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PASSAGES IN THE LIFE
OF
A FAST YOUNG LADY.

BY
MRS. GREY,
AUTHOR OF "THE GAMBLER'S WIFE," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.
VOL. I.

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PASSAGES
IN THE
LIFE OF A FAST YOUNG LADY.

CHAPTER I.

A YELLOW FOG in London ! We all know from experience what that is, have felt the overwhelming influence of the cold, clammy pressure, the weight and depression it ever exercises over the spirits, the gloom it casts on every surrounding object, magnifying, to an unsupportable degree, the troubles which may chance at the moment to lie most heavily on the heart.

It was on a morning when our metropolis

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B

wore its most sombre garb—that dark covering which may well cause our foreign neighbours to look upon us with such unfeigned commiseration, no longer wondering at our dull and apathetic natures—the gas lamps scarcely seeming to lend any assistance in irradiating the thick orange-coloured darkness of the atmosphere, that a cab was suddenly stopped as it turned into an obscure street, and without waiting for the assistance of the driver, an arm was thrust out of the window, the door of the vehicle burst open, and a man springing out, closely enveloped in a great coat, his face buried in the thick folds of the shawl about his neck, helped or rather dragged forth, his companion, also covered with a large cloak, and whose countenance was concealed by an impenetrable veil, and then ordered the cabman to wait there until the ladies returned. This done, he walked

on without offering any further notice, the lady following, as also an elderly woman, who had been one of the occupants of the cab.

Along dirty streets, they traversed with difficulty, keeping up with the rapid, impatient steps of their conductor, until they reached the gate of an old tumble-down church, in an obscure precinct, into which the man at once stalked. The clergyman and clerk were waiting in readiness to receive the party, and the gentleman, for such, notwithstanding his disguise, he unmistakably appeared, walked hurriedly to the Communion-table, seemingly little heed-ing whether his bride elect was doing the same; but at length, impatiently turning round, and perceiving that she stood motionless in the doorway, he strode hastily towards her, and said, in anything but a conciliatory tone of voice,

“For heaven’s, sake come on ! let it be done, and that quickly.”

The lady thus urged obeyed, although those who looked on might have perceived that she trembled so violently that her limbs had scarcely power to sustain her faltering steps.

The person who accompanied her, and she was evidently intended to play the part of witness, now took her place by the side of the bride, the clerk having been deputed to give her away.

What a bridal it was ! In that wretched, worm-eaten church, the deep orange-tinted fog rendering the whole scene so obscure that the clergyman must indeed have known the service well by rote, or he could not have distinguished a word in the Prayer-book he held in his hand—scarcely the countenances of those standing before him.

The ceremony, performed in a most

slovenly manner, and contracted to its shortest limits, was soon ended, and the couple pronounced man and wife.

"There is something more to be done, I suppose," exclaimed the bridegroom, in an impatient tone of voice, taking no notice of his newly-made wife, whose emotion was beginning to be so apparent, that the woman who accompanied her stepped forward to offer her assistance.

The gentleman was informed that he must sign his name in the register, and into the vestry he stalked, leaving the lady to follow.

Seeing that she hesitated, the clergyman accosted her, and she was about to be ushered into the dark, small closet bearing the name of vestry, when she encountered the bridegroom hurriedly issuing from it, he having done his part even in that short moment.

The lady murmured a name quite in-

audible from agitation, as she eagerly caught hold of his arm to arrest his flight.

" You must not leave me thus," she imploringly said. " Are we indeed thus to part, and for ever?"

" Did you not consent that it should be so, Linda ?" he harshly replied ; " you knew how it was to be, and having fulfilled your promise, we do now part, and as far as I can see, *will never meet again.*"

And with cruel force he extricated her hands from the light grasp with which she had endeavoured to detain him, and after having thrust money to defray the necessary fees into the hands of the clergyman who had officiated at these ill-omened nuptials, he hurriedly left the church, apparently little heeding the shriek of agony which burst from the lips of her to whom he had just pledged himself that death should only part them.

The poor girl, for such she appeared, when the veil was removed in order that water might be sprinkled on her death-like face, was kindly ministered to by the person who had accompanied her.

She was made to swallow a little wine which was kept in the vestry for sacramental purposes, and by degrees revived sufficiently to sign her name and be assisted into the cab which was still awaiting them.

Not a word passed from the white lips of the bride during the long, miserable drive; she sat motionless, her hands clasped, her eyes dilated, fixed on vacancy, the very image of dark despair. Such a bride! this wretched-looking young creature, with masses of dark brown hair hanging in confusion about her face, her dress neglected, no sign or trace of aught but misery; and the dense, cold, humid atmosphere penetrating through

the badly closed windows, pressing with its freezing influence upon the already overcharged feelings.

At length the cab stopped at a small house in one of the insignificant streets leading out of Bloomsbury Square.

“For goodness’ sake! make haste and get a pan of coals to warm the young lady’s bed, Sarah,” was the order given as they entered the door.

“And now, my dear, we must put you to bed, you are chilled to death,” was the proposition made by the good woman to whose house they had just returned.

The girl shook her head, and then attempted to rise from the chair on which she had thrown herself on first entering the little parlour, but the trembling limbs refused to perform their office, and she sank back, for the first time that morning tears coming to her relief; but tempo-

rary relief only they proved, for soon convulsive sobs burst forth anew, which at first she tried hard to restrain, but her emotion rose far beyond her control, and a violent fit of hysterics ensued, which only ceased when complete prostration of strength caused the poor sufferer to fall into a state of stupor.

In this condition she was undressed and removed to the next room, placed in a small bed which she had before occupied, and soon sank into a profound and death-like sleep.

Then, as Mrs. Davis sat down for the first time that day to refresh herself with a cup of tea, after such a morning as she had never before passed, she pondered gravely and sadly over the perplexing scene she had just witnessed. Mrs. Davis was a retired servant, and had amassed sufficient means to take a small house, the upper part

of which she let, retaining the parlours for herself.

We must take the liberty of repeating aloud her cogitations, as she consoled herself with that innocent solace of the perplexed, that beverage so out of favour with our modern Esculapians, but which nevertheless has continued for many generations to be the comfort of our lives.

Yes, a cup of tea, why should not sonnets be written in its defence and praise, as well as to so many far less worthy objects ?

And whilst the good woman sat sipping and cogitating, her eyes happened to fall upon a letter on the chimney-piece.

“ A letter, I declare, for Miss Linda ! ” she exclaimed, as she reached it down and began to examine it with her eyes and manipulate it with her fingers, “ and I verily believe there are bank-notes within.

So much the better. Well, I'll just go and look at the poor thing," Mrs. Davis added, her spirits beginning to rise at the discovery, "but not give her the letter just yet;" and so saying, she opened a door of the folding ones dividing the little parlours, and noiselessly walked to the side of a small press-bed on which the unfortunate girl was lying.

She was in a profound sleep, her hair thrown back, disclosing a small oval face and well-shaped forehead. The features appeared regular enough, but the mouth was compressed and rather distorted, as if with pain; the complexion of a hue so livid that what its real tint might have been could not be guessed, and under the eyes might be seen dark shades of the deepest violet; suffering, indeed, marked the whole character of the countenance. But she seemed very young—one arm was drooping over

the low bed ; but it was well formed, the hand small and taper, its third finger encircled by the symbol of her new position —that type of weal or woe—the wedding ring.

But it was evidently not fitted for the finger on which it had been placed ; for, as the hand hung almost lifelessly in the position in which the arm had been despairingly flung, the circlet, so far too large, even whilst Mrs. Davis stood and gazed, dropped on the ground. Mrs. Davis shook her head portentously as she picked it up.

“ This is no good omen,” she thought—“ a bad business from first to last—and what I’m to do, I’m sure I can’t tell. I always liked the poor child ; but I’m a lone woman, and must take care of myself, and not bring discredit on my lodgings. Oh ! that plaguing bell !” as there came a peal at the street door ; “ the newspaper for the people

upstairs. I hope it won't wake this poor thing."

And Mrs. Davis bustled out to receive the paper, which she always took the liberty of peeping into before she sent it upstairs.

"Well, I declare!" she said, as she rapidly ran her spectacled eyes over the columns, scanning here and there what to her were the most interesting pieces of intelligence. Having lived all her life in great families, she still had a hankering after their doings, reading with interest every account of fashionable entertainments, arrivals, departures, marriages, deaths, and births, dwelling with old feelings of deference upon great names associated with reminiscences of former times, when she was an important housekeeper, presiding over an aristocratic establishment — well remembered forms, faces, and histories, connected with many a noble name, appearing now before

her as they presented themselves to her sight in the columns of the "Morning Post," as "bright dreams of the past;" for though it had ever been Mrs. Davis's ambition to have a home of her own, she still fondly dwelt in imagination upon the "flesh pots of Egypt," a contrast assuredly to her present mode of life, a lodging-house keeper on a small scale. "But home is home, be it ever so homely," was the housekeeper's consolatory reflection when the lodgers upstairs were "worreting," or the maid of all work incorrigibly dirty.

But to return to Mrs. Davis's exclamation, as her eye caught one particular name amongst the arrivals.

"Well, I declare, if the Countess of Sunderland has not returned to Carlton Gardens; a strange time of year for her to leave Belfield; but," she added, "a thought has struck me. I'll just go off this evening, and

advise with her what is to be done with Miss Linda ; they can't have cast her off after all the work the family have made about her. Oh, there's the drawing-room bell ; what a hurry those people always are in for their paper, just as if it signifies whether they have it a few minutes sooner or later."

And away she bustled to deliver the "Morning Post," and ask what was required for dinner.

CHAPTER II.

It was late in the day before the miserable inmate of the inner parlour opened her eyes—she had slept the sleep of utter exhaustion. Her first impulse was to start up and look wildly around her, the next to press her hand upon her forehead, as if to recall recollection. With a shiver, she hurriedly looked at the third finger of her left hand, and then clasping both hands together, she raised her eyes to Heaven, ejaculating :

“ Thank God ! Then it cannot be.”

Mrs. Davis, who had been anxiously watching for her awakening, hearing the

sound of her voice, was in an instant by her side.

"Oh! Mrs. Davis," Linda exclaimed, "I have had such a terrible dream; but is it really only a dream?" she added, looking anxiously at her, "for, thank God, thank God, I have no ring upon my finger!"

"Never mind your dream, my dear, but just drink this cup of tea; I have put a taste of brandy in it—for you'll die from want."

"Die!" the girl exclaimed, wildly; "and why not, pray? Why should I live?"

"Oh, that's not pretty talk," Mrs. Davis replied, as she stood by the bed, and insisted upon every drop of the tea being swallowed, and a small piece of toast. "And now lie still again, and try to have another nap. I am obliged to go out by and by on a little business, so it's no use your troubling yourself by getting up."

Linda fell back upon the pillow, and began to meditate. The shades of sleep were passing away, her mind and perception beginning to become clearer ; she started up and looked around.

“ Yes, it is no dream,” she at length drearily exclaimed. “ There is my bonnet and cloak; my clothes just thrown upon Mrs. Davis’s bed. Oh ! it is no dream,” she almost shrieked. “ Mrs. Davis, oh, come here. Oh ! what shall I do ? what shall I do ? But the ring ! the ring ! It is not here; and as sure as that I am lying upon this bed *he* put it on my finger. Oh ! Mrs. Davis, come quickly.”

“ Well, this is a pretty business,” the good woman murmured, as she bustled in, and found her charge in a state of excitement almost amounting to frenzy.

“ So it is true after all, and no dream,” Linda cried ; “ but where is the ring ?” she demanded.

“Why, for the matter of that, I’ve got it; it dropped off your finger as your hand hung down when you were asleep. Yes, it is all too true, poor child; you are married, for certain sure ; for all he looked so fierce and crazy, he is your husband, for good and all, but no doubt it will come right in the end. He’ll come back again, so don’t fret.”

Linda turned abruptly in the bed, and covered her face with the clothes, smothering as she did so a cry of despair. Then again she spoke—

“Give me that ring, Mrs. Davis.”

On receiving it, she immediately put it on, placing over it a handsome turquoise guard, which she removed from another finger, then returned to her former attitude, hiding her face from observation, and remaining so still that Mrs. Davis hoped she had once more fallen asleep, and making her preparations for going out as noiselessly

as possible, she soon sallied forth, desiring the maid servant to look now and then after the young lady. When the house door closed with its usual sound, Linda uncovered her face, again looked around, and again came the despairing words :

“ Oh! what can I do ? I cannot stay here ; I must go ; but where ? I can never show my face again. I am disgraced for ever by this badge,” and she looked at the wedding ring. “ Oh ! why did he make me marry him ?”

She lay some time meditating profoundly. Sarah peeped in, full of curiosity about the young lady, suspecting from the occurrences of the morning that some wonderful mystery was going forward. She saw that Linda’s eyes were wide open, so thought she might venture a word or two.

“ Are you better, Miss ?” she inquired.
“ Can I get you anything ?”

“No,” was the abrupt answer; and Sarah, leaving the door open, went into the front parlour to fidget about the fire; presently she again approached the bed.

“If you please, Miss, I think this letter is for you; I found it on the mantelpiece.”

Linda started up, and seized the letter held to her by the maid.

“Bring a candle quickly,” she gasped; “and now go,” she added, as one was placed in her hand.

These words she read:

“You have performed your rash promise—the law binds you to me as a wife—to the extinction of every hope of happiness to either of us—but you have brought all this upon yourself, Linda, by your blind, weak affection for a brute—an unprincipled villain,—such I freely acknowledge myself to be; you will, however, never see me again; henceforth we must be as

strangers. I owe you a deep debt of gratitude for having, by this sacrifice of yourself, freed me from the yoke of a galling chain, which, however, has already eaten into my heart, leaving me a shattered wreck, in mind almost a madman. Our marriage will be duly recorded in the papers, and then, God help you, Linda ! you will receive no quarter from my side of the house ; at least not from my mother, and my father is always powerless ; and your own friends will be indignant. You will require protection, but I know not where to advise your seeking it. Yes, you may well exclaim against my brutality, my reckless selfishness towards one so young, so good, so worthy of better things ; but, Linda, I am mad, my brain is on fire, my whole being in a state which my mind cannot control. Draw upon my banker for one hundred pounds quarterly, that is all I can

at present spare you from my allowance. In case of present need, I enclose notes amounting to the first quarter. God protect you, Linda! We shall never meet again."

There was no signature to this cruel document. Linda read it over and over again, and whilst so doing her countenance underwent a complete change; its paleness vanished, the brightest crimson usurped its place, her eyes flashed with indignant fire.

At length she crushed the paper in her hand, and setting her small teeth with fierce anger, sprang from the bed, and hastily commenced dressing herself.

" See me again!" she murmured, " no, never! Truly so he says,—and he holds that out to me as a threat. Did I ask him to marry me? Such a thought never entered my mind, until, for his sake, to save him from ruin, I madly consented. And his money!" she continued, spurning indig-

nantly with her foot the crumpled letter with its enclosure, which had fallen on the floor; “his money, I’ll have none of it,—no, not if I am starving, and have to beg my daily food—not I.” Hastily as her trembling hands could lend their assistance she dressed herself, and then proceeded to fill a carpet-bag. The contents of her purse were anxiously examined, some sovereigns and silver poured forth upon the table, and then replaced.

“I cannot spare any of this,” she said, in a softened tone, “and yet I must leave something for Mrs. Davis, so kind as she has been to me;” and then, as if a sudden thought had struck her, she opened a box in which were trinkets; sighing deeply as she examined them separately, she said, “Ah, this I cannot give—nor this—nor this—they are all so dear to me, for the sake of those who gave them—and these

were my mother's; but this brooch," and she selected a very handsome one—this I will leave as a gift for the dear old woman; I care not for that great man who gave it to me because I sang so well that night—oh, that night!" and she wrung her hands as if stung by some painful recollection.

The costly brooch was placed in a small box and enclosed to Mrs. Davis with a few scrawled lines.

"I have no money to spare, dear Mrs. Davis, but accept this brooch, which I believe is valuable, for the sake of the unhappy, but most grateful,

"LINDA."

"And now I must go," the girl exclaimed; "yes, go, but where? no matter!—a vagabond and fugitive on the face of the earth I shall henceforward be," and she laughed wildly.

"I must hide my head somewhere, anywhere, so that they never see or hear of me any more; and yet, why should this be?" she continued, her fierce mood in a moment changing, "what have I done so very, very bad to be thus treated? Foolish, thoughtless, easily led, I have been; but oh! not wicked." Tears now fell in torrents as she put on her cloak and bonnet.

"Poor miserable Linda!" she sobbed, "what am I to do? but I had almost forgotten," and with a loathing expression, as if she were touching some noxious reptile, she picked up the letter which still remained disregarded on the floor, "this must be done."

She refolded and placed it in an envelope, with its enclosure of bank notes—directed and securely sealed it. "Now I have done with him for ever," she cried; "he has added insult to injury—did he

think I would exist upon his money, I who henceforth must always loathe the very thought of him, I who never can forgive him—no, never, never!"

She stood for some minutes transfixed, her young white face transformed, painful to contemplate, disfigured as it was by the unnatural feelings which convulsed her heart. "But I must go," she again said, "Mrs. Davis will soon return." The box containing her trinkets was hurriedly added to the contents of the carpet-bag. "I shall want these probably to obtain bread," she murmured; then opening the door gently, she saw Sarah ascending the stairs, bearing the large tray containing the lodgers' dinner, and then, stealing from the room and opening the street door, went forth into the dark foggy atmosphere of a December evening.

CHAPTER III.

MRS. DAVIS, much perplexed in mind, had set out on her expedition to Carlton Gardens, an omnibus conveying her within a short distance from her destination.

“ Well, Thomas,” she said to the porter who admitted her, “ so the family are come to town—rather early for them, is it not ?”

“ My lady is the only one who is staying here, but Lord Sinclair is expected this evening—her ladyship does not intend to make any long stay, I believe.”

“ Can I see my lady ? ” Mrs. Davis demanded, “ I am come to speak to her upon a matter of particular business.”

The porter called to a footman and desired him to ask the lady's maid whether her ladyship could see Mrs. Davis. The ex-housekeeper was not long kept waiting; she was informed that she might go immediately to her ladyship's dressing-room.

Lady Sunderland kindly greeted her old servant, who had served her long and faithfully. "Well, Mrs. Davis," she said, after the first greetings were over, "what is it that you wish so particularly to say to me? Sit down and let me hear."

"Well, my lady," Mrs. Davis began, "I am in a very worried state, I can assure you, and it is all about Miss Linda!"

"Miss Linda!" the lady exclaimed, with much excitement, "for Heaven's sake what of her? We are all in much distress and perplexity about that unfortunate girl—where is she?"

"At my house, my lady."

“ Oh, what a relief! but tell me all about it.”

“ I fear, my lady, you may say that I have done very wrong, and I daresay,—indeed, I am sure I have, but I really was taken so by surprise that I scarcely knew what I did, and indeed I had no option; I was obliged to go.”

“ Go where? pray say at once what it is, for I am really most anxious, Mrs. Davis,” demanded Lady Sunderland.

“ To the church to see her married, my lady.”

“ Married! and to whom?” was the excited exclamation.

“ That I cannot tell,” Mrs. Davis continued, “ but it will be all down in the register book.”

“ At what church was the ceremony performed?”

“ Upon my word, my lady, for the life

of me I cannot tell; we went a long way, and the fog was so thick that I could see nothing at all—a dismal old place a long way off it seemed, that's all I can say."

"But," said Lady Sunderland, knowing from experience that she had better let Mrs. Davis relate the story in her own way, "tell me all about it from the beginning; I will not interrupt you."

"Well, my lady, this is the true account. The day before yesterday, about eight o'clock in the evening, a cab stopped at my door; says I, that's not for us, the lodgers are gone out for the day—but soon there came a loud ring at the street bell; I heard the steps let down, and in another moment, Sarah having opened the door, who should stand before me but Miss Linda, looking as white as a ghost. 'Miss Linda,' said I, 'where in the world do you come from?'

“ ‘ Dear Mrs. Davis,’ said she, ‘ will you take me in for a few nights?’

“ ‘ Take you in, my dear, what do you mean?’

“ ‘ Why, give me a bed only for a few days. Say quickly, will you or will you not? for I must get into that cab and go elsewhere.’

“ ‘ I was taken so all of a heap that I answered, ‘ Well, I’ll try, dear, but why not go to Carlton Gardens?’

“ ‘ Carlton Gardens!’ she almost shrieked, ‘ never, never! say at once, Mrs. Davis, yes or no,’ and she stamped with her foot.

“ And then I remembered the little press-bed in my room that I could make up for her. I could not turn the child into the street at that time of night; so she paid the cab, and her carpet-bag was taken in.

“ I was shocked and sorry when I looked at the poor thing, so changed was she, and

with a strange look upon her face; her eyes staring so wildly, and such a dark expression about her countenance altogether.

“I said, ‘What is the matter, Miss Linda? I thought you were in Scotland, with your uncle.’

“Then she started up, quite frightening me out of my senses, and catching hold of my hands, cried, ‘Mrs. Davis, I beseech, I implore you to ask no questions, but let me stay here a few days, and then I shall go, and be no more trouble to you or any one.’

“Upon my word, I thought, this is a pretty business—some scrape the child has got into; what will all her friends say to this? But of one thing I’m sure, they would think no harm of me for taking her in for a night or two, whatever she may have done, and so I set about making her a cup of tea, and getting the little press-bed ready, for indeed she looked fit to drop. I

soon got her to bed, she never speaking a word, but looking so miserable."

" You did most kindly, Mrs. Davis," Lady Sunderland said, with much feeling.
" This is indeed a sad story."

" Yes, and I haven't come to half the worst part of it, my lady. All the next day she sat looking the picture of misery, starting at every sound, doing nothing but occasionally looking into a Bradshaw which lay on the table. I tried to get her to talk, but it was of no use. Sarah told me, when I was out she wrote a letter and put it into the box herself—we have one close at hand. When we went to bed that night, she said, ' You must let me stay a day or two longer, Mrs. Davis, I have not yet quite settled my plans.' I told her that there was no hurry, only I wished I could see her more cheerful. ' Cheerful ! ' she repeated, and laughed ; but I would as soon have heard her cry, as give

such a laugh as that. Well, and so three days passed. This morning was so dark, with such a fog—I question whether I ever saw a worse one—that we did not sit down to breakfast till nearly nine. I had not tasted a mouthful before a cab rushed up to the door, a violent ring came next, and then the door suddenly opened, and in walked a man. ‘Linda!’ he said, in a harsh sort of voice, ‘make haste and come with me, all is ready waiting for our marriage.’

“Miss Linda, who had started up, looking whiter than ever, now covered her face with her hands, and gave a sort of cry.

“‘Yes, we are to be married; you remember your promise, and you know the conditions.’—‘For Heaven’s sake,’ he added, stamping his foot impatiently, ‘put on your bonnet without any further delay, and you, Madam, had better come with us,

to see that all is right, that we are joined together for ever and for aye.'

"Oh, in what a sneering, jeering tone were these words spoken! To my surprise Miss Linda walked deliberately into the next room, and put on her bonnet and cloak, and then again the gentleman said: 'And you, Madam, pray make haste, the parson and clerk are both waiting to solemnise these auspicious nuptials.' I felt as if I were spell-bound, so I obeyed, put on my things, shivering with cold, and not having had a bit or sup in my poor stomach that blessed morning; and was thrust into the cab with Miss Linda by the gentleman, who jumped in after us.

"Drive on, you know where,' he said to the cabman, and we did drive on. In all my life I never had such a drive; the cold so bitter, the fog so dense, we were almost in darkness, Miss Linda, poor

thing, trembling and shaking by my side, and that man—what he was even like I could not tell, so buttoned up and shawled was he, and his hat slouched over his face. Not a word was spoken by any of us, good, bad, or indifferent, and when the cab stopped, it was as dark as night. All I can say is that this fellow, whoever he may be, is a wretch without a spark of feeling."

Mrs. Davis then gave a graphic description of what we have already related, ending by saying, "If that man is not a wicked one, or a madman, I'm much mistaken, and I am very grieved to think I had not sent for the police, and had him taken up, instead of allowing him to drag me with that poor child to witness such a disgraceful business."

Lady Sunderland looked inexpressibly

shocked; she was silent from emotion for some minutes, and then said:

“It is a pity, indeed, that this marriage was allowed to take place.”

“Yes, my lady, it was, and I sorely repent not having endeavoured to prevent it; my only excuse is, that from Miss Linda’s state of mind I verily believed something wrong had happened; and I thought, perhaps, that marriage was the best thing to be done; and, indeed, if you had heard the man, how he commanded us, we could not choose but to obey.”

“And you have left Linda, you say, in bed?”

“Yes, and I hope asleep; the ruffian declared they should never meet again on earth, and I’m sure he meant what he said, for if she had been a reptile, he could not have shuddered more at her touch, as he shook her off when the poor thing clung to

him, imploring that he would not leave her thus."

Lady Sunderland then said: "To tell you the truth, Mrs. Davis, it was on Linda's account that I came to London, and I have desired Sinclair to join me here to-night for the same reason; she left Scotland, and her friends had no idea why, or where she had gone. As soon as we heard of it, as the unfortunate girl has so long been under our protection, Sinclair and I thought it our duty, as well as its being our anxious desire, to endeavour to gain some tidings of her. Lady Elizabeth is in much distress about this child of her adoption. I will consult with my son, and you shall hear from us to-morrow. Now, you had better return home, for after what you have told me, I do not think Linda is in a fit condition to be left alone. I will order a cab for you."

On Mrs. Davis's return, her consterna-

tion may be imagined when Sarah met her at the door with the information that the young lady had disappeared. She only waited to ascertain that this intelligence was true, to find the letter containing the brooch, and the few corroborating lines from Linda, and the same cab which had brought her from Carlton Gardens conveyed her back to the presence of Lady Sunderland, who now had been joined by her son, Lord Sinclair. They were at the very moment talking over this most perplexing and distressing business when Mrs. Davis again appeared before them.

CHAPTER IV.

THE night was still thick with fog, as Linda walked on, little heeding which way she went. She had no decided plans, although many floated through her mind. Her present almost frenzied desire was to remove herself somewhere — anywhere — to some impenetrable distance far from all whom she had ever seen before. Pursuing the course of her entangled thoughts and schemes, she first of all deposited her letter in a post office, and then looked inquiringly into the shops of the busy streets in which she by chance found herself — the gas with which they were lighted displaying their different articles for sale.

Suddenly she stopped before one, and gazed into it thoughtfully. "Yes," she murmured, "that is what I want; that will be the best dress for me—the most effectual disguise."

She entered the shop, and addressed a person who was serving behind the counter—a pale, gentle-looking widow.

"I want a widow's cap," Linda demanded, "and a bonnet and veil."

The woman looked up into the speaker's face. A fellow-sufferer—a bereaved one, like herself, she thought. The face was concealed by the thick veil.

Several caps were brought forward for the approbation of the customer.

"Oh!" Linda said, impatiently, "I don't care which I have—anything will do."

"But will you not try them on?" was asked.

"No, I have not time; now, a bonnet, quickly."

"I have only one quite finished," the shopkeeper replied; "but I fear it will be too large, and also too old-looking, if it is for you, madam," for a glimpse had been caught through the folds of the veil of a very young face.

"Never mind, never mind," was the impatient answer; "I don't care how old it will make me look—the older the better."

The person who served her, then took from a bandbox a lugubrious black bonnet with its long heavy crape fall, which must effectually have hidden every part of the face of the wearer save the eyes, the only part not left in impenetrable darkness by the double folding of the thick material.

"That will do, I daresay; and those things!—I must have some of them, I suppose," Linda continued, pointing to

some collars and cuffs, commonly called weepers.

“What am I to pay for all this?” she then asked.

“One pound fifteen,” she was told, when the bill was added up.

Linda groaned as she drew forth her purse. How little money would be left!

“But it cannot be helped,” unconsciously she said aloud. Then she paused and reflected.

“I must put on these things somewhere; but where can that be?”

She added, “Perhaps you will let me go into that room and change my bonnet,” and receiving a sanction to this request, she found herself in the small parlour adjoining the shop, in which there was a little pale boy seated at a table writing a copy.

Before she removed the bonnet from her head, Linda turned suddenly round and said :

“ What will you allow me for this bonnet and Honiton lace veil ? I shall never wear them any more ; and,” she added in a gentler, almost a supplicating tone, “ it will be doing me a special kindness if you would take them, for I have little money to spare ; and these things, pointing to the mourning, I must have.” And so saying, she removed the pretty little fancy straw bonnet from her head and presented it to the milliner, who looked with amazement upon the uncovered face of the young widow, her woman’s heart melting at the sight ; an anxious feeling for the poor girl mingling with distrust as to what her real condition might be, and rendering her for a moment unable to notice the request. Mrs. Lewis stood holding the bonnet in her hand, with her eyes fixed upon Linda, who began hastily to equip herself in her new head gear. It was a bonnet evidently intended for an

elderly woman of ample dimensions, far too large for the small head on which it had been placed. Linda looked at herself fixedly in a mirror which hung over the chimney-piece, and certainly the image it reflected was a strange anomaly—such a mixture of the sad and ludicrous.

The slight young figure seemed so out of character, covered by its enormous summit, the little white face almost totally lost in its vast amplitude.

And Linda, whilst she thus beheld herself, in spite of her pre-occupied miserable feelings, suddenly felt a sense of the ridiculous rise in her mind. She turned away her head for a moment, and in so doing encountered the eyes of the boy, who had been curiously watching her movements. He had now a queer sort of smile upon his lips. The contrast of the girl's young face and her hideous head-dress had

also evidently struck him, for as she turned her full face upon him he laughed aloud, thinking no doubt the young lady was only amusing herself by trying on the ugly bonnet.

Laughter is very infectious, particularly to one who was in the nervously excited state of our heroine.

To Mrs. Lewis's consternation, she saw the previously wretched-looking young widow burst into a convulsive fit of laughter, which she vainly endeavoured to control, and which continued to increase. Peal after peal succeeded, re-echoed by the boy, until their character changed to tears and hysterical sobs.

The boy, who had at first joined heartily in the merriment, now began to look frightened, as his mother told him to be quiet, and fetch a glass of water. She saw how it was with the poor girl, and was truly

sorry. Thoroughly exhausted was Linda when she began to recover.

“Shall I send for a cab, Ma’am, to take you home?” Mrs. Lewis demanded.

“Home! I have no home! I want to sail for France to-night.”

“You cannot possibly do that; you are not fit.”

“But I must—I must,” and she looked round for the bonnet.

“If you can only wait till to-morrow, I can make you another one, that will suit you much better,” Mrs. Lewis suggested.

“I must go. I have no place in London where I can remain till morning.”

Mrs. Lewis felt some very imprudent risings at her heart as she looked at the miserable, tear-stained face of the young creature before her. She longed to say, “I will give you a night’s lodging.”

She had once possessed a daughter; about

Linda's age she must have been when she died, and the thoughts of the still mourning mother reverted to her. But she hesitated: would it be right? Who and what might the stranger not be? Certainly she looked in all ways respectable; indeed, far above the common class, equipped as she was in a well-made silk dress, with all else to correspond; her whole bearing—her voice, her hands, bespeaking her grade of life; and then the wedding ring, and its handsome guard of turquoises—the pretty little watch hanging at her side—all were unmistakeable tokens in Mrs. Lewis's eyes of her being a young lady. Still there must be something very wrong to bring her to this pass.

"Yes, I must go," Linda gasped, trembling in every limb.

"Mother!" exclaimed the boy, "why cannot the young lady stop here to-night?

She can have my bed, you know, and I can sleep with you."

Mrs. Lewis still stood irresolute.

"Poor girl! what may not become of her if I turn her out into the streets? No, I dare not do so; I should have the sin upon my conscience as long as I lived. No, it cannot, must not be."

"Yes, Miss; Ma'am, I ought to say, but you really look so very young; pray let me, as George suggests, offer you the protection of my humble dwelling for the night; it is but homely the accommodation I can afford you, but to such as it is you are heartily welcome."

Linda lifted up her head, which had sunk very low, quickly glanced at the kind woman, and in that face read naught but the purest benevolence.

"I had better go," she faltered, turning till paler; "why should I be a trouble to

you, I, a perfect stranger?" and she attempted to rise, but the boy now advanced.

"No, young lady, pray stay with us; mother wishes it, she always speaks the truth;" and with gentle force, he made her sit down again, and poor Linda, her heart touched and softened by this unlooked-for kindness, throwing her arms round the boy's neck, wept, now gently and silently.

"Yes, indeed you must stay, my dear," Mrs. Lewis added, much affected, "and you must have refreshment. I am sure you look in need of it. Georgie, run for the corkscrew, the lady must have a glass of wine immediately," for she saw how faint she looked; "how fortunate that I have some to give you, a present from my brother only yesterday; and George, bring up the cold fowl, and the bread and country butter. You have come at a fortunate time, Ma'am, for we had a hamper of good

things from the country at the same time ; my brother is a farmer in a large way."

And soon Linda was seated at the widow's hospitable board, she and her son, with pleased alacrity, waiting upon her, for miserable as she was, she was still so unheroine-like as to be very hungry, only having tasted one cup of tea during the whole of that agitating day. Whilst thus engaged, Mrs. Lewis left her in the charge of George, whilst she went to prepare her sleeping accommodation, and light a fire in the room to give it a cheerful appearance ; and poor Linda, refreshed and revived by the genial kindness of her hosts and the nourishment she so much required, could now smile upon her attendant, the interesting little boy, who gazed at her with such tender concern.

" You and your mother are very good," at length she said, in a more natural manner, as she held out her hand and drew him towards her.

"Mother is always good," he said.

"And so are you, I am sure, George; you are a happy boy to have a mother, and such a kind one."

"Yes, indeed," was the answer; "but," he added, his eyes filling with tears, "a year ago I had a father and a sister, and since we lost them we have not been very happy, and we have had other troubles. You see how ill poor mother looks."

Mrs. Lewis now appeared, and looked with pleasure upon Linda's face, whose expression had so changed, the fierce look gone; and though it was flushed, and her eyes were too bright, still there was more repose altogether in her voice and mien, when again she poured forth her thanks and apologies for the trouble she was giving.

Mrs. Lewis thought, "She is far too bonny to be all alone in the wide world," and then she said,

“ My accommodation is but small, my dear young lady.”

“ Oh, anything will do for me,” replied Linda, “ but I wish to start for France to-morrow night, and I would rather it was at night that I embark ; therefore could you allow me to remain till then, and to-morrow, you would perhaps make some purchases for me ? I have not much money, but some trinkets of value, which I should be glad to dispose of.”

And thus Linda, without a shadow of mistrust, threw herself upon the protection of a complete stranger. Providential, indeed, for her that merciful fate had drawn her into the humble abode of this excellent woman !

“ Well, we will talk all about it to-morrow. I must put you to bed, and when there, I shall give you one of my composing draughts : blessings they have been to me,

young lady, I can assure you, when my sorrow was at its height."

And Linda saw, as she looked upon that face, marked with the unmistakeable lines of grief, that there was one near her who had indeed suffered deeply.

Georgie having now announced that all was ready and the fire burning up, Mrs. Lewis ushered her guest into the sleeping apartment.

The room was well furnished with a large, handsome bed, and an air of comfort and superiority pervaded its aspect, little to be expected from the general impression given by the humble little shop down stairs.

A small iron bedstead was the couch prepared for Linda, the sheets white and fine.

" You won't mind my little Georgie sleeping with me, he's but a baby almost, and, to tell the truth, I have not been able to afford to furnish any other room ; but we

shall dress in the next, to make this all tidy for you."

Linda cared not. She began, indeed, to feel that, had she attempted any further exertion that night, she must have sunk at once. The night-dress was brought forth from the heavy bag she had dragged about with her, and then too gladly she laid herself down on the clean little bed.

Mrs. Lewis set about concocting the composing draught, whose efficacy she so much vaunted, and almost immediately after it the good woman had the pleasure of seeing her guest fall into a quiet sleep. Not till then did the good woman leave her to spend part of the night in making a suitable bonnet for the young widow.

CHAPTER V.

LINDA slept all night the sleep of utter prostration of mind and body.

When, at length, she opened her eyes, with a start, she roused herself and looked wildly, and in bewilderment, around the room.

We all know how painful is the awakening from a slumber of complete forgetfulness, after any crushing misfortune has befallen us ; the temporary oblivion of our senses scarcely compensating for the agony of renewed recollection.

She sat up, and listened to the din of vehicles passing and repassing that noisy street.

“ Where am I ?” she cried.

The other bed was empty, its occupants had long left it ; she was alone in her wretchedness, and soon the whole story of her misery rushed like an overwhelming flood into her mind, and piteous was the tone in which she exclaimed —

“ Unfortunate Linda, what is to become of you !” and then followed heartrending sobs and tears.

Poor girl, she thought herself at this moment friendless, for her unbroken spirit had not yet made a friend of Him “ who sticketh closer than any brother.” She had not yet implored guidance from above, judgment to know what was right, and strength to perform it. No ; in her weak folly she had madly plunged upon the waves of this fearful world, and that mercy had for the present moment saved her, and conducted the rash girl to this safe haven,

where, for a brief space, she might breathe in peace. Linda was not long left alone to weep ; soon she was joined by her kind hostess.

“ My dear young lady, what is the matter ? ” she exclaimed, on finding her thus agitated.

“ Oh ! Mrs. Lewis, I am so wretched. Oh, what *is* to become of me ? I am so very, very miserable.”

And Linda, in her despair, threw her arms round the kind woman’s neck, feeling balm and solace whilst weeping forth her tears upon that compassionate bosom.

Mrs. Lewis allowed the paroxysm to subside, and then gently extricating herself from the encircling arms, said,

“ Now, I must light the fire ; it is a bitter morning ; and then I shall bring you some breakfast. You must try, my dear, to compose yourself ; be still, and lift up your heart in prayer. If you have heavy

sorrows, nothing in the world can assist you to bear them but bringing all your troubles to God. I speak, who have felt how comparatively worthless is every other sort of help."

"Pray! Mrs. Lewis—I hardly know how to pray."

Mrs. Lewis looked aghast.

"My dear, what do you mean? Have you never been taught to pray?" she anxiously demanded.

"Oh, yes—I have, of course, said my prayers morning and evening, but is that praying? They never seemed to do me any good, and since I have been so very miserable, I have left them off entirely."

Mrs. Lewis shook her head gravely—almost sternly; but pity for the poor benighted girl soon changed the harsh feeling which was beginning to rise in her breast, and she said,

" My dear, you need not use long prayers to make your petitions. You have only to lift up your heart and cry, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'"

Linda sprang up from her pillow, her face flushing crimson, her eyes flashing fire.

" Mrs. Lewis," she said, " what do you mean? Are you one of those who think ill of me? How dare you speak those words? I am not a sinner. I will get up and go; I will not stay a moment longer with one who misjudges me, who thinks she is harbouring a sinner;" and indignant looked the face of the miserable girl.

" My dear, I did not mean to offend; I only spoke to you as a fellow-sinner. We are all sinners; we all have need to cry for mercy, even those amongst us who appear the best, the holiest. Can you be an excepted one from the curse of sin which has fallen upon all mankind? My dear young

lady," the widow continued, with much solemnity, "I fear indeed, until you can, with humble contrition and true faith, repeat those words which have given you such offence, there can be no peace, no help, no strength vouchsafed to you in your great trouble, whatever it may be. Yes, I can truly say that, amidst all my afflictions, the sorest and bitterest of them all have been my sins, my mistrust of Him; dwelling, as I have done selfishly, on the weight of my sorrows, rather than on His justice and wisdom; murmuring at His will, giving way to impatience, judging harshly and cruelly, and feeling hard unforgiveness at my heart against those who had wronged me. These are what I call sins, my dear, with many, many others."

Linda's tears were again falling, but now gently she reached forth her hand, and took possession of one of Mrs. Lewis's.

“ You a sinner, Mrs. Lewis—you, who have done such a work of charity by me, sheltered a friendless unknown girl, taken her to your kind heart without a fear or scruple ! ”

“ My dear, that is no merit in me, it is all God’s work in my heart ; I only followed the dictates of his leading. ‘ A cup of cold water given in His name.’ ”

Linda was again clasping her arms round the neck of this humble woman, her heart warming towards her as it never yet had done towards mortal woman.

“ Oh ! dear, kind Mrs. Lewis,” she murmured, “ teach me to know myself, and to see my sins ; but—” she continued, throwing herself again helplessly on the pillow, “ I must go, I must go ; ” and she flung her arm over her head in impotent distress.

“ Poor child ! ” the widow interposed, “ do not thus agitate yourself ; I shall go

and prepare your breakfast ; and whilst I am gone, repeat those words which gave you so much offence, over and over again, and be not dismayed if they bring before your eyes, hideous forms in the shape of transgressions innumerable, both of commission and omission, be not overwhelmed,—seeing your danger, will ensure your future safety as well as peace and comfort."

Mrs. Lewis left her, and Linda lay for some moments with clasped hands and eyes raised to heaven ; her lips moved, but no sound issued from them, and thus she remained till her kind hostess brought up a small tray, on which was laid a neat breakfast, and then Mrs. Lewis proceeded to make up the fire, and put the room in order.

After she was dressed Linda requested to be allowed to remain entirely upstairs till she took her final departure.

"I would rather not be seen by any one,"

she said ; “it must be in the dark that I must leave you.”

“ Not to-day, my dear,” was the answer, in this snow storm; and, indeed, you are not fit to undertake the passage over to France ; you require some rest ; besides, did you not say you wanted several things that I can get for you ?—There is no hurry for you to go, if you can put up with what I am able to offer. I keep no servant, Georgie and I do all that is required, with the assistance of a charwoman once a week.”

Linda’s countenance brightened — she heaved a sigh of relief.

“ A day of peace at least,” she thought. Her thanks were warm and full of gratitude. It was, indeed, a desolate road which lay stretched before her. Her present intention was to go to Paris, and obtain a livelihood by teaching music,—if possible, to become a teacher in some school. But she had no

friends to whom she chose to apply, and how would she be received, a perfect stranger, without any references to give ? But she made no calculations as to the probable results of her plan—in England, she would not, could not, stay. But now, launched upon the sea of uncertainty, the excitement of the moment passed, she began to view her situation more dispassionately, to look with black dismay upon the future.

“But what else can I do but hide myself?” she thought ; “have I not lost everything, even the respect of those who once cared for me ? And he —— !”

How much is implied by those simple pronouns, *he* or *she* !

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Linda was settled comfortably in the room for the day, a bright fire enlivening the gloom of the dark atmosphere, she began to make some necessary arrangements for the future.

She opened her trinket box, which really contained some articles of value—a cross and a ring of diamonds, and many lesser ornaments of worth.

She selected the cross, and the next time Mrs. Lewis appeared, showed it to her, saying,

“ You must sell this for me ; I shall want the money.”

Mrs. Lewis looked much perplexed.

" My dear young lady, I really do not know how to act; it is not from idle curiosity, but I wish you would give me more of your confidence. I know not even your name."

" My name, my name!" and the girl pressed her forehead distractedly with her hand. " My name," she repeated, " do you wish to know it?" and again she paused, as if lost in reflection.

" It would be pleasanter," was the answer, in a hesitating tone of voice.

Linda burst into one of those unnatural peals of laughter which grate so unpleasantly upon the ear, and then said —

" You may call me," and again she pondered; yes, " you may call me Mrs. Lindsey; Rosa Lindsey, will that do?"

" My dear," Mrs. Lewis again continued, interrogatively, " you are really married, I suppose?"

"What do you mean?" cried Linda, starting up, and fiercely confronting her. "What do you take me for? Not some vile girl, I hope. If you suspect me in any way, I had better go at once. Am I always to be treated as if I was the worst of sinners?" she cried, indignant tears now falling quickly down her cheeks. "I am lawfully married, so help me God!"

The good woman felt more than ever sorry for this poor, desolate, wayward girl. She kindly took her hand, and drawing her gently towards her, said—

"You are very young to be a widow, poor thing."

"I have lost my husband, Mrs. Lewis," Linda replied, disconsolately; "but if you wish really to befriend me, ask no questions; only believe me, when I solemnly assure you that I am no disgrace to your dwelling. If I were to tell you

all, I feel sure, that instead of blaming me severely, you would pity more than condemn me. I am young—foolish, and you have already taught me to acknowledge myself sinful, but I have not acted in such a manner as would oblige you to spurn me from your presence and that of your innocent child. Will you believe me? Will you trust me, dear, kind woman?"

And Linda, now all gentleness, knelt at the feet of the thoroughly perplexed and mystified Mrs. Lewis.

" My dear, pray don't do such a thing," she exclaimed, as she raised her. " Yes, be sure that I will do all I can for you."

" But will you believe me—trust me?" again Linda impetuously demanded.

" Yes, I will try to do so."

And then, with a brightened countenance, Linda kissed and thanked her newly-found friend.

“ And now,” she said, “ I must tell you my plans. I want to go to Paris, and, if possible, to get into a school, to gain a livelihood by teaching music.”

“ But have you any friends there who can recommend you ?”

“ None.”

“ Where do you mean to go, in the first instance ?”

Linda shook her head, then added, “ I have no idea.”

“ Oh, this is a mad scheme,” Mrs. Lewis exclaimed, “ it will never do ; why not stop in England, and try to do what you say ?”

“ I tell you I cannot, Mrs. Lewis,” Linda again petulantly broke forth, stamping with her small foot, “ I cannot stay in England, and I have heard there are places in Paris where one can board and lodge, till I find something else, and English governesses get on well abroad, that I know. I once had a

French governess, who told me all about it, so pray say nothing more on the subject."

Mrs. Lewis groaned in spirit; but she saw it was useless to argue the point just now with the impatient girl, so she sat down and began to cogitate what was best to be done in this perplexing case.

"This cross," she reflected, looking at that which she held in her hand, "must belong to one of some position above the common grade; it is valuable," and she gazed fixedly at the girl. "Yes, she is indeed above the common rank, I am quite certain; that one can tell by a glance at her proud look; my proper course ought to be to put an advertisement into the papers, to tell her friends where she is."

Linda was watching intensely the open, speaking countenance of the widow, and as if by some species of *clairvoyance* she had read the thoughts which were passing

through Mrs. Lewis's mind, she cried, "Mrs. Lewis, you are not going to betray me!" and sprang eagerly towards her. "Swear that you will not," she continued, her excitement becoming quite fearful to behold, "or on your head will rest the consequences. My friends shall never see me again alive. Where," and she looked around, "are my bonnet and cloak?"

Mrs. Lewis, now fairly terrified by the wild, determined looks which glared upon her, promised any thing Linda demanded. Visions of the Serpentine, the Thames, strychnine, &c. &c., flashed before her imagination as she looked upon this young Pythoness. The meek woman felt angry with herself for the little firmness she could command, to execute what her conscience pointed out as the right path to pursue, and for so completely succumbing to this young creature, this stranger of only a few hours'

acquaintance. Now, all she felt inclined to do, was to soothe and pacify her by any means in her power. There was something very interesting in Linda's appearance. Her figure was slender, though not yet arrived at its full perfection; her teeth beautiful. There was no decided beauty in the *tout ensemble* of the small oval face; still there was that about it which attracts the eye of the beholder, and causes one to think, "how attractive that girl will be!"

And the earnest look of either pleasure or pain, which emanated from her deeply-fringed eyes, gave an indescribable power to the expression of the ever-varying countenance; sometimes such glances of fierce indomitable feelings passing over it, the next moment to be quenched by repentant tears and heartfelt sorrow.

"Well, my dear," Mrs. Lewis said, after they had talked quietly for some time, "if

you really must dispose of your beautiful cross, I think I can manage it for you. As good luck will have it, I have a cousin, a jeweller in a very good way, and I will take it to him."

"And, Mrs. Lewis," Linda interposed, "I want a great many things—a proper dress, a warm cloak, and many necessaries. Oh! all my nice clothes, what a pity I could not bring any more of them!" she exclaimed, and then colouring violently, seeing Mrs. Lewis about to speak, she said, hurriedly—

"But never mind all that; you know what I shall want, and you must just get them at once; and my present cloak and bonnet, and this pretty Honiton lace veil, sell them, pray, dear woman. I shall want money until I begin to earn, and then I expect to be quite rich. You don't know how well I can play; and as to my singing, my Italian

masters used to say there was not a finer voice in England, and so it ought to be. *Povera madre mia!*" she sighed, "she had such a beautiful voice."

Mrs. Lewis groaned in spirit, and thought how little calculated was that proud heart to "earn her bread;" a thing so easily resolved upon, so difficult to accomplish—a task which to perform (setting aside its other impracticabilities) requires a complete change in our natures, a total abnegation of long-rooted habits, opinions, and general bearing—a humble, submissive spirit, a total smouldering of every spark of that excitable pride, ever so ready to blaze up into a fierce flame at every breath of humiliation.

The good woman soon went out to execute her commissions, leaving the shop to be served by Georgie, who, young as he was, most cleverly assisted his mother in every department.

On her return she found Linda impatiently awaiting her; the hours had passed very heavily alone, as she had been, for Georgie was not able to leave the shop for many minutes together. Mrs. Lewis had been very successful in all her undertakings.

Her cousin the jeweller had promised to give an answer the next day.

“The cross, he said, was very valuable; I can tell you, I could not have disposed of it to any one else: even John Harris looked astonished, and asked me ever so many questions. I told him that it was a customer, a lady who was a widow, and he could not doubt me, as a stranger might have done.”

And then she proceeded to show the material and crape she had bought for the dress, and a large black mantle, besides many other articles; and also to tell of the

good bargain she had made in disposing of the bonnet, cloak, and veil.

Linda's spirits now rose ; she became quite gay, enjoyed her tea greatly, which was brought up by Georgie, and as Mrs. Lewis remained in the parlour during the evening, cutting out the widow's dress, which she intended to make herself, merry peals of laughter were heard from the upstairs room.

The young lady, seemingly forgetful of all her trouble, past, present, and to come, was amusing herself with little Georgie right well ; riddles, puzzles, and tricks with an old pack of cards Mrs. Lewis had rummaged out, followed each other in quick succession, to George's infinite delight and wonder.

“ Poor girl ! ” soliloquised the widow, as she listened with astonishment to all this light-hearted mirth, “ how soon her troubles

roll off her heart ! She could not have cared much for her husband, but she is so very young, it must have been but a short time that they lived together. Ah, me ! it is not like the rending of soul and body which it is to lose the husband who has been the light of one's countenance for many a year of happiness, even of sorrow. But it is as well that the young so speedily throw off their grief ; they have probably a long life before them ; it would not do to carry about for so lengthened a period hearts weighed down by sad remembrances ; no, it is as well that they can so soon forget."

And the widow wiped away the tears which were now falling from her meek eyes.

" Well," she continued to meditate, " it is most fortunate for her mother, who she tells me is dead, that she is gone, for, oh ! what an anxious care such a child would have been ! And this plan of going to Paris,

it makes me tremble to think of it, and so pretty as she looks at times. Just now, when I went upstairs to see what all the noise was about, there she was, with such a colour in her cheeks, her eyes flashing like diamonds, showing all her pretty white teeth, laughing so heartily at some blunders Georgie had made ; no wonder, dear boy, his little head is quite bewildered by that queer, taking girl. I believe he thinks her some fairy—something quite supernatural ; he is ready to worship her. Ah, me ! ah, me ! the more I think of it, the more troubled I feel about that unfortunate young creature.”

Suddenly a thought darted into her mind :

“ Yes, Madame La Tour, I’ll go to her to-morrow ; she is a decent sort of body ; of course she knows all about Paris, and may be able to assist us ; to tell us at least where Mrs. Lindsey can safely go, when she

gets to that great wicked city—so full of snares and pitfalls for such as she is. Mrs. Lindsey!" Mrs. Lewis repeated, "such a childish thing to be a wife, and yet she swears she has been lawfully married, and has lost her husband. Upon my word, this business is enough to drive one mad, it does puzzle and perplex one so terribly."

The preparations went on rapidly. A dress of the most mournful description was completed, with a bonnet and veil to correspond, and a box procured, in which Mrs. Lewis placed everything absolutely necessary for Linda's immediate comfort.

The jeweller had given a much larger sum for the cross than she had hoped for, so that, after having remunerated Mrs. Lewis for all that she had bought for her, and also for her board, which, with much difficulty, Linda insisted upon her taking, a considerable sum remained.

" You must take care of this for me, dear woman," Linda urged. " It will not be safe for me to take so much money with me; I shall lose it, or be robbed. Give me what you think will be sufficient for the present, and I can always write to you for more when I require it, and it will be a comfort to feel that I have still some tie, some claim upon you, my kindest friend."

Mrs. Lewis could not but feel gratified by this proof of the entire confidence this strange girl placed in her, and at the same time concurred in the prudence of the plan.

CHAPTER VII.

It was with sorrow and shrinking dread, that Linda saw one by one every excuse for protracting her stay hourly vanishing. She had really in her childish heart enjoyed the time she had spent in that humble abode, so kindly had she been treated by the widow and her little son.

The girl's high spirit had been softened and subdued by the truly maternal and tender bearing of her lowly friend. She had never experienced the love of a mother; ties of blood relationship had in but a solitary instance exercised their uniting bond of affection upon her nature. Kindness

and consideration she had received, but not the peculiar motherly tenderness of a heart like Mrs. Lewis's, full as it was with the very milk of human kindness, and who well understood by the bitter experience of sorrow how to feel for the sufferings of others. The novelty of the position was a most amusing excitement. To Linda's young fancy it was a delightfully romantic episode, particularly as there was nought of vulgarity to throw its disenchanting effect over the homeliness of the daily proceedings, nor the least straining for an assumption of aught but reality.

Mrs. Lewis possessed the innate refinement of a pure and holy mind, and her boy promised to be like her, of a very superior species of the class to which he belonged.

Mrs. Lewis had evidently seen better days, but there was no low-bred semblance of superiority in the humble woman who

performed the menial offices of her changed life without a murmur, or the slightest appearance of repugnance; considering no apology necessary for so doing. And Linda delighted in assisting—helping to make the beds and to arrange the rooms; and even, when the house was shut up for the night, going into the clean little kitchen to assist to prepare their small supper, and to eat it there; no food ever tasted before so delicious as that which she had lent her aid to cook; and then the chestnuts she and George were so fond of roasting before the fire, it was delightful fun; the fact was, she was quite as much a child at heart as George himself, in many ways, although, poor girl, with all, she possessed also the far less unmixed feelings of a woman.

And then it was inexhaustible amusement to peep behind the blind, and watch the novel scene, the ever busy passing panorama,

always enacting in Oxford Street. Mrs. Lewis's shop was at the very extreme end of that locality, and Linda would smile when she contrasted her present resting place with those grand halls and aristocratic precincts in which her life had been hitherto passed.

"Oh!" she would ponder, "after all, people, not places, constitute our well-being. If this dear woman with her loving ways had been my mother, I really think I could have been very happy here, helping her, working hard for her and my little brother."

But again other visions crossed her mind — lighted saloons, splendour, gay company, faces, forms; and then, with a smothered groan, she would press her hands upon her eyes, as if to shut out from her mental vision, sights which it tortured her to behold.

"That dear, kind woman, that complete stranger, has done more for me in these few

days than I have gained ever since I was born. She has taught me so much. Had I but known and felt before, all that she has made me feel, poor Linda, you would not have been as you are now; but whatever may henceforth happen, I think I shall be a different girl in future. I shall carry away with me a treasure nothing can deprive me of—a changed heart, I really hope I now have; at least she has told me where to look for everything, and there in future I must go."

And Linda threw her arms round the kind woman's neck, who at that moment entered the room, and wept upon her bosom.

"My dear, there's no hurry; we shall be very sorry to lose you, that I can say with truth. I have not been unmindful of your wishes; and as you insist upon going to Paris—a plan I cannot like—I have just been to a person who I think may assist you."

"Yes, I must go, Mrs. Lewis," Linda hastily replied. "You have not said anything about me, I hope."

"My dear, I never break my promises," the widow answered. "I have been to a person I used once to know very well. She is a Frenchwoman, but has lived many years in England—a milliner in the most fashionable line. She is, I have every reason to believe, a very respectable person. I went to her and said I had a customer, a young widow lady, who wished to go to Paris to be a teacher in a school; and asked if she could in any way assist her by recommending a boarding-house where she might stay in the first instance. I told her how very young you looked, and that you were not rich."

"And what did she say?" Linda eagerly inquired.

"She said she would consider, and let me know this evening."

And that evening a note arrived from Madame La Tour, saying she was going to send her forewoman to Paris on Monday to execute some business, and if the lady was ready to start, she could travel with her. Madame La Tour added that she would write to her correspondent, another celebrated *modiste*, who would, she was sure, assist to find the lady an abode.

This was an opportunity not to be lost, and the offer was accepted. It was already Saturday ; how short the time now appeared to the period when Linda must leave her friends ! We are very much inclined to measure time by circumstances more than by its real duration—by those leaden hours that sometimes pass so laggingly, and then again the changed feeling which renders every minute valuable as a thread of gold.

The girl clung with the affection of years,

instead of days, to those who had so pitied her in such an hour of need. Adversity draws hearts together in a far more rapid and closer manner than years of prosperous intercourse ; and the terrifying idea that she was so soon to go forth alone, to drift down the troublous stream of life, with no one friendly hand held out to assist her, seemed every moment more and more alarming. She became nervous and frightened ; many were the tears shed that night as she contemplated the awful prospect before her.

“ Shall I,” she once that night exclaimed, starting up in bed, “ shall I tell her all, and ask her to advise me what to do ? But no, I cannot. I know what she would say, —that it was my bounden duty to write to *them*, and explain it all. Oh, no ! I cannot —I cannot. Rather let me be buffeted about the world, exposed to every trouble

and hardship. And do I not deserve it all for my former folly—my vanity ? Yes, dear Mrs. Lewis ; and here I can acknowledge it—my sin—for is not vanity sin ? And I thought—I thought he loved me. I—such a foolish, senseless girl !” And she hid her face in the bed-clothes, to suppress the sound of her sobs, fearing they might disturb her sleeping companions.

But with the morning’s sunshine the dark clouds of her mind had in a measure departed. Oh, those happy careless days of early youth, when troubles roll off so speedily from the smooth surface of the heart, leaving so few traces behind ! so different from one which has been long worn and furrowed by the constant droppings of cares and sorrows — the griefs of the aged, with whom life at best is but a “wintry day,” and which can look in this world for no after-growth of happiness.

But the young—their elastic spirits soon rise above the pressure of grief, close above the wound. Linda had so much to do, helping to pack, and to finish some of her lugubrious possessions, that she seemed for a while to forget her woes, and that evening again Mrs. Lewis's ears caught the sound of the melodious laugh issuing from the bedroom, where Linda and the boy were pursuing their favourite amusement of roasting chestnuts; and as she entered to tell them not to make quite so much noise, as many customers were coming in and out, and one lady had already said, “ You seem to have a merry party upstairs, Mrs. Lewis,” she saw the sorrowing widow with her arms flung over her head, and her mouth opened to its fullest extent, giving way to unrestrained merriment, elicited by some quaint remark of the innocent George, which had tickled her fancy.

"Oh, Mrs. Lewis," she said, when she could command her voice, "that boy will be the death of me. He has been asking such ridiculous questions."

"I only asked Mrs. Lindsey if she had any children," the boy deprecatingly explained. "There is nothing so extraordinary in that, is there, mother?" But Linda seemed to think there was, and went on laughing till Mrs. Lewis thought it best to put a stop to what generally ended in a painful reaction of feeling. She made some grave remark that immediately turned poor Linda's thoughts to the fast approaching Monday, and her mood soon changed from gaiety to dejection.

That evening, when George had cried himself to sleep, for he was heart-broken at the idea of losing his dear Mrs. Lindsey, Linda, seated on a footstool, with her head on Mrs. Lewis's knee, was talking

long and sadly, and listening to words from her humble friend which sank indelibly into her heart.

“ Yes ; you will see, dear Mrs. Lewis, that all my life I shall be a better girl. You have taught me what I never knew before ; and ever since I was born I have been so wilful, so foolish, and ungrateful. It seems as if my heart had never been able to lean to any one as it has done towards you ; yet I have received great kindness from many ; and oh, it shocks me now to think how ungrateful I have been, and must now appear. And yet — ” And now the despondent, humble look suddenly disappeared ; it changed to one of fierceness, as she continued : “ Mrs. Lewis ! still, though I may have been everything that is unamiable and foolish, I have been wickedly treated. Yes, most wickedly.” And the girl now clenched her hands, and

set her teeth, whilst glances of scorn, nay, even hatred, flashed from her eyes.

“Oh, Mrs. Lewis, when I think of some things, I feel such rage and hatred rising in my heart, that I could play the part of a demon; so do not raise the dreadful spirits before me by asking any questions. Let me endeavour, if possible, to forget the past, and only look onwards —never casting a thought back upon what has been.”

“But, dear, one thing I must say, and I entreat you to turn it, with many others that we have talked over, in your mind when you have left me. Remember, it is our bounden duty to forgive.”

“Forgive!” was the impetuous rejoinder; and the wrathful look which shot from those young eyes shocked and saddened the good woman.

“Poor child!” she thought; “all this

tells of a heart which requires much chas-tening to subdue its pride."

Mrs. Lewis was much more communi-cative to her young friend. She told her without reserve the story of her life—one of no eventful interest until the very few last years, when sorrow had ruffled its calm, happy, uneventful surface.

Her husband had been in a most thriving business, but before his death was a ruined, heart-broken man. The old story had been the cause of this disaster. He had weakly taken upon himself the responsibility of a friend's liabilities—one whom he had trusted as a brother, and utter destruction was the consequence.

They had lived in a pretty house, sur-rounded by a garden, within a mile or two of London, their two children growing up in health and happiness—all this was utterly swept away. The father, a most excellent

man, his only fault his being too yielding in his nature, perhaps less strong-minded than his enduring wife, never recovered the shock of the utter beggary in which he had involved his wife and children—a brain fever speedily brought him to the grave. In the state of destitution into which the family were plunged, Lucy, the daughter, then nearly eighteen years old, endeavoured to relieve her mother of the burden of her maintenance, by gaining her own livelihood. She entered a family as attendant upon some little girls, performing also the duties of nursery governess to them.

But, alas! the widow's cup of grief was not yet half filled. The scarlet fever was raging in the neighbourhood, and in the house where Lucy resided it soon made its spectral appearance, and she became one of its first victims.

“Before I was aware of the nature of

the complaint, I had hastened to see my child, and by that means conveyed the infection to George." Mrs. Lewis continued, when she had controlled her emotion sufficiently to speak, "Both my children were soon at the point of death; but one was mercifully spared to me, although George has never been the same in health since that fearful disease; but, thank God that he has been left, although my Lucy God thought in his wisdom to remove from her poor doting mother."

"Oh! Mrs. Lewis, dear, dear Mrs. Lewis," cried Linda, now weeping bitterly, "and you have gone through all this trouble, and can speak of it thus calmly?"

"My dear, how can I do otherwise, when it was God's will that I should have thus suffered? At first my hard heart rebelled, and had it not been for my boy, despair might well nigh have destroyed me, for my

Lucy had ever been my best beloved, my pride and joy ; too much so, no doubt, for now I can see that I made her an idol. "However," the mother continued, "I had a work to do. George lingered on, and there was only me to nurse him ; so strength was vouchsafed, and sweet comfort has since been sent to my torn heart in that dear child."

"Well, to shorten my sad story, I will just add that my friends were all most kind. Even our creditors, for the most part, respected and were sorry for my dear husband ; and there were not a few amongst them who came forward in the most considerate manner, returning many things necessary to our immediate comfort, which my husband, as a bankrupt, had most scrupulously given up.

"My own relations too were nobly generous, and by their kindness I have been esta-

blished in this shop, and for the last year have carried on this little business with tolerable success. And now, my dear, I have told you all; don't grieve for me," the widow added, as Linda clung to her, sobbing; "for in the midst of all this misery I have found comfort and cause for much thankfulness."

The girl's really affectionate heart was deeply touched. No lesson could have been so effectual in its teaching as this tale of real woe—no payment so precious to the excellent woman as the words Linda at length faltered forth,—

"Mrs. Lewis, I thank you for telling me all this; I shall never forget it. Oh, how ashamed I feel of my paltry trials, after hearing of your sorrows; but it will be good for me, dear woman! Yes, very good for me. I hope what I have heard will teach me also patience, submission;

and now I know that there is, as you say, but one refuge in trouble, and that must indeed be a sure one, or how could you so cheerfully have borne such a load of grief? Yes, dear Mrs. Lewis, I will think of your meek face in my hours of bitterness, and my impatient heart will grow calm."

"Not of me, my child," the widow earnestly exclaimed, "not of me, but of Him who is the Father of the fatherless and of the widow."

"Yes, I will; I promise you I will," repeated Linda, sinking upon her knees, and hiding her face on the widow's lap; "and," she added, "I hope we may live to meet again, that you may see that I have followed your precepts. Oh, Mrs. Lewis, if I could only have you always with me, and be to you a daughter in the room of poor Lucy. Alas! alas! this cannot be here in England."

It was now late, and Mrs. Lewis was obliged to hurry her guest to bed ; but long after she was asleep the widow still watched. With what a heart-ache she looked upon that childish face, so brightly flushed from the agitation of the past hours !

“ What a sweet face it is ! ” she sighed, “ really scarcely looking older than Georgie, lying there, with only that small head and face appearing. What it can all be, this mysterious history of hers I have no idea—something very wrong somewhere, I fear ; but I can’t think evil of the poor child—wilful, headstrong, and imprudent, no doubt she has been, but not wicked. Well, it cannot be helped, whatever it is ; I must go through with it now. I may have been unwise, imprudent, but after all I have only done my duty as a Christian woman ; and I feel sure, come what may, I shall never repent of it—indeed I would

do more if I could for her, poor young creature! and my heart, which is so dreary, will miss that face most painfully. And, oh, dear me, to think of the like of her alone upon the wide world!" Mrs. Lewis was miserable at this idea, and she would have made any sacrifice to have further befriended the desolate Linda, but could do no more than pray most fervently for her welfare.

Very little sleep visited the widow's eyes that night, and it was with a load at her heart that she commenced the business of another day.

The frost and snow had departed, and were succeeded by a damp, heavy atmosphere. Linda was not to start till night, and it was arranged that she should meet Madame La Tour's forewoman at the place of departure. Mrs. Lewis and George were to accompany her to see the last of their

young friend, and in order that the former might place her under the protection of the Frenchwoman, Mamselle Sophie.

It was only a very short time before they departed that Mrs. Lewis could prevail upon Linda to change her dress and put on her sombre suit of weeds.

A singular effect they certainly produced upon the appearance of this childish-looking creature, and tears were in the kind woman's eyes as she looked at her when thoroughly equipped. But there was no answering emotion in those of the young widow—rather an indignant flush—and a scornful look her eyes emitted.

“ You would not know me for the same person ?” she then rather anxiously demanded.

“ Scarcely, indeed !” was the answer, and then Mrs. Lewis went on earnestly to recommend that she would take care of her

new dress, and put on the dressing-gown she would find in the carpet-bag before she lay down in the berth. "Pray remember the new crape," was one of her careful admonitions, "and be sure that you hang up your bonnet."

Poor Linda was now very miserable and nervous, and Georgie overwhelmed with grief. The boy loved the young lady so dearly, her stay with them had been such happiness, that the idea of losing her was quite dreadful.

"Indeed, dear Georgie, you must write to me, and you must always tell me how your dear mother looks, and how she is; never mind spelling or grammar; all I shall care about is to hear from you. Oh, Georgie, what a happy boy you are, always to be with such a mother!"

Georgie hung about her as she sat listlessly allowing Mrs. Lewis to perform every

part of the packing and preparations for her departure; and at length, with a very heavy heart, on the darkest and gloomiest of November nights, Linda quitted the humble refuge which had proved a haven of peace to her.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE parting was over, and a sad one it was. All who have ever embarked on board a steamer from the London Wharf, can enter into Linda's bewilderment, which almost absorbed every other feeling, whilst being jostled by the watermen, all struggling for her luggage, preparatory to stepping into the boat which was to convey her and her companion to the vessel.

Dark looked the river, lights gleaming on its troubled waters from the numerous buildings around; the cold wind blowing on the girl's face, rain dropping upon her head.

She had not till now in any way realised

her position, and as, with a start of dismay, she found herself at length on board the packet, a feeling of blank desolation rushed to her heart. Her first impotent impulse was to spring forward with a wild resolve to return to the widow and her son, who, she felt sure, were still watching the departure of the vessel.

“ But oh, it is too late ! ” she exclaimed.

The ship was indeed already in motion, and she had no alternative but to wring her hands and sob in hopeless distress, as her eyes fixed themselves in the direction where she fancied might still be standing the only two on earth who, in her present morbid state of mind, she imagined felt any interest in her.

The Frenchwoman now approached and spoke soothingly to her, but little did Linda heed her words, or the proposal that she should accompany her into the saloon.

"Madame," the milliner said in French, "will be wet through; we had better go down and secure our berths, for we shall have a terrible night."

And Linda passively allowed herself to be conducted to the saloon, and once there she threw herself helplessly on a seat, leaving Mamselle Sophie to make what arrangements she pleased about her sleeping accommodation.

It had been settled that Linda was to accompany Madame La Tour's forewoman, in the first instance, to her friend and business correspondent, a first-rate milliner, Madame Le Roi, whose Magasin de Modes was situated in one of the most distinguished localities of Paris. She had been deputed to find some establishment of respectability, in which the young lady could reside until she had definitively arranged her plans.

As there she sat, all the excitement of the

last week subsiding into terror, as she felt, for the first time, the reality of her lonely position, the poor girl was indeed a pitiable object ; all her past existence, her impetuous, self-willed conduct rising up in judgment to condemn her, filling her heart with affright and repentant sorrow.

“ What will become of me ? ” she almost suddenly exclaimed.

In her total absorption, her despairing feelings, she had thrown her veil back, and sat with her hands clasped, her eyes, from which tears fell fast, raised piteously, as if invoking help from above. But we fear the attitude was more indicative of devotion than her thoughts really were at that moment.

She cared not who saw her, in the impatience of her present feelings, or what might be the consequences. She was forgetful of Mrs. Lewis’s words of counsel, of

all her own promises of seeking aid from whence alone it could be derived. Again, she was the miserable girl sorrowing impotently without hope.

The saloon was full of people, but she saw them not; little heeded that many looked upon her with surprise, some with compassion; her widow's weeds, so strange a contrast to that small childish face, her deep distress!—it was so unusual, and doubly affecting to witness in one so young.

As the night advanced the sea roughened, large waves beat against the vessel's sides, and soon the assembled party began to disperse; one by one might be seen a fresh victim reeling helplessly, supported by the steward or stewardess into the sleeping cabin, a prey to that demon of sickness, whose power is resistless; but Linda felt it not; perhaps the counter-irritation of her mind saved her from bodily suffering. The

motion of the packet, however, became every moment more violent. She could with difficulty keep her seat, but still resisted the repeated advice of the stewardess that she should take possession of her berth. She dreaded the lights, the sounds, and the atmosphere of the sleeping cabin, crowded as it must be with so many sufferers. Through the gloom of the saloon, lighted so dimly by the lamp swaying to and fro, she had scarcely perceived that she was not alone, but that a pair of eyes were attentively watching her with the deepest interest. She had removed her heavy bonnet, so that the face was no longer hidden, and the young man who looked upon it, felt such pity for the poor young sorrowing one, whose eyes were so red with weeping, and with such a piteous expression on her countenance, that gladly would he have done any thing possible to serve her.

He longed to say something, to offer his services, for he had a good, kind, English heart. Any one in distress commanded his sympathy; but in one so very young he could not bear to see it; and he ventured by degrees to approach nearer to where she sat, and then made some casual remark upon the stormy state of the weather.

Linda started; what was she to do?—and she had taken off her bonnet.

“However,” despairingly she thought, “I care not what becomes of me.”

She just answered at first in monosyllables, but the gentleman persisted, and very soon she felt a degree of inexpressible comfort whilst listening to his soothing tone of voice.

There is certainly a magic influence in the sound of a voice; so much does it at once convey an impression of the identity, the character, the station of the speaker.

No wonder, then, that the blind so generally read aright characteristics by the mere intonation of those with whom they converse; every inflexion of their voices proving as sure an index to their darkened vision, as the fluctuations of the countenance afford to those who are able to watch its variations.

Linda felt imperceptibly re-assured; a creature of impulse,—one moment in the depths of despair, the next, her spirits rebounding in a surprising manner, forgetting for a while aught but the impression of the actual present—she was soon chatting freely to this perfect stranger.

Nothing conducts an acquaintance so speedily to a climax as the saloon of a packet in a tremendous sea, particularly if we are not quite laid low by sickness; there are so many little events and *contre-temps* which bring one in familiar contact,

destroying at once all attempts at formality or ceremony.

Soon the heaving and lurching of the vessel rendered Linda's position critical; she was obliged to accept the gentleman's arm to save her from falling from the insecure situation in which she was placed; but once in comparative security she laughed merrily, and seemed rather to enjoy what once she would have termed the fun of the whole business.

How strangely did the laugh sound to the young man, who had so few minutes before watched such despairing anguish in the face of the infantine-looking widow! But this only made him pity her the more.

In the interval of the temporary comparative quiet they talked together, and Linda was soon telling him that she had always been an excellent sailor, and was well accustomed to the sea; had yachted a great

deal from Torquay, had been out in very rough weather, and had never yet suffered from sea-sickness.

The next question was, where she had been, and Linda told of Cherbourg, the Channel Islands, Scotland, &c., &c., and she was asked what was the name of the yacht ?

Then a dead silence ensued—the charm was broken. Linda shrank back, and spoke not afterwards ; and the stewardess appearing, and again advising her most strongly to go to her berth, saying that the storm was increasing, and soon she would not be able to remain where she was in safety, she at length consented to go to the ladies' cabin.

With the utmost difficulty, assisted by the stewardess, she at length, remembering Mrs. Lewis's orders, contrived to take off her dress and put on a dressing-gown, and

at last found herself in a berth, repenting most sorely that she had left the saloon ; for the state of the passengers assembled there, was anything but agreeable to the senses ; every one suffering more or less from the tortures of that most incurable of horrors, the almost certain accompaniment to a stormy passage across the channel.

The lady in the next berth to Linda's seemed to be in a worse plight than all the others.

The stewardess, torn to pieces by the necessities of the various passengers, was unable to give her the attention she so evidently required, and her exclamations and cries for assistance were piteous in the extreme.

"Oh, why did I attempt this horrid long passage ?" she would exclaim. "I must die—I cannot survive this torture !

Stewardess, for mercy's sake come to me,
or I must expire."

But the stewardess could not move ; she was at that moment held tight in the grasp of another sufferer, who would not allow her to leave her side.

Linda really began to be alarmed, as well as very sorry for the poor woman. She sat up in her berth and said —

"Can I do anything for you, ma'am ?"

"Oh, I am dying ! I am dying !" was the only answer, "and no one will come near me."

Linda, with the utmost difficulty, contrived to get out of the berth. Holding tight by the side, with one hand she contrived to support herself, whilst with the other she administered to the suffering woman ; bathing her face plenteously with *eau de Cologne*, speaking words of comfort and encouragement, and serving her

so kindly and effectually, that soon, with the selfishness of suffering, she became so necessary that, whenever the weary girl endeavoured to return to her berth, she was implored so earnestly to remain that she had not the heart to refuse. But at length it occurred to Linda that she had heard of a specific which, after sea-sickness had done its worst, produced a wonderful effect in procuring rest.

She called the stewardess; and desired her to bring a large glass of mulled port wine, well spiced.

After some demur, and promises of good payment, this was obtained, and Linda, with some difficulty, insisted upon her patient swallowing almost a tumblerful of this cordial. The lady had been well nigh exhausted by so many hours of incessant sickness, therefore the potent nature of the draught, to Linda's relief, speedily took

effect—her charge soon fell into a profound slumber ; and the storm having in a great measure subsided, the motion of the packet was now comparatively easy. Linda gladly crept into her berth, and in a moment was also fast asleep, and so remained for two hours, when she awoke, finding that they had reached Boulogne, and that the wretched inmates of the berths had been aroused from the short oblivion they might have enjoyed of their night of misery.

She started up, longing to get out of this chamber of horrors ; and demanding of the stewardess where she could find washing materials, was soon endeavouring to refresh herself by as much ablution as the scanty means of a packet would afford.

She had peeped into her patient's berth, and was glad to see her still asleep, and felt rather proud of her successful doctoring, which had proved so effectual.

But the lady's eyes were only closed. She had been awake some time, still feeling the exhausting effects of her dreadful night, and thinking, with much gratitude, of the kind girl who had done so much for her alleviation. No one was as yet astir but Linda; and the lady, turning on her side, looked forth, and first saw her kind young nurse devoutly kneel down, and leaning her face upon her hands, perform her morning devotions. Then she watched her through the different stages of her toilette,—how at length she combed out and coiled her long hair round the back of her small head, and then—no, it could not be possible,—and the lady raised herself upon her elbow to gain a better view, as she saw this child-like-looking creature place upon that little head a widow's cap, and proceed to equip herself in the complete garb of a bereaved wife.

Linda was on the point of leaving the cabin, panting to breathe the fresh air on deck, when, chancing to look round her, she saw the lady, with her eyes open, fixed upon her. She immediately went up to the berth, inquiring kindly how she felt.

Then followed the most lady-like expressions of gratitude for the services she had rendered. A very different individual was the calm, collected, dignified person who now addressed her, to the abject, petulant woman who, so short a time ago, would have sold her birthright for a moment's reprieve from the sufferings under which she groaned; from the degrading, levelling effect of seasickness, that respecter of no one person, high or low, rich or poor, equally regardless of the queen as of the subject—which laughs to scorn every nostrum human skill has ever devised, bringing the victims of

its despotic sway powerless under its complete dominion. Yes, there is certainly one thing omnipotent even here below.

Linda flew up the companion stairs upon deck. How delicious was the open air after the night spent in that dreadful cabin below! She leant over the side of the vessel, gazing upon the town of Boulogne ; but her thoughts were wandering far and wide, the moment's pleasurable sensation soon giving place to the anxious cares which pressed upon her heart.

She was roused from her reverie by a voice behind her, saying—

“ I am glad to see that you have recovered the horrors of the night you so much dreaded.”

It was her acquaintance of the previous evening, and Linda felt glad again to behold

that agreeable countenance, a passport to her favour quite irresistible.

They chatted freely until summoned to breakfast. When seated at the well-filled table, she hurriedly cast her eyes over the assembled party; but seemingly satisfied with the scrutiny, she raised her veil and commenced the meal, to which she was assiduously assisted by her new acquaintance. She observed, however, that the lady who sat opposite gazed fixedly upon her.

Could it be possible? Was that imposing-looking person, so strong-minded in the expression of her countenance, the impatient, fractious, impotent invalid, giving way to every ejaculation of complaint, whom she had nursed during the night?

She was a tall, stately personage, between forty and fifty—a cold, rather stern expression the chief characteristic of her

countenance, her eyes hawk-like, so keen and piercing they appeared ; but when she smiled, a look of benevolence seemed, like a sunbeam on a winter's day, to lighten its frigidity.

The lady evidently was much interested by the appearance of the youthful widow, and Linda caught her eyes repeatedly, as she sat before her, apparently endeavouring to penetrate into her inmost thoughts.

Breakfast was soon over, and the confusion of landing commenced. Again Linda's spirits, which had with their usual elasticity risen for a space, sank again. Her resting time was passed—the future, with all its difficulties, was again staring her in the face, and the ready tears began to gather in her eyes.

The Frenchwoman began to bustle about, advising her to make her preparations ; and it was with a listless, miserable

air that Linda followed her into the sleeping cabin to look after her carpet-bag.

“Are you going to Paris, Madam?” was asked in a clear, decided voice by the lady whom she encountered, also on the same errand; “for if so, perhaps I may have the pleasure of travelling with you in the same carriage?”

Linda eagerly expressed her acquiescence, and felt a sensation of relief in feeling that, during the journey at least, she would be under the protection of one who appeared so unmistakably respectable.

From that moment she kept close to her new acquaintance, evidently evincing such comfort in the proximity—even viewing with indifference the offered services of the handsome young man—that the lady, whose perception was acute to a degree, at once perceived it, and felt not only gratified, but formed at once a favourable estimate of

Linda, who, now that she had found a support in one of her own class and sex, seemed to regard with perfect indifference the attentions of the young man who hovered about her, perceptibly much attracted by the interesting young widow. He was at the carriage window making his adieux when they departed, and might have been seen standing on the platform watching the train as long as it was visible; and then with a sigh walking away, thinking, "Poor girl, I wonder who she is? What can be her history? I wish I had not met her; that piteous face of hers last night will trouble me for many a day!"

And so it sometimes happens during our journey through life: we are struck by an expression in a face, by some peculiar fascination in the bearing of a stranger casually seen, and perhaps never again en-

countered, which, like the effects of some mysterious dream, leaves an extraordinary impression on the mind, and clings pertinaciously to our recollections.

CHAPTER IX.

LINDA'S LETTER TO MRS. LEWIS.

"December, Rue ——, à Paris.

"My dear, kind Friend,

"I have only time to write most hurriedly; but you will, I know, be glad to hear that the poor girl whom you have so compassionately assisted in her hour of need is for the present in safe keeping."

Then followed the account of the passage to Boulogne, and the manner in which her acquaintance commenced with the lady whose guest Linda now was.

"During our journey to Paris my companion questioned me as to my arrange-

ments when we should have arrived there. I told her what they were; that I expected Madame le Roi would have secured some present asylum for me until I had attained the object which had induced me to leave England; and I informed her of my earnest desire to obtain a situation in a school, where I might make myself useful in teaching music. Mrs. Grandison, for that is her name, was silent for some time after I had spoken, and then she said, ‘ You, of course, are supplied with credentials to assist you in this object?’

“ ‘ No, indeed, I don’t possess a single reference. Are they really necessary?’ I added, in blank dismay.

“ ‘ Absolutely,’ was the laconic reply.

“ ‘ Then,’ I exclaimed, losing all presence of mind, ‘ I am indeed an unfortunate creature, and what is to become of me God only knows!’ and I covered my face

and cried bitterly. Mrs. Grandison was silent; when she spoke again it was in a firm though not unkind tone of voice.

“ You could not expect, young lady, that any right-thinking person would receive into their house a stranger, without a friend to vouch for her respectability; it would be, indeed, the height of imprudence, particularly when that stranger must necessarily associate intimately with the young people committed to her charge. For instance, myself,—I educate under my roof some pupils,—at this very moment I am in want of a resident teacher of music, but ——”

“ I interrupted her by exclaiming, dreadfully excited, ‘ Oh, madam, dear madam, only take me; try me; I’m a poor forlorn girl, but there is nothing really wrong or disreputable in my character; I have married, and my husband has gone from me

for ever, and my friends will never forgive, or look upon me as they have done. I again implore you to try me ; I do not want you to pay me until you have proved me thoroughly ; let me work for you without any salary for three months, then, if you find me worthy, give me a pittance, just sufficient to buy what is necessary for this dress, which will henceforth be my constant livery,' and I pointed to my widow's garb.

"Mrs. Grandison still shook her head doubtingly. I was sitting on the seat opposite to her, my eyes fixed with the intensity of hope and fear upon her severe countenance. How earnestly I begged and prayed, implored her in the name of mercy to have pity upon me, no pen can describe!

"'At any rate,' after some hesitation, she said, evidently softened by my tears and vehement importunities, 'I shall be glad if you will go home with me now, and stay a

week, and in that time something may be done for you.'

" You may imagine my rapturous gratitude. Mrs. Grandison looked amazed at my impetuous conduct, she, so calm and cold! though, as I flung my arms round her neck, and with sobs and tears kissed her over and over again, blessing and thanking her for her goodness, I thought I saw her eyes fill with tears, and certainly her voice sounded much more gentle when she bid me compose myself. Oh! Mrs. Lewis, have not goodness and mercy followed my footsteps ever since I have needed them so greatly?"

" 'But your maid,' she said, 'I fear I cannot consent to receive her also.'

" I soon explained to her who Mam'selle Sophie was; and just then we were about to enter Paris, and all was again confusion. I told the Frenchwoman, who had travelled in a second-class carriage, my change of

plans; and, according to Mrs. Grandison's directions, gave her my address; and after everything was arranged, and our luggage left to the charge of a respectable-looking man-servant, whom we found at the station, we entered a *fiacre* and drove to Mrs. Grandison's abode.

"The house stood within gates, at which there was a lodge for the *concierge* or porter. It seemed large and gloomy as we entered at that dusky time of the day, before the lamps were lighted; but the room into which we were ushered was bright with the radiance of a large wood fire.

"'Wait here and warm yourself, whilst I go and make preparations about your sleeping apartment,' Mrs. Grandison said; 'but, by the by, what is your name? I must know that at least.'

"I told her it was Mrs. Lindsay, and she departed.

“ And then, dear Mrs. Lewis, I thought of you, and on my knees I thanked God for this present deliverance, and implored His assistance to help me on in the course into which my fate had drawn me; and as I rose on Mrs. Grandison’s entrance, I felt so strengthened, such a feeling of relief and happiness filling my heart, that I again rushed into the arms of that tall, stately-looking woman—I daresay she thought with childish, foolish vehemence—thanking her for her kindness.

“ ‘ Now I will take you to your apartment,’ she said, when she could extricate herself from my embraces; ‘ you will find it quite prepared, for I had expected to have brought back a young lady, and the room you will occupy was made ready for her reception.’

“ I followed her upstairs, and through a long passage, until we arrived at a door,

and entered a large room, which, but for the bed in a recess, did not look like a sleeping apartment. It appeared to me more resembling a study, the large library table being covered with books and writing materials, while leading out of it were two smaller chambers, one which was appropriated by Mrs. Grandison to the business of the toilette, the other fitted up as a sleeping room, on a very small scale, with its French bed and furniture to match.

“‘This little room,’ Mrs. Grandison remarked, ‘I keep in general for a new pupil; I think it more agreeable for a stranger, before she becomes acquainted with her companions, to be alone.’ Will you like Weston to assist you in opening your trunk? Dinner will be ready in an hour.’

“I thanked her, but declined the offer; my carpet-bag contained all that I required

for the present, and in it, you, dear woman, had deposited in the little *carton*, my cap. I smoothed my hair and put it on, took out the contents of the bag, and when these little arrangements were over, had still time to look around at my tiny domicile and write these hurried lines to you. Such a pretty little room it is, furnished as only French taste can furnish; and then I looked out of the window, and saw that a large garden belonged to the house. ‘Oh ! that I may be allowed to stay here !’ I thought ; ‘it is just the place to suit me, I am sure ; and Mrs. Grandison, though she does look so severe, and is so stately, what a lady-like woman she is ! and under all that cold exterior I am sure she has a warm heart,— I know I could serve her well.’ Oh, Mrs. Lewis, how my heart smites me while thoughts of the past rush through my mind !— my wilfulness towards those who

have been so good to me ever since I was born, and who must now think me a regular monster of ingratitude, must feel that so much kindness and affection, so freely bestowed, have been utterly thrown away. The feelings of my heart must have been in a state of total apathy, for from what I now experience, they must have been always there; but bound fast by pride and folly, never did I realize their natural workings until suddenly they seemed to burst forth when I was with you, dear, dear Mrs. Lewis! Those words you bid me utter, 'God be merciful to me a sinner,' and which, after a hard struggle with my rebellious nature, I have been able to repeat with sincerity, seemed to break open the fast-closed gates of my cold, hard heart, and oh, what a flood of torturing thoughts did then enter into my benighted soul! — remembrances which had nearly over-

whelmed me with sorrow—and to think how kind *they* were, the friends of my childhood and youth, and I so totally dead to their influence, making no return but coldness, disrespect; no answering love. My tears are choking me, and blotting my paper; a bell rings, it must be dinner; in the greatest haste I must finish this confused scrawl. Tender love to dear Georgie and yourself, dearest Mrs. Lewis. You shall hear again in a day or two, from

“Your grateful and affectionate
“Rosa.”

P.S. “The maid tells me this will not be too late for the post.”

CHAPTER X.

IT was with very red eyes that Linda found herself in the presence of Mrs. Grandison, who, having divested herself of her travelling costume, stood before her, more frigidly stately than ever, in her full-skirted, handsome silk dress and imposing-looking cap. She stiffly made an inclination, to express that her guest should walk first into the dining-room, and treated Linda with the grave courtesy due to a stranger during the meal, and when it was concluded they retired in the same order into the room into which they had first been ushered.

“My pupils are gone home for their

Christmas vacation," she said, when they were seated. "I have no company to welcome you, Mrs. Lindsay."

Linda soon began to feel oppressed by the weight of the atmosphere of frigidity which Mrs. Grandison's present manner cast around her. What was she to do during this long evening? she thought, whilst casting her eyes despairingly around.

Mrs. Grandison immediately began to examine the direction of a number of letters placed upon a small table, on which stood a lamp by the side of a *fauteuil*. Linda, seated opposite, had nothing else to do but to watch the movements and countenance of her hostess. She saw her look abstractedly at the directions of several letters, but at last she came to one which had been hidden under the others, all of which she now hastily cast on one side, and then, with an impatience very unlike her usual collected

demeanour, hurriedly opened it, and was soon deep in its contents.

Linda thought it must be a foreign letter from the appearance of the paper. What a change did its contents produce upon the countenance of that stern woman ! Her face became paler, but a softness came over its expression, quite transforming its character; tender smiles ever and anon played around her mouth, and then again some tears were wiped away; and when the last words seemed to have been read, the first sheet was taken up again and every word reperused. And even when it was at last reluctantly put down, and Mrs. Grandison took up the other letters to examine abstractedly their contents, the mind certainly was not with the task; for often were they again thrown aside, and again the other taken up, and some passages dwelt upon, Linda could easily perceive,

with such fondness. Once she saw her press the lines with fervour to her lips, and they moved as if ejaculating a name! Could that be the stony-looking woman who, like a clothed statue, had just done the honours of her table?

Linda's very expressive eyes were fixed on Mrs. Grandison's face whilst these ideas were passing through her mind, and suddenly the lady, who, whilst reading her letter had totally forgotten even the existence of her guest, suddenly looked up and perceived that she was watched. Her face flushed, and evidently a displeased expression overspread it; but with cold civility she said, with her usual dignified manner,—

“I suppose you have not unpacked your work-box, Mrs. Lindsay; it must be irksome to you, I should imagine, doing nothing; you will find some books and prints upon that table.”

“And Linda, feeling like a detected criminal, immediately rose to obey her orders, looked over the prints, and finally settled herself with a book. After a time Mrs. Grandison spoke.

“Have you selected a book you like?” she politely said.

“Yes, I am very fond of Alfieri.”

“Do you speak Italian?” was asked with some interest.

“Quite as fluently as English, much better than French. I never cared for that language; German, even, I like better. Italian is my mother tongue.”

There was a long pause. Mrs. Grandison, Linda could perceive, although now she only very stealthily turned her eyes towards her, was still absorbed by her letter; but at length again she spoke.

“You must be tired to-night, Mrs. Lind-

sey, I should imagine, or I would ask you to give me a little music."

"Not at all tired, I can assure you," Linda exclaimed, starting up with alacrity; "I shall be too happy to play or sing."

"But you have not, I daresay, unpacked your music?" Mrs. Grandison said, as she proceeded to ring the bell for lights for the pianoforte.

However, saying she should not require any to-night, indeed, had brought no music with her, and would prefer not having lights, Linda gladly sat down to the occupation which almost she loved the most; and choosing a song which she thought, in Mrs. Grandison's present mood, would be most calculated gently to mingle with the feelings of tenderness drawn forth by that foreign letter, Linda sang an Italian *canzonette*, of such pathetic pathos, in a voice of such exquisite plaintive melody,

that soon the heart which had already heaved high with that sweetest and tenderest, though saddest of emotions, caused by the words (though they were but written ones) from one beloved in a far distant land, ceased almost in its beatings, whilst in rapt attention she listened to the strains.

Linda noted the effect she was producing. She felt a sort of exultation at the idea of the power she possessed of melting the soul; not that she meant to be cruel, far from it, for with all her faults, the girl possessed a compassionate heart, but with a sort of instinctive conviction that she knew a song which would particularly touch the heart of her listener, and with an impulse of curiosity to discover the extent of her power in exciting her feelings (after having finished the Italian arietta she had before commenced), she at once broke forth into that plaintive air "the Exile's Home":—

“ Where, tell us where, for hearts in sorrow pining,
Where dwells the calm that shall our toil allay?
Tell us, ye stars, above in glory shining,
Where lies the shore that yet shall all repay?
Oh there, only there !

“ Shades of the past, whose pilgrim cares are over,
Say ye in dreams who round us kindly come;
Ye from the skies, that here in pity hover,
Where is the wanderer’s home—the exile’s rest?
Oh there, there !”

Every word fell with liquid clearness upon Mrs. Grandison’s listening ear, and soon Linda was startled and terrified when she discovered what passionate emotions her spell had conjured up. A sudden vibration on some of the most sensitive chords of her heart seemed to run through the whole frame of the stern-looking woman, and in a moment to open the flood-gates of her tears. Uncontrollable was the emotion which now shook the whole frame of one apparently so strong-minded. She could

not suppress her sobs, which sounded so far more painful than the ordinary emotion of women, proceeding from one who seemed so little given to such tender weakness.

Linda, as usual the creature of impulse, in a moment was on her knees before Mrs. Grandison, imploring her forgiveness for being the cause of her emotion.

"I ought not to have sung that song ; I know it was wrong of me ; it is so sad, it always makes me feel inclined to weep when I sing it. But yet, dear Madam," Linda continued, "the words must be so comforting to an exile. Yes, I feel its influence ; I, a poor, miserable, forlorn exile, now know, that 'There, only There,' can there be rest for me."

And Linda buried her face on Mrs. Grandison's lap, and wept for her own woes.

No words were spoken for some time, but much was accomplished during that brief space ; and it was a true and honest, though

a rash, wild young heart you pressed to yours, Mrs. Grandison, and one which kindness would melt and mould to your will. You may trust her now; though faulty and impetuous, she will be true to you.

The value of adversity depends upon the spirit of the person upon whom it falls.

Fire will inflame straw, soften iron, or harden clay; its effects are determined by the object with which it comes in contact. There are some spirits with which it hastens the consummation of perpetual decay, and there are others in which it develops the hidden good qualities of the mind.

Linda's previous existence had been one of prosperity, but not one of love. It was a cold atmosphere which she had ever breathed, and this impetuous nature longed for something more; her energetic soul would fain be doing, not merely existing; she had ever fretted and chafed at her life

of vacuity;—no one to love her, as she fain would be loved ; nothing to do but to saunter through life a nonentity.

Adversity had at once done its transforming work upon her very peculiar temperament. Her very entrance into what ought to be termed life had become to her a snare, a peril. She had rushed into it with a heart as buoyant as a fresh morning to the skylark, but for every step she had taken in that path she had now something to mourn, to deplore. But sorrow had been good for Linda. They were now seated side by side, the lady and the girl on the sofa—Mrs. Grandison talking long and in a gentle voice. She was uninterrupted by her listener, who sat drinking in every word she spoke, and then, when the lady ceased to speak, she murmured: “All, all shall be done as you wish ; you will not repent, dear Madam, that you have befriended me;” and she erected her head with a degree of



dignity, a new phase in her deportment. "I hope, with all my faults, I possess an honourable heart; and believe me when I say, though my present appearance may, under such mysterious circumstances, belie my words, that I am no low-born adventurer, I shall never at least, come what may, be a disgrace to you; and oh, Madam, how can I sufficiently express my overwhelming gratitude?" she added, melting into tears of tenderness.

Music, which she was called upon every night to perform, was evidently the greatest source of delight to Mrs. Grandison, who soon discovered how *soignée* the young girl's education had been; and then her manners and language, how perfectly lady-like and well-bred they were!

"Yes, she is exactly what I want," was the reiterated exclamation. "But this silence, this mystery!—I know not how to decide."

CHAPTER XI.

BUT few days more and the pupils were to arrive.

Mrs. Grandison became grave and abstracted, and Linda's heart began to sink.

"I shall have to go," she would exclaim when she was alone in her little room. "Yes, I see plainly Mrs. Grandison will not keep me any longer without some explanation; but I cannot, I cannot tell her." And it was with very red eyes the poor girl again encountered Mrs. Grandison; and so passed the three next days, nothing having transpired upon that subject.

She little guessed what a reciprocal feeling

was struggling in the heart of her formidable-looking hostess.

At length the crisis came. They had finished breakfast, which had been a silent meal, both evidently engrossed by troubled thoughts. With a start Linda heard herself addressed :

“ Mrs. Lindsey, the time has arrived when we must come to some understanding or part. Your own good sense will point out to you how impossible it will be for me to retain you under my roof, as the companion to my twenty pupils, unless I know something of your previous history.”

Mrs. Grandison paused, but no answer did she receive. Linda sat speechless, her hands pressed tightly together, looking the pale image of despair.

At last she rose, and said in a voice, almost inaudible from choking sobs she in vain endeavoured to restrain,—

“Yes, Mrs. Grandison, I know that I must go, for I cannot, *must* not, tell you who I am ; you have been kind, most kind, and I shall be always grateful for what you have already done. You are quite right ; you could not let me stay, still doubting me ; though God is my witness when I declare that you have not been sheltering one of whom you need be ashamed. I have been, no doubt, a very foolish girl, but not a disgraceful one. I can swear solemnly that I was lawfully married, but,” and she clasped her hands in agony, “my husband is gone from me for ever ; and as for my friends, I never will return to them. This I can solemnly declare ; parents, I have none.”

And thus having spoken, Linda rushed from the room, and regained her sleeping apartment in a state of excitement and agony truly pitiable.

"Oh, Mrs. Lewis, Mrs. Lewis!" she exclaimed, "you are the only one who really compassionated my forlorn condition; you did not turn from me, though I told you as little as I have done Mrs. Grandison. Yes, I must go, and that immediately," and with her usual impetuosity Linda dragged forth her trunk, and began hastily to deposit in it the contents of the drawers, her tears all the while falling thickly whilst thus engaged. She little imagined that a pair of eyes were intently watching her movements.

The door of the small room leading into the one occupied by Mrs. Grandison was ajar, and that lady, who had soon followed Linda, really distressed at the state in which she had quitted her presence, had intended, although, indeed, her intentions were very vague and undefined, to persist in her endeavours to prevail upon her to

be more explicit ; but the sight of the poor girl thus engaged, the wretchedness of her appearance, her unfeigned grief, and evident determination to rush upon the wide world rather than tell who she was, touched the really warm heart of the cold seeming woman.

It was affecting to see the poor childish-looking girl endeavouring, with her trembling hands, to perform what was evidently an unaccustomed labour, that of packing. Her widow's cap had been flung off, as it always was when she was alone, and her hair, hanging wildly about her tear-stained face, impetuously every moment was thrust back, displaying her face disfigured by weeping.

“ Poor, poor child ! ” Mrs. Grandison’s heart began to suggest, “ how unfit she is to be sent abroad to buffet with this rude world ! —but what can I do ? With all these

pupils given so confidingly to my care, how should I be able to answer to their parents, their guardians, if any evil came from companionship with this stranger ? I have watched her well during the month she has been with me, and I have detected nought that is wrong in her, save a childish impetuosity of character, which, with time and proper management, would, I am certain, be soon controlled. She has been evidently educated in a superior manner, and possesses first-rate abilities; and, as far as I can judge, and I have studied her deeply, has no guile in her naturally, but rather, on the contrary, though rash and impulsive, is more innocent and backward, with regard to anything approaching to evil, than most girls of her age ; but this mystery and her obstinate silence, what can they mean ? But, good heavens ! how can I turn her out of the house without a friend to protect her ? ”

And now Mrs. Grandison, evidently painfully perplexed, walked several times to and fro across the apartment. Most certainly there was a hard struggle in her heart going forward between compassion and prudence, and again she went and looked through the half-closed door, and then she saw Linda still on her knees, endeavouring to make room for the last article, which she was vainly trying to press into the trunk. Prudence was fairly beginning to give way to the overpowering effects of the compassion rising in so full a flood in Mrs. Grandison's heart. "Poor, poor child, she is in no way fit to go alone; come what may I will give her a trial. At the very shadow of anything approaching to evil she shall go; but now, weak mortal as I really am, I cannot send her away."

And, without giving herself time for any more reflection, she gently entered unper-

ceived, and laid her hand upon the shoulder of the still kneeling girl.

Linda started and looked round; what an altered face she beheld! All sternness had passed from Mrs. Grandison's expression; tears stood in her eyes. It was like the look Linda had seen when the foreign letter was being read,—so tender and yet so sad,—that at once the impulsive girl was on her feet, her arms encircling the neck of the woman of whom, but a brief hour ago, she stood in such solemn awe, sobbing forth —

“ Then you will trust me — you will not send me away ? ”

Linda had secured a friend.

In vain Mrs. Grandison endeavoured to look stern and dignified, to keep up the character she ever tried to enact: she was, indeed, in heart but a weak woman.

It would not do; her softer nature soon

rose to the ascendant ; and she could not repulse the poor clinging girl, but tenderly pressed her to her heart.

“ Oh, Mrs. Grandison ! ” Linda now sobbed, “ then I may stay ? And you will never have reason to repent of your kindness. I will work for you day and night, so joyfully, so earnestly ; it will be my only happiness on earth to please you. How can I express my gratitude, my thankfulness ? I have not words to tell all I feel.”

“ You need not express it,” interrupted Mrs. Grandison ; “ deeds, not words, will amply repay me. Now go and unpack your trunk, my dear.”

And the lady arose, — again the stately, stern-looking woman.

* * * *

Months had passed by, spring was now bursting forth in all its verdant beauty,

and the young teacher might be seen taking her part steadily, assiduously, in all the duties of her present vocation. Marvelously altered in appearance seemed Linda. She was just of an age when every day makes a difference in the looks of a girl; and her very altered expression of countenance, added to the other visible changes in her demeanour, was most striking.

The eyes once so restless, emitting such quick glances around, were now softer, more fixed and meditative, as if the thoughts of her heart were graver, calmer. There was more of peacefulness in her look; and though she smiled often and pleasantly, the boisterous, though at the same time melodious laugh which echoed through Mrs. Lewis's small abode, was never heard.

A change had, indeed, come over Linda.

CHAPTER XII.

“Now, Miss Caroline, pray don’t make all this dreadful noise. Cannot you come into a room without making such a racket, startling the poor baby in its sleep?” exclaimed, in an irritated tone, an important looking nurse, who was seated before the fire with a child on her knee. This admonition was addressed to a girl who rushed impetuously into the nursery.

“Oh, you grumbling old creature, I shall do the brat no harm; don’t you know that ‘nought is never in danger,’ and a seventh son! of what use can he be?”

The nurse shrugged her shoulders, and looked daggers at the speaker.

"Yes, of what use can he be? Mamma ought to be ashamed of herself for going on having so many children, and with a daughter of nineteen, presuming to own one so young. These tiresome monkeys coming into the world only to curtail their elders of every enjoyment;—pests and plagues in every sense of the word!"

"Oh, Miss Caroline, Miss Caroline, it is quite dreadful to hear you talk," said the nurse, in a tone of deep concern; and then she added, indignantly, "But don't come talking in that wicked manner here; you have no business in my nursery at any rate, and I won't have you in it talking this way, that's just the long and short of the matter; so if you cannot ——"

"Hoity, toity, old woman!" said the girl, putting her hand before the nurse's mouth, and preventing her from finishing her speech, at the same time throwing an arm

caressingly round her neck and kissing her, “what a bad humour you are in, you old bore, taking all I say for gospel! — you know I dote upon, and am very sorry for that poor little wretch (darling, I mean, of course), but at the same time you must forgive me for my lack of any great tenderness towards him, for, do you know, my head was felt the other day by a phrenologist, and he discovered that I do not possess in the slightest degree the bump of philoprogenitiveness, so how can I help it?”

“Bump of nonsense!” the nurse exclaimed, “Oh, Miss Caroline, many a heartache you give me, that I can say with truth; don’t I often tell you, Miss Geraldine, how unhappy I am when I think of your sister’s strange sayings and doings?”

Caroline, or Car, as she was always called, burst into an immoderate fit of laughter,

which, for fear of Mrs. Nelson's indignation, she tried to smother by pressing her pocket-handkerchief against her mouth. When she had recovered her composure she continued: "Ah, poor Gerry, you are the very person I came to seek. I knew you would be moaning here with this cross old woman, Nelson, and weeping over that animated piece of flesh, our blessed seventh brother."

This tirade was addressed to a pale, grave-looking girl of sixteen, who was sitting in a desponding attitude close to the nurse.

"So, unfortunate little misery, you are really to be off to-morrow to Paris, to be again incarcerated for one whole year within the walls of that dungeon-looking abode, watched over by the grim she Cerberus who guards the prisoners. Oh, how I pity you! I wanted Papa to take me with him to

cheer you up, and have a look at Paris, but he will not hear of it! Expense again!—always, always talking of that odious money, or rather the want of it; and what provokes me more than anything, always ringing the changes with that horrid speech about ‘the large family;’ upon my word, people are so anxious to marry, and what for I should like to know? but ‘to suckle brats and chronicle small beer.’”

“ Now, seriously, Miss Caroline, this will never do; the rubbish you talk beats my understanding. No wonder your Papa and Mamma go to the expense of sending your sister away, to get her out of sight and sound of you and your bad example; I wish with all my heart you were married and done for.” And Mrs. Nelson waxed exceeding wrathful, but Car, who delighted in exciting a rise out of the nurse, by exposing her very ultra views upon most

subjects, went on to say: "Married! I marry! defend me from that dreadful alternative for many a long day; some ten years hence I may begin to think of it; not before, I can tell you."

Mrs. Nelson groaned, and rocked the child, who began to move, with an impatient gesture.

"Oh, Car!" now interposed the gentle voice of Geraldine, "and yet how you went on, and what trouble you gave about all those men you flirted with!"

"Oh, hold your tongue, you little idiot," interrupted the sister; "what do you know about the matter? 'Went on,' indeed, and so I shall go on to the end of the chapter,—I mean, till the ten years specified are over, and I begin to think I have done my duty in the fast line, and that if I don't take some one by that time, I shall be left in the lurch; and then, depend upon it, I will

play a new game, but I'll have none of your young ones, your boys, I can tell you. I intend to marry for position, and I don't care how old, ugly, or disagreeable the creature may be; my mark will be the loaves and fishes."

"But, Car, some of them were not so very young, and had position as you call it—I mean Lord ——"

"Hold your tongue!" again interrupted Car Eversfield; "I flirted with them out of pure mischief; I was determined to get them into my clutches, that was all. But come away, Gerry; don't you hear that odious sound, that din of worse than battlefield, the Philistines approaching? Oh, mercy, here they come!" she added as the nursery door opened, and a host of hats and feathers appeared, worn by small children, and their elder sister, with a gesture of disgust, rushed past them, and in a

moment disappeared. Geraldine remained, and was soon surrounded by the little group, assisting in removing their walking things, and caressing them with the feminine tenderness of an elder sister. And nurse Nelson looked at her, and with a sad shake of her head was thinking, "Who could believe those two girls were sisters, — children of the same parents?"

The girls we have just brought before our readers were the daughters of General Sir Hector Eversfield and Lady Julia his wife. He was an officer of much distinction, possessing what would be considered an ample fortune, were it not for the incumbrance of the twelve children his daughter has informed us were added to his possessions.

Caroline was the eldest of the family, a son the next, who had just entered the foot-guards; the rest of all ages, a nursery

full of little ones, to the great disgust of the vivacious Car, who was far too full of her own special plans of amusement, to bear with patience the largely divided share of her parents' attention to her *exigeantes* demands.

In a large family it is surprising to observe how strangely the several members of which it consists, vary in every respect—appearance, temper, in every quality, both of the mind and heart—with the same blood running through the veins, how totally opposed in character as well as features, partaking little apparently of the nature even of the parents who gave them birth. And a contrast indeed it was to look upon the mother and the daughter, as Car Eversfield, on her way from the nursery, passing an open door, abruptly entered the room, and stood before Lady Julia Eversfield, a fair faded woman, who was busily employed in

superintending the packing of a trunk destined for Geraldine.

“ My dear Car,” she exclaimed, in a low voice, “ you really always startle me by the noisy manner in which you rush into a room ; when will you, darling, ever learn to be more gentle, more, really I must say it, ladylike ? ”

“ Oh, Mamma, it is not my nature, I never shall be different, nor do I much care to be what people call ladylike, and what I call a piece of stupidity ; you are always finding fault with me, but others do not think my manners so disagreeable.”

And Car pouted, doing no disparagement to the reddest and fullest of beautiful lips.

“ My dear child, I must find fault with you until I find your manners soften and improve. I can assure you, your Papa was talking only this morning of your boisterous ways, of the manner in which you conduct

yourself; so differently from what we like to see in our daughters; even, he says, when you are riding in the park, for instance."

"Oh good gracious, Mamma, if you go on in this manner I shall be off," cried the impetuous girl, putting her hands to her ears, and rushing forth, never stopping until reaching the drawing-room, where, seeing the window open, and hearing the sound of a military band, she was in an instant upon the balcony, watching a battalion of the foot-guards marching past from the park, and kissing her hand with much *empressement* to some of the officers who cast their glances upwards from amidst the overhanging shade of their bearskins.

A beautiful Hebe-looking creature was Car Eversfield, her complexion clear and blooming, with the bright hue of health and youth; her eyes dark and dazzling, lips full and red, and when parted by those dimpled

smiles which were ever hovering round her mouth, disclosing the finest and whitest of teeth. And her figure was symmetry itself; above the middle height, but every limb so beautifully rounded, rather inclining, we might add, to *embonpoint*. Yes, she was, to use rather a broad term, voluptuously lovely, this girl, as she stood thus conspicuously on that balcony, surrounded by plants and flowers, waving her handkerchief as the soldiers passed by, greeting several acquaintances amongst the gallant band with—

“Nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles,
Such as hung on Hebe’s cheek,”

forming a most alluring picture to all the present passers by, excepting one individual, who at that moment crossed over the street —her father. Car’s quick eye soon saw him approaching, and also noted the annoyed expression upon his kind face.

"Oh, good gracious!" she exclaimed "now I'm in for it with a vengeance! Now that dear man, though he is what he is called, an indulgent father, is at this moment thinking that he would dearly like to shut me up in the guard-room, or put a log round my leg, or even, though I suppose that fashion has gone by, summoning a drum-head court-martial and inflicting fifty lashes upon his wicked daughter. Oh, here he comes; well, I must bluster it out, or coax him, as well as I can."

And Car turned her face towards her father, so animated and brilliant, and at once exclaimed, approaching the General who entered the room, caressingly: "Now darling Papa, don't scold me; remember I am a soldier's daughter and can never resist the sound of the drums and fifes; I could not help stepping out into the balcony to look at those fine fellows. Now you shall not be angry with me," she continued, as the General began

in a severe manner with "Really, Car," stopping his mouth by many a sweet kiss and blandishment, and ending at length by fairly vanquishing the man who was stout-hearted as a lion but in one small corner of his heart, and that was his too yielding love for this, his headstrong daughter.

"Well, I won't be angry, then," at length he found means to say; "but ——"

"Oh! that 'but,' that horrid 'but,' means all sorts of dreadful things. That it was wicked of me, I will confess, to be seen on the balcony bowing to the officers, and unladylike, as mamma would say; and that no wonder you are shocked and ashamed of your poor Car. But she will change and be a piece of starch, stiff formality, or you will cease to love her and make her so happy by your love as you have always hitherto done, darling, darling Papa, ever since she can remember anything."

And now the girl tried to play the pathetic, and certainly looked so very beautiful in this well-acted expression of her countenance, that the doting father, quite softened, only said,—

“ Well, well, we will say no more about it at present; but, Car, you cannot imagine how bold you looked standing there, the wind blowing about your petticoats, nodding so familiarly to those men. It is not the habit of modest girls to make themselves so conspicuous.”

“ Well, dear Pappy, I won’t do it *never no more*. The next time I hear the band, I will let down the blinds and shut the shutters, and only peep through the crevices. And please don’t tell mamma, for you see she is already in a fuss about Geraldine to-day, and that makes her a little cross,—*nervous*, of course, I mean,—and she has a bad enough opinion of poor me already.”

The General promised silence. And thus it was that Car Eversfield generally vanquished one who was really a hero in the battle field, but, we are obliged to add, very soft and yielding under the influence of the blandishments of the young Circe.

CHAPTER XIII.

Two young Guardsmen were walking down St. James's Street ; they were talking gaily as they went on their careless way.

“ That was a splendid affair at H—— House last night,” remarked one of them.

“ You seemed to think it agreeable, certainly, and to get on like a house on fire with that slippery beauty, Car Eversfield,” was the reply ; “ but, my good fellow, ‘ take care ! beware ! ’ ”

“ Oh, I’ll take care,” the first speaker answered hastily, with a heightened colour.

“ Indeed, you had better,” the other persisted ; “ you little know how dangerous she is.”

At this very moment a carriage passed, out of which was seen the brightest of faces and one kissing her hand to the two young men with the utmost *empressolement*.

"What a lovely creature she certainly is!" exclaimed Captain Ashton, the elder of the two officers. "I remember last year, when she first came out, I was desperately in love with her."

"But, I suppose, she snubbed you, and destroyed the illusion," remarked Norman Lawless, tartly.

"Well, it was certainly something of the kind, I must confess; she contrived to disenchant me, at any rate, of my love, though I must always admire the charms of her person," was the good-natured reply. "There is nothing like experience; and as the burnt child dreads the fire, I fear for you, old boy, my friend and brother officer, falling into the same snare which the un-

sparing beauty spreads for all mankind, and you could not so easily get out of it as I did ; you are more worth keeping in it, though I question if even you in the end would not be finally eclipsed. You are an only son of rich and titled parents, and are different in all respects to me. I have all my life been obliged to practice self-denial, so everything hard and disagreeable comes more easily ; but to you, — the spoilt, the indulged, from the babe to the man — you would not so easily endure to be cast off for another victim.”

“Oh ! for mercy’s sake, don’t prose so dismally,” Lawless interrupted, hastily. “I’m off to the park, so good-bye !”

“What creatures these fast London young ladies are !” Cyril Ashton continued to muse, after his companion had left him, “a race quite of its own species, terrible snares to the poor, green, uninitiated youths fresh

launched upon a London world, and Car Eversfield, what a regular mischievous little demon she is! so fascinating and yet I fear so wholly unprincipled; — however I must not be too severe upon her, I who was once captivated, led to the very brink of a precipice, from which one encouraging word from her would have precipitated me. But I need not have been afraid, she knew better, the heartless Siren; she has played the same game with many others since she gave me up, having gained her point in thoroughly ensnaring my heart, and for the time making me most miserable; and so she will continue to go on, rejoicing in mischief. She won't marry in a hurry, that's not her mark at present, and so much the better, for what a life she would lead a husband! I hear she has refused Lord Sinclair, who would have been such a splendid catch, and just the man not to stand being played the

fool with ; but no, her thirst for attraction is not half slaked. She evidently now has her eye upon Lawless, who will prove such an easy victim with his uncontrollable feelings. If I had daughters," the young man continued to soliloquise, " I would rather see them unformed, old-fashioned, awkward country girls all their lives, than the most vaunted, the most admired of London young ladies. I scarcely think I should dare to bring them here at all ; the very atmosphere is tainted; poisonous to simplicity and modesty ; and a girl in some sets, after what is called a regular London season, comes up to my idea of that very trite old remark, of the bloom being rubbed off the peach, no longer fresh, or pure, or desirable, after having been seen and handled by so many ; my daughters shall never waltz ;" and, now he laughed, " my daughters, indeed ! I am certainly progressing wonderfully. 'First catch

your hare,' Mrs. Rundle says, in her cookery book, before she enters into further particulars about dressing it, and I, poor devil as I am," he sighed, " how am I ever to catch the mother of my daughters ? "

These two young men had been friends from childhood; Cyril Ashton the elder by a few years of the two. Norman Lawless was an only child, with far higher prospects. His father was an Irish viscount, who had married a Scotch heiress of considerable wealth, which was very necessary to prop up his wasted fortune and repair the walls of Castle Lawless, the family seat in Ireland, which, from want of means, was speedily falling into utter decay.

We fear that it was dire necessity alone which had induced Lord Turraghmore to offer his handsome person and empty purse to this very unattractive Scotch woman.

Norman Lawless, whom we have just

introduced to our readers, was the only son of this marriage. From his earliest days he had exercised unlimited control over his stern and frigid mother. Soldiering having been his hobby ever since he had been strong enough to wield a baby sword, after Eton, and a year or two at Oxford, he had wrung from his parents a reluctant consent for him to go into the Guards, and we now present him to our readers at the age of twenty-two, having joined at a late period. But that little mattered to one who had no need of the army as a profession. He was a fine-looking young man, certainly; monopolising the beauty of the family, and inheriting much of his father's Irish nature and little of his mother's cold, calculating prudence.

Never having been controlled as a boy, now as a man he brooked no interference which militated against his inclinations, or

thwarted his indomitable will. Norman Lawless could be an agreeable companion, open-handed and hearty in his demeanour to those he liked, and who were subservient to his will, but cross his path, interfere with his determined will, and then did his expression change, his countenance assume a look so sinister and excitable as to cause an unpleasant feeling to those who looked upon it.

In a short time after Norman Lawless had passed, mounted on his beautiful horse, he might again have been seen, his arm leaning upon the window sill of Lady Julia's close carriage, in which, much to her daughter's disgust, she was incarcerated this beautiful afternoon. One of the children had been indisposed, and was having its first airing. Car's horse was lame, and she could not have her ride, and as for leaving her at home alone, Lady Julia never considered that an expedient act.

The bird who had been caught and caged, and with a very dissatisfied air had sat longing to break loose, only brightening up when she occasionally passed some adoring swain or favoured partner, was soon entering, heart and soul, into a whispering flirtation with the handsome young Guardsman, nearly annihilating him with the glances of her bright eyes — the smiles which played about her dimpled mouth ; the happy youth never heeding, as he claimed them as all his own, that ever and anon a most alluring *accolade* was also cast upon some other passer-by, who looked with envious eye upon the place thus usurped by the presumptuous youth. Certainly Car Eversfield had many strings to her bow.

CHAPTER XIV.

OH! ye mothers of England who groan beneath the burden of large families, cease to murmur, and bear the weight with fortitude, if only your children are well-conditioned and promising for good as they grow up.

It is a comforting adage to those who consider their quivers rather over full, that "large families generally do best," and certainly it is wonderful to observe how often a numerous progeny do get on mighty well, in households where one might have supposed even the number of pairs of shoes would be a difficult matter to supply.

But numbers certainly do greatly increase our family cares; it is quite an erroneous theory, whatever may be said, on the subject of *only* children being the heaviest of burdens to parents. Our cares are at least concentrated when there is only one, instead of the poor divided heart, here and there and everywhere, yearning after sons and daughters, either separated by distance or troubling the mind by other anxieties equally distressing. It is the idea of Car Eversfield which has induced us thus to digress so gloomily; this one of a large family, a girl so fair, so bewitching to look upon, and yet the one who added a hundred fold of weight to the cares of her parents, her mother in particular.

The General was too much under the spell of the fascination of his beautiful daughter, to look upon her faults and failings with eyes rendered so clear-sighted

by anxiety as her mother's ; but poor Lady Julia, who was of a nervous temperament, and her health rather delicate, watched with daily increasing affright the developing character of this daughter (who, though she had always been a troublesome child to manage, enraging the nurses, waging war with the governesses, tormenting, not so much in malice as in fun, her brothers and sisters), had been nevertheless a favourite with every one. We fear her beauty had much to do with the supremacy she acquired, her playful vivacity adding to her attractive charms, her faults all seeming, in those young days, to spring from a love of mischief more than naughtiness. Certainly she was petted and indulged far above the other more deserving children, and it became the custom of the house to succumb to her whims and fancies, perhaps as much for the sake of a quiet life as for any other reason.

Lady Julia, when the General was away, had often tried to exercise some discipline upon her volatile daughter, but any little improvement that had been achieved was soon entirely destroyed on her father's return.

His unbounded love and admiration blinded his eyes to the perils which surrounded this spoilt one, and the mother felt powerless to interfere.

Sometimes, after too glaring an *escapade*, the General was roused to anger and disapprobation, but this soon melted away, and was forgotten, after a few sharp words had been spoken, and a tear dropped from the bright eyes of his offending daughter.

“Never mind, Julia,” he would say in private to his wife; “she will be all right, when she is a little older, she will steady down, depend upon it; you think far too seriously of her madcap ways; I wish she

could impart a little of her exuberance to Geraldine. What a quiet little mouse she is!"

"Yes, compared to her sister most certainly," was the reply ; "but oh, Hector, defend me from two Cars. I look with terror upon all the other girls, fearing they may have some of her nature in them ; but as yet, I am thankful to say, I have not perceived anything approaching to her disposition. But 'forewarned, forearmed.' Car was always indulged and encouraged in her wayward flights. I take care to bring the others up very differently. Dear Geraldine is all that I can desire as a daughter, gentle, obedient, and affectionate. I grieve to part with her, but it is quite necessary. I cannot keep her here at her age, her mind in a transition state between a child and a woman, with such an example before her as poor Car."

"Upon my word, my lady," exclaimed

the General, waxing rather wroth at this censure of his darling, "I think you take a most harsh view of the innocent foibles and follies of your daughter. I see nothing in them but the exuberance of high spirits. Car enjoys everything with all the energy and freshness of youth and light heartedness. She has no guile in her composition, depend upon it, and when a little sobered (I must allow she requires some bringing down from her high stilts), will do very well. We must try and find her by and by some husband who will take care of her; some quiet prudent man, no highflyer like herself."

Lady Julia shook her head despondingly, and then said with a sigh,

"Oh that is a very sore subject to me. Such a husband as you describe, I fear she will never attain; and do you know, Hector, that one of my great sources of disquiet on Car's account is the manner in

which she scouts the idea of matrimony, always declaring that it will be many a day before she gives up her ‘glorious liberty,’ as she calls it ; not, she says, till she is at least eight-and-twenty, and then she intends to marry for position, not love ; such unfeminine, unnatural ideas for a young creature like her ! ”

The General knitted his brows for a moment; and then the partial smile beamed again.

“ What a curious girl she is ! ” he said. “ But Julia, you take far, far too seriously all the nonsense she talks ; just wait till the right man comes, and then see if Car will not tell a different story ; a few years hence, when she is older and steadier.”

“ A few years hence,” groaned the mother ; and she added, with a deep sigh, “ she will have worn me to death long before a few years have passed.”

CHAPTER XV.

“ Oh, Millicent, don’t you think the life of a well-conducted, what is called a well-cared-for young lady, the dullest, the most wearisome of all things here below ? ” remarked Car Eversfield to a young friend of her own sort, who had joined her on horseback whilst riding with her father in the park some days after.

“ I suppose we of the fast sort think so,” was the answer. “ It depends, I suppose, upon the temperament of the individual, as mamma is always saying.”

“ Well, my temperament is to loathe and detest it. Now, for instance, to be jogging

on as we are doing at this moment, whilst our fathers are discussing some stupid point which absorbs their whole souls, when I should like to be galloping full speed round the park, followed by some amusing young fellows, leaving the wise heads far behind ; and oh ! to have nothing from morning till night but propriety dinned into one's ears — I, who hate its dulness as I do poison. I tell you what, Milly, I feel sometimes inclined to do anything, however horrible, to get out of it all."

" Well, you can marry, at any rate, which every one cannot manage."

" Marry !" and a look of disgust spread over the radiant face ; " that would, indeed, be a dreadful way of gaining liberty, even if by that means it might be gained. But the man you mean that I could perhaps marry, is not the one to give me freedom ; no, rather would he load me with chains

far heavier than those I already wear, although they might be made of gold ; just look at him, for here he comes ! did you ever see such a silly, dolorous-looking creature ? It amuses me to tease and vex him sometimes, to make him think that I am coming round, after all ; although lately he has been queerish in his ways, I can tell you, beginning, I believe, to understand me too well. But you know, Milly, I have just now another victim caught safely in my net ; that young Lawless !—so I could amuse myself very well, if it were not for Mamma, who is so —”

Car was interrupted by the sudden proximity of the two strings to her bow, of which she was at this moment boasting. A good-looking, very young man had ridden up to her side from the opposite direction ; so close, indeed, was he at her elbow, that she was startled by the thought

that he might have heard his name, just fallen from her lips, and the sudden blush which rose to her cheeks not only made her more than ever beautiful, but impressed the young officer with the delightful hope that it might be some favourable feeling towards himself which caused the tell-tale suffusion.

But only for a second was this pleasing idea allowed to remain upon his mind ; for Car, with some petulance, exclaimed —

“ How you startled me, Mr. Lawless ! if it had been my brother Albert, I should most assuredly have boxed his ears. Don’t you know that I am as nervous as a deer ? ”

“ No, certainly, I did not,” was the reply. “ Of all people in the world I should have said that you were the last to come at all under the class of nervous subjects.”

“ Now, Mr. Lawless, if you mean that as a compliment, you have quite missed your

mark. You meant to insinuate that I am a hard, ironminded girl, with none of the pretty weaknesses of my sex; a bold, strong creature, possessing nerve sufficient to do anything, beginning from dancing upon the tightrope (which, by the by, I have always longed to do) to thrusting my head into a tiger's mouth and taming wild beasts; now is not that what you really think? You cannot deny it,—I see by your guilty face."

Young Lawless began an earnest refutation of this accusation, but Car had ceased to listen to him; she was engaged in talking to Lord Sinclair, who was now riding on her other side.

Lord Sinclair was about thirty-two or thirty-three years old; looking perhaps older than his age, his countenance grave and thoughtful; the very last man one might have imagined to be captivated by a

girl like Car Eversfield, whose appearance and manners were the very reverse of what we could have imagined to be his *beau ideal* of a young lady.

But there is no accounting for such irregularities in the human mind. Love, or that attraction of the fancy which leads to the desire of possession, is quite a disconnected feeling in the nature of man ; it does not hinge upon a single characteristic of an individual, nor on any of his previous tastes, habits, or feelings, but

“ ‘The power of Love !’
Who can withstand its all-powerful influence ?”

And so it was with Lord Sinclair. His reigning passion from a boy had been music, in which he excelled as a performer ; and, till he had seen Car Eversfield, any attention he had hitherto paid to young ladies was circumscribed towards those

who could enter into this his absorbing taste. There were several *debutanti furiore* who had hoped they had gained some footing in his heart by the pleasure he had evinced in their performance, and the hours he had willingly spent in their society, practising with them, accompanying the pianists with his cornopean, or even violin, and joining his fine barytone voice in their duets and trios. But they would, indeed, have been mortified, these hopeful aspirants, had they been aware that they were considered, by this most valuable *parti*, merely in the same light as a musical instrument, or professor of some utility. Nothing further ever resulted from these marked attentions; although his family were always of opinion that whenever he did marry it must surely be to some finished musician; and Lady Sunderland, most anxious to see her only son settled in life,

spared no pains to draw around her all the singing and playing young ladies of any consideration, in the hope of seriously attracting his attentions.

But vain were the endeavours; a mother's labour in the case of matrimony is too often lost time and trouble.

It was at a concert, in the midst of the most absorbing music, that Lord Sinclair's attention was attracted, by the feeling of great annoyance he was undergoing, by hearing the sound close behind him of incessant talking and laughing going on, at a crisis of a song which ought to have enraptured every one and silenced every tongue; no longer able to endure it, he suddenly and angrily turned round and faced the offender. And there she stood, that dimpled Hebe — Car Eversfield, her bright eyes sparkling with light and fun. At once she understood the state of the

case; perfectly was she aware how she had disgusted and outraged this well-known *fanatico per la musica* — but what cared she ?

Indeed, from that moment a thought had darted into her versatile mind.

“ I’ll make him think of something else besides that tiresome music,” was her determination; and, without losing any more time, her eyes were fixed steadily, with a glance she knew well how to bend, upon those of the now abashed and stricken Lord Sinclair, who felt at once their miraculous power. How changed in a moment were his feelings, considering himself the culprit for having dared with so impatient a gesture, and so frowning a brow, to look upon one so surpassingly lovely. When the song was ended, Car whispered in his ear —

“ Lord Sinclair, I ought, I know, to apo-

logise for my want of taste and good-breeding in making such a noise when Novello was singing. I fear you will henceforward shun my proximity in a concert-room."

She had never been introduced to Lord Sinclair, but she knew him well by sight, as they met frequently at the same parties ; and Lord Sinclair may have also known her by name, and perhaps, in a general way, in person, but probably had really never looked at her before ; but Car cared not a rush for this.

She felt determined to make his acquaintance and hook the shy fish, as she afterwards told Millicent Danniers, her intimate friend and gossip ; by that she meant, "make him in love with her." And Lord Sinclair, perfectly overwhelmed with contrition, his blood tingling with a new-born sensation, whilst under the influence of those dazzling eyes, now so beseechingly fixed upon him, stam-

mered out something about his being the person to apologise, and then offered his arm to lead her into the refreshment-room, the first part of the concert being over.

From this moment may be dated poor Lord Sinclair's defeat; for the first time in his life he felt irretrievably attracted, even after he had heard from her own lips that she cared little for music, and that no master or mistress could ever succeed in teaching her. Not even then did his admiration cool, —no, Car was determined that it should not; and she told him the truth with such a depreciating expression, was so sorry, she declared, to be obliged to confess this lowering fact, that a man, who had proclaimed that music was a *sine quâ non* in a woman, began to think that it could not add to the perfection of the lovely one before him.

And thus it went on, Car glorying in this conquest above any that she had ever yet

made. "This man of all others," she would boast, "the grave, impenetrable old fogy, who had never considered a woman but in the light of an embodied pianoforte, now to be over head and heels in love with me, who do not know a crotchet from a quaver, or 'God save the Queen' from 'Hoop-de-dooden-do.'"

And so it went on ; poor Lady Julia rejoicing, though in trembling, thinking what a safe, excellent marriage this would be for her most troublesome child,—splendid as to position,—and what was much better, the really right-minded woman thought,—such a good man.

"But," she repeated, "what an extraordinary marriage it would be for Lord Sinclair to make ! — the very last likely to suit his tastes and habits ; and Car, what a changed life it would be to her !" Thus Lady Julia thought and felt during this second season

of her daughter's appearance in the gay world, whilst she watched Lord Sinclair's unceasing attentions, and also with terror Car's *escapades*, her perfect disregard of the proprieties of life, receiving attentions from every man who came near her ; at one moment overwhelming Lord Sinclair with her fascinating wiles, the next plunging him into despair by her outrageous conduct towards others.

The General was a great deal away on military business this spring, and the poor mother had to accompany this vexatiously anxious charge to every description of dissipation ; herself in delicate health, and her heart in her nursery full of babes.

In vain she talked and lectured ; Car laughed at all she said. But one day after Lady Julia had implored her to be more circumspect for the sake of her future well-being, “for,” she added, “you may depend

upon it, Car, Lord Sinclair will never propose to you if you continue to conduct yourself in, I really must call it, so improper a manner ; last night, for instance, were you not missing for hours at the ball ? and then you appeared from the garden with young Lawless. I watched Lord Sinclair's countenance, he looked thoroughly disgusted and annoyed "—" "Lord Sinclair!" Car exclaimed; "and do you think I care *that* for what he thinks ?" and she snapped her fingers with a contemptuous gesture. "I'll make him propose to me before the week is out, and then you will see what I shall do."

And thus saying, she bounced out of the room, leaving her poor mother more than ever overwhelmed, her only comfort at the moment being to sit down to write to Sir Hector, imploring him, if possible, to come to her rescue, for that, really, Car was far beyond her management.

CHAPTER XVI.

"PROPOSE to me he shall!" was Car Eversfield's fixed determination; "as for marrying him," she continued to ponder, "catch me doing such a slow thing; he is the very last man on earth I could endure to wed. I would rather live in a barrack all my life with one of those young guardsmen, with twopence a year, than encounter the dulness of a splendid existence with Lord Sinclair; however, I am not going to be dropt by him. No, he shall ask me, just that I may have the pleasure of saying 'No.'"

So resolved, at the ball that night, our young Circe met this man, over whose

heart she had gained so complete a conquest,—this man, hitherto so invulnerable, so superior one might have imagined to the allurements of such a girl as Car Eversfield, who possessed no one attraction but her beauty.

But so it is, and so it ever will be.

Strong men have always one vulnerable spot, however iron-cased appear their natures. Only find out what that weakness is, and the result is certain.

Car Eversfield, quick-sighted in such matters, had speedily discovered that this grave, pre-occupied-looking man, his imagination fenced around hitherto by the pursuit which had been from his infancy the absorbing delight of his life, had scarcely yet given a thought to other attractive feelings.

What a triumph to be the first to thaw that frozen heart!

And this she had accomplished ; her witcheries had infected his whole being, he was an altered man, and would gladly have succumbed at once without a struggle.

But Car, as soon as she perceived that her end was gained, and that her victim was fairly entangled in the meshes of her net, was quite satisfied. She cared not for more, and leaving him to struggle free as he might, flew off to some new scheme of conquest, fixing upon young Lawless as her next prey.

Lord Sinclair's eyes began to see more clearly what was the nature of the woman he now loved with the intensity of a first *grande passion*. He knew her to be false, fickle, cruel, but still he could not disengage himself from the chains with which her attractions had loaded him ; — no, still he fiercely loved, though it was with a different feeling that he regarded her ; it was pas-

sion, not the reverential devotion of a man, who considers the goddess of his idolatry more in the light of an angel than a woman.

However, of late he had ceased to importune her with his marked attentions ; he endeavoured to struggle against the infatuation which was changing his very nature, lowering him in his own estimation, and attracting the attention of his own family by the alteration of his habits and demeanour. No ! it would never do ; he must shake it off, cost what it might ; he would leave London as soon as he possibly could,—some important business at the moment detained him there ; in the meantime, should he meet her again, he would be decided in his changed manner towards the girl ; would show her that he did not choose to be made a fool of. He acted upon this resolve, and Caroline soon perceived that two could play at the same game, and that Lord Sinclair,

desperately in love as he decidedly was, did not intend to stand any more nonsense.

So, acting upon this discovery, the heartless coquette changed her tack, and again put forth the whole artillery of her charms to draw once more to her side her receding lover. Splendidly handsome she looked that night at D—— House, where a large ball was given. Her dress was exquisite in its simplicity and good taste. Before starting, when Car had entered the drawing-room, ready to depart, her opera cloak covering her neck and shoulders, Lady Julia had requested that she would remove it, that she might see the effect of the new ball dress;—Lady Julia, poor woman, always dreading to think how far she might have reason to be shocked at the too great exposure of those white shoulders and beautiful bust.

This night the mother's heart sank as she

gazed at the *décolleté* state of her young daughter; and she exclaimed in an accent of dismay, “Car, I will not go with you in that state; I consider your dress indecently low. Can anything be done to it? If not, you must change it for some other; and she rang the bell and desired that Miss Eversfield’s maid might be sent for.

A scene of most disagreeable altercation ensued; Lady Julia, generally so passive, was now determined and firm. She would not allow her daughter to leave the house attired in so unseemly, so immodest a manner. After many angry and disrespectful words addressed to her mother, tears of rage coursing each other down her cheeks, she was obliged to submit, whilst the maid drew the dress over the exposed shoulders, and with the aid of lace, endeavoured to veil the charms so unrestrainedly exposed to the public gaze.

The brow of the beauty was louring, and the poor exhausted Lady Julia looked paler and more careworn than ever when they entered the splendid saloons of D— House. The very first person they encountered was Lord Sinclair, in the act of making his way through the crowd in order to facilitate his escape, but, like a sunbeam darting through the gloom of a sombre cloud, a smile arrested his progress, and a pair of eyes were fixed on him with an expression quite unusual, drawing the infatuated man, like the needle to the loadstone, to the fair one's side.

“ You are late, Miss Eversfield,” were his Lordship's first words.

“ Yes,” she replied pensively, and in so subdued a manner to her usual sprightly, off-hand address; “ but I daresay *you* did not miss me.”

“ Why should you think so ?” was eagerly demanded.

"Because, lately, you have seemed to shun me, Lord Sinclair; I can assure you I have felt the difference in your manner,—I, who really was so proud of your friendship."

"Miss Eversfield," exclaimed Lord Sinclair, greatly moved, "can you really mean what you are saying, or is it only amusing yourself at my expense?—you know that you are apt to do such things sometimes. Will you dance this quadrille?" and he offered his arm, which she immediately accepted; and what happened during a long interval which elapsed, Lady Julia had no means of ascertaining, as her daughter never approached her, and the crowd was so great that she could not make her way for some time into the dancing room, out of which were conservatories and gardens illumined by coloured lamps. But Car was busily engaged; she achieved much business dur-

ing the time ; drew from poor Lord Sinclair a proposal of marriage, which she neither accepted nor declined, but only begged for a little time to consider such a serious step ; to-morrow she would give him an answer. And now, having gained her point completely, she turned her thoughts into another channel.

“This will never do,” she cogitated ; “I am not going to have a dull evening, and waste my time in playing good and gentle by that old man’s side (Lord Sinclair was only thirty-three) ; there is poor Lawless half dead with fury and jealousy ; I really must comfort and cheer him a little.”

“Will you take me to mamma ?” she said, demurely, as she rose from her seat.

They had been sitting in the garden, and had entered the conservatory in order to reach the house, when Car encountered the gloomy young guardsman, who had

been hovering about, watching with terrific glances the pair, and noting, with torturing feelings, Lord Sinclair's looks of love and devotion, as he sat whispering into the ear of his captivating companion. As Car passed him she again put forth all the artillery of her smiles and looks, seeing at once the state of his mind ; and whilst Lord Sinclair turned away for a moment to speak to a lady, she whispered—

“ What is the matter ?—are you not going to ask me to dance to-night ? ”

Poor young man ! in a moment what a change was wrought by those looks, those words ! With a sigh of thankfulness he asked her to waltz, and Lord Sinclair was civilly informed, though in sweet-sounding words, that—“ he might go about his business.”

“ But I thought you wished to be taken to Lady Julia ? ” he expostulated, not at all

relishing the idea of leaving her, to whom he had plighted his faith, in the hands of that young guardsman, whom he had disliked and feared as a most dangerous rival. But Car Eversfield little cared what he might think ; she had accomplished all she wished ; and what he thought or felt was perfectly indifferent to her. The rest of the evening was spent quite to her satisfaction, conducting herself in a manner which quiet, undemonstrative young ladies can little imagine, and which would make the uninitiated in such ways, wonder and exclaim how such things could possibly be, and how men, even the most satiated, who do certainly admire, respect, and sometimes worship modesty,—in their sober moments desiring, above all other qualities, that special one in their wife,—should be so completely enthralled, heart and soul, in the allurements of a Delilah, for it does seem,

to the inexperienced in the way of modern society, antagonistic in the extreme. But we will not for a moment desecrate the feeling with which men regard these fast girls, with the name of love ; it has no affinity to that more refined passion.

The conquered Lord Sinclair had to make his way alone to Lady Julia, and when by her side he told her what he had done, that he had offered to her daughter his hand, his heart.

For a moment the mother's heart beat high with joy. Such a marriage for her unpromising child — such a man ! just the one to guide and guard one so young and thoughtless ; and she asked eagerly —

“ And has she accepted you ? ”

“ I could not induce Miss Eversfield to give me a decided answer ; she begged I would leave her till to-morrow to consider. But, Lady Julia,” he asked anxiously, “ you

do not think I have any reason to fear a refusal?"

Poor Lady Julia in her sinking heart felt that there was, indeed, great fear; all she could say was, with much earnestness and warmth,—

"Oh, Lord Sinclair, if Car were to be your wife, her lot, I feel, would be indeed a most happy one."

CHAPTER XVII.

LADY JULIA was far too much exhausted, when at length Car was caught and with difficulty persuaded to return home, to be able to enter upon the subject uppermost in her thoughts, until she had recruited her strength for what she might hear ; and it was late in the following afternoon before the fair one, wearied also by her various exertions of mind and body, had opened her eyes, after the fatigues of the preceding night.

When at length she did appear before her mother, then the tug of war commenced.

“ What an idiot the man is to have told you anything about it ! ” Car exclaimed, after

Lady Julia had spoken. "He is only exposing himself. I'm not going to marry him, I can tell you, mamma," she said. Lady Julia's heart sank.

"What can you then have meant, Car, by the manner in which you encouraged him last night? I saw plainly that Lord Sinclair was rather inclined to avoid you when we first entered the room, and that you actually forced yourself upon his notice."

"I meant nothing at all but to have a little amusement at his expense; he has been showing me the cold shoulder lately — and I will not bear that from any man," the girl said, defiantly. Lady Julia was speechless with dismay; with hands clasped together she sat, her eyes fixed upon her daughter's face, despair at her heart.

What was to become of this girl? — what terrible complication of evils would not her conduct produce, not only to herself but to

all those belonging to her?—what would be the end of all this?

“And you intend, then, to refuse Lord Sinclair?” at length Lady Julia faltered.

“I would just as soon marry old Thompson, the butler,” Car replied. “That dismal-looking piece of propriety! a pretty slow life I should have with him! No, no, I thank you, he is not at all of my sort; I have brought him to his senses, and now I shall wish him good morning.”

“Very well, Car, then I desire you will write his dismissal. I shall have nothing to do with it,” Lady Julia resumed, with grave displeasure. “Your conduct has been improper in the extreme. You have fallen low, indeed, in my estimation. I pray that none of your sisters may be in any one respect like you.”

“Oh, mamma, do you mean that I ought to marry a man without feeling *one atom* of

love for him, just because he will be an earl with an immense fortune? I thought *you* would be the last person in the universe to advocate such worldly views,—you, who are always preaching duty and principle, and all that sort of things."

"No, Car; what shocks and thoroughly disgusts me in this case, is the shameful conduct you have pursued towards that man, so superior in every way to your own unworthy self; how completely you have lured him on to commit himself by offering his hand to you. I trust, much as I desire to see you well married, that I am still quite incapable of asking or wishing any daughter of mine to accept as a husband, a man, however desirable, that she could not regard with sufficient affection to enable her to look forward, without shrinking, to be his wife. No, Car, I watched you attentively last night before you vanished for so long

from my sight with Lord Sinclair, and for a few minutes my heart was filled with pleasure ; for I thought surely no girl could look as you did, act as you did, and not feel love towards the man whom she thus looked upon.” Car laughed mockingly.

“ You did not before give me credit, I suppose, for being such a good actress? No, I do not care *that*,” and she snapped her fingers, “ for him, or his title, his fortune, or his worthiness : the latter musty, fusty qualification, the last in the world to be any recommendation to me.”

“ Well, I have quite done with you,” Lady Julia indignantly rejoined. “ I shall write to your father and tell him the whole story ; and, until his return, I shall beg to decline everything in the shape of going out. And now I will leave you to compose your letter of dismissal to Lord Sinclair, rejoicing, for his sake, that he has

escaped such a destiny as a future life with you must surely have proved."

Car began to cry; she saw before her more difficulties than she had bargained for. Her father's displeasure, the only thing on earth that ever touched her; and then to be shut up like a nun in that dull house with her mother, whom she never had considered a lively companion; and such a pleasant new flirtation she had just commenced, which she really found so peculiarly agreeable and *piquante*; and, to crown it all, to have a letter of so difficult a nature to concoct to Lord Sinclair,—she, who was such a bad hand at anything of the sort.

"Oh, mamma," she began, deprecatingly, "do pray help me, and just tell me what I ought to say—you know I shall never be able to do it—you always tell me that I do not even spell properly; you do not wish me to expose my ignorance, do you?"

"I care not what you do," Lady Julia said, quite irritated into petulance, as she left the room; "only I beg you will write, and not give me any further annoyance on the subject."

And the mother, with grief and anger at her heart, left the presence of a daughter, once so petted and idolised, but now sunk so low in her estimation; one whom she considered so terrible a trial, standing at the head of so large a family of sisters.

What a disadvantage must she prove to those other four young creatures!

"God grant that they may be kept from following in her footsteps," was the poor woman's inward cry, as she hastened to the sanctuary of her own room, where, having first locked her door, her anger melting into sorrow, with tears streaming from her eyes, she lifted up her heart in prayer, imploring mercy for herself, her erring daughter, and

for her other children'; beseeching that her own sins might not be visited upon them.

And whilst thus laying bare her heart to the great Searcher of Hearts, how fearfully acute became the remembrance of her sins of omission and commission, especially those which hinged most immediately upon the present subject of her distress.

It is an awful, fearful retrospect for parents to look faithfully and steadily back upon their whole conduct as fathers or mothers, commencing from the very beginning of their children's career ; and, with eyes cleared from the mist of partial blindness, to trace, step by step, their own misdoings, their selfishness, indolence, vanity, pride, cupidity,—all mingling in the bringing up of their families ; yes, and their neglect of constant, earnest prayer for direction in the course of the education and advancing years of their sons and daughters;



dazzled as they too often are by those adventitious circumstances which are merely earthly and carnal.

Many an affrighted, repentant parent has seen the reflection of their own sins in a child most fondly loved, and that sin by degrees changing itself into a scorpion, to wound the hand of one, whose whole heart and soul has been engaged in administering to the happiness of a child far more precious than life itself.

Yes, it is indeed a true and faithful saying, that "the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children."

CHAPTER XVIII.

CAR, when left alone, gave way, as she always did, to loud bewailings. When she wept, it was with more violence than grown-up persons in general think it at all necessary to pour forth their woes; her lamentations, like her laughter, were loud, not deep.

“ How cross mamma is!” she sobbed forth. “ Oh! I wish I had any other woman in the world for a mother; she has become so prim and particular, never letting one have a moment’s peace; and she will write, and make out a pretty story to papa. And this horrid letter that I have to write to that odious, tiresome

wretch of a man ! Why was I such an idiot as to try to make a fool of him ? I have done for myself with a vengeance ! And not to be allowed to go out anywhere till papa returns—I, who made an appointment with young Lawless to meet him this very night at Mrs. G.'s ! Oh, what shall I do ? ”

And the brilliant Car now played the part of a weeping Niobe. The door just then opened.

“ If you please, my lady, the woman is come about the children's hats,” said Mrs. Nelson, the nurse, looking round the room in search of Lady Julia. “ But what is the matter, Miss Caroline ? ”

“ The matter ? plenty's the matter. I am the most miserable wretch in the world ! ”

And now Car flew to the nurse, and throwing her arms round her, began afresh her noisy moanings.

“Now, my dear, compose yourself,” was the soothing answer. “I daresay you have been doing something to vex your mamma, and you are sorry for it, and you ought to be; for oh ! Miss Car——”

“Sorry for it!” cried the girl, starting back, and looking fiercely at the nurse; “I am not sorry for that ! I am the ill-treated one ;— yes, you may look as if you did not believe me, but it is true, notwithstanding, Madam nurse ! ”

Mrs. Nelson still shook her head disbelievingly. “Your mamma never acts unkindly by any of her children, my dear.”

“Will you just listen, you very wise old woman, to what I am going to say, and answer me truly ? Do you think it is kind of a mother to be angry with a daughter for not wishing to marry an ugly, dismal, cross old fellow, whom she considers more in the light of a sign-post than a man ? ”

“ That, I am sure, your mamma never would do. I have not served her for nineteen years without knowing her ways pretty well ; and I can vouch for her Ladyship never wishing to do an unnatural or a cruel act by any one, let alone her own children.”

“ Yes, you are just one of the same pack. I might have saved myself the trouble of talking to you, and have been well aware that you would turn upon me like the rest. I am a miserable girl, with not a friend in this house ! ”

“ I fear, Miss Car, that you are rather an ungrateful girl, considering how many friends you have, and all so inclined to be kind to you. But I must go, for I have plenty to do, and the straw-hat woman is waiting.”

“ No, don’t go this minute. Now, Nelson, dear old Nelson, just listen to me. Mamma

is really cruel. Do you know she has desired me to write a letter of refusal to this man? and she will not assist me, and I cannot do it. I write such bad letters, and he is such a particular old prig. I do not like to expose myself to him. He thinks me a piece of perfection now, and I daresay fancies I do everything well; and, Nelson, I don't know what to say. By the by, perhaps you can help me?"

"I, Miss Car? I don't know how to refuse gentlemen, particularly old men; I never did such a thing in my life."

"Oh, Nelson," said Car, now bursting out into one of her merry laughs, though the tears were still wet on her cheeks, "I am sure you have. Now just recollect;—was there not a dismal, worthy old cheese-monger on Holborn Hill, whom you refused just before you came here to nurse me?"

"Miss Caroline, Miss Caroline, what are

you dreaming about? I refuse an old cheesemonger! I don't believe I ever spoke to one, as I can remember, in my life, except in the way of business."

"Well," persisted Car, "would not that have been in the way of business, nursey? I am sure I think this offer of mine, business, and a very bad business indeed. Now tell me the truth, for it is of great importance that I should know, what did you say to the old gentleman?"

Mrs. Nelson looked quite alarmed.

"My dear, what is the matter with you, talking such nonsense? I never had an offer from an old cheesemonger. If I had, maybe I should have been, perhaps, too glad to have accepted it,—I, at that moment in such a poor plight, a widow with a baby, no money, no friends, and no home, till I was so blessed as to find home and friends under your kind parents' roof."

“ Yes, and a sweet little baby to nurse, who has grown up to be such a comfort to you all,” Car added, still laughing.

“ Yes, you were a sweet pretty baby, Miss Caroline, and I loved you dearly, and still, though you do sadly vex me, I must always continue to do so. But oh, my dear child, you give me no end of heartaches, both on your own account and all the others’.”

“ Oh, nursey,” said the girl, in a sweet coaxing tone of voice, whilst she caressed Mrs. Nelson, for, with all her grievous faults, she could be, or seemed to be, affectionate to those she loved, and her foster-mother had, perhaps, as large a place in her heart as any one save her father, “ I know I am a naughty girl, but really I cannot help it; I suppose it is my nature, and I am doomed to be bad.”

“ Oh, pray do not talk in that way, child,” exclaimed the nurse, much distressed; “ we are all by nature sinful, but you know ——

“Oh, stop, stop,” cried Car, “I am in no mood for a sermon this morning, and I know exactly every word you are going to say; for, dear old thing, you have said the same a hundred times at least before. And, really, you must assist me with this letter. Now then tell me, suppose the dismal old cheesemonger *had* asked you, what would you have said if you did not choose to have him?”

“But, Miss Caroline, I cannot suppose any such stuff and nonsense, and don’t know about anything of that sort. When my poor husband asked me to marry him, and he was the only person who ever did so, I just said ‘Yes,’ and there was an end of it.”

“Well, but you *must* assist me,” said Car, sitting down to the writing-table and preparing to write. “Now I will begin,” and she scrawled, “Dear Lord Sinclair.”

“Lord Sinclair?” Mrs. Nelson exclaimed, quite aghast, “Lord Sinclair? you don’t

mean it? what!—that fine-looking gentleman, who seems so good and pleasant, whom I have seen here when I brought the children down. Not *that* Lord Sinclair, I am sure?"

"Yes, just that Lord Sinclair," persisted Car, half amused and half provoked.

The nurse stood speechless and pale with dismay.

"And you call him old, and ugly, and dismal—*that* man, whom any woman on earth ought to be proud to marry; so rich and noble too; and, what is better, who bears such a character! Well," she added, waxing very wroth, "I don't wonder at your poor mamma's vexation; and you, whom I saw riding in the park with him, he close by your side,—and you making so much of him. Oh, fie, fie, Miss Caroline!—I've no patience any longer with you."

And so saying, she hurried out of the

room ; and when she had got rid of the straw-hat woman, and put the baby to sleep, she sat down to have a good cry.

“ Oh, that girl, that girl, she’ll break all our hearts ! ” was the burden of her song.

Car was thus left alone with her letter. Many a blotted and smeared sheet was scribbled over, tears of vexation dropping upon the writing. At last the following words were produced with the aid of a dictionary :—

“ Dear Lord Sinclair,

“ I am very sorry, but I find on reflection that I cannot accept your kind offer, though I feel very much obliged by it. I really have no wish to marry. Pray forgive me, if you think I have in any way done wrong,

“ And believe me,

“ Truly yours,

“ CAROLINE EVERSFIELD.”

With the deepest groan of relief, after having read the common-place production for the last time, she placed it in an envelope, and then ringing the bell, desired the servant to send it directly.

“Yes,” she murmured, “it shall go at once, or there is no saying what may happen, they all seem in such a state of frenzy upon the subject. Heigho, what a bore all this is! A pretty life I shall lead; quite enough to make me cut my throat, and that poor dear boy, Lawless, what will he do? Oh, Albert,” she sobbed forth, as her brother, the very juvenile guardsman, entered the room, “I am so miserable.”

“What’s the row now?” inquired the youth.

“Oh, Albert, mamma is so ill-natured, so unkind! I am to be shut up till papa returns, just because I have refused to marry that horrid Lord Sinclair.”

"And more fool you!" was the consoling answer; "the best match in London, and a brick of a fellow into the bargain. I don't wonder mamma is angry."

Again the noisy weeping commenced, mingled with affronting speeches aimed at the offending brother. "Everybody against her!" she cried, passionately and vehemently; her brother, her mother, her nurse, all alike!—including poor Lord Sinclair, were mingled in the general abuse.

Car was good-tempered enough in a general way, her feelings were not sufficiently sensitive to cause her to be easily touched—but rouse them by some unusual means, and then a sudden blaze would flash forth of fearful, startling, unfeminine significance. Her brother, strong in the early importance of his manhood, his profession, his independence, cared little for this ebullition, till words spoken disparagingly of his

mother fell upon his ear,—his mother, whom he loved so dearly.

Then in his turn he became irritated beyond control, ordered his sister to hold her tongue, and not presume to speak thus of her mother.

“I see what you are at now,” he said, “you want to play the old game with Lawless. I can only tell you, I for one am thoroughly ashamed of you and your ways;” and thus saying, he left the room, rushing hurriedly upstairs to find Lady Julia, in order to vent his anger against his sister, and to assure her of *his mighty* protection and preservation from the airs and impertinence of that most odious and unmanageable of girls.

“ You know, mother, that I stand in the place of my father when he is away, and I shall take care to show that I am master here in his absence.”

Lady Julia tenderly kissed her son, whose fair young face certainly did not exhibit the semblance of a very formidable champion ; but his affection at that moment was very soothing to her heart. .

CHAPTER XIX.

THE London season was nearly over, and the Eversfields were preparing to go into the country. Sir Hector had lately come into possession, by the death of his father, of a place in A——shire. The children, governess, and nurses, with the exception of Mrs. Nelson and the youngest boy, were already despatched to Everslee; Lady Julia and Sir Hector, with their eldest daughter, having been long engaged to stay at several country houses before returning to their home.

Unfortunate Lady Julia! how she hated

the fatigue, expense, and *gêne* of these visits ! and how she envied the young ones, and longed to be included in the party, when they set off so merrily on a fine summer's morning, leaving her so exhausted after her troublous spring, alone with the restless spirit Car !

Yes, let no mothers consider themselves over-burthened by the troubles of nurseries and school-rooms ; rather let them sigh over every discarded frock, and every tuck let out in the dress of their girls; every change from frock to jacket, jacket to tail-coat, in their boys,—in fact, every sign and symbol savouring of emancipation from the gentle cares of their infancy.

It is really true that the bread-and-butter time is the halcyon period of a mother's life ; before the cup of almost unmixed pride and pleasure in the possession of her children, is mingled with anxieties impos-

sible to remove or surmount—cares consequent upon advancing maturity.

And Lady Julia's was a very divided heart: with little ones to engross her thoughts, and the requirements of those who were growing up; their maturer ages necessarily bringing forward graver duties and responsibilities. How she panted, as we have said, to be in the country, for ever so short a breathing-time, without the constant irritating anxiety of poor Car! But it could not be; although, indeed, Lady Julia was looking so ill and worn that Nurse Nelson, as a very privileged person in the establishment did venture to say to the General—

“Really, Sir Hector, my lady looks very delicate; do not you think this visiting about will be too much for her? It would have been better had she gone quietly into the country with us.”

Sir Hector looked annoyed.

"She does look ill, certainly, Nelson," he answered ; "but what am I to do about Car ? She would not like to give up Westover Castle, and all the other visits ; and I should be afraid to undertake the girl without her mother. The fact is, I really cannot manage that restless spirit ; and, strange to say, Lady Julia, gentle as she is, has far more control over her daughter than I have."

"There's the pity, Sir Hector. The fact is, you have always spoilt Miss Car. Surely, she is old enough, and ought to be wise enough, to know how to conduct herself by this time."

Sir Hector only shrugged his shoulders and shook his head, as much as to say, "But she is not."

* * * *

It had been a stormy time since Car's

refusal of Lord Sinclair. Her father, on his return, had been seriously displeased ; her heartless conduct towards a man so superior to herself in every way, her drawing him on merely for the amusement of refusing him, had filled him with disgust.

She had really been in disgrace with every one. And the gentle Geraldine, who was returning to her school in Paris, was distressed to leave her usually joyous, overbearing sister,—always the first and foremost in the house, her voice and laughter ringing on every ear,—for the first time in her life, subdued and crest-fallen ; her father, even, scarcely noticing her.

Geraldine Eversfield was, indeed, the very reverse of her elder sister in every respect. No positive beauty characterised the pale face and unpretending features of this second Miss Eversfield ; her appearance was only distinguished by the amiability of her

expression and her gentle retiring manners. How Lady Julia loved this young daughter, who had been to her a constant source of comfort and consolation, her right hand in every matter in which she could assist her mother; so kind to the little ones, so affectionate and attentive to herself, not a selfish feeling discernible in her nature! But she was growing fast towards the dreaded period when she also must make her *début* in the gay world, and Lady Julia thought with deep distress of her sister's hitherto objectionable career; not that she doubted her gentle child, but it had really come to this state of things, that, under the present circumstances, it would be disadvantageous to the girl to see such glaring examples of want of *retenue* constantly before her eyes, and to hear so much that was unfit for the innocent Geraldine's ears.

When the General, after leaving Geral-

dine, returned from Paris, he found his wife certainly in no state to accompany him to the gay country house, where every kind of festivity was to take place, and where she must dress and exert herself from morning till night.

Car had been unusually subdued and quiet during the General's absence ; she had been in some degree sobered by the disgrace into which she had fallen. Mrs. Nelson had spoken kindly, but severely, to her ; and no one exercised so much influence over the wayward girl as her foster-mother, who was a sensible, superior woman, loving her nursling with the most maternal affection,—every word she uttered coming straight from her tender, honest heart.

“Oh ! to think you were once such a sweet, innocent little baby !” she would sometimes exclaim.

“And what am I now, nurse ? ” Car asked

one day as she sat at her feet, disconsolately leaning her head upon her knee.

“ What are you ? Oh, Miss Car, you know well enough what you are,” was the response.

“ Yes, tell me the truth ; you may just let it all out, and abuse me right and left as you please.”

“ Oh, my child, I don’t want to abuse you, I am sure ; you know I would give my right hand to do you good — to make you what you ought to be—a comfort to your dear papa and mamma, instead of seeing you, whom we used to be proud as well as fond of, only a trouble and distress to them ; and oh, Miss Caroline, your poor dear mamma —— ”

“ What of her ? ” exclaimed Car, suddenly raising her face.

“ What of her, child ? ” answered the nurse, severely, “ why, have you not seen her to-day ; don’t you know how ill she looks ?

—quite worn out, requiring the attentions of an affectionate daughter ; and there she is alone. All the other children gone into the country, where I should also be if that dear child had not been so ill,” pointing to a cot where the baby lay.

“ Alone ; no, my place has been filled all day by one she loves far better than me — that conceited chit, Albert, who takes upon himself all the airs and graces of a man ; even presumes to lecture *me*. It is all very fine parents’ talking about having no favourites ; I am sure that is not the case with mine ; for instance, Geraldine and Albert, — mamma does not consider *me* worthy to be called their sister.”

“ Oh, fie, fie, Miss Caroline ! ” reproved the nurse.

“ Yes, it is quite true, Nelson,” was the indignant rejoinder ; “ and I can tell you that several times to-day I went into

mamma's room, and there sat that pompous young brother of mine, looking daggers at me every time I approached her, he pretending to act the sick-nurse. And once I found him — affected fellow! — holding mamma's hand in his."

"Dear boy!" exclaimed Mrs. Nelson, "just like him; he always was a tender-hearted child — so fond of his mamma."

"A stupid milksop! — not like a man," Car persisted, waxing ireful.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Caroline," interrupted the nurse, indignantly; "I have lived many years longer in the world than you can count, and of one thing I am quite sure, that the bravest and the best of men have always been those who have the softest hearts towards their mothers, and, indeed, towards all who are weaker than themselves, and require their support and kindness; only cowards and bullies are unkind to women,

particularly their own mothers. Yes, dear boy!—you will see that he is no milksop, but a true son of his father ; and when he is called upon to show his manhood, he will prove as fearless a soldier, as noble a man, as the General has been before him. Mr. Albert a milksop, indeed ! ”

“ Oh, yes, you can take everybody’s part but mine. I, of course, am the black sheep of the family, just because I have good spirits and enjoy fun, and because I do not choose to marry a prig of a man I could never like. Who would expect me, young as I am, to turn into a demure grand lady, and play at propriety till I became a dried-up mummy, no longer the merry, light-hearted Car Eversfield ? No, Madam Nelson, in spite of all the gloomy looks and cold words which are for ever cast upon me from every direction, I can just tell you, *for once and for ever*, that I intend to enjoy life whilst I can. I am sorry to see mamma look ill, and I am still

more sorry to see papa frown upon me, for really, I am very fond of the dear old fellow."

"Oh, Miss Caroline, Miss Caroline!" groaned the nurse, raising her hands in horror.

"Yes,—don't interrupt me, you old goose! —and, to finish what I was saying, in spite of everything bothering, — and they do worry me past endurance, — I intend to take my own way; depend upon it, I shall do very well and take good care of myself. Lord Sinclair will keep, — he will do very well for Geraldine — just suit her demure ways,— and I must warn you that it's no use trying to alter me. No, it's just lost labour to endeavour to make a good woman of me. By the by, they had better try the experiment of a reformatory if everything else fails, though I question whether that, even, would succeed in reforming me; no, depend upon it, dear nursey, I am a doomed one."

Then raising her head from the knee on which it had been resting, she saw that tears were coursing one another down the cheeks of the shocked and distressed woman. Up started the wayward girl, her arms were flung round the good woman's neck, and covering her face with kisses, she exclaimed, " You foolish old darling, to take every word I say for earnest," as Mrs. Nelson endeavoured to disengage herself from Car's embrace. " I am only in fun."

" Such things are inexcusable to say even in fun; such light talk amounts, indeed, to downright wickedness," was Mrs. Nelson's remark, as, rising to go to the child who was now awake and crying, she determinately extricated herself from Car's pertinacious caresses, and walked, with sternness upon her brow, to the crib at the other side of the room.

CHAPTER XX.

LADY JULIA, as well as the baby, became too ill for her to think of putting the visiting plan into execution. The medical man decidedly forbade it. "All that her Ladyship can do," he said, "is to go quietly into the country, and there remain and take care of herself, for she is in a very exhausted state; and as for the child," and he shrugged his shoulders, "Mrs. Nelson will be able to manage him. I fear he will be a delicate plant to rear."

Sir Hector would most gladly have given up all these visits and accompanied his wife to Everslee, but Lady Julia implored him, at least, to take Car to Westover Castle.

“ It will be a dreadful disappointment to her,” she urged ; “ and Lady Westover will, I am sure, look after her in some measure. Lady Millicent, though a lively girl, has not, I think, any guile in her; and, dear Hector,” the invalid added sadly, “ I believe her absence, poor child, will be beneficial to me. I require repose of mind, which I cannot have whilst she is with me. It is very sad, very dreadful, to be obliged to say anything so harsh of one’s own daughter, but it has come to this at last. I suppose it is my state of health that renders me thus sensitive, but I live in constant terror of that girl doing something to annoy me; and my nerves are so irritable that, no doubt, I magnify everything she says and does, far beyond what really is meant. It will be better for her, as well as for me, that we should be separated for a short time.”

Sir Hector acquiesced, as he generally did,

in every wish of his wife's, and it was settled that, as soon as Lady Julia was strong enough to travel, she should proceed to Everslee, and Car and himself to Westover Castle; these projects, however, did not take place till the second week in August.

Car received this intelligence, given to her by the General, with inward exultation: it was just what she wanted. However, she restrained all demonstration of satisfaction, and listened very demurely whilst her father severely admonished her as to what her conduct must be whilst under his sole charge.

He certainly had been far less indulgent lately towards this daughter, whom he really so fondly loved, not being able to forgive the trouble and distress she was constantly causing her mother. The General was ever endeavouring to be austere and cold in his manner towards this hitherto petted girl, but

the attempt generally proved a failure ;—Car knew too well how to manage him.

A well-timed flood of tears — stopping with the tenderest kisses the mouth from which was about to proceed words of severe import—soon defeated the General; but still his grave, sad countenance, though it softened under her resistless influence, did not now beam upon her with its wonted brightness.

His heart was heavy, both on her account and that of his wife. But still he thought, “Poor girl, what is to be done about her I do not know; perhaps when she is older her wild ways will tame down. I cannot believe that there is any real harm in her; and lately, how much more quiet she has been! Certainly, her manner has been more subdued, and she would, I am sure, be attentive to her mother, if my dear wife would allow her to be more with her; but the very presence of the girl seems to agitate her, and

to bring that flush of weakness into her face; and, certainly, Car is wonderfully awkward in a sick-room. It is extraordinary to see the difference between her and Albert in that respect ; he, so gentle and handy ; she always coming in like a whirlwind, upsetting everything before her, speaking in her usual tone of voice, not remembering that, even her clear musical tones are all too loud for the sensitive ear of an invalid ; and yet," and the father sighed painfully, "with all her faults she is really such a pet of mine."

We are not to imagine that the dull weeks that elapsed before Car Eversfield left London were passed without excitement and amusement to herself. No!—although evening gaieties were at an end, she was playing a game which answered every purpose *pour le moment*.

She must have walking exercise, she

piteously told her father ; and, of course, she could not take it during the later part of the day, now the governess and her sisters were away, and he was so very busy ;—so she proposed that she should get up very early and walk in the park with Louise, her French maid — nobody could object to that, she thought.

And the General, thinking no evil, let her go.

Our readers may wonder how this young lady managed to eke out the very lengthened time which passed before she returned every morning, looking so bright and fresh from her walk, to join her father at breakfast.

“Well, indeed, Miss Car, you have certainly turned over a new leaf—you who used to be the last to appear downstairs. Where have you been walking this morning ?” the General remarked, as he looked at his blooming daughter.

"Oh, papa, I generally contrive to get into Kensington Gardens ; I have a friend there, one of the gardeners ; — I gave him half-a-crown, and I am always admitted, even before the usual hour for opening the gates. It is so delicious to sit under the trees with a book!"

Yes, Caroline did go to Kensington Gardens every morning, and there she lingered till the time warned her that ten o'clock was near at hand, and she must be at home to appear before her father at the breakfast-table.

Her home was close at hand, in one of the houses overlooking the park, in Bayswater, so it took but a few minutes to return. And was it only with a book that Car sat under the shade of one of those beautiful trees ?

The book might be there indeed—some French novel Mam'selle Louise had contrived

to obtain for her—but it was seldom even opened at that time. One sat by her who required every glance of those bright eyes to be cast upon himself alone.

Yes!—there might be seen, close beside her, the tall, handsome young Lawless, drinking in rich draughts of passionate love, as he gazed on his beautiful companion, that arch deceiver, who, without the slightest compunction, merely for her own amusement and to while away the tedium of her present existence, was driving the impetuous youth into a whirlpool, a dizzy round, too likely at last to precipitate him into destruction.

It was a picture a Watteau might have coveted for a subject, to behold those two young beings seated there in that beautiful spot beneath one of those unbrageous trees, the glory of all Londoners; the brilliant morning's summer sun softly tinting with its rays all around, shining upon the

water, brightening the colour of the foliage, and bringing forth from the dewy turf the fragrant odours of vegetation.

Yes, there they sat; the girl with her straw hat removed and thrown carelessly at her feet, displaying fully that bewitching face—bewitchingly dangerous indeed!—her light muslin dress, so gracefully draping her faultless form, her eyes so varying in expression, now lifted up, animated with lively glee, and then again assuming an aspect of languid softness, still more dangerous to the unfortunate who gazed into their very depths with earnestness amounting to agony.

And the young man, what a fine specimen he was of an Englishman in early youth! or rather, we ought to say, one bred up in England, for the blood of our sister countries flowed in his veins,—his Irish nature no doubt preponderating, if we may

judge by the rash impulsive feelings which characterised his every action.

But he was quite the man to lay hold of the heart of an unsophisticated girl—a hero of romance, we might have supposed, to all soft maidens' hearts. And Car Eversfield did think him very handsome, and liked to meet him, to look at him, to talk to him, to hear him pour forth his whole soul to her; indeed, even her unimpressible heart throbbed often wildly whilst under the spell of his gaze. It excited her not a little, and flattered too her vanity,—sent her homewith many feelings, brightening her countenance : but not one atom of genuine *bonâ fide* love was mingled in these sensations.

“It is very pleasant to meet the handsome fellow,” she would soliloquise, “and I like it very much, and must go on with it whilst I am thus moped up, for I should die of the dumps if I did not have this

little amusement; but, upon my word, I had better take care, for I *cannot* marry him. I know perfectly that I should soon get dead sick of him, in spite of his handsome face. And," she continued, "the more I think of it, the more certain am I that I could *not marry*; that is to say, if I am expected to behave myself afterwards; but this boy—for I can scarcely fancy him a man, he looks so fair and young—will insist upon talking of marriage, and how I shall be able to say a final 'No,' I cannot imagine. I wish, to goodness, mamma were well enough to go to Everslee, and that Papa and I were off to Westover Castle; we shall miss the Brookwood races for a certainty, and I shall go mad with spite."

And thus it went on for some time, till at length one morning might have been seen under those same trees, another picture, which might well have served for a *pendant*

to that beautiful engraving, “The Last Appeal.” But our last appeal represented a scene in which the actors were in high life, no village girl and rural Strephon.

This was their last interview under the trees in Kensington Gardens, for Car was to leave London the next day with her father for Westover Castle.

“Miss Eversfield!—beautiful Caroline!” exclaimed the enamoured youth, as she rose to depart, “for the hundredth time I implore you to give me a final answer—may I hope to call you my own?—my wife?”

“Oh, Norman Lawless,” she petulantly replied, “why will you continue to torment me by that ceaseless question?—I have told you a thousand times that I have no intention of marrying at present.”

“And do you then not love me?” he vehemently cried. “And after all that has

passed between us, Caroline, do you think I can exist, after these weeks of bliss, these daily meetings, all those joyful moments in which I have felt so blest—judging by your looks, your words, that our love was mutual—now to be thus discarded, without one hope left, upon which to exist!"

And with almost abject entreaty, this young man, so strong in frame, so generally undaunted in the fierce expression of his handsome countenance, cowered beneath the influence of that young girl, whilst he seized her hands, imploring her not to leave him thus in despairing wretchedness.

Car really felt rather sorry for him, as she turned her head away, whilst the young lover still held her hands; but even in that brief moment the old ideas floated through her mind.

"What am I to do? If I say I will marry him, it is all up with me; in no time I

shall be chained for life, and all my fun over. But I do like him; and I have not the heart quite to dash his hopes for ever; and I certainly have given him an awful deal of encouragement."

And the thought of how much it had really been, made *her* cheek, even, burn with blushes.

"Well, Caroline," again spoke Lawless, "why this silence?—have you no word of hope to give me?"

Again the girl paused, and thus she thought, as now she struggled to extricate her hands from his firm grasp—

"I suppose that I cannot get off; oh, what a fool I have been! but I will not speak the decisive word—no, I cannot."

"I will not let you go until you decide my fate," Lawless said, now sternly, his countenance assuming its natural expression of defiance; am I to believe that, after

all that has passed between us, you mean positively to refuse me?"

"Oh, no, no, Lawless!" Car answered, beginning to feel rather frightened, "only wait a very short time, and then —"

"You will accept me for your husband?" Lawless interrupted. "Answer this simple question ere we part."

"We shall meet at Brookwood, and there all shall be settled."

And Car turned upon her agitated and now incensed lover, one of those glances which she knew were all-conquering; and the parting was in no ways like that of lovers with hearts so totally dissimilar; — one, with all its faults, true to the passionate love which filled it; the other, void of every feeling save that of self-indulgence, vanity, and the momentary gratification of its senses.



“Oh, what tiger cats those light men are!” Car mused, as she hurried home. “I remember there is some old rhyme which says—

“With a white man trust not your life ;”

and, upon my word, that boy quite frightens me sometimes, he looks so wild and mad.”

CHAPTER XXI.

SIR HECTOR and his daughter went to Westover,—he, poor man, low and depressed about his wife, who had left London the same morning, with the sick child still much of an invalid, and also dreading the task he had imposed upon himself, that of being his troublesome Car's sole guardian during their visit to this gay country house.

She was in mad spirits, much to the disgust of Mrs. Nelson, who, full of sorrowful forebodings, both for her lady and the child, was busy packing, when Car as usual bounced into the nursery.

“Well, old woman, so we shall be off at last, and hurrah! I say. But I should like to know why I am to have that formal old maid Fenton to go with me instead of Louise? She does not understand dressing my hair half as well, and, besides, I have a personal dislike to her. I suppose, therefore, she is to be in the capacity of keeper.”

“Perhaps so, Miss Caroline,” was the answer.

“You may as well advise her not to meddle with me; or, just to torment the piece of propriety, I'll lead her a pretty dance. I don't much care, only it is a bore, when one looks in the glass, to see a brown, wrinkled, dismal old face, pitted with the small-pox, brushing one's hair, instead of a young, merry, laughing one, and to hear solemn English spoken when one asks a question, in the place of a volley of chit-chat poured forth in the purest Parisian

accent. Louise is delicious when one is staying in a large country-house. She tells one a little of everything, and poor little creature, she is so disappointed."

"No doubt, Miss Caroline," was the supercilious reply.

"Oh, I see you are in a bad humour, and no mistake, Madam Nelson."

"I am in a very sorrowful humour, Miss Eversfield, and I wonder you are quite so gay when your mamma is so ill, and the poor baby in such a failing state. Doctor L. thinks he cannot be reared."

Car looked a little grave.

"I am very sorry, Nursey," she said, "but I hope country air will do them both good. Doctor L. always croaks. I daresay little Henry will live to be as great a bully as any of the rest."

The nurse shook her head.

"I hope, my dear, you will not add to

your mamma's troubles by vexing her by your conduct. Pray be steady while you are away ; your poor papa, I can tell you, is quite nervous at the idea of having the sole charge of you."

Car burst into one of her fits of laughter.

" Upon my word, it amuses me. I believe I am considered in the light of some wild animal in a menagerie, which terrifies every one, even its keepers ; but I tell you what,—for the sake of the timid souls about me, I really think I will marry after all, and rid them of the plague of me."

" Oh, don't think, my dear, they want you to marry merely to get rid of you ! No, indeed, you misjudge the best of parents ; but should you meet with a husband with whom you could live happily,— and Miss Car," Nelson added severely, "respectably, it would be best for all parties."

" Respectably ! Ha ! ha ! Oh, Nursey,

that is quite in your cheesemonger's line. Respectably! — I hardly know the meaning of the word."

"Oh, I will tell you what it is, Miss Caroline. Respectably means"—

"Oh, hold your tongue, you most tiresome of old creatures," cried Car, putting both her hands to her ears. "I don't want to hear you prose about what I shall never be, nor ever *wish* to be."

Mrs. Nelson turned up her eyes and shook her head, sighing hopelessly.

"If I marry," the girl continued, "it will not, I can tell you, be to please myself. I shall hate and detest selling myself just to please others, and upon my word, I don't think, when it comes to the scratch, I shall ever be able to do it. So good night, you crossest of the cross!"

And now Caroline found herself at length on the road to Westover Castle. It saddened

her father still more as he, with his heavy heart, travelled with her into Sussex, that not a trace of feeling did she evince at having just parted from her mother and the little brother, whose death-like countenance gave little hope of final recovery.

Albert, the boy guardsman, had taken a daughter's place towards his mother, and obtained a short leave of absence to escort her to Everslee, and it was with real comfort the General placed his wife under his charge.

The father, wholly absorbed in meditation, scarcely looked at or heeded his daughter, for some time after they were seated in the railway carriage, nor had he remarked that, whilst on the platform of the terminus, she had her own business to transact.

In a sharp tone of voice, Car said to the grave-looking maid, who, according to instructions given to her from home, was standing close to her side,

“Fenton, in the name of patience, why don’t you go and look after the luggage ; in all this confusion, that stupid Thomas will be sure to make some blunder. I shall not at all like to have no dress to-night for dinner, in consequence of my trunk having been put into some wrong place; and besides, I don’t want you to stand here guarding me, as if I were a child, or an idiot.”

Fenton was obliged to obey. And as she departed a young officer rapidly advanced. “I could not resist coming here to have one more glimpse of you, Caroline,” he exclaimed in an agitated tone of voice, “and again to remind you of your promise; remember, at the Brookwood races I am to have your final answer, and oh! for mercy’s sake, let it be a favourable one, dearest Caroline.” And her hand was seized and pressed with genuine fervour.

“Yes, yes,” she hastily replied, every

moment expecting her father's return. "But, Mr. Lawless, I must tell you, it will not be given till the last day of the races; I have a particular reason that so it shall be." "Yes," she thought, "let me put it off till the very last moment, and enjoy myself whilst I may."

"You are as cruel as you are beautiful," the young man replied, as he gazed on the dazzling face before him.

"This is my final resolve, however," Car added pettishly, "and now pray go. I see my father coming."

Lawless stepped aside, and soon he beheld his insidious charmer whirling off rapidly from his sight. She had with mocking kindness put her head out of the window, in order that the unfortunate youth might carry away with him still more of the subtle poison derived from the destroying passion, which was undermining every healthful spring of his soul.

How brilliant was the countenance of the girl, when Sir Hector at last looked upon her ! the face so flushed, heightening the carnation on her cheek, her eyes flashing with an expression which the father's heart trembled to observe.

Now it was not that of the careless light-hearted glee with which they were wont to sparkle so merrily; no, it seemed to him, that some fiercer feeling than usual was agitating her mind. There was a smile upon her lips, but it was one which partook of scorn and defiance, assimilating with the expression of the lustrous eyes.

“Car, what *are* you thinking about?” the General at length asked, after he had contemplated his daughter for a brief space.

Car started, and then blushed crimson. “Thinking of, Papa,” she said, “thinking of? Why, a thousand things. Why do you want to know ?”

"Only because I have been watching your countenance, and I never before remember seeing it look as it has done for the last ten minutes. My madcap Car seemed to be coming out in quite a new character; instead of a light-hearted, thoughtless *Bacchante*, you looked as if you were for the first time in your life reflecting seriously, and upon no peaceful subject, most certainly."

Car laughed her usual light laugh. "Pray Papa don't liken me to a *Bacchante*, it sounds so very horrible. I who never drink any wine but champagne, when I can get it; it just shows what a bad opinion you must have of my looks and tastes. A *Bacchante* indeed!"

The General laughed. "Well Car, what was it that transformed you at that moment into a fierce Gulnare? A penny for your thoughts, my child."

"I was thinking that I must, as Nelson says, 'turn over a new leaf,' and give up

enacting the *Bacchante*, as you call me! Heigho! it will be a great bore, for I have had such fun."

No more could be said upon the subject, as they had just stopped at a station, and passengers were climbing into the carriage, some of whom proved to be acquaintances, who were also *en route* for Westover Castle.

With what light-hearted glee Car Eversfield jumped out of the carriage which had met them at the station, when it stopped before the door of the stately mansion!

In the hall she was informed that Lady Millicent requested that Miss Eversfield should be at once conducted to her Ladyship's dressing room, as she had just returned from a long ride. And away went Car, flying up the wide staircase, pursued more leisurely by the groom of the chambers, who could imagine no possible reason for such unwonted haste.

And soon noisy greetings resounded through the pretty sanctum of Lady Milli- cent.

“Oh! Milly, how glad I am to find myself here at last!” Car exclaimed, as she hugged and kissed her friend, who, having just thrown off her riding-habit, had replaced it by a dressing-gown, — her hair tucked under a net displaying a face not very handsome, but with bold good- nature in its expression. With reciprocal warmth she welcomed her favourite gossip, Car Eversfield.

“Such a time I have had of it since I saw you, darling Milly!” Car continued, trying to look doleful.

“Yes, dear—but Car, you wicked one, did you not contrive to amuse yourself notwithstanding? However, first have some tea to refresh you, and then we will talk thirteen to the dozen, as the bakers say. We don’t dine till eight, so there is plenty

of time, and Mamselle Louise need not hurry her unpacking."

"Louise, poor Louise, she is not here," was the response, made in a tone of querulous dissatisfaction, "that is just one specimen of the manner in which I am worried. No, forsooth!—she was not thought steady enough to be my keeper! Poor little soul, I left her sobbing her heart out with disappointment. That grim old maid of mamma's, whom I never could endure, has been sent with me, no doubt with all sorts of injunctions to watch me narrowly. I'll try to lead her a dance, and drive her half-mad if possible."

"And no doubt you will succeed, you incorrigible creature," laughed Lady Millicent; but you may give her rest just for one night, for we shall be quite alone to-day, excepting the few dull people you met in the train. Our party does not begin till to-morrow, and then, Car, we shall have some of all sorts for you to try your flirting manœuvres

upon. Who of all men in the world do you think is coming?"

"Not Lord Sinclair, I hope, or Norman Lawless. I really must have a little rest from them?" Car demanded eagerly and in real alarm.

"Oh no, but the hero you have so long been expiring to know. For some reason or another papa could not help inviting him, for mamma has been hot against it. People are beginning to think it is not the proper thing to ask him into their houses. At a dinner party in London, it does not much signify, but the intimate association of a country house is considered deteriorating to the morals of us innocent maidens."

"Oh, I know whom, you mean," exclaimed Car with brightening eyes, "it is that man so all-powerful in every way, that all-conquering hero, both as a warrior and a lady-killer—that delightful wicked one, Lord Glendinnon."

“ Yes, Car, so I advise you to take care. Mamma will look sharp after you, I must warn you ; Lady Julia has placed you as solemnly in her hands as if ——”

“ Oh please don’t talk of mamma’s absurdities !” exclaimed the undutiful daughter ; “ upon my word,” she continued, her eyes now sparkling with anger, “ they will drive me into doing something outrageous, by making mountains into mole-hills, talking of me in that manner to people ; but, Milly,” and her countenance again changed, “ I really have got into a scrape, and how to get out of it without getting deeper than ever into the mire, I have no idea.”

“ What’s the matter now ?” Lady Millicent inquired.

“ Well, you see, for the last month London has been detestable to me ; I have been a regular prisoner — mamma so ill, and papa both grumpy and out of spirits — I should have regularly died of it had it not

been for a little diversion I got up with young Lawless. You know, my dear, that when men once take to smoking they can't live without their cigar. It is the same with flirting,—if a girl ever takes to flirting she cannot exist without it, it becomes meat and drink to the unfortunate individual; and the fact is, in my weariness and want of anything else to do, just in the same way as a man would treble his number of cigars when suffering under a fit of ennui, I indulged in an unusual fit of flirting."

"Under those circumstances it must have been indeed something tremendous," said Lady Millicent laughing, "considering what I have already witnessed."

"It *was* tremendous," Car continued solemnly, "and I own to being a great fool to have gone as far as I did, for I really believe, darling," and she began to whimper, "that I shall be obliged after all to marry

that tiresome man, for I have all but promised to do the horrible thing ; and how to get out of the scrape I cannot imagine, for I have discovered that he is one who will stand no nonsense, and I have been—so foolish."

"Well, never mind, Car," was the consoling rejoinder, "the deed must be done some time or another, and Lawless is really a handsome fellow, and an excellent *parti*; and because you are married, I suppose you need not be miserable. Look at the young married women in London—they are far more jolly and happy than we spinsters; I believe life only begins when women marry well (and I mean by marrying well, position and money of course), and the husband is a sensible man who lets his wife take her own course, and he his own, and does not trouble her by too *exigeant* affection."

"Oh, but, Milly, fancy the troublesome

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brats ; look at Mamma with all those everlasting babies. I believe she was once upon a time beautiful, and now how wan and faded she looks ! The idea of running one's head into a chance of such a horrible fate makes me shudder. And after all, I believe I do possess some very, *very* faint glimmering of a conscience, for knowing myself so perfectly as I do, and having had well dinned in my ears many virtuous precepts, I think perhaps I had better wait till I am older and can behave myself, which now I am *quite certain* that I could never do. I feel convinced that I should weary of that youth in a week, and then a pretty life for him, poor fellow, and upon my word I like him too much to wish him such a misfortune as a wife such as I should prove."

"Bravo, bravo!" again laughed Lady Millicent, clapping her hands, "upon my word, Miss Caroline, you have become quite

eloquent. I have never heard you make so long or so moral a speech since I have had the pleasure of your acquaintance. Well, my advice to you is to swallow with as few wry faces as possible this bitter pill called Matrimony (a necessary evil, my dear), and try to make the best of it, leaving to chance not to be too bountifully rewarded by a supply of olive branches. As for me, I shall take matrimony just as coolly as I have done all the successive stages of life, considering it in the usual routine of existence. I have already passed through several acts of my drama,—childhood, girlhood, and soon the curtain will draw up, and the last act will commence,—I shall be a married woman, I see it all looming not far distant. But I care not; I don't trouble my head about it. I know it must be some of these days, so leave it all to wiser heads than mine to arrange."

"Ah! but you are far wiser than I am," sighed Car.

"Perhaps so, and perhaps not quite so cold-blooded as you, fair Caroline," Lady Millicent replied, "and my advice to you, Car, is to give up some of your very foolish ways, and 'strike while the iron's hot.' You were a goose to lose an excellent chance in Lord Sinclair; but young Lawless is quite another thing ; with all that hot Irish blood in his veins, he is charming and original. Heigho! I wish he had taken a fancy to me."

"Do you really?" Car asked, rather impressed by her friend's words.

"Yes I do, although I warn you that he is not really quite the man he generally appears. One would imagine him a careless, joyous, lighthearted being, every quality of his mind appearing on the surface. But you know I am a bit of a physiognomist and phrenologist, and I have studied both

in him as well as I was able without manipulating his head, and of one thing I am perfectly sure, that he will be an awkward customer to deal with, if thwarted. His bump of firmness rises conspicuously even amidst those clustering curls, and this, with but a small amount of conscientiousness and a preponderance of the basilar regions, as they are phrenologically termed, is not likely to render him a very easy subject to manage."

Car put her hands to her ears.

"Oh, Milly, don't talk in that incomprehensible manner; I don't care anything about phrenology—that hard name is as much as I can pronounce—as for understanding anything about it, I might just as well try to speak Hebrew. Norman Lawless's head always appeared to me a handsome one, but with all these horrible things upon it I shall never like to look at it again."

Millicent laughed heartily.

"Oh, Car, what a little goose you are! I can feel some very dangerous ones here too," placing her hand on the small head, and then she added, "and the absence of many most valuable to a woman."

The dressing-bell rang.

"Oh, good gracious!" cried Car, starting up, "that reminds me of horrid Fenton. What a bore she will be, instead of having my pretty little Louise to amuse and make me die with laughing at her little historiettes, as she calls them! I'll try to torment the old woman in every way, give a scream every time she puts a pin into my hair, and make her so nervous that she will be scarcely able to fasten my dress."

"What a girl that is!" mused Lady Millie-
cent, whilst she sat before the glass under-
going the process of having her own hair
arranged; "such a fool — scarcely a grain
of sense in her head — and yet I like her,

and feel amused and interested in her senseless ways. And really I am curious to know how it will all end ; upon my word, she had better pull up in time and marry, for I see plainly that she will be getting into some serious scrape. Even I, who never professed to have a heart, who have been, I am perfectly aware, wholly worldly, feel sometimes startled at her total want of affection and principle. How little she cares howshe treats the feelings of men, so she can only gain, what she seems alone to exist for—admiration and adulation ; for never does she in the slightest degree respond to the ardent love which is offered her. No, I believe she is as passionless as she is false ; and yet what a lovely-looking creature she is. I don't wonder at all the men being wild about her. Yes, it will be really an excitement to watch the finale of her flirting career, and I will stand by her to the last,

although Northland implored me to drop her. What would he have thought had he heard me talk so lightly with her? What will Car say when she hears I am actually engaged.

CHAPTER XXII.

LADY MILICENT, when she had finished her toilette, repaired to Car's room to escort her down stairs.

What a scene of confusion met her eyes! The young lady had evidently carried out in full her intention of worrying the poor lady's maid. The contents of every drawer seemed to have been ruthlessly ransacked, and their contents flung upon the floor; the bed was covered with artificial flowers, wreaths, and bouquets of all hues and kinds, and now Car was vehemently gesticulating, whilst the poor woman, with a heated face and trembling hands, was lacing up the tight-fitting bodice of the impatient girl.

“ Oh, Millicent, I dare say I am late, but it is not my fault; how can I possibly dress with a maid who knows nothing on earth about my ways? I never wear artificial flowers when I am in the country; Louise always makes me the loveliest things for my head; the idea of asking me to put on one of these horrid things!”

“ I had not time, you know, to-day, to make up anything, Miss Eversfield. To-morrow you shall have a wreath,” replied Fenton.

“ You make up a wreath! Thank you, I would rather be excused wearing anything of your making.”

“ I made many of those you used to wear, Miss. When Louise was busy I generally made them.”

“ I am sure your hair is perfectly done to-night, Car; such beautifully smooth thick rolls.”

“ They have, however, been down several

times already I can tell you, and I dare say, at dinner you will see one of them fall and drop into my neighbour's soup. My hair feels so loose and uncomfortable. Now give me my gloves, and pocket-handkerchief, and be quick; don't you see Lady Millicent is waiting?"

And away she flounced, and as soon as the door was closed began to laugh.

"Now haven't I paid her off properly? She'll think it no treat to come out visiting with me another time."

"No, I should think not indeed," replied Lady Millicent; "I must say I pity the poor woman from the bottom of my heart."

Car continued to laugh until they entered the grand saloon where the company had assembled for dinner. She immediately went up to Lady Westover, whom she had not yet seen, and who greeted her affectionately, and then she turned to seek Lord Westover, whom in the absence of more at-

tractive sports she did not at all object to flirt with, and he, notwithstanding his sixty years and more, was always delighted to be even second best with the beautiful Caroline, whose charms he most fully appreciated.

He was standing at some distance, talking to a tall man, whose back was turned towards her. Car was instantly struck by the appearance of the stranger, though even thus imperfectly seen. He could not be any one of those guests Millicent had enumerated.

She however fearlessly advanced, longing to see the face of this stately, imposing-looking figure, and said,

“Lord Westover, you have not yet spoken to me.” His Lordship was most tender in his welcome to his fair guest.

Depend upon it, the older a man becomes, the greater his admiration for youthful

beauties increases ; at least so we have generally observed.

Lord Westover had taken possession of both the fair hands that were held out to him, and gazed with undisguised delight upon the bright face which looked up to his with such flattering *empressement*.

But Car, whilst she thus was apparently engrossed by her noble host, had managed also to cast her eyes upon the object of her curiosity, the tall man, who still stood close behind them.

Never did she appear to more advantage, for although her dress was only white muslin, enlivened by a gold band round her waist, it fitted exquisitely, displaying her beautiful figure to the fullest perfection, and her simple *coiffure*, glossy luxuriant hair, unencumbered by flowers, or any of the superfluous ornaments with which young ladies *will* disfigure themselves,

allowed the beholder to feast his eyes upon the statue-like shape and proportion of the small undecorated head.

And Car was at that moment thoroughly pleased, and that alone gave an additional charm to her face.

She saw in a moment that the stranger was gazing upon her with unmistakable admiration, and she had also instantly recognised his identity. He was the far-famed Lord Glendinnon—far-famed in many ways, besides being a military man of the highest reputation.

Having listened to many pretty complimentary speeches from Lord Westover, addressed to the now blushing girl, whose heart was already fluttering under the gaze of this hero in love and in war, who was attentively observing her, Car, seeing her father enter the room, said hastily,

“I must go and speak to Papa. Do you

know, Lord Westover, that I have been so inattentive, I have never seen him since I arrived, and I promised Mamma to take such care of him ; ” and she darted off, but not before her quick ear had heard some exclamations from both gentlemen, which dimpled her cheeks with exulting smiles.

“ Oh, darling Pappy,” she exclaimed, linking her arm in his, and looking up in his face with the most endearing expression ; “ how careless you must think me not to have visited you in your room, and asked about your headache ; but how is it ? Millicent and I had so much to say, and then the dinner-bell rang, and I had not time, for Fenton was so stupid, and I so missed Louise.”

“ However, I think poor Fenton has turned you out quite well enough,” the father said, as he gazed with fond admiration on his beautiful child. And certainly

Car's *forte* must have been acting, for a most graceful tableau did she enact for the benefit of the two Lords, who were following with their eyes her every movement, as she hung about her careworn-looking father, her every look and attitude apparently emanating from the impulse of natural grace.

Dinner was announced, and she relinquished her father's arm to take that of a shy eldest son of one of the neighbouring *élite*. Lord Westover had told her to mind that she was to sit on his left side, the right of course being occupied by the greatest lady present, to whom, we fear, his Lordship did not give the largest portion of his attention. How could he, with such a magnet so near at hand?

And Car heard how it was that Lord Glendinnon had arrived sooner than he was expected. He had mistaken the day.

“ You must take care of your heart, fair

lady," he continued, "his Lordship is considered, I can tell you, irresistible."

"Oh, no fear of me," Car answered, laughing. "It is always being dinned in my ears that I have no heart."

And at that moment her eyes turned towards the head of the table, where Lord Glendinon was seated by Lady Westover, Sir Hector occupying the opposite place by her side. Car was almost startled on perceiving how earnestly he seemed to be regarding her.

The colour mounted to her cheeks, caused by gratified vanity — she felt at once that her conquest was certain over that fierce-looking man.

"It will be delightful," she thought, "something so new. I am so tired of the same thing over and over again with all those young Guardsmen, and the other stupid men, young and old, I have made

fools of. After all, I care not much to waste my time on boys — they are so silly — but this splendid-looking creature, neither young nor old, such a regular lion as to courage, and looking almost as fierce as any of the forest monarchs,—Oh ! would it not be glorious to make him crouch at my feet for one smile ?”

And again she looked towards him, and caught another fixed gaze from his eyes, which she understood well how to return.

Alas for her young lover ! no longer did this unprincipled girl feel even pity for him. Before the dinner was concluded, Lord Glendinnon and Car Eversfield, without any introduction, and at the distance of the intervening space of the top and bottom of a long table, had become perfectly acquainted with each other.

“Car,” said Lady Millicent, as they walked on the terrace on leaving the dinner-table, “I am rather alarmed about you.”

“Why, what is the matter now ?”

“I have been watching you all the time we were at dinner, and I am quite sure that it is your intention to commence a flirtation with Lord Glendinnon.”

“And why not, pray ?” asked Car, redening, for Lady Millicent looked graver than usual. “He is just the man to talk and laugh with, for every one knows that he is a safe subject enough, having a wife somewhere.”

“Upon my word, Car,” Millicent replied, “I used to think I was very bad, but I have come to the conclusion that I am a saint and angel compared with you. Yes, you may laugh, but I must just again warn you to take care how you behave to Lord Glendinnon, who is one of the most profligate men in London. He has been for years separated from his wife, and is so notorious in his career that few people will now

invite him to their country houses. Mamma does not at all like his coming here, and will be greatly disgusted if she sees you encourage him, and I am sure the General will be much displeased. I heard him say that he certainly should not have come to Westover, had he known Lord Glendinning had been invited, which indeed he was not—he as good as asked himself, and Papa had not the presence of mind to refuse him. Mamma hates his being here."

"I am sure I am glad he did come," was Car's rejoinder. "It does one's eyes good to look at such a splendid specimen of the human race. That is what I call a man, very unlike those whey-faced youngsters I am accustomed to see."

"Yes, and by the bye remember, Car, what you have just told me about young Lawless. I consider that you are actually engaged to him, and after what has passed

and that ring on your finger, you cannot possibly get off without a pretty row."

Car, as usual when vexed, began some noisy whimperings.

"How cross you are, Milly! just like the people at home. You of all girls in the world are the last to have a right to talk in this manner! A pretty number of scrapes you have very nearly got into! No girl in London has ever been more fast than Millicent Danvers; but just because you have been so sly and have never been found out, you fancy yourself so much better than others. And I am come here to be so happy, and you are trying to make me miserable."

And now she began fairly to cry.

"You had better not disfigure those mischievous eyes," said Lady Millicent, laughing, "for behold, the conquering hero is advancing. We had better turn into the flower garden, that you may have time to shake the rain-drops from the rose."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THAT same night Sir Hector called his daughter into his room, and spoke to her very seriously about Lord Glendinnon. Not that he had observed anything as yet in her conduct to give him uneasiness, for Car was rather startled by what her friend had said, and was afraid of showing any public demonstration of her determination to commence a flirtation with Lord Glendinnon, although she had not lost all her time, even this evening, for she well understood the science of by-play.

“I must just warn you, Car,” her father said, “that if I see the slightest inclination

on your part to receive any attentions from Lord Glendinon, I shall take you home immediately. Nothing will turn me from this determination. Had I known he was to have been here, I should have declined the invitation at once."

"Oh, papa! what does Lord Glendinon signify to me?" Car exclaimed petulantly, "I shall not be the only girl in the house if he wishes to amuse himself; there are several coming to-morrow."

"I dare say, but they will probably have their mothers with them," and the General sighed, his thoughts reverting to his sick wife at home. "However, Car," he continued, more sternly than was his wont when speaking to his daughter, "I *insist* upon your remembering what I have said; I am perfectly in earnest."

But the next morning brought its changes. Before Car had lifted her head from

the pillow her father again appeared before her. The post had brought a letter from Portsmouth, stating that his second son Ernest, who had just gone into the navy, had met with a severe accident, and was left at the hospital at Portsmouth. He was in no danger, but the authorities had thought it expedient to inform Sir Hector of his son's state.

"I shall be off immediately. If you write to your mother to-day, don't mention what has happened — it would only alarm her, and I hope I shall find my dear boy in no kind of danger, indeed they say the hurt he has received is of no vital importance. However I could not feel a moment's peace until I have seen him, and shall start in half an hour. Now, Car, do not add to my many anxieties, by misconducting yourself whilst I am away. Do you hear, child?"

"Yes, darling Pappy," the girl cried, start-

ing up and throwing her arms round his neck — “I shall be so good—don’t fear for me—and I am so sorry for poor Erny.”

And she looked so lovely, this young brilliant creature, in all the dishevelled carelessness of her sleeping attire, the glow of childlike sleep flushing her soft cheeks,—her dark hair, loosened from the net which usually confined it, falling on her white neck—that the doting father, as he pressed her in his arms, could not keep up any demonstration of severity.

“God bless you, my darling,” he murmured as he extricated himself from her embrace, “and keep you in safety. I shall be back again as soon as possible, I hope, if Erny is pretty well.” And Car fell back upon her pillows, and wept, and her tears this time flowed from a softer, purer source than usual. “Poor darling papa!” she sobbed, “how much he always has to vex him. Oh, how

I wish, I wish I *could* be good, and not add to his vexations, but I fear I *cannot*; and poor Erny!—he is my favourite brother—a mad-cap like myself—I really will try to be sedate, and what is more to the purpose, I will stay at home to-day. I ought not to go to the races whilst the poor boy is so ill. I shall hear to-morrow, and if he is better, then I can enjoy myself. And I won't go down to breakfast. I really never was so unhappy!"

Lady Millicent found her still in bed, so changed from the brilliant Car of yesterday,—her eyes, so unaccustomed to shed tears of sorrow, so red and swollen, that her friend was quite sorry for the distressed girl, and said all she could to console her.

"Poor Ernest," she said, "I know him well," though I have not seen him for a year or two. He is very like you, Car, is he not? both in mind and looks, a regular scapegrace, if I remember right."

"Yes, the best of the family," sobbed Car.

"If he is exactly like you, Car, depend upon it he will do very well. The bad ones always outlive the good ones ; you and Ernest will see out all the rest. But you must get up ! We breakfast unusually early, to be ready for the races ; the drive to Brookwood is a tedious business."

"I'm not going to the races," groaned Car.

"Not going to the races ! Nonsense, you silly one !"

"No indeed ! it would be very unfeeling to go when my brother is so ill."

"After all," persisted Lady Millicent, "he has only had a slight crack on the head, poor boy, and if, when every middy had a fall, their sisters were to take to their beds, the world would indeed come to a pretty pass. Now, Miss Caroline, you shall just be allowed to have your breakfast up here, and then, if you please, begin to gird

your armour on. You have a good deal of business on hand to-day, remember."

Yes, Car did remember, and felt at the moment really averse to going to the races. She was as sorry for her brother as she could be for anything, and she did not feel strong enough to encounter her ardent young lover, Norman Lawless.

But she was fated to go. Lady Millicent soon returned to say that Sir Hector's last words to Lady Westover before he went, were, "Well, my dear Lady, you will take care of that madcap child of mine at the races to-day."

"So you see your father expects you to go, and that he would not do if he apprehended any danger to Ernest. No, depend upon it, this being the first time he has knocked his head out of reach of Mrs. Nelson and her *pommade divine*, the boy has made the most of it."

"Come now, I shall ring for Mrs. Fenton, and do you set about your toilette with all speed. Papa would never get over it if you did not go. He intends to drive you in his phaeton, and I believe Lord Glendinnon and some other man are to sit in the rumble. And oh! such a parasol my revered parent has just produced, which he intends presenting to you. Were I Mamma I would not allow of such doings. It must have cost a pretty sum! He never gives *me* such things. Now! fair lady, make haste! By the bye, I hear you have such loves of bonnets."

"Yes, poor Louise made them all, and they cost next to nothing. She is so clever; and after all her trouble not to see them on me," sighed Car.

Lady Millicent's inducements were irresistible, and before the toilette was half completed, Caroline was herself again, quarrel-

ling with the maid one moment, chattering to Lady Millicent, who looked in ever and anon to see how she was going on, and at length finally forgetting all about poor Ernest and his broken head.

And we must allow that beautiful the girl looked when at last the unfortunate abigail had completed her labours, and saw her young lady leave this room of confusion worse confounded—dresses here, bonnets there, gloves and small boots littering the floor. Car had never been so anxious to make a *soignée* and becoming morning toilette, and not having Louise to give her advice, on which her mistress generally relied as infallible, she became irritable and impatient to a frightful extent.

She had no opinion of Fenton's "dowdy old taste," as she called it—was dissatisfied with everything she said or did, and made the poor woman so nervous that she felt

inclined to give it up and run out of the room. At length, after Car had dragged off a bonnet from her head and thrown it to the other end of the room, declaring that Fenton had entirely put it out of shape by her clumsy manner of handling it, and had torn off her back a beautiful, new, expensive French muslin, because she insisted that the flounces had not been properly ironed out, the poor woman could bear it no longer.

Bursting into tears she declared that having done her best to please, and totally failing, she really could do no more.

“I shall speak to the General when he returns, Miss Eversfield, and tell him that I am of no use to you, and entreat him to send me back.”

Car was alarmed. In a subdued tone she said,

“How silly you are, Fenton!—don’t you

know it's my way ? I often get into rages with Louise even. I think nothing of slapping her face when I am in a passion. I don't mean all I do and say."

"But I do, Miss Eversfield, and cannot stand it any longer; and to think of your destroying that expensive dress and that pretty bonnet, and your papa and mamma, with their large family, little able to afford such extravagant waste. No, indeed, I should go into a fever if I were to wait upon you much longer, Miss Car."

"Oh, good gracious !" thought Car, "what in the name of patience am I to do ? Now this botheration old creature, what a scrape she will get me into if she complains to papa, and just now too !"

And Car was obliged to do violence to her feelings, and beg pardon, and coax, and fondle the good woman, who had been with

Lady Julia many years, ever since Car could remember.

“ You wouldn’t be so cruel as to tease papa just at this moment, when he is so miserable about poor Erny,—your favourite Erny, Fenton ? ”

“ I am very, very sorry for your papa and Master Ernest,” Fenton replied, “ but he is not my favourite, Miss Car. My favourite is that dear, good son, Mr. Albert.”

“ Ah, that’s a cut at me. Ernest is too like a certain bad girl called Caroline to be your dearest, Fenton ; ” and she looked slyly at the maid. “ Ah, yes, I see that is the reason; you cannot deny it; ” and seeing a half-smile on the tear-stained face of the poor woman, Car thought her victory won, and putting her two hands upon her shoulders, held her fast, looking into her face with that insinuating, irresistible expres-

sion she so well knew how to assume, and said,—

“I shall not let you stir, Fenton, till you say you have forgiven me, and that you will not tell papa. You will see how pretty behaved I shall be. You will even fancy you are waiting upon Gerry.”

“Oh, I shall never take *you* for dear Miss Geraldine,” Fenton replied, with an ironical emphasis in her tone, “but as you say you will behave better, Miss Caroline, of course I *must* try to remain with you whilst you are here; but oh!” she exclaimed, taking up the remains of the pretty French muslin, “what in the world can be done with this? It is past my skill at mending. And to think of the money it cost!”

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



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