this procedure more than once: I did it with a vague, blundering idea of getting a word with her in the hall, or elsewhere. Yesterday, towards dusk, I had her to myself for five minutes, by the hall-fire: we stood side by side; she was railing at me, and I was enjoying the sound of her voice: the young ladies passed, and looked at us; we did not separate: ere long, they repassed, and again looked. Mrs. Sympson came; we did not move: Mr. Sympson opened the dining-room door; Shirley flashed him back full payment for his spying gaze: she curled her lip, and tossed her tresses. The glance she gave was at once explanatory and defiant; it said—'I like Mr. Moore's society, and I dare you to find fault with my taste.'

"I asked—'Do you mean him to understand how matters are?'

"'I do,' said she; 'but I leave the development to chance. There will be a scene. I neither invite it nor fear it—only, you must be present; for I am inexpressibly tired of facing him solus. I don't like to see him in a rage; he then puts off all his fine proprieties and conventional disguises, and the real human being below is what you would call "commun, plat, bas—vilain et un peu méchant." His ideas are not clean, Mr. Moore; they want scouring with soft soap and fuller's earth. I think, if he could add his imagination to the contents of Mrs. Gill's bucking-basket, and let her boil it in her copper, with rain-water and bleaching-powder (I hope you think me a tolerable laundress), it would do him incalculable good.'

"This morning, fancying I heard her descend somewhat early, I was down instantly. I had not been deceived: there she was, busy at work, in the breakfast-parlour, of which the housemaid was completing the arrangement and dusting. She had risen betimes to finish some little keepsake she intended for Henry. I got only a cool reception; which I accepted till the girl was gone, taking my book to the window-seat very quietly. Even when we were alone, I was slow to disturb her: to sit with her in sight was happiness, and the proper happiness for early morning—serene, incomplete, but progressive. Had I been obtrusive, I knew I should have encountered rebuff. 'Not at home to suitors,' was written on her brow; therefore, I read on—stole, now and

then, a look; watched her countenance soften and open, as she felt I respected her mood, and enjoyed the gentle content of the moment.

"The distance between us shrank, and the light boar-frost thawed insensibly: ere an hour elapsed, I was at her side, watching her sew, gathering her sweet smiles and her merry words, which fell for me abundantly. We sat, as we had a right to sit, side by side: my arm rested on her chair; I was near enough to count the stitches of her work, and to discern the eye of her needle. The door suddenly opened.

"'I believe, if I had just then started from her, she would have despised me: thanks to the phlegm of my nature, I rarely start. When I am well-off, bien, comfortable, I am not soon stirred: bien I was—très bien—consequently, immutable: no muscle moved. I hardly looked to the door.

"'Good-morning, uncle,' said she, addressing that personage; who paused on the threshold in a state of petrifaction.

"'Have you been long down-stairs, Miss Keeldar, and alone with Mr. Moore?'

"'Yes, a very long time: we both came down early; it was scarcely light.'

"'The proceeding is improper ——'

"'It was at first: I was rather cross, and not civil; but you will perceive that we are now friends.'

"'I perceive more than you would wish me to perceive.'

"'Hardly, sir,' said I: 'we have no disguises. Will you permit me to intimate, that any further

observations you have to make may as well be addressed to me. Henceforward, I stand between Miss Keeldar and all annoyance.'

"'*You!* What have *you* to do with Miss Keeldar?'

"'To protect, watch over, serve her.'

"'You, sir?—you, the tutor?'

"'Not one word of insult, sir,' interposed she: 'not one syllable of disrespect to Mr. Moore, in this house.'

"'Do you take his part?'

"'*His* part! Oh, yes!'

"She turned to me with a sudden, fond movement, which I met by circling her with my arm. She and I both rose.

"'Good Ged!' was the cry from the morning-gown standing quivering at the door. *Ged*, I think, must be the cognomen of Mr. Sympson's Lares: when hard-pressed, he always invokes this idol.

"'Come forward, uncle: you shall hear all. Tell him all, Louis.'

"'I dare him to speak! The beggar! the knave! the specious hypocrite! the vile, insinuating, infamous menial! Stand apart from my niece, sir: let her go!'

"She clung to me with energy. 'I am near my future husband,' she said: 'who dares touch him or me?'

"'Her husband!' he raised and spread his hands: he dropped into a seat.

"'A while ago, you wanted much to know whom I meant to marry: my intention was then formed, but not mature for communication; now it is ripe, sun-

mellowed, perfect: take the crimson-peach — take Louis Moore!'

"'But' (savagely) 'you *shall not* have him—he *shall not* have you.'

"'I would die before I would have another. I would die if I might not have him.'

"He uttered words with which this page shall never be polluted.

"She turned white as death: she shook all over: she lost her strength. I laid her down on the sofa; just looked to ascertain that she had not fainted—of which, with a divine smile, she assured me; I kissed her, and then, if I were to perish, I cannot give a clear account of what happened in the course of the next five minutes: she has since—through tears, laughter, and trembling—told me that I turned terrible, and gave myself to the demon; she says I left her, made one bound across the room—that Mr. Sympson vanished through the door as if shot from a cannon—I also vanished, and she heard Mrs. Gill scream.

"Mrs. Gill was still screaming when I came to my senses: I was then in another apartment—the oak-parlour, I think: I held Sympson before me crushed into a chair, and my hand was on his cravat: his eyes rolled in his head—I was strangling him, I think: the housekeeper stood wringing her hands, entreating me to desist; I desisted that moment, and felt at once as cool as stone. But I told Mrs. Gill to fetch the Red-House Inn chaise instantly, and informed Mr. Sympson he must depart from Fieldhead the instant it came: though half-frightened

out of his wits, he declared he would not. Repeating the former order, I added a commission to fetch a constable. I said:—

"'You *shall* go—by fair means or foul.'

"He threatened prosecution—I cared for nothing: I had stood over him once before, not quite so fiercely as now, but full as austerely. It was one night when burglars attempted the house at Sympson-Grove; and in his wretched cowardice he would have given a vain alarm, without daring to offer defence: I had then been obliged to protect his family and his abode by mastering himself—and I had succeeded. I now remained with him till the chaise came: I marshalled him to it, he scolding all the way. He was terribly bewildered, as well as enraged; he would have resisted me, but knew not how: he called for his wife and daughters to come. I said they should follow him as soon as they could prepare: the smoke, the fume, the fret of his demeanour was inexpressible, but it was a fury incapable of producing a deed: that man, properly handled, must ever remain impotent. I know he will never touch me with the law: I know his wife, over whom he tyrannizes in trifles, guides him in matters of importance. I have long since earned her undying mothers' gratitude by my devotion to her boy: in some of Henry's ailments I have nursed him—better, she said, than any woman could nurse: she will never forget that. She and her daughters quitted me to-day, in mute wrath and consternation—but she respects me. When Henry clung to my neck, as I lifted him into the carriage and placed him

by her side—when I arranged her own wrapping to make her warm, though she turned her head from me, I saw the tears start to her eyes. She will but the more zealously advocate my cause, because she has left me in anger. I am glad of this: not for my own sake, but for that of my life and idol—my Shirley.'"

Once again he writes—a week after:—

"I am now at Stilbro': I have taken up my temporary abode with a friend—a professional man—in whose business I can be useful. Every day I ride over to Fieldhead. How long will it be before I can call that place my home, and its mistress mine? I am not easy—not tranquil: I am tantalized—sometimes tortured. To see her now, one would think she had never pressed her cheek to my shoulder, or clung to me with tenderness or trust. I feel unsafe: she renders me miserable: I am shunned when I visit her: she withdraws from my reach. Once, this day, I lifted her face, resolved to get a full look down her deep, dark eyes: difficult to describe what I read there! Pantheress!—beautiful forest-born!—wily, tameless, peerless nature! She gnaws her chain: I see the white teeth working at the steel! She has dreams of her wild woods, and pinings after virgin freedom. I wish Sympson would come again, and oblige her again to entwine her arms about me. I wish there was danger she should lose me, as there is risk I shall lose her. No: final loss, I do not fear; but long delay ——

"It is now night—midnight. I have spent the afternoon and evening at Fieldhead. Some hours

ago she passed me, coming down the oak-staircase to the hall: she did not know I was standing in the twilight, near the staircase-window, looking at the frost-bright constellations. How closely she glided against the banisters! How shyly shone her large eyes upon me! How evanescent, fugitive, fitful, she looked,—slim and swift as a Northern Streamer!

"I followed her into the drawing-room: Mrs. Pryor and Caroline Helstone were both there: she has summoned them to bear her company a while. In her white evening dress; with her long hair flowing full and wavy; with her noiseless step, her pale cheek, her eye full of night and lightning, she looked, I thought, spirit-like,—a thing made of an element,—the child of a breeze and a flame,—the daughter of ray and rain-drop,—a thing never to be overtaken, arrested, fixed. I wished I could avoid following her with my gaze, as she moved here and there, but it was impossible. I talked with the other ladies as well as I could, but still I looked at her. She was very silent: I think she never spoke to me,—not even when she offered me tea. It happened that she was called out a minute by Mrs. Gill. I passed into the moon-lit hall, with the design of getting a word as she returned; nor in this did I fail."

"'Miss Keeldar, stay one instant!' said I, meeting her.

"'Why?—the hall is too cold.'

"'It is not cold for me: at my side, it should not be cold for you.'

"'But I shiver.'

"'With fear, I believe. What makes you fear me? You are quiet and distant: why?'

"'I may well fear what looks like a great dark goblin meeting me in the moonlight.'

"'*Do not—do not* pass!—stay with me awhile: let us exchange a few quiet words. It is three days since I spoke to you alone: such changes are cruel.'

"'I have no wish to be cruel,' she responded, softly enough: indeed, there was softness in her whole deportment,—in her face, in her voice; but there was also reserve, and an air fleeting, evanishing, intangible.

"'You certainly give me pain,' said I. 'It is hardly a week since you called me your future husband, and treated me as such; now I am once more the tutor for you: I am addressed as Mr. Moore, and Sir; your lips have forgotten Louis.'

"'No, Louis, no: it is an easy, liquid name; not soon forgotten.'

"'Be cordial to Louis, then: approach him,—let him approach.'

"'I *am* cordial,' said she, hovering aloof like a white shadow.

"'Your voice is very sweet, and very low,' I answered, quietly advancing: 'you seem subdued, but still startled.'

"'No,—quite calm, and afraid of nothing,' she assured me.

"'Of nothing but your votary.'

"I bent a knee to the flags at her feet.

"'You see I am in a new world, Mr. Moore. I

don't know myself,—I don't know you: but rise; when you do so, I feel troubled and disturbed.'

"I obeyed: it would not have suited me to retain that attitude long. I courted serenity and confidence for her, and not vainly: she trusted, and clung to me again.

"'Now, Shirley,' I said, 'you can conceive I am far from happy in my present uncertain unsettled state.'

"'Oh, yes; you *are* happy!' she cried, hastily: 'you don't know how happy you are!—any change will be for the worse!'

"'Happy or not, I cannot bear to go on so much longer: you are too generous to require it.'

"'Be reasonable, Louis,—be patient! I like you because you are patient.'

"'Like me no longer, then,—love me instead: fix our marriage-day. Think of it to-night, and decide.'

"She breathed a murmur, inarticulate yet expressive; darted, or melted, from my arms—and I lost her."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WINDING-UP.

YES, reader, we must settle accounts now. I have only briefly to narrate the final fates of some of the personages whose acquaintance we have made in this narrative, and then you and I must shake hands, and for the present separate.

Let us turn to the Curates,—to the much-loved, though long-neglected. Come forward, modest merit! Malone, I see, promptly answers the invocation: he knows his own description when he hears it.

No, Peter Augustus, we can have nothing to say to you: it won't do. Impossible to trust ourselves with the touching tale of your deeds and destinies. Are you not aware, Peter, that a discriminating public has its crotchets: that the unvarnished truth does not answer; that plain facts will not digest? Do you not know that the squeak of the real pig is no more relished now than it was in days of yore? Were I to give the catastrophe of your life and conversation, the public would sweep off in shrieking hysterics, and there would be a wild cry for sal-

volatile and burnt feathers. "Impossible!" would be pronounced here: "untrue!" would be responded there. "Inartistic!" would be solemnly decided. Note well! Whenever you present the actual, simple truth, it is, somehow, always denounced as a lie: they disown it, cast it off, throw it on the parish; whereas the product of your own imagination, the mere figment, the sheer fiction, is adopted, petted, termed pretty, proper, sweetly natural: the little, spurious wretch gets all the comfits,—the honest, lawful bantling, all the cuffs. Such is the way of the world, Peter; and, as you are the legitimate urchin, rude, unwashed, and naughty, you must stand down.

Make way for Mr. Sweeting.

Here he comes, with his lady on his arm; the most splendid and the weightiest woman in Yorkshire: Mrs. Sweeting, formerly Miss Dora Sykes. They were married under the happiest auspices. Mr. Sweeting having been just inducted to a comfortable living, and Mr. Sykes being in circumstances to give Dora a handsome portion. They lived long and happily together, beloved by their parishioners, and by a numerous circle of friends.

There! I think the varnish has been put on very nicely.

Advance, Mr. Donne.

This gentleman turned out admirably: far better than either you or I could possibly have expected, reader. He, too, married a most sensible, quiet, lady-like little woman: the match was the making of him: he became an exemplary domestic character, and a truly active parish-priest (as a pastor, he, to his dying

day, conscientiously refused to act). The outside of the cup and platter he burnished up with the best polishing-powder; the furniture of the altar and temple he looked after with the zeal of an upholsterer,—the care of a cabinet-maker. His little school, his little church, his little parsonage, all owed their erection to him; and they did him credit: each was a model in its way: if uniformity and taste in architecture had been the same thing as consistency and earnestness in religion, what a shepherd of a Christian flock Mr. Donne would have made! There was one art in the mastery of which nothing mortal ever surpassed Mr. Donne—it was that of begging. By his own unassisted efforts, he begged all the money for all his erections. In this matter he had a grasp of plan, a scope of action quite unique: he begged of high and low,—of the shoeless cottage brat and the coronetted duke: he sent out begging-letters far and wide—to old Queen Charlotte, to the princesses her daughters, to her sons the royal dukes, to the Prince Regent, to Lord Castlereagh, to every member of the ministry then in office; and, what is more remarkable, he screwed something out of every one of these personages. It is on record that he got five pounds from the close-fisted old lady, Queen Charlotte, and two guineas from the royal profligate, her eldest son. When Mr. Donne set out on begging expeditions, he armed himself in a complete suit of brazen mail: that you had given a hundred pounds yesterday, was, with him, no reason why you should not give two hundred to-day: he would tell you so to your face, and ten to one, get the money out of you:

people gave to get rid of him. After all, he did some good with the cash: he was useful in his day and generation.

Perhaps I ought to remark, that on the premature and sudden vanishing of Mr. Malone from the stage of Briarfield parish (you cannot know how it happened, reader; your curiosity must be robbed to pay your elegant love of the pretty and pleasing), there came as his successor another Irish curate, Mr. Macarthey. I am happy to be able to inform you, *with truth*, that this gentleman did as much credit to his country as Malone had done it discredit: he proved himself as decent, decorous, and conscientious, as Peter was rampant, boisterous, and —— (this last epithet I choose to suppress, because it would let the cat out of the bag). He laboured faithfully in the parish: the schools, both Sunday and day-schools, flourished under his sway like green bay-trees. Being human, of course he had his faults; these, however, were proper, steady-going, clerical faults; what many would call virtues: the circumstance of finding himself invited to tea with a Dissenter would unhinge him for a week; the spectacle of a Quaker wearing his hat in the church—the thought of an unbaptized fellow-creature being interred with Christian rites—these things could make strange havoc in Mr. Macarthey's physical and mental economy; otherwise, he was sane and rational, diligent and charitable.

I doubt not a justice-loving public will have remarked, ere this, that I have thus far shewn a criminal remissness in pursuing, catching, and bring-

ing to condign punishment the would-be assassin of Mr. Robert Moore: here was a fine opening to lead my willing readers a dance, at once decorous and exciting: a dance of law and gospel, of the dungeon, the dock, and the "dead-thraw." You might have liked it, reader, but *I* should not: I and my subject would presently have quarrelled, and then I should have broken down: I was happy to find that facts perfectly exonerated me from the attempt. The murderer was never punished; for the good reason, that he was never caught; the result of the further circumstance, that he was never pursued. The magistrates made a shuffling, as if they were going to rise and do valiant things; but, since Moore himself, instead of urging and leading them as heretofore, lay still on his little cottage-couch, laughing in his sleeve and sneering with every feature of his pale, foreign face, they considered better of it; and, after fulfilling certain indispensable forms, prudently resolved to let the matter quietly drop: which they did.

Mr. Moore knew who had shot him, and all Briarfield knew: it was no other than Michael Hartley, the half-crazed weaver once before alluded to, a frantic Antinomian in religion, and a mad leveller in politics; the poor soul died of delirium tremens a year after the attempt on Moore, and Robert gave his wretched widow a guinea to bury him.

The winter is over and gone: spring has followed with beamy and shadowy, with flowery and showery flight: we are now in the heart of summer—in mid-June,—the June of 1812.

It is burning weather: the air is deep azure and red gold: it fits the time; it fits the age; it fits the present spirit of the nations. The nineteenth century wantons in its giant adolescence: the Titan-boy uproots mountains in his game, and hurls rocks in his wild sport. This summer, Bonaparte is in the saddle: he and his host scour Russian deserts: he has with him Frenchmen and Poles, Italians and children of the Rhine, six hundred thousand strong. He marches on old Moscow: under old Moscow's walls the rude Cossack waits him. Barbarian stoic! he waits without fear of the boundless ruin rolling on. He puts his trust in a snow-cloud: the Wilderness, the Wind, and the Hail-Storm are his refuge: his allies are the elements—Air, Fire, Water. And what are these? Three terrible Archangels ever stationed before the throne of Jehovah. They stand clothed in white, girdled with golden girdles; they uplift vials, brimming with the wrath of God. Their time is the day of vengeance; their signal, the word of the Lord of Hosts, "thundering with the voice of His excellency."

"Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail, which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war?

"Go your ways: pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth."

It is done: the earth is scorched with fire: the sea becomes "as the blood of a dead man:" the islands flee away; the mountains are not found.

In this year, Lord Wellington assumed the reins in

Spain: they made him Generalissimo, for their own salvation's sake. In this year, he took Badajos, he fought the field of Vittoria, he captured Pampeluna, he stormed St. Sebastian; in this year, he won Salamanca.

Men of Manchester! I beg your pardon for this slight résumé of warlike facts: but it is of no consequence. Lord Wellington is, for you, only a decayed old gentleman now: I rather think some of you have called him a "dotard"—you have taunted him with his age, and the loss of his physical vigour. What fine heroes you are yourselves! Men like you have a right to trample on what is mortal in a demi-god. Scoff at your ease—your scorn can never break his grand, old heart.

But come, friends, whether Quakers or Cotton-printers, let us hold a Peace-Congress, and let out our venom quietly. We have been talking with unseemly zeal about bloody battles and butchering generals; we arrive now at a triumph in your line. On the 18th of June 1812, the Orders in Council were repealed, and the blockaded ports thrown open. You know very well—such of you as are old enough to remember—you made Yorkshire and Lancashire shake with your shout on that occasion: the ringers cracked a bell in Briarfield belfry; it is dissonant to this day. The Association of Merchants and Manufacturers dined together at Stilbro', and one and all went home in such a plight as their wives would never wish to witness more. Liverpool started and snorted like a river-horse roused amongst his reeds by thunder. Some of the American mer-

chants felt threatenings of apoplexy, and had themselves bled: all, like wise men, at this first moment of prosperity, prepared to rush into the bowels of speculation, and to delve new difficulties, in whose depths they might lose themselves at some future day. Stocks, which had been accumulating for years, now went off in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye; warehouses were lightened, ships were laden; work abounded, wages rose: the good time seemed come. These prospects might be delusive, but they were brilliant—to some they were even true. At that epoch, in that single month of June, many a solid fortune was realized.

When a whole province rejoices, the humblest of its inhabitants tastes a festal feeling: the sound of public bells rouses the most secluded abode, as if with a call to be gay. And so Caroline Helstone thought, when she dressed herself more carefully than usual on the day of this trading triumph, and went, attired in her neatest muslin, to spend the afternoon at Fieldhead, there to superintend certain millinery preparations for a great event: the last appeal in these matters being reserved for her unimpeachable taste. She decided on the wreath, the veil, the dress to be worn at the altar: she chose various robes and fashions for more ordinary occasions, without much reference to the bride's opinion; that lady, indeed, being in a somewhat impracticable mood.

Louis had presaged difficulties, and he had found

them: in fact, his mistress had shown herself exquisitely provoking; putting off her marriage day by day, week by week, month by month. At first coaxing him with soft pretences of procrastination, and in the end rousing his whole deliberate but determined nature to revolt against her tyranny, at once so sweet and so intolerable.

It had needed a sort of tempest-shock to bring her to the point; but there she was at last, fettered to a fixed day: there she lay, conquered by love, and bound with a vow.

Thus vanquished and restricted, she pined, like any other chained denizen of deserts. Her captor alone could cheer her; his society only could make amends for the lost privilege of liberty: in his absence, she sat or wandered alone; spoke little, and ate less.

She furthered no preparations for her nuptials: Louis was himself obliged to direct all arrangements: he was virtually master of Fieldhead, weeks before he became so nominally: the least presumptuous, the kindest master that ever was; but with his lady absolute. She abdicated without a word or a struggle. "Go to Mr. Moore; ask Mr. Moore," was her answer when applied to for orders. Never was wooer of wealthy bride so thoroughly absolved from the subaltern part; so inevitably compelled to assume a paramount character.

In all this, Miss Keeldar partly yielded to her disposition; but a remark she made a year afterwards proved that she partly also acted on system. "Louis," she said, "would never have learned to

rule, if she had not ceased to govern: the incapacity of the sovereign had developed the powers of the premier."

It had been intended that Miss Helstone should act as bridesmaid at the approaching nuptials; but Fortune had destined her another part.

She came home in time to water her plants. She had performed this little task. The last flower attended to was a rose-tree, which bloomed in a quiet green nook at the back of the house. This plant had received the refreshing shower: she was now resting a minute. Near the wall stood a fragment of sculptured stone—a monkish relic; once, perhaps, the base of a cross: she mounted it, that she might better command the view. She had still the watering-pot in one hand; with the other, her pretty dress was held lightly aside, to avoid trickling drops: she gazed over the wall, along some lonely fields; beyond three dusk trees, rising side by side against the sky; beyond a solitary thorn, at the head of a solitary lane far off: she surveyed the dusk moors, where bonfires were kindling: the summer evening was warm; the bell-music was joyous; the blue smoke of the fires looked soft; their red flame bright: above them, in the sky whence the sun had vanished, twinkled a silver point —the Star of Love.

Caroline was not unhappy that evening; far otherwise: but as she gazed she sighed, and as she sighed a hand circled her, and rested quietly on her waist. Caroline thought she knew who had drawn near: she received the touch unstartled.

"I am looking at Venus, mama: see, she is beau-

tiful. How white her lustre is, compared with the deep red of the bonfires!"

The answer was a closer caress; and Caroline turned, and looked, not into Mrs. Pryor's matron face, but up at a dark manly visage. She dropped her watering-pot, and stepped down from the pedestal.

"I have been sitting with 'mama' an hour," said the intruder. "I have had a long conversation with her. Where, meantime, have you been?"

"To Fieldhead. Shirley is as naughty as ever, Robert: she will neither say Yes nor No to any question put. She sits alone: I cannot tell whether she is melancholy or nonchalant: if you rouse her, or scold her, she gives you a look half wistful, half reckless, which sends you away as queer and crazed as herself. What Louis will make of her, I cannot tell: for my part, if I were a gentleman, I think I dare not undertake her."

"Never mind them: they were cut out for each other. Louis, strange to say, likes her all the better for these freaks: he will manage her, if any one can. She tries him, however: he has had a stormy courtship for such a calm character; but you see it all ends in victory for him. Caroline, I have sought you to ask an audience. Why are those bells ringing?"

"For the repeal of your terrible law; the Orders you hate so much. You are pleased, are you not?"

"Yesterday evening at this time, I was packing some books for a sea-voyage: they were the only

possessions, except some clothes, seeds, roots, and tools, which I felt free to take with me to Canada. I was going to leave you."

"To leave me? To leave *me?*"

Her little fingers fastened on his arm: she spoke and looked affrighted.

"Not now—not now. Examine my face; yes, look at me well: is the despair of parting legible thereon?"

She looked into an illuminated countenance, whose characters were all beaming, though the page itself was dusk: this face, potent in the majesty of its traits, shed down on her hope, fondness, delight.

"Will the repeal do you good; *much* good—*immediate* good?" she inquired.

"The repeal of the Orders in Council saves me. Now I shall not turn bankrupt; now I shall not give up business; now I shall not leave England; now I shall be no longer poor; now I can pay my debts; now all the cloth I have in my warehouses will be taken off my hands, and commissions given me for much more: this day lays for my fortunes a broad, firm foundation; on which, for the first time in my life, I can securely build."

Caroline devoured his words: she held his hand in hers; she drew a long breath.

"You are saved? Your heavy difficulties are lifted?"

"They are lifted: I breathe: I can act."

"At last! Oh! Providence is kind. Thank Him, Robert."

"I do thank Providence."

"And I also, for your sake!" She looked up devoutly.

"Now, I can take more workmen; give better wages; lay wiser and more liberal plans; do some good; be less selfish: *now*, Caroline, I can have a house—a home which I can truly call mine—and *now* ——"

He paused; for his deep voice was checked.

"And *now*," he resumed—"now I can think of marriage; *now* I can seek a wife."

This was no moment for her to speak: she did not speak.

"Will Caroline, who meekly hopes to be forgiven as she forgives—will she pardon all I have made her suffer—all that long pain I have wickedly caused her—all that sickness of body and mind she owed to me? Will she forget what she knows of my poor ambition—my sordid schemes? Will she let me expiate these things? Will she suffer me to prove that, as I once deserted cruelly, trifled wantonly, injured basely, I can now love faithfully, cherish fondly, treasure tenderly?"

His hand was in Caroline's still: a gentle pressure answered him.

"Is Caroline mine?"

"Caroline is yours."

"I will prize her: the sense of her value is here, in my heart; the necessity for her society is blended with my life: not more jealous shall I be of the blood whose flow moves my pulses, than of her happiness and well-being."

"I love you, too, Robert, and will take faithful care of you."

"Will you take faithful care of me?—faithful care! as if that rose should promise to shelter from tempest this hard, gray stone. But she *will* care for me, in her way: these hands will be the gentle ministrants of every comfort I can taste. I know the being I seek to entwine with my own will bring me a solace—a charity—a purity—to which, of myself, I am a stranger."

Suddenly, Caroline was troubled; her lip quivered.

"What flutters my dove?" asked Moore, as she nestled to, and then uneasily shrank from him.

"Poor mama! I am all mama has: must I leave her?"

"Do you know, I thought of that difficulty: I and 'mama' have discussed it."

"Tell me what you wish—what you would like—and I will consider if it is possible to consent; but I cannot desert her, even for you: I cannot break her heart, even for your sake."

"She was.faithful when I was false—was she not? I never came near your sick-bed, and she watched it ceaselessly."

"What must I do? Anything but leave her."

"At my wish, you never shall leave her."

"She may live very near us?"

"With us—only she will have her own rooms and servant: for this she stipulates herself."

"You know she has an income, that, with her habits, makes her quite independent?"

"She told me that, with a gentle pride that reminded me of somebody else."

"She is not at all interfering, and incapable of gossip."

"I know her, Cary: but if—instead of being the personification of reserve and discretion—she were something quite opposite, I should not fear her."

"Yet she will be your mother-in-law?" The speaker gave an arch little nod: Moore smiled.

"Louis and I are not of the order of men who fear their mothers-in-law, Cary: our foes never have been, nor will be, those of our own household. I doubt not, my mother-in-law will make much of me."

"That she will—in her quiet way, you know. She is not demonstrative; and when you see her silent, or even cool, you must not fancy her displeased—it is only a manner she has. Be sure to let me interpret for her, whenever she puzzles you: always believe my account of the matter, Robert."

"Oh, implicitly! Jesting apart, I feel that she and I will suit—on ne peut mieux. Hortense, you know, is exquisitely susceptible—in our French sense of the word—and not, perhaps, always reasonable in her requirements; yet—dear, honest girl—I never painfully wounded her feelings, or had a serious quarrel with her, in my life."

"No: you are most generously considerate—indeed, most tenderly indulgent to her; and you will be considerate with mama. You are a gentleman all through, Robert, to the bone—and nowhere so perfect a gentleman as at your own fireside."

"An eulogium I like: it is very sweet. I am well-pleased my Caroline should view me in this light."

"Mama just thinks of you as I do."

"Not quite, I hope?"

"She does not want to marry you—don't be vain; but she said to me the other day, 'My dear, Mr. Moore has pleasing manners; he is one of the few gentlemen I have seen who combine politeness with an air of sincerity.'"

"'Mama' is rather a misanthropist, is she not? Not the best opinion of the sterner sex?"

"She forbears to judge them as a whole, but she has her exceptions whom she admires. Louis and Mr. Hall, and, of late—yourself. She did not like you once: I knew that, because she would never speak of you. But, Robert——"

"Well, what now? What is the new thought?"

"You have not seen my uncle yet?"

"I have: 'mama' called him into the room. He consents conditionally: if I prove that I can keep a wife, I may have her; and I *can* keep her better than he thinks—better than I choose to boast."

"If you get rich, you will do good with your money, Robert?"

"I *will* do good; you shall tell me how: indeed, I have some schemes of my own, which you and I will talk about on our own hearth one day. I have seen the necessity of doing good: I have learned the downright folly of being selfish. Caroline, I foresee what I will now foretell. This war *must* ere long draw to a close: Trade is likely to prosper for some

years to come: there may be a brief misunderstanding between England and America, but that will not last. What would you think if, one day—perhaps ere another ten years elapse—Louis and I divide Briarfield parish betwixt us? Louis, at any rate, is certain of power and property: he will not bury his talents: he is a benevolent fellow, and has besides an intellect of his own of no trifling calibre. His mind is slow but strong: it must work: it may work deliberately, but it will work well. He will be made magistrate of the district—Shirley says he shall: she would proceed impetuously and prematurely to obtain for him this dignity, if he would let her, but he will not; as usual, he will be in no haste: ere he has been master of Fieldhead a year, all the district will feel his quiet influence, and acknowledge his unassuming superiority: a magistrate is wanted—they will, in time, invest him with the office voluntarily and unreluctántly. Everybody admires his future wife; and everybody will, in time, like him: he is of the 'pâte' generally approved, 'bon comme le pain'—daily-bread for the most fastidious; good for the infant and the aged, nourishing for the poor, wholesome for the rich. Shirley, in spite of her whims and oddities, her dodges and delays, has an infatuated fondness for him: she will one day see him as universally beloved as even *she* could wish: he will also be universally esteemed, considered, consulted, depended on—too much so: his advice will be always judicious, his help always good-natured—ere long, both will be in inconvenient request: he will have to impose restrictions. As for me, if I

succeed as I intend to do, my success will add to his and Shirley's income: I can double the value of their mill-property: I can line yonder barren Hollow with lines of cottages, and rows of cottage-gardens——"

"Robert! And root up the copse?"

"The copse shall be firewood ere five years elapse: the beautiful wild ravine shall be a smooth descent; the green natural terrace shall be a paved street: there shall be cottages in the dark ravine, and cottages on the lonely slopes: the rough pebbled track shall be an even, firm, broad, black, sooty road, bedded with the cinders from my mill: and my mill, Caroline — my mill shall fill its present yard."

"Horrible! You will change our blue hill-country air into the Stilbro' smoke atmosphere."

"I will pour the waters of Pactolus through the valley of Briarfield."

"I like the beck a thousand times better."

"I will get an act for enclosing Nunnely Common, and parcelling it out into farms."

"Stilbro' Moor, however, defies you, thank Heaven! What can you grow in Bilberry Moss! What will flourish on Rushedge?"

"Caroline, the houseless, the starving, the unemployed shall come to Hollow's mill from far and near; and Joe Scott shall give them work, and Louis Moore, Esq., shall let them a tenement, and Mrs. Gill shall mete them a portion till the first pay-day."

She smiled up in his face.

"Such a Sunday-school as you will have, Cary! such collections as you will get! such a day-school as you and Shirley, and Miss Ainley, will have to manage between you! The mill shall find salaries for a master and mistress, and the Squire or the Clothier shall give a treat once a quarter."

She mutely offered a kiss, an offer taken unfair advantage of, to the extortion of about a hundred kisses.

"Extravagant day-dreams!" said Moore, with a sigh and smile, "yet perhaps we may realize some of them. Meantime, the dew is falling: Mrs. Moore, I shall take you in."

It is August: the bells clash out again, not only through Yorkshire but through England: from Spain, the voice of a trumpet has sounded long: it now waxes louder and louder; it proclaims Salamanca won. This night is Briarfield to be illuminated. On this day the Fieldhead tenantry dine together; the Hollow's mill work-people will be assembled for a like festal purpose; the schools have a grand treat. This morning there were two marriages solemnized in Briarfield church,—Louis Gérard Moore, Esq. late of Antwerp, to Shirley, daughter of the late Charles Cave Keeldar, Esq. of Fieldhead: Robert Gérard Moore, Esq. of Hollow's mill, to Caroline, niece of the Rev. Mathewson Helston, M.A., Rector of Briarfield.

The ceremony, in the first instance, was performed by Mr. Helstone; Hiram Yorke, Esq. of Briarmains, giving the bride away. In the second instance, Mr.

Hall, Vicar of Nunnely, officiated. Amongst the bridal train, the two most noticeable personages were the youthful bridesmen, Henry Sympson and Martin Yorke.

I suppose Robert Moore's prophecies were, partially, at least, fulfilled. The other day I passed up the Hollow, which tradition says was once green, and lone, and wild; and there I saw the manufacturer's day-dreams embodied in substantial stone and brick and ashes—the cinder-black highway, the cottages, and the cottage-gardens; there I saw a mighty mill, and a chimney, ambitious as the tower of Babel. I told my old housekeeper when I came home where I had been.

"Ay!" said she; "this world has queer changes. I can remember the old mill being built—the very first it was in all the district; and then, I can remember it being pulled down, and going with my lake-lasses (companions) to see the foundation-stone of the new one laid: the two Mr. Moores made a great stir about it; they were there, and a deal of fine folk beside, and both their ladies; very bonnie and grand they looked; but Mrs. Louis was the grandest, she always wore such handsome dresses: Mrs. Robert was quieter-like. Mrs. Louis smiled when she talked: she had a real happy, glad, good-natured look; but she had een that pierced a body through: there is no such ladies now-a-days."

"What was the Hollow like then, Martha?"

"Different to what it is now; but I can tell of it clean different again: when there was neither mill, nor cot, nor hall, except Fieldhead, within two miles

of it. I can tell, one summer-evening, fifty years syne, my mother coming running in just at the edge of dark, almost fleyed out of her wits, saying, she had seen a fairish (fairy) in Fieldhead Hollow; and that was the last fairish that ever was seen on this country side (though they 've been heard within these forty years). A lonesome spot it was—and a bonnie spot—full of oak trees and nut trees. It is altered now."

The story is told. I think I now see the judicious reader putting on his spectacles to look for the moral. It would be an insult to his sagacity to offer dircc-tions. I only say, God speed him in the quest!

THE END.

London: Printed by STEWART and MURRAY, Old Bailey.

Lately Published,

THE THIRD EDITION OF

JANE EYRE; AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

By CURRER BELL.

"AUTHOR OF SHIRLEY."

3 *Vols. post* 8*vo.* *Price* 1*l.* 11*s.* 6*d. cloth.*

LONDON: SMITH, ELDER AND CO., CORNHILL.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

From *Blackwood's Magazine.*

"A very pathetic tale; very singular; and so like truth, that it is difficult to avoid believing that much of the character and incidents are taken from life. Though woman is called the weaker sex, here, in one example, is represented the strongest passion and the strongest principle admirably supported. It is an episode in this work-a-day world, most interesting, and touched at once with a daring and delicate hand. It is a book for the enjoyment of a feeling heart and vigorous understanding."

From *Fraser's Magazine.*

"Almost all that we require in a novelist the writer has: perception of character and power of delineating it, picturesqueness, passion, and knowledge of life. The story is not only of singular interest, naturally evolved, unflagging to the last, but it fastens itself upon your attention, and will not leave you. The book closed, the enchantment continues: your interest does not cease. Reality—deep, significant reality—is the characteristic of this book. It *is* an autobiography—not, perhaps, in the naked facts and circumstances, but in the actual suffering and experience. This gives the book its charm: it is soul speaking to soul: it is an utterance from the depths of a struggling, suffering, much enduring spirit: *suspiria de profundis.*"

From *Tait's Magazine.*

"'Jane Eyre' has already acquired a standard renown. The earnest tone, deep fervour, and truthful delineation of feeling and nature displayed in its pages, must render it a general favourite. There is a touch of nature in the whole book, which is one of its greatest charms. Its views of human nature are in accordance with truth, and the morality it inculcates is throughout of an unexceptionable and instruotive nature."

4