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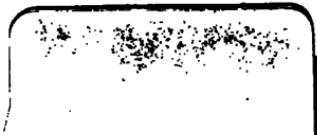




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# THE COLONEL:

## A STORY OF FASHIONABLE LIFE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF  
"THE PERILS OF FASHION."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:  
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,  
SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,  
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.  
1853.

24g. w. 46g.

M. S. MYERS, PRINTER,  
22, TAVISTOCK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.



# THE COLONEL.

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## CHAPTER I.

"Our daughters die to us e'en in the hour  
They open to the world. . . .  
. . . . She no sooner blooms  
Than comes the licensed spoiler with his suit,  
His open theft, and the new family  
Begins by rooting up from out the old,  
Its choice--perchance its solitary flower."

SIR W. CHrichton: A TRAGEDY.

"As poor as a Lord of Barra," was a local proverb; and when Major St. Colmo succeeded to the title, there was nothing in his

circumstances to falsify the saying. Still, the taking possession of the paternal mansion, half fortress, half farm-house as it was, offered a pleasing contrast to the infantry barracks in which he, his wife, and two sons had hitherto passed much of their lives. Indeed, it was regarded by the quartetto as a comparative Elysium; so much so, that when Eric, the second son, received his commission in the —th Hussars, which a god-father-General's interest procured him, he looked with a regretful eye on all the rude scenes and ruder pleasures which he was called upon to quit; and would fain have prolonged the wild, sportsman's life afforded by the moors and lakes of Barra. However, on joining the —th Hussars he found that he had no cause to regret his transplantation. A prowess in field-sports was precisely the one distinguishing feature of the regiment;

and if Eric St. Colmo had relished picking off starved ptarmigan with a rusty fowling-piece on the Barra moors, he was perfectly enchanted with all the variety of sportsman craft which now dawned upon him; together with the admirable implements that, in trim mahogany and brass-tipped cases, crowded the rooms of the officers.

There was still a further art peculiar to the —th Hussars. It was the “happy knack” of making rich marriages, a pursuit followed up with all the force of regimental coadjutancy. This was as congenial to the notions of Eric St. Colmo, as the things connected with the chase; and on the arrival of the regiment at Canterbury he forthwith showed his readiness to “fall in” with the prevailing practice, by commencing an attack on the love and liberty of a Miss Bertie, a niece of the Dean, and the reputed heiress of

seventy thousand pounds. Everything was done by his brother officers to advance his interests with the young lady—"backing up" they called it. However, nothing further than an archery meeting on the Dane John, and the band, ordered off at an hour's notice to play at a ball at Ashford, was necessary. And when at this same ball he proposed and was accepted, they all declared the thing had never been done so cheaply before. But now came the reverse of the medal. Another niece of the Dean's, who had lately come to Canterbury, but from being a little deformed—an invalid—and slightly archaeological, had been brought but little before the notice of the Hussars, turned out to be the heiress; and poor Nelly Bertie was self-declared destitute of all fortune, save the fifty pounds a-year pension enjoyed by her as an Admiral's orphan.

What a commotion all this stirred up in the regiment; and what embarrassment to the unhappy lover, who owed every possible debt a “fast man” may be supposed to owe, from a bill on Cox with a date almost expiring, down to an innocent fifteen pounds due to the Trumpet-Major for postage! What an agitation in all intervening duns, fostered into an unwholesome vivacity by St. Colmo having, in the glee of his success with Miss Bertie, rather prematurely talked of paying them! All was consternation. A council of war was called. Eric’s father was sent for. The Dean was instructed in the ruin her marriage would entail upon his niece; and a combined force of friends and relations separated the young people.

Three months after these events, Eric might have been seen at his friend Sir Otho Fairfax’s place on the moors, bagging grouse.

with an intensity which would seem to contradict the idea of a sentiment still existing ; and yet the last touching look of Nelly Bertie's blue eyes, which had rested on him as his father declared to her the perfect madness which an union between them would be, at times wrestled with the smothering effect which men's sports and men's talk exercise over men's sensibilities.

The —th Hussars were ordered to Brighton ; and urged by his comrades, who seemed to take his late mishap much to heart, and aided by a machinery, of which they well understood the management, St. Colmo prepared himself with method to be agreeable to Mr. Henslow, the *millionaire* of the moment ; whom with his wife and only daughter, he was invited to meet at Lord Thomas Wynne's, an ex-Hussar. As all the regiment pronounced Miss Henslow a "nice girl," and the indu-

bitable wealth of the father was fully proved, St. Colmo, as in duty bound—*i. e.* regimental duty—commenced the wooing. This, however, went not so smoothly. For though Mrs. Henslow, with rather an extension of chaperoning confidence, at every party was affixed to the whist-table, the father seemed to feel pride in having his beautiful Margaret always on his arm. It may be, that he liked to find himself one of those gay groups, who, like butterflies without hunger or thirst, still love to flutter amidst the blossoms of life, and who usually surrounded his daughter, full of admiration of her lovely eyes, or the imperial diamond, which, something less than the Koh-i-noor, clasped the narrow velvet round her fair white throat; it may be that he wished to keep both treasures to himself;—as it was, his constant vicinity was a great hindrance to St. Colmo's views. Added to

this impediment to love-making, there was a governess, fast sliding into the duenna, who was the constant companion of her walks on the cliffs; and who seemed to have no fellowship with the feelings of humanity, beyond that which a vast admiration for the Waverly Novels—at that time bursting like stars from their mysterious depths—exhibited.

Though Miss Henslow rode occasionally with her father, there was no better luck in these rides for would-be suitors; for whoever might be the cavalier on the one side, Mr. Henslow was sure to be on the other. At length Margaret suddenly proclaimed herself nervous with her sprightly Arabian among so many carriages; and fancied that some lessons in the riding-school would give her more courage. Her wishes were laws, and the riding-lessons commenced; Miss Hopkins with her charge being always at

the school at twelve o'clock ; at which hour Mr. Ross was requested to keep it clear. And so it was for the first two or three lessons ; after which, he petitioned so earnestly that a Miss Clarke, the daughter of an invalid clergyman, and who could find no other vacant hour to leave an aged father, might be allowed to share the lesson, that it was conceded. Accordingly a huge, bony young lady, with an ill-made habit, and the gothic fortress of an enormous straw bonnet, commenced taking her rounds with the exquisite-looking Margaret, who seemed to feel a mischievous pride in attending more than ever to her perfect riding-costume, thus further to eclipse poor Miss Clarke. Miss Hopkins, whenever her attention was drawn to the two, was exceedingly amused by the glaring contrast which they offered ; but the truth was that they attracted but little of her

notice. The two hours' riding-lesson was to her a luxury of leisure, generally employed in devouring some new novel ; and seated on the huge red sofa in the gallery overlooking the arena appropriated to the riders, she scarcely ever glanced beneath her; imagining most sagely, that Mr. Ross's scientific notions of equitation quite superseded her own. Neither did she think any more of the unsightly female who shared the riding-lessons, than occasionally to marvel at her possession of the very nice books she sometimes found lying on the sofa ; evidently belonging to her, bearing her name, and apparently taken there for her amusement while awaiting her horse.

One day Miss Hopkins discovered, on the red sofa, a great booty. She pounced on it with all the avidity of a pearl-fisher. It was nothing less than the first volume of Ivanhoe, which was just come out, and for which she

had vainly assailed the library for the last fortnight. She scarcely waited to see Miss Henslow mounted, before she was fairly launched in its pages; and, fettered by the spell woven by the fine art and exquisite nature of the author, she was lost to all knowledge of what was passing around, when a faint scream from below aroused her attention. Lifting her eyes, she saw Miss Henslow's Arabian and Miss Clarke's large black horse standing without riders, and looking silly, in the middle of the school; the young ladies and Mr. Ross nowhere visible. She hastened down the steep stairs with her best speed; and there, beneath the gallery, she found her charge; who, to judge by her dishevelled hair and lost hat, had evidently fallen from her horse, and was now in the arms of Miss Clarke. That young lady was perceptibly in a decided fright on the occasion. In two

or three minutes it was ascertained that no harm had befallen Miss Henslow ; who now, with blushes and laughter, seemed rather to enjoy the thing. But poor Miss Hopkins ascertained something further, which sent her life-blood in a rush to her heart. Apparently regardless of herself, in her alarm for her companion, Miss Clarke, while she knelt supporting Miss Henslow, with utter indifference to the fall of her drapery, had suffered her habit to be drawn up much higher than is usual for modest young ladies ; and there, extended on the ground, was a long, long leg ; not decked in the pretty frilled trousers which usually flourishes beneath the habit—not clad in the white cotton stocking, perhaps appropriate to the parson's daughter—but actually encased in a dark blue undress military trousers, with a boot below of faultless make and blacking, bearing an incontestable military spur at its heel !

The carriage, which had been sent for, had arrived before Miss Hopkins had recovered the power of speech, of which her consternation had deprived her; and Miss Henslow was handed into it by Miss Clarke, who seemed, in the confusion of the minute, to have forgotten the retiring delicacy of manner which usually marked her, and actually offered her hand to the governess. It was indignantly repelled; and, with a frown portentous of ill, Miss Hopkins rushed past her.

Poor Margaret! When she left the carriage she showed more appearance of having suffered from her fall than she did on entering it; and with red and swelled eyelids and trembling steps, she retired at once to her room. There she announced to her father, who, on hearing of her accident, flew to learn the extent of it, that she never should ride at

the school again. Miss Hopkins showed a grim complacency as her determination was uttered ; and imploring eyes were turned towards her, as if to supplicate that nothing further than complacency should be evinced. It was not. Two days after that, a splendid chinchilla pelerine hung over the meagre shoulders of Miss Hopkins. Was it the price of silence ? It is difficult to say. But it did nothing to allay the fierceness of aspect with which, for the next fortnight, she paraded by her charge's side.

A charity ball at the rooms was announced ; one of those assemblies, where, for the sake of the alms-giving, dancing might be thought to assume a character of sublimity as in days of yore when it rendered worship to some dark idol. Margaret Henslow thought neither of idols or hospitals as she took the arm of St. Colmo to join the quadrille just then

forming ; but what exquisite pleasure filled her young bosom !—a pleasure not to be lessened even by the circumstance of her father standing at her elbow during the whole dance.

The concluding figure was just finished, and *queue de chat*—that license for hands being clasped to soft music—had terminated the dance, when a sealed letter was presented to Mr. Henslow by one of the waiters, who seemed to deliver a verbal message at the same moment. The blood flew to the forehead of the merchant ; and first requesting St. Colmo to conduct his daughter to her mother in the card-room, he hastily left the ball-room. The request was not strictly complied with. Drawing her towards the door which her father had just passed,—a measure, which by as skilful and accurate a movement as ever arranged a *pas de villageois*

on the opera stage, was entirely covered by a group of officers forming between them and the rest of the room a perfect screen,— Eric St. Colmo, in the most earnest yet gentle manner, breathed into the astonished Margaret's ear that this was the last minute they should ever be together, unless she, knowing his love—his devotion, mustered up sufficient courage to give herself to him that moment.

“How?” was the simple monosyllable uttered by the agitated girl; whose feelings, seeming to catch some of the perturbation which shook her lover, obliged her to cling closer to the arm on which she leaned. “How?” The little word lent a world of strength to the hopes of St. Colmo. He briefly explained to her that the letter she had seen delivered to her father was a fictitious one, forged for the purpose of taking

him from her side for these few moments, which were even then fast passing away ; and then they should be for ever separated, unless she could resolve to reward the most ardent love which ever burnt within the bosom of man, by consenting to fly with him and become his wife.

Margaret trembled to that degree that the arm of St. Colmo, now passed around her, was actually essential to her support. And yet the word “wife” seemed to breathe a soft and happy meaning to her ears, and she looked up into his face with inquiring, though bashful, tenderness. She could not speak ; but she met such loving eyes, there seemed no want of uttered words ; and in the bewilderment of the moment she suffered herself to be led quickly on. She was in the cloak-room—her fur mantle passed around her by the woman, who seemed actually

waiting with it on her arm, ere she knew that she had left the ball-room; and then borne/rather than led down the stairs, she was placed in a carriage which, with open door and steps down, stood at the entrance. She was still scarcely aware of the decisive step she was taking—had taken. But when St. Colmo sprang into the carriage after her, and the door was slammed to with violence by a man, who, by the light of the lamps, Margaret recognised as one of the officers, though dressed as a servant, a faint shriek escaped her.

“Oh! pray, Miss, don’t take on!” exclaimed a trembling, but well-known voice from the corner of the carriage. “Your trunks and dressing-case is all as comfortable packed as can be. And here’s your velvet bonnet; I thought it would be warm for night travelling.”

Margaret could not believe her ears. Was it indeed her own maid—her own velvet bonnet thus lending comfort and sanction to the wild step she was about to take ? Taken, would again, perhaps, have been the more appropriate word ; for they had already cleared the Preston turnpike ere these realities dawned upon her. The hand of St. Colmo still held hers ; and ever and anon a fond pressure seemed, as if by inspiration, to answer and allay the anxieties which arose in her bosom. He spoke but little, and there was then much trepidation in his voice ; while his looking constantly from the window showed the nature of his fears. But the merry voice of Lord John Suffolk from behind, every time his head was put forth—“ All right, old fellow,” seemed like some magician’s incantation to soothe him ; and Margaret found herself taking coffee and cold

chicken with Lord John and St. Colmo at Barnet, her maid “enjoying her tea” in the corner, long before she thought she could be above twenty miles from Brighton. Railways had not then taught lovers and debtors how quickly they can get beyond the reach of fathers and creditors.

The elopement went off much in the same way as those things do ; though it afterwards proved to lack the usual stage effect of parental forgiveness at the *denouement*. There was a good deal of hysterical gaiety, meant to hide deeper feelings—something of the sort heard when school-boys rob orchards ; there was a good deal of physical discomfort connected with dressing and sleeping rooms ; but still happiness was the prevailing feature.

Lord John left the married pair at Berwick, to retrace their way under those happy circumstances—a bridal *tête-à-tête* ; the maid

now taking her place in the rumble of the carriage. And they were happy. At least Margaret felt that she should be so, when she had arranged her post-nuptial *trousseau*, and could drive about Brighton in a high phaeton, like Lady Thomas Wynne, with no cross papa to frighten away surrounding flutterers, like locusts before an east wind.

St. Colmo's happiness was not anticipatory. It was all of the present; full, exquisite, and satisfying. Not but what at times something like pain mingled with his most felicitous feelings. And when the soft cheek of his young wife was pressed against his own, a pang smote his heart at the thought that a species of outrage had been used towards the attainment of the present joy, and the nearest and dearest rights invaded. There was some myth—some *legende dorée* about a little ewe lamb which constantly haunted him. He

could scarcely say where he had first heard it; whether as a child in his own little story books, or from some Highland ballad. Neither could he quite recal all the features of the story, though the vague and fantastic remembrance seemed to hover over the best and brightest moments, and, thus hovering, spoil them; making him still more anxious for the time when, claiming the forgiveness of the original owner of the ewe lamb,—a forgiveness which the pretty Margaret assured him would not be withheld,—he should receive a fuller title to the treasure that he held. He felt that, in spite of a certain and new found uxoriousness, his happiness was incomplete without it.

The daughter had deceived herself. On reaching London, they learnt that the elopement might have been pardoned—the deception never. Indeed the mercantile panic,

which the forged letter sent to him in the ball-room had occasioned, could not be forgotten; and though Mr. Henslow and his wife were both in town, an interview was refused to them.

Mr. Bartlett, the managing clerk of the firm of Henslow & Co., waited upon the young couple at the hotel to which they had repaired on reaching London, with the intimation that the pretty, weeping bride was henceforth to be considered a stranger by her parents. At the same time he handed over to St. Colmo a cheque on Coutts for seven thousand and three hundred pounds, it being a sum left to Margaret by an aunt, who had died before the firm of Henslow had taken to such marvellous feats of accumulation as now marked its books.

The announcement of Mr. Bartlett seemed to give a shock to the feelings of the young

husband. Still, however, he had sufficient recollection to send for the maid, and direct her to bring the little casket containing the "*Ajeeb*," as the large diamond was called, and which he consigned to Mr. Bartlett.

The singularly precious stone was nevertheless returned that evening, with the brief intimation that the jewels worn by Miss Henslow were her own property.

Considering all things, the seven thousand and three hundred pounds was a most timely incoming. It rather smoothed present difficulties, and made a return to the regiment a less embarrassing affair than it might otherwise have proved. As it was, on hearing all particulars, the abettors and chief actors in the elopement pronounced it a "dirty sell."

Nothing of this, however, interfered with the happiness of the St. Colmos; and as time went on, the —th Hussars seemed inclined

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band's interest in this treasury of form and feature may be understood.

Some one has written, "that it is a woman's business to be beautiful," and "that beauty is a virtue as well as a gift." If this means more than smart words, well did Mrs. St. Colmo fulfil both virtue and business; proudly did she use the gift. This duty of loveliness, however, was by no means inexpensive; necessitating costly apparel and expert tiring-women. All were supplied by the enamoured husband with a facility which might have drawn down upon him the contempt of those who knew how inadequate were his means to the expenditure. But somehow no one ever thought of blaming Eric St. Colmo, or of uttering those amicable detractions, those pungent strictures, which half the world pass on the actions of their friends.

Whether the gift of beauty, which he also owned in a pre-eminent degree, dazzled eyes into blindness of his faults, or whether there was a lustre in the manly single-mindedness—the ineffable good temper—the exquisite and never-failing notions of truth and trust, which threw into obscurity all the less salient traits of character, can scarcely be said. The fact of the universal courtesy and liking which met him can alone be vouched for. Strange to say, that among those who by their cordial demeanour showed their kindly feelings, there was a class of persons not usually amenable to the glamour thrown by frank manners or personal comeliness; these were his creditors. It may be that there was a further motive for their patience and indulgence than the fascinations of the popular St. Colmo; and that the fact of his father-in-law being the

richest among the rich was the cause of their forbearance. Whatever the cause, it was not until eight years after his marriage that he came to a dead lock for ready money; and then it was not so much from unbecoming conduct in duns, as from a conglomeration of mischance. A sudden order for the regiment to leave Weymouth, where it had only been quartered four months, and the absence of the Paymaster,—who, by some singular astuteness in finance, could get credit for bills with which St. Colmo would not have hesitated to light his cigar on an emergency,—now seemed to put the acme to his embarrassments.

## CHAPTER II.

Gray, speaking of Mason, says, "He is so sincere and so undisguised, that no mind with a spark of generosity would ever think of hurting him, he lies so open to injury."

THE DOCTOR.

THE exceedingly ruinous state of his affairs had long been an interruption to the happiness which each passing day seemed calculated to afford; but St. Colmo repulsed the thoughts of it with vehemence; a vehemence so far justifiable, that all the thinking in the world could not have improved it. He had

but one other cause for disquiet ; and that was the sense of having wronged the father of his beautiful Margaret. This, in spite of all the sophistry he could muster as to the rights and privileges of young ladies to choose their own husbands, and the absence of such rights and privileges in fathers to refuse them, was perpetually recurring to him. Long ere this he would have humbled himself before the injured father, and supplicated for his forgiveness ; but there was one idea which forcibly withheld him. It was the consciousness that his motives might well be mistaken ; and that it could be supposed that a dowry, as well as a blessing, was sought for at the hands of the inexorable father-in-law. It was an idea that filled his mind with repugnance ; and though on the birth of each of the four little girls, who had blessed his union with the miniature love

and loveliness of the mother, he had forwarded notice of the fact to Mr. Henslow, he had forborne to add more than the assurance of his daughter's well doing.

The existence of these pretty little creatures had not slightly increased the expenses of poor St. Colmo. Even the very article of sashes—an item not calculated in an estimate of their wardrobes,—necessitated the dismissal of a page, who, though considered merely a sort of subsidiary to the long-backed Hussar, who also acted as servant, was, in truth, the very prop of the establishment.

The sudden order for Edinburgh seemed to bring things to a frightful crisis. There was house-rent to be paid, there were travelling expenses to be provided for, among a multitude of other calls for money; and poor St. Colmo rose one morning from a

sleepless pillow with most grievous trouble of spirit. At breakfast he could perceive that his wife shared his perturbation, and he was afflicted that he had not better concealed his annoyance.

By that strange sympathy which, without words, imparts the thoughts of one to the mind of another, Mrs. St. Colmo said kindly—

“Do you know, Eric dear, that I think it would be a good plan to sell the Ajeeb diamond. I cannot bear black velvet round the throat, now that ugly banker’s wife always wears it; and I know it would cost an immensity to have the diamond remounted. Do let us sell it?”

This was just what Eric had all the morning been considering, but which would have cost him much to have uttered. His whole soul would have shrunk from despoil-

ing Margaret of a favourite ornament; but, now that she herself suggested it, the measure was finally agreed upon, and Turner, who knew the "Ajeeb," was written to on the subject.

A few mornings after this, St. Colmo, with some trepidation, opened a letter in a strange hand, anticipating that it contained the jeweller's decision. His agitation was much increased on seeing the signature of Mr. Henslow.

The letter was short and incoherent. It spoke of sickness, of ruin, of bankruptcy, and disgrace. Still, nothing of this was to be breathed to his daughter; and yet the wish of seeing St. Colmo was implied, with the notice, that if he valued his forgiveness, he must at once proceed to town; and, as it was uncertain whether he might have to seek him in a madhouse or a prison, it was

added in a postscript, that he had better call first upon his old friend, Dr. Vernon, in Brook Street, who would know particulars.

A journey to London seemed by no means mistimed to the unsuspecting Margaret, and she consigned the "Ajeeb" to her husband, little thinking into whose hands he proposed resigning it.

Arrived in London, St. Colmo hastened early the next morning to Dr. Vernon. Sending up his card, he was immediately shown into the vivacious Doctor's study; who received him with politeness, at the same time that he showed some little curiosity in discovering whether his visit was professional or otherwise.

On St. Colmo mentioning Mr. Henslow's name, a burst of recollection seemed to effect a rapid change in the Doctor's

manners ; and, with something of an ostentation of grief, as St. Colmo considered, he said, composing, as it were, his face to gloom—

“ Ah ! yes ; poor Mr. Henslow ! He is almost beyond me, I can tell you.”

Then ringing the bell hastily, he despatched a servant to Green Street, with a message to Mr. Henslow, that his son-in-law would wait upon him in a few minutes.

The questions St. Colmo was so anxious to put, were answered rather evasively by the Doctor ; and though the fact of what he termed “ a great smash ” was admitted, St. Colmo was inclined to hope, from his light manner, that the ruin was not so complete as Mr. Henslow’s letter had led him to conceive. However, on reaching the house in Green Street, there seemed confirmation of his darkest anticipations.

The street-door was ajar, half the shutters of the house were closed, and all the windows dirty ; the steps were littered with straw, and a strong smell of matting and deal packing-cases issued from the hall. St. Colmo merely rang instead of knocking at the door, which was opened by a man in a paper cap, who asked his business. A female servant at the moment came out of a small room on the left of the hall, and beckoned St. Colmo to approach it. There was a hurry and agitation in the woman quite in keeping with his expectations ; and with something of the same agitation he entered the unfurnished and wretched little room, where, by the dim light of the half-closed shutters, he could distinguish a miserable truckle bed, in which he discerned the form of a man.

“Good heavens !” thought St. Colmo, “and is this all which rapacious creditors have left

to the man whose thousands have probably enriched them?" His heart bled at the tokens of misery around him. Even in the sick man's room, straw and matting had obtruded; while carpenter's tools, paint-pots, and physic-bottles occupied the mantelpiece.

"St. Colmo, this is kind of you," said Mr. Henslow from the bed, in a strange voice, half groaning, half hysterical. "I thought that you would come and see the last of me—and I thank you." Still he offered not his hand; but seemed to hug the bedclothes over his shoulders with a strange affectioning of dirty blankets.

Grieved to the heart, tears gushed to the eyes of St. Colmo at witnessing this ruin of health and substance. Now, at least no interested motive could be attributed to his desire of claiming the bankrupt merchant's forgiveness; and with a fulness of purpose

he humbled himself before him ; describing, with simple but forcible expressions, all the contrition that had neutralised the happiness of the past years.

“ And why the devil, sir, couldn’t you tell me all this before ? ” inquired the sick man, with a voice and vivacity little in consonance with the extremity to which he seemed reduced, though tears bore evidence to his weakness and agitation ; while as much as could be seen of his face between his night-cap drawn over his forehead and the bed-clothes gathered around him, seemed to the shocked son-in-law purple with impending apoplexy.

St. Colmo briefly explained that the fear of the imputation of mercenary feelings had kept him silent.

“ And pray, sir, what may be your motive of selling the ‘ Ajeeb ’ diamond ? ” snuffled

out the perturbed moribund, while he writhed in his bed with convulsive action.

“Temporary embarrassment,” murmured St. Colmo, rather gulping down his belief in the duration of said embarrassment; at the same time that he considered how entirely Turner had forfeited a character for discretion in mentioning to the original proprietor the contemplated sale of the diamond.

“It was Margaret’s suggestion in our difficulties,” he said; desirous that the idea of his having extorted from his wife so favourite a jewel, should not embitter the father’s last thoughts of his child; and then he added, “Could she have known the misery which has come over you”—and, in spite of himself, the eyes of St. Colmo rested on a large rent in the soiled blanket covering the bed—“I am sure that she would have entreated you to convert it at once into what might alleviate all this wretchedness.”

"Dammit, sir, do you want to choke me?" the father asked. "Where is the 'Ajeeb'?"

"Here," St. Colmo answered, taking from his bosom the packet, which, for safety, he had placed there.

"Give it me, put it on the bed," snuffed the old man; while his eyes, fixed eagerly on his son-in-law, seemed to doubt his acquiescence with this direction.

St. Colmo placed the packet beneath the dirty bolster, meditating whether he should offer to transact the bartering with Turner, or whether, as was possible, such a proposal might not seem to imply a wish to share the product. There was a moment's silence; when, by a rapid movement which startled St. Colmo to that degree that his knees trembled beneath him, Mr. Henslow leaped from the wretched pallet on which he lay, exclaiming—

"I have done you, St. Colmo; by Jove,

I have done you ! We are quits at any rate, as far as cheating goes." And there he stood, to St. Colmo's utter amazement, in all the well-ordered costume of a smart old man about town. "And now we'll go to breakfast," he continued, leading his way to the hall, for St. Colmo was still speechless ; "Mrs. Henslow is waiting for us in our new house just round the corner. Perkins, that's a deuced nasty bed they have put up for you," he said to the man in the paper cap, who stood giggling with the woman. "I'll be hanged if I could have got into it, if Captain St. Colmo had not been so quick upon us!"

Still, as if he were in a dream, St. Colmo followed his father-in-law through the straw and matting into the street, and, in the next minute, entered with him one of the splendid mansions in Grosvenor Square. All was soon explained to the astonished

man. A few words sufficed to make him understand that, although the father's heart had long yearned for a reconciliation, the backwardness shown by St. Colmo, and attributed by him to pride, had repelled all the overtures he might otherwise have made. And it was pride ; but not of the kind imagined by Mr. Henslow. There was nothing of self-exaltation in it, or looking down upon the money-getting trader ; but a feeling which twines round a well-born Englishman's heart, like the ivy which clings to their old castles, at once adornment and support. It is that feeling with which a man shrinks from the sense of obligation to his wife ; that craving for independence, that unequivocal spurning of other benefit to be received from the one beloved, than sweet looks and truthful proofs of affection. And though, under the influence of the heiress-

seeking officers of his regiment, the view to sharing the wealth of Mr. Henslow had been the first mover of his addresses to his daughter, a species of chivalrous love springing up for the lovely wife, had made him eventually disdain the mercenary principle.

The offer of disposing of the "Ajeeb" to Turner had been made known by the jeweller to Mr. Henslow, who had purchased it originally from him. This told of difficulty. Surely the pride of the noble Highlander must have given way! There was then but one impediment to the unity and friendliness which should exist between the father and husband of the cherished Margaret. It was the recollection of the trick, the startling deceit, which had been played on him. This, however, could be got over by a cheat as disturbing. Hence the men-

tion of the bankruptcy, and death-sickness ; and all had succeeded better than Mr. Henslow could possibly have anticipated.

St. Colmo and his father-in-law set off that very morning for Weymouth, as fast as four of those fleet things of by-gone days—Newman's post-horses—could take them.

A felicitous change in this life's drama, seemed to open to the handsome Hussar and his wife. The reunion with her parents conjured up a series of brilliant effects, each outvying the last, like the concluding and crowning spectacle of a pantomime ; leaving Margaret the happy inmate of a suite of apartments consecrated to herself and husband, in the beautiful new house in Grosvenor Square ; their pretty children no longer clad in her turned silk dresses and “ironed out” sashes, but adorned with a care and costliness which seemed to

enhance their wondrous beauty. But besides all this, there were still deeper causes for exultation. Eric St. Colmo's debts were inquired into. And he who had talked himself into the belief that he could live on his Captain's pay and the interest of the seven thousand pounds belonging to his wife,—thousands, by the way, which had never found their way back to the funds in his name, but whose decline had begun and was completed in a short interval of time,—now found that he was actually involved to the amount of twenty-five thousand pounds.

This co-existence of enormous debt and unconsciousness of the fact, is by no means so extravagant a sample of this world's foolery, as novices in such things may consider;—and, so considering, account the narration as untrue to life. Ah me! What Dragoon regiment could not produce a *pendant* to poor

blind St. Colmo ? Beggared in fortune—in hopes—in everything but reputation,—which somehow or other survives the shock—how many men now walk this earth with the continuous and gnawing reflection of having squandered on the penny drums and trumpets of their young life's fair, the golden talisman, that should have called to their keeping all the affections and distinctions meant to adorn maturer manhood ! St. Colmo had done everything to draw down upon himself the extremest wretchedness of debt and destitution ; when, as if by the wave of some fairy's wand, all these vilifying crustations passed off, and suddenly he stood the more than whitewashed son-in-law of a generous Crœsus ! And his creditors? no compounding—no discount asked—no rate of interest disputed,—or any of those devices enacted, by which kindred sometimes save the young

debtor's money, by showing him up less of a prodigal than an ass ; but the bills all called in, and no questions asked. Tailors, coach-makers, gunsmiths, milliners, Italian oilmen, and French shoemakers, in the sudden collapse of the unlooked-for liquidation, thought, as people do in slight shocks of earthquake, of the day of judgment. Under these impressions, there were those who almost wished that some items—entered when things had looked their darkest—had been otherwise. They had been taken by surprise. “People ought to ask for discount, when bills of such large amount, and contracted under such unpromising circumstances, are paid.” These soft feelings of compunction soon passed away ; the tone took its ordinary pitch. “It was well for parties who gave long credit, that there were some parties whose payment would make up for other parties' slackness.”

And so the jargon, debts and doings of that curious “party”—a London tradesman—run on.

In all the good fortune that had befallen the St. Colmos—in all the exquisite joy, real and anticipatory, which it was to feel themselves in the very way of life most consonant to their every prejudice and partiality,—there was one, who, though the genii who had done all the felicity work of the little drama, had received more genuine happiness than any who had taken part in it. This was worthy Mr. Henslow. From the moment that St. Colmo had thrust the “Ajeeb” beneath the dirty bolster of the painter’s bed, a new capacity for enjoyment seemed to start into existence, bringing with its capabilities its nutriment. Much may be said of the rival enjoyments of giving and receiving. The one is undoubtedly a power exercised among the creatures of a lower

world, by him alone, who, made after the image of his Creator, declares his divine origin by acts in which there is assimilation ; and by the prerogative of giving, proves the higher tribute. But receiving ?—Ah ! it may be all of earth. It may tell man of his helplessness. It may humble him by casting him back, as it were, to the state of infancy, when his every cry was a prayer, his every comfort a boon. But does it not also convey a blessing to the rightly-organized and trusting mind ; even though showing to man that he is man, and as such dependent ? Mr. Henslow did not analyse his feelings to learn why the consignment of the “ Ajeeb ” had given him something of the same joy, as when, an humble clerk, his first employer had given him a golden guinea at Christmas ; but a heart which had been frozen up by the scraping, sordid pursuits of his early life—

which had kept its frost, as the world and the world's homage to wealth became known to it, now melted at once at the disinterested act of a warm-hearted soldier. It broke its bounds ; and flowing forth a continuous stream, found its only happiness in heaping wealth and consideration on the kind St. Colmo.

The junior officers of the —th Hussars had their share of this good luck ; and found their co-operation in the Henslow alliance at length repaid by the circumstance of St. Colmo selling out and purchasing a troop in one of the Household regiments.

And now began a life most amusing in its details. But that the narrative would lead far from the purpose of these pages, it might not be unedifying to learn how those carry on an onslaught into fashionable life, whose connections have not made the way plain

and easy. It suffices now to say, that Mrs. St. Colmo's launch into high life was conducted on infallible principles; while the wealth of Henslow and Co., her own excessive beauty and good taste, and the unmixed popularity of her husband, with his link to nobility,—iron and heather-bound as it was,—substantiated her hold on the intimacy of those who had merely taken her up by caprice or good-nature.

Years passed on; and still Mrs. St. Colmo wore the double crown of fashion and beauty. And now might be seen, in hot June evenings, pacing the square in which they lived, three lank girls accompanied by a worn-out looking governess. There was still the same lovely outline of feature, the same glossy curls, though smothered by the limits of dowdy straw bonnets; but that was all that remained of the beauty of those bright little

girls, whose cots, in company with the mahogany gun-cases, had travelled all England over in the baggage waggons of the —th Hussars.

Were there then no more of the St. Colmo babies to deck the triumphs of their Venus-mother? Yes. At the same time that the three elder girls left a hot school-room to lounge round the dull and parched enclosure of the square, with hearts worn out with wrestlings with Porquet, Ollendorf, Zotti, Hertz, and others, a boy and a girl younger, with exquisitely imagined dresses, fresh from a bath and a merry tea with their nurses, awaited their mother in the open barouche at the door, to share with her the reviving influence of a drive in Hyde Park; and who, returning from thence, their pretty cheeks fresh and braced with the evening breeze, offered, with all their healthy excitement, a

strange contrast to the three mournful girls, who entered from their walk something more languid than when they commenced it. And here we would raise a *fronde* against many a mother. Not because she takes her pretty little children, dressed in dazzling costumes, to drive with her, and share all the playful words of the cavaliers who surround her carriage. We will not fling a stone for the light words and light moments of a world, which half the inhabitants have settled should be the playground of humanity. But we do grieve over those young girls who are kept in the soul-deadening obscurity of a school-room—doomed to the sad converse of a governess, whose spirits are oppressed equally by the monotony which sinks their own—solely because custom has agreed to consider that from the years of twelve to seventeen, girls should suffer a sort of eclipse.

If this must be;—if it is unpleasant to mothers to have the half-formed girl in their rooms or their carriage;—if the law is absolute which obliges the budding woman to be clad in habits designed to disguise the young beauty until the time appointed for its bursting forth;—if it be actually necessary that their days should be passed in poring over books which give no idea, excite no emotion;—if their young hearts must be doomed to worse than conventional torpidity—for the service of God is denied them;—if girls must thus be schooled in dulness and in unwholesome confinement, in wearying and unprofitable studies;—if they must, in short, be banished from the exciting circle of the pleasures which they know are enacting beneath the same roof which shelters the wretched school-room, with all its direful paraphernalia of globes, maps, pianos, high-

backed and no-seated chairs, drawing-boards and reclining-boards, dumb-bells and tapestry frames,—why not leave them to the happy influence of the country? Retirement there would bring them acquainted with God's best gifts; the unadorned dress would enable them better to enter into all the movements of rustic walks and games. The delayed “coming out”—passed partly in the open air, in all the mirthful flutterings natural to youth, would be so much gain to the growing girl by a strengthened constitution. Why not leave them, then, to the full enjoyment of the nice country-houses often left tenantless? The claims of education and the advantage of London masters are urged against such a measure; while expenses are entered into which would pay a whole household of professors in the country. Ah me! Chimney-sweepers, fish-cart dogs, and others of

the oppressed of God's creatures, find their champions; and can none be enlisted for the secluded and over-taught young thing in the school-room? Is there no instinct to tell the mother that the uncomeliness of form and tint she thus so sedulously keeps in the background, is chiefly owing to the unnatural life fashion prescribes for girls, at a period when all should be joy and animation? Is there no maternal craft which may warn the mothers of high life, that the early marriage following a life so tampered with and tried, must end, as ninety-nine out of the hundred do end—a few years of delicate health—and then death? When the *début* is not so immediately succeeded by wedlock, youth may assert its energies; and the sickly-looking being of the school-room may become the blooming woman. But when we know that all this cramping, hiding, forcing, and

teaching, is to facilitate her exit from her father's house, ought we not to grieve over the Iphigenias of modern life, thus sacrificed by the distorted views and exactions of modern parents ?

The case of Mrs. St. Colmo and her three elder girls were, in much, parallel to those we speak of ; with this excuse—that from his position in the Life-Guards, and a small appointment he held in the Household, Major St. Colmo was obliged to be much in town ; while such was his affection for his children, that their actual domiciliation in the house with him was an absolute necessity to his feelings, and blinded him to the fact that they could be better than in the back room consecrated to their use. A room by whose windows a sun ray never entered ; and from which, if the sedulous governess ever gave them leisure to look, all that met their eyes

were slated roofs and grated windows ! It was a spot to canker the very heart of young girls, had not visits to Windsor and Brighton occasionally changed the scene. But, even then, the salutary effect of these moves had been considerably neutralized by the zeal of the resident instructress, who at Windsor took occasion to throw in the study of architectural drawings to their usual treadmill of science ; while, at Brighton, the pleasure which a scramble on the sea-beach might have proved to the poor girls, was made a fret, by having to collect specimens for the marine botany which she insisted should be studied.

When in London, the father had hazarded the suggestion that he should like the elder girls occasionally to ride and drive with him ; but he was silenced by the assurance of Mrs. St. Colmo that it would be the entire

ruin of them to bring them forward so unfashioned and unformed; besides the utter interruption to their studies. That Mrs. St. Colmo knew best, seemed proved by the fact that the young Duke of Lochaber proposed and became the husband of Margaret, the elder daughter, during her first season. And even when poor Constance, the second daughter, died from decline,—brought on, it was thought, by the fatigue and excitement of the wedding-tour, which she made with her sister to the German Spas—and the young Duchess, after the premature birth of a still-born child, was sentenced by Sir James Clarke to keep the sofa for the next twelvemonth—still, the trusting St. Colmo did not question the system which had been observed in their education.

## CHAPTER III.

“Tous ces honneurs mondains ne sont qu'un bien sterile,  
Des humaines vertus récompense fragile,  
Un dangereux éclat qui passe et qui s'enfuit,  
Que le trouble accompagne et que la mort détruit.”

VOLTAIRE.

DR. JOHNSON said—“If women were always well they would be angels.” So judging, the mortality of Mrs. St. Colmo might long have been disputed; for health seemed her peculiar attribute, and so lengthened out the term of her beauty. Some said, that the

care taken of her beauty preserved her health, and that thus the double result was gained—a hint to those beautiful creatures one sometimes meets in society, scattering the precious gifts of health so prodigally. The lurking demon, Influenza, however, at last invaded Mrs. St. Colmo's *cordon sanitaire*; and many months' illness was succeeded by such excessive pulmonary delicacy, that the mild air of Devonshire was pronounced by her doctors as henceforth desirable.

A beautiful estate near one of the Devonshire watering places which they had first visited, was purchased by St. Colmo; his father-in-law, as a matter of course, furnishing the funds; and there they finally settled.

On inspecting Fernacres, as the estate was called, the first impression of St. Colmo was,

that it was too vast an affair ; consisting as it did of a villa and pleasure-grounds, four hundred acres of excellent land, coppices, sheep walks, and a compact barton, as a snug farm-house was called ; but he was urged so strongly by Mr. Henslow to make the investment, even though there was an evident delay and difficulty in supplying the purchase money, that the place was bought.

In a few years St. Colmo divined the cause of Mr. Henslow's anxiety on this point ; and his heart beat quickly on the occasion. His liberal father-in-law died, and at the *exposé* of his affairs which supervened, it was found that they were by no means in the flourishing state which people had conjectured. Indeed, there was such decided proof that much of the money matters of the later years had been carried on by credit, that the wonder was that they had been car-

ried on at all. Much litigation ensued. Mrs. Henslow's dowry was invaded ; and, amongst other things, matters relative to the purchase of Fernacres had to undergo a strict investigation. The lawyers, however, brought everything through. Mrs. Henslow remained in full possession of her settlement, even to the willing it to a favourite nephew, to whom it eventually came ; and Fernacres was in like manner untouched by hungry and angry creditors. The firm of Henslow and Co. disappeared from the commercial face of the earth.

The removal into Devonshire seemed like a new epoch in the life of St. Colmo. He had left the Life-Guards ; and, though with the rank of Lieutenant-colonel, stood confessed a country gentleman. His boy had just entered a "crack" light-infantry regiment ; two gentle, lovely girls were his con-

stant companions ; and but for the rapidly declining health of his beloved wife, he would have considered himself in the enjoyment of perfect happiness.

There is so much strange diversity in the perceptions of men as regards happiness, that one might feel inclined to doubt its existence as a distinct principle ; and consider that it depends more on the gases and humours of the human frame, than on the furnishing material.

Many might have looked less complacently on surrounding circumstances than did Colonel St. Colmo. There was the beautiful estate of Fernacres, it is true, crowning the richly-cultivated hills which surrounded the pretty village of Stokebree. But then, with all its advantages of locality, neighbourhood, and climate, it scarcely brought in a return of six hundred a year. This, with

the few hundreds afforded by his half-pay, and a small sum inherited from his father, who had lately died, leaving his title, castle, and heaths to his bachelor brother, formed the whole of the income for a family, who, experience could show, had never spent less than three thousand a-year.

The younger Eric had already exhibited his aptitude in the spending powers of the St. Colmos, by contracting bills, which it had not a little distressed the Colonel to pay. Poor Mrs. St. Colmo, sinking from this life as she was, still did the work of a beauty ; and Valenciennes lace and white cashmere, a part of the accessories called to her adornment in the few hours she passed with her family, were not the least costly of her wants. Her two lovely girls took their part in scattering the poor Colonel's few hundreds ; and the governess, who from habit was now a

thing of course in the establishment, was perhaps the least expensive of their superfluities ; seeing that this young person who had lately joined the family, by a fund of foresight and management seemed to instil something of her genius into others.

Still, with all these separate causes for anxiety, there was an ineffable spirit of happiness in Colonel St. Colmo, proof against them. It might be that the flood of warm affection in his heart, lent a felicity to every other sensation. It might be that, with the perfections of his manly and majestic form, the exquisite regularity of his features, the deep lustre of his sunny blue eyes, the irreproachable grace of his manner, came a sense of harmony and fitness which imparted itself to his every feeling. Whatever its cause, there was the still enduring buoyancy and gladness of heart.

The current of the next three years, however, beat hard against the rock of the Colonel's equanimity. His beloved wife died. True to the reigning impulse of her nature, her last thought was of personal attraction; and the rose-coloured ribbons which confined the sleeves and collar of her night-dress, had been chosen by herself with regard to her appearance; while, with a strange and awful limitation of her onward view, the dying beauty's directions and anxieties had only reference to the arrangement of the embroidered muslin which was to envelop her when in her coffin. Not that this seemed strange to those who wept around. Far from it. They gathered up her words with grave attention; and the remark that both husband and children made, as they kissed the marble forehead for the last time, ere it was shut for ever from their

mortal view, proved their entire sympathy with her they had lost. With the burst of passionate regret and tender sorrow, was added what would have been whispered to her living ear ; it was, “ How lovely she looks ! ”

The next grief which smote on the heart of St. Colmo, was the announcement that his beautiful Eric, whom he believed to be with his regiment in Manchester, was actually shut up in a sponging-house in Chancery Lane. And there in a comfortless room, without a fire, in a freezing day in February, the distressed father found him, weeping frantically, and in the same breath heaping all sorts of hard names on Mr. Sloman. That worthy seemed to take all in good part ; telling the Colonel it was a pity the “ young shentlemensh ” debarred himself of the comfort of fire, seeing that it was only a saving of five shillings a day in his bill for lodging. To the rather un-

measured assertion of Eric, that he was “an infernal Jew thief, whose every thought was how to skin the unfortunate devils who got into his clutches,” he remarked benignly to his father—winking like a tender nurse who would console a child with false promises—that the Captain would take *shings* quieter when he was more used to them.

This lock-up affair, however, was of no trifling importance in the future fortunes of young St. Colmo; and, in fact, involved the necessity of his quitting the army altogether. He smoothed things, however, to his father; declared his preference for a settled life in the country, where there was good fishing; and really tried by a series of irreproachable conduct to prove to the indulgent parent that he appreciated and endeavoured to merit the sacrifice which his insane extravagance had necessitated.

Considering the excessive pain which it is for the high-bred and fastidious member of the superior classes to associate with aught that is base or sordid, perhaps there was no greater penalty entailed by his son's criminal prodigality than the intimacy it involved, and the obligation under which it placed Colonel St. Colmo, with a Mr. Colyton, a near neighbour, but one who, till then, he had successfully avoided.

This Mr. Colyton—a sort of half-squire, half-lawyer, half-surveyor—had ever since St. Colmo's purchase of Fernacres, been nibbling, as it were, at improved acquaintanceship with his neighbour. A naturally busy and sociable temper would have led Mr. Colyton to this, even had there not been other causes; one of which was, that his wife, who boasted of noble blood in her veins, and whose one wish was to talk of it

and compare its current with other streams, constantly urged and maintained the struggle against, what she considered, the arrogance of the St. Colmos. However, the out-works of coldness had hitherto stood proof against the combined forces of melons, pines, hares, venison, trout, and Christmas cucumbers ; and coldly expressed gratitude, with a sort of repelling courtesy, had been all that was elicited. Still the St. Colmo family had felt that nothing could exceed the kindness of the Colytons, though aware that they had not one feeling in common with them ; and that, among the various strata of living creatures of which the breathing world is composed, they were clearly of another formation. Perhaps there was something beyond difference in the natures of the two gentlemen. It was approaching to antagonistic. In Colonel St. Colmo, beyond much natural

high-breeding, there was a fastidiousness, engendered and nourished by having mixed all his life with people of condition, which ill prepared him for toleration of the coarser material that prevails in half the world. Of too mild and benevolent a nature to show by rude or rough manners his annoyance, when he came in contact with such, the encounter became to him more a case of suffering; and, therefore, with something of the antipathy with which people shrink from snakes and rats, the Colonel actually fled from before the presence of Mr. Colyton. As this style of evasion was not always practicable, his powers of endurance were at times severely taxed; particularly when he found himself *vis-à-vis* at a dinner-table to the important and officially friendly Colyton. St. Colmo could have met impertinent presumption with hauteur,—coarse ill-temper with slight;

there was something too good-naturedly tiresome in the lawyer's manner to be resented. He had the trick of opposing a sort of coquetry to the rigidity which sought to repulse him,—a coaxing playfulness like that used by a vulgar nurse to a perverse child. And he would hold his head on one side, and affect to deprecate coldness by such expressions as—“The Colonel can't stand chaffing ;” “ What a long tail our cat carries ;” “ You military men are so deuced chuff with us civilians.” And, as the climax of annoyance, on St. Colmo declining any offer of service or civility, he would poke him in his side, and profess unwillingness to take “ No, for an answer.”

It was odd that, all the while this thistle and prickly-pear front was turned to the father, a son, who was occasionally at Stokebree, was on rather good terms with the

younger branches of the St. Colmo family. An equal mania for fly-fishing had first formed a chord of sympathy with Eric, during the visits which leave from his regiment had enabled him to pay his family ; and a great deal of kindness had been occasionally shown by young Colyton to the young ladies, in the form of wood-pigeons, Blenheim puppies, glass beehives, and such permitted courtesies of country life. But, differing in this respect from his father, his presence had always to be courted ; and there was as much difficulty in luring him to remain with them in the garden or library, as it would have been to have induced fellowship with a young hawk or a white-foot Indian. Into the drawing-room they had never prevailed on him to enter. Not that this shyness on his part gave Eric or his sisters the idea that he felt as an inferior, or that there was aught of

disparity in their positions ; on the contrary, if ever cheated into forgetfulness of the lapse of time by some subject of interest, or the power of being of service to the beautiful sisters, the fact being called to his attention seemed to bring with it a sense of degradation ; and he flew from them much as people would hasten from agreeable smugglers or rope-dancers. What still further convinced the young people that his associating with them at all was more a stolen indulgence than a premeditated advance to further intimacy, was the circumstance, that often after such interviews, Mrs. Colyton, in a morning visit, would regret not having been able to prevail upon her son to accompany her, entering at the same time, with more of maternal feeling than good taste, into a disquisition on all his virtues and attainments, as of those of a person unknown to her

auditors; thus further convincing them of what they suspected—that the movements of the son were all unknown to the mother.

Oh ! that Mrs. Colyton ! Even could Colonel and Mrs. St. Colmo have overcome their repugnance to the coarse familiarity, the patronising and mistimed benignity of the husband, any idea of lending themselves to his restless and intrusive attempts at good neighbourhood, was at once subverted by Mrs. Colyton's vehement flattery of themselves, and her confidential and detrimental notices of others.

Mrs. Colyton was one among the last of an ancient and regal Irish family. No one could contest the purity of her pedigree, or the immediateness of her descent; and yet never did gentle blood ferment and fume more upon the subject; and instead of the proud imperturbability which we are apt to

connect with our ideas of high extraction, there was one sempiternal endeavour to proclaim it—to the nobly-born, as a cause for equality with themselves,—to those less advantageously descended, as a pretty strong reason for what the browbeaten called “crowing over them.”

The appearance of Mrs. Colyton was strangely against her ; and to the St. Colmo family, with whom good looks and a courtly exterior weighed more than creed or caste, it was in itself reason for alienation. She had large black eyes, which gleamed with a fire, neither of earth or heaven. Glancing from beneath the helm of some of the mighty chieftains of her race, they might have awed contending hosts, and been by no means out of keeping ; but when these same lurid orbs looked from beneath a showily-trimmed Leg-horn bonnet, which it was Mrs. Colyton’s whim

should adumbrate the form of the coal-scuttle in her hall, they were dreadful. Then the high, aquiline nose—though probably once an accessory to the dignity of the Milesian originator of the pattern—was as repulsive as the flashing eye. A parched and sallow skin, Mrs. Colyton had chosen to alleviate with a scarlet and ill-applied rouge, which rested on her cheeks, with a line of demarcation as clearly defined between it and the orange background, as one sometimes sees in the fires of Vesuvius, when represented in bad Italian pictures. Her figure was commanding and well-formed, and usually adorned with costly attire ; but, with some affectioning of by-gone things, her petticoats were curtailed of their fair proportions ; and thus, different to the sweeping screens formed by modern garments, exposed to view huge bony feet, which were usually encased in

large drab jean boots. The face is usually considered the mirror of the soul ; and to that index our observance of the workings of the mind is usually turned. But strange to say, and paradoxical as it may appear, it was in the feet of Mrs. Colyton where lay all her physiognomy. Frowns, smiles, impatience or approval, agitation or calmness, all were shown forth by the feet of this descendant of Irish kings. Indeed, the power of working those digital appendages called toes—all facilitated and made evident as it was by the roomy jean boots—was marvellous in its way. From the convulsive graspings—the dilation and extending—the contraction and firm clenchings of the toes, to the impatient drumming of the heel—the exulting shakings of the crossed feet—the imperative stamp down to the satisfactory stillness of the whole member, there was an infallible deal of

expression. When with Mrs. St. Colmo these pedal evolutions were always called into action ; whether while proving her descent from a long line of kings, or in abusing, with something more than national virulence, the indifference shown to the fact by some of the aristocrats of the neighbourhood.

All this bad taste and bad temper were so utterly repugnant to "Mrs. Colonel St. Colmo," as Mrs. Colyton always persisted in styling her ; adding "the Honourable" when mentioning her as an acquaintance to others —that by it the gentleness and good breeding of the family were almost subverted. The St. Colmos were not a laughing family. They had no idea of extracting anything like mirth from the eccentricities of their associates ; and therefore those of Mr. and Mrs. Colyton were felt with serious and unmitigated disgust.

With all that has been related to the ~~dis-~~paragement of Mrs. Colyton, it should also be noted, that there were splendid and ~~re-~~deeming points in her character, with an excess of generosity rarely equalled. It was only as the lady she was so distasteful. As a mother, there was a devotion, a tenderness in her feelings, holy as the fount from which maternal love first sprang. As a wife, there was deference and obedience, even though the affection which makes such things easy, was absent. As a daughter, she had been severely tried, and had passed a cruel ordeal without forfeiture of filial piety. On the death of her parents, the aunt who had undertaken the charge of the orphan, had cared but to instil two things into her mind, —the never-dying thought of her illustrious descent, and the expediency of marrying when she could.

The latter step had been delayed longer than is usual in young ladies' lives; for, though the aunt had considered every gentleman eligible who had in his possession a silver "tay-pot," the idea of her niece's eligibility seemed more difficult to establish in the minds of men. At length, at a "Kiastle ball," as Lady Desmond persisted in calling the entertainments of the Lord-Lieutenant, Florinda Desmond, dressed in yellow satin and Roman pearls, met Mr. Colyton, then officiating as private secretary to a gentleman, who, suddenly called to office, for the life of him knew not where to lay his hands on one; and so, named the son of his solicitor to the situation. This young person, who had been previously impressed with an idea of the consequence of all whom he should meet in the Vice-regal atmosphere, lent a willing ear to the genealogical talk of

his partner ; and, in a few weeks being dismissed from his situation, owing to his patron discovering that it was a man-cook, and not a secretary, which his official appointment had rendered necessary, he returned to England, the elated bridegroom of the regally-descended Florinda Desmond.

There is a happy film—a sort of domestic cataract, which, clouding the eyes of those long accustomed to base and common association, closes the perception to the things of good taste or of bad taste. This absence of fastidious discernment was the only feature in common in the characters of Mr. and Mrs. Colyton. It was an assurance against the contempt of either alighting on the other ; and an insuperable impediment to any amelioration of the coarse and common texture of their minds.

And it was with such people, that poor

Colonel St. Colmo, by the weak and selfish prodigality of his son, was thrown into constant contact, and forced, moreover, to incur deep and not easily discharged obligation.

The mortgage which Eric's liberation from the prison threatened by his creditors necessitated, could be alone effected by Mr. Colyton, who held the papers and title-deeds connected with Fernacres. As it happened, this mortgage was the very thing desired by Colyton; whom some successful railway speculations had overburthened with ready-money.

It was a disastrous time for the poor Colonel; though perhaps the keen sense of pecuniary difficulties was lessened by the severer pangs of bereaved affection. The intelligence of the death of the Duchess of Lochaber, at Pau, where, with her husband, she had been residing, was mixed up pain-

fully with Eric's involvements. Life certainly seemed now to have assumed a dark and troubrous aspect for one whose days had been hitherto so felicitous.

One evening he was sitting absorbed in gloomy thoughts, though apparently gazing on the soft purple tints which the departed sun had left on the distant hills, when Rose, his eldest daughter, unobserving as she usually was, could not forbear being struck with his mournful appearance. Approaching softly the back of the chair on which he rested, she stooped and kissed his forehead; a forehead which, hitherto so smooth, now began to show some slight furrows of that ruthless ploughman, Care.

"Is the darling Daddy unhappy?" she said gently, pressing the noble head fondly against her—guessing the cause of his abstraction, yet in her simplicity unknowing

how to offer consolation. " You must not let these ugly money matters grieve you. All will soon come right. Miss Morant has shown me and Minna how we can save so much money ; and poor Eric too has promised to be so economical. The poor fellow is so very wretched about those dreadful bills, which he never imagined could be even a quarter so immense."

The father passed his arm round the loving daughter ; her affection softened, but her words failed to enliven him ; and sighing deeply he said—" Ah ! my love, Eric's debts are not the least of the disasters which have come over us. The intimacy and friendly footing they involve with this Mr. Colyton actually rasp my nerves. But this is not half. The man was actually impertinent enough, to-day, when I met him for the purpose of arranging the periods at which it

would be desirable for me that the interest  
on the moneys advanced should be paid, to  
put on that leer which so infuriates me," (the  
Colonel was never furious in his life,) "and  
beg me not to disturb myself on the subject,  
as Mrs. Colyton and himself had settled that  
it would do nicely for pin-money for Miss  
Rose! Ah! well you may start, my dear  
child," the father added, on feeling the  
convulsive spasm which shot through his  
daughter's frame; "I was just as paralysed  
at the bare idea of what his words would  
infer, though convinced you had no intimacy  
with the son: and on seeing my amazement,  
he then explained, that when ransacking the  
study of that starved-looking youth,—a very  
ungentlemanly thing to do by the way,—  
they found a series of paintings, or poetry, or  
something of the kind, of which you were  
the subject; and on these slight materials

the idiots have dressed up a notion of an attachment between you both. They had actually sent to hasten his return from Germany. However, you need not tremble so, dear Rosie; I have put a stop to all this by showing pretty clearly my view of the matter. I may have offended the vulgar rascal, and it is just possible it may make him spiteful; but you may be satisfied, my sweet child, that you will hear nothing more of this confounded presumption."

Rose St. Colmo usually spoke so little, that her silence on the present occasion passed unnoticed by her father; and the deepening twilight shaded her features from his observation. But when, after some minutes in which neither spoke, both seeming to have sufficient food for meditation, she wished her father good night—saying that she feared she had taken cold, as she felt such a chill—there

was a hoarseness in her voice which justified the surmise ; though at the same time there was a tremor in her manner which made St. Colmo fear she had felt more annoyance at the vulgar pretensions of the Colytons than she had expressed.

He was unable to ascertain the next morning her feelings on the subject, as disposition prevented her joining the party at breakfast ; and when St. Colmo again saw his daughter, there were so many marks of real illness, he felt disposed to hope that her sense of delicacy had not been so deeply wounded, as, unknowing of this cold, he for the moment had grieved in thinking was the case.

It also appeared that the offended dignity of the Colonel had not been exhibited with such exacerbating effects as he believed ; for in about a week from this time an obliging note came from Mrs. Colyton, stating, that as

they were going to be some weeks absent from Stokebree, on business connected with Miss Mavesyn, the heiress of the Cedars, who was just then coming of age, and a client of Mr. Colyton's, she should feel obliged if the Miss St. Colmos would take possession of her ponies and phaeton for that time; giving as a reason that, as the ponies were now in excellent condition, she was averse to turn them out, or to leave them entirely to the groom's notions of the exercise they might require. The kindness was well meant and was well taken; and, as information soon after this reached Fernacres that young Colyton had proceeded from Vienna to Constantinople, there seemed no reason to fear further misunderstanding or offence on his account.

## CHAPTER IV.

“Peut-être faut il établir dans l'intérêt des écrivains, la nécessité de ces préparations didactiques, contre lesquelles protestent certaines personnes ignorantes et voraces ; qui voudroient des émotions sans en subir les principes génératrices—la fleur sans la graine.”

BALSAC.

THE immediate neighbourhood of Stokebree offered something less than the average amount of society which country villages are usually expected to afford. This might be owing to the estates of the young Earl of Villaroy spreading in wide expanse on the northern side of the parish ; while the sea on

**the** south formed a barrier to the erection of **the** habitations which should send forth the **furnishing** material for the dinners and tea-parties which custom agrees to call society.

The village itself consisted of one long **street**, composed of the usual variety of shops **and** private dwelling-houses. Perhaps the **number** of shops where rope, bunting, neck-laces, watches, mariner's compasses—and **such** marine necessities were sold, preponderated over butchers and bakers, and similar trades; but this was all explained by the circumstance of the long street ending in an amphitheatre of beach; where a few boats, a capstan, **and** one bathing-machine at once did foreground for a sea-picture, and proclaimed Stokebree **to** be what it in fact set up for—a fishing town and bathing place. On both sides of this beach the fine red cliffs rose immediately to a towering height, each form-

ing the end of the chain of hills surrounding Stokebree ; differing however from the others by being clothed with heath and some storm-torn trees, instead of the fine cultivation and rich hedge-rows which marked the rest. From their summits a fine sea-view was obtained ; and on either side, the eye could take in much of the Devonshire coast, with all its purple headlands and grassy coves, melting into the deeper blue of distance.

At the entrance of the village on the land side, standing within its well-planted and well-ordered grounds, was the villa of Mr. Colyton, radiant with plate-glass and pea-green paint. The church and parsonage stood a little beneath it ; and, with the exception of four or five fragile houses with preposterous bay windows, constructed like rude, peering eyes to see that, which, by the position of the main building, it was evident they were never

meant to see, the village held no other domicile taking the rank of one of the “gentlefolk’s houses.”

At the distance of one mile from Stokebree, the road to it being through the very model of a Devonshire lane, stood Fernacres, midway up the hill, its plantations rising to the heathy summit on the east, while its picturesque and beautiful pleasure-grounds, with meadows and coppices, occupied the gentle declivity lying full to the west. The house looked over a view unrivalled, as regarded the richness of the landscape ; which was backed up by the wooded hills lying between Stokebree and Breemouth, a pretty and improving bathing place, about eight miles distant.

There were two other houses in the parish of Stokebree, but remotely situated ; and which, at the period of the first settlement of

the St. Colmo family in Devonshire, had offered nothing in the way of society. Subsequently, one had become inhabited by a Mrs. Villaroy and her daughter, relations to the young Lord Villaroy ; and, who, in tone and bearing, promised to be desirable acquaintances. The Lodge, as it was called, was a fantastic-looking building, erected at one of the entrances of the Villaroy domains ; and had probably been built to facilitate sea-bathing for the noble family in past years, as it stood about six miles nearer the sea than the mansion. What would further corroborate this surmise was, that the capstan and bathing-machine apparently took their date from the same period.

The other, and most distant habitation, was a large and gloomy old edifice, called “The Cedars,” standing in the narrow lane leading from Stokebree to Breemouth, being

nearer to the latter place than to the village. It owned little beauty either in architecture or position, and had evidently been built at a period when solidity and security were the desiderata in country mansions. Indeed, old title-deeds showed that, belonging originally to the Barony of Villaroy, on the forfeiture of that property under the Commonwealth, this distant corner had probably been bestowed on a follower of the Protector, who had shown his sense of the stability of the peace of his country, by surrounding his house, and four acres of garden-ground, with a ten-feet stone wall. Owing to this muniment, nothing of the place was visible, except through the means of immense iron gates ; and even then, the red brick front of the house, with the stone frame-work and pediments of the doors and windows, were scarcely perceptible, owing

to the large cedar trees which grew on the lawn, and gave their name to the place.

On the Restoration, the Villaroy property had been resumed by the rightful owner, with the exception of The Cedars, which, from some motive of policy, was left still in the possession of the Puritan Digby. Under the first George's reign, The Cedars passed from the hands of the Digby family, and was secured by a Roman Catholic nobleman, for some monks of the order of St. Benedict, who were in need of an asylum. In time, from death and dissensions, the holy brotherhood had sunk away; and The Cedars, after remaining many years tenantless, became the property of an Exeter doctor, who converted it into an asylum for lunatics. Madness seemed to flourish better in that Devonshire vale than monasticism. Still, after two generations of doctors

had made their fortunes by the establishment, The Cedars had again to endure a long vacancy. At length it was purchased by the gentleman who inhabited it at the time Colonel St. Colmo first took up his abode in the county, but who did not much more to enliven the neighbourhood than the monks and madmen had done before him. Indeed, the seclusion maintained by Mr. Mavesyn, from the first moment of taking possession of The Cedars, to the last minute of his occupancy, exceeded that of either of his predecessors in that gloomy mansion ; perhaps there was better reason for it.

By birth and education a cotton-spinner, by good fortune belonging to the great manufacturing firm of Frith and Mavesyn, the duty of visiting Paris, and ascertaining some point connected with “open clocks,” and “women’s hose”—as the phraseology

of the firm named it—was assigned to Luke Mavesyn. Evil was the day that took the amiable young manufacturer from the sober realities of his neat brick house in Nottingham and its subdued dissipations, into all the summer merry-makings of merry-making Paris. A month decided his destiny. The *Fabricant* Justin Angran, with whom his business was principally to be transacted, had a lovely daughter, who, with her modest, downcast eyes, her pretty formal “Oui, monsieur,” “Non, monsieur,” her deferential curtsies, and in short, with all the mincing manner of a French *bourgeoise* fresh from a *pensionnat*, in one interview sent a world of love into the English weaver’s heart. Three successive *fêtes*, on three successive Sundays, at St. Cloud, completed the affair; and, on the fourth, he bore his beautiful Junie home in triumph to

Nottingham. We have the records of Mary Stuart's first dolorous impression of England, and we also know something of the blank felt by Madame Laffarge on her entrance to her husband's home ; but neither could compare with the amount of woe and weariness with which eight months in Nottingham afflicted Mrs. Mavesyn. Making good use of the influence which her beauty lent her over her husband, she extorted from him the promise to return to Paris after the birth of the child, to which event he was anxiously looking. The promise was fulfilled ; and, ere the infant boy was three months old, its mother was dancing at a ball at the Hotel de Ville, in Paris.

To recount the events of the next five years of the Mavesyn *ménage* would fill volumes. They are best passed over. Suffice it to say that they were all outrages against

the pure connubial happiness which Luke Mavesyn had promised himself on his marriage. By the end of five years, English severity had tried French levity to its utmost capability of endurance ; and six months after the birth of a little girl, the unworthy wife flew to Spain with a young merchant, who was about the seventh lover to whom the wretched husband had denied admittance to his house. To return to England with his two children was the first impulse of the unhappy Mavesyn ; at the same time that his sense of shame was such, that he felt it impossible again to appear at Nottingham. His partnership in the wealthy house of Frith and Mavesyn still existed ; but seeking retirement, and a mild air for his infant girl, whose health was precarious, he visited Breemouth. He then first heard of “The Cedars.” The place seemed strictly to promise all the seclu-

sion his diseased and troubled mind now coveted ; and he accordingly purchased it. There seemed to him but one object in life. It was that of rearing his children apart from the polluting influence of the world ; even while, from his connection with the thriving mercantile house which still bore his name, he was amassing that wealth which a love of the world alone renders desirable. But the outrages his every feeling had endured, with an ever-abiding sense of dishonour—though the guilty woman who had borne his name, had sunk with her shame into an early grave,—had confused his perceptions and power of reasoning ; and judging the world by the example of a Parisian *intriguante* and her associates, he indulged in an extreme and morbid distaste to society of every description. He had been reared by a religious grandmother, for in his infancy he had been left an orphan and

dependent ; and though a life of business had set aside devotional thoughts, early impressions now recurred with a force proportionate to the comfort which the recovered treasure wrought for him. To make his children feel as he felt became his one thought. The little Junie seemed to reciprocate his every feeling from her earliest years. She too found that the walls which shut her from the world but seemed to make more near the heaven to which this life seemed so blissful a prelude. The boy, Justin, had no fellowship in all this ; and, from the age of nine to that of fourteen, there had been one bitter struggle with his father against the confinement within those prison-like walls of their grounds ; a confinement only broken by occasional drives through woody lanes, and a weekly visit to the little dull market-place of Breemouth. It would seem that some of his unhappy

mother's temperament had fallen on him ; and, though kind and merry-hearted, there was something in him in direct antagonism with intellectual or religious pursuits. At the age of fourteen, his father had intended to ward off what he considered the dangers of the world by engaging a resident tutor, and so maintain seclusion. While in the dilemma of selecting a suitable instructor, which was no very facile affair, Justin, with something of the daring of the mother, insisted on being sent to school. He was refused with violence and wrath. The next day it was discovered that, taking advantage of the admission of a coal-cart, young Mavesyn had made his escape from The Cedars. The neighbourhood was scoured for him, and large rewards offered. In three days he was brought back by some gipsies with whom he had fraternised, and who had suddenly be-

come alive to the justice of the laws of restitution. They had their reward; though these measures from henceforth brought discredit to gipsy hospitality in the neighbourhood of Stokebree. The offended father, with something more than anger, next had an interview with the agitated Justin; and he was shown a will which Mr. Mavesyn had hastily drawn up and executed, constituting Junie his heiress, to the entire exclusion of his son. This was consigned to a small iron box, appropriated to valuables, with the reiterated assurance that it should never be revoked unless a better spirit was evinced by Justin. A month passed tranquilly away. An old curate of a remote village, and a Fellow of Cambridge, was engaged as tutor. The day of his entering upon his duties was fixed; when again Justin evaded the watch set over him, and fled. This time he had

laid his plans better. Not the least trace of his steps could be discovered ; and it was generally believed that he had sailed in a collier, which had left Breemouth the night he had escaped. But in spite of the active measures taken for his recovery, and the enormous rewards offered for the slightest intelligence of him, Mr. Mavesyn never again heard of his son.

Although these events were generally known, and the father's feelings greatly commiserated, the neighbourhood's acquaintanceship with Mr. Mavesyn experienced no advance. Occasionally meeting him in their drives, his mournful aspect, and the eager, pleased gaze of the young girl, gave people an interest in them, which led to the attempt to break through the reserve that kept the interior of The Cedars as secluded as in the days of its monastic or maniacal inhabitants.

But all their overtures to intimacy met with rebuff; and the wish and the attempts by degrees died away.

At length, at the most twelve years after the flight of young Justin, people heard that Mr. Mavesyn had died suddenly of apoplexy; and that a Mr. Beresford, one of the first lawyers in London, had arrived immediately at The Cedars; and after arranging and being present at the funeral, had conveyed the orphan daughter back to London with him, leaving all the affairs of The Cedars under the jurisdiction of Mr. Colyton, in his capacity of lawyer.

For six months and more, there were seen constant advertisements for news of Justin Mavesyn, or information of his death, with suitable rewards for either, in that mysterious corner of the *Times* newspaper, where husbands sue for the return of wives, one

should think they were better without—mothers promise forgiveness to sons, to whom a sound flogging would be the wholer advertisement—and where notices of the loss of jewels and money make one think how extremely idiotic the original possessors must have been; while certain—and indeed the most pathetic—announcements of the loss of old Skye-terriers, blind cats, and mangy parrots, make one wish to be the lucky finder; not so much for the sake of the splendid rewards offered, as to alleviate the pitiable affliction which we may guess is suffered both by the loser and the lost.

It would seem, however, that no advertisement had brought Justin Mavesyn forward; as in two years after the death of the father, upholsterers from London, and other artisans connected with the adornments of the mansions of the rich, arrived at The

Cedars. And shortly afterwards, Mr. Colyton announced to the neighbourhood that the young heiress had decided on again making Devonshire her home.

In effect, she soon after arrived with a lady, who, it appeared, was in future to reside with her. Again Mr. Colyton's perfect cognizance of her affairs was made known, by his informing all who listened, that Miss Mavesyn hoped to be as "thick as thieves with her neighbours, to make up for lost time." People trusted that Mr. Colyton had translated Miss Mavesyn's wishes into his own language; thinking that otherwise there was more prospect of good fellowship than of refinement with the lady of The Cedars.

## CHAPTER V.

“ Open your ears ; for which of you will stop  
The vent of hearing, when loud Rumour speaks ?  
I, from the orient to the drooping west,  
Making the wind my post-horse, still unfold  
The acts commenced on this ball of earth.”

SHAKESPEARE.

WHO has not remarked the placid beauty of a Sunday in the country in the summer-time ; and that quiet hour after the morning service, when the labouring poor, withdrawn into the interior of their cottages, leave the world to that silence which gives

even to the things of nature a sabbatical character? Even the birds at such times appear to have less of their week-day's restlessness, and pass quietly in and out the leafy shade, for which in the mid-day they show such liking. Perhaps some distant sky-lark may even then be heard, mounting, with his shrill aspiring solo, to the blue infinity above; but the poets have so schooled us into considering its note as a sort of choral service, it takes nothing from the holiness which one feels at such moments to rest on this our English world.

The scene which Fernacres offered on such days was one of surpassing loveliness. The garden was rich in those features of well ordered nature for which this country is famous; with smooth-shaven lawns losing themselves beneath clumps of flowering shrubs, and here and there adorned by

stars and crosses, and all the fantastic shapings of modern floriculture ; filled with dazzling masses of scarlet, blue, and yellow, glaring in the full tide of a meridian sun, like monster flowers flung from some upper world. On the summit of this lawn extended the house, of no mean limits, though crowned by a thatch, and lighted by latticed windows. A wide verandah ran all the length of the garden front, into which the library, drawing-room, and dining-room successively opened. This was also thatched and supported by thick stems of trees, on which the bark remained, while flowering creepers twined around them. A smooth *parqueterie* of blocks cut from young larches formed the flooring, on which stood vases of rarer flowers than those which graced the lawn. On the right of the varied pleasure-grounds, and reached by a labyrinth of overgrown paths, lay the

kitchen gardens ; and here, perhaps, was visible some break to the summer Sabbath. The bees in their hives showed all the work-a-day activity which gets these little insects their name of praise ; while a stream of ants near, crossing the path in never-ending succession, some laden, all evidently working, shared the scandal of Sunday-labour. Ants ! bees ! little Scripture characters, how is this ? “Ah !” might they not reply? “we share not the hopes of that crowning Sabbath promised to man ; leave us then to our busy week of life.” Another evader of the Sunday rest now particularly treated of, meets the eye. It is a female figure bending over the strawberries. One whose beauty is of that high order that all dissentient opinions must be hushed. The perfect profile, the glossy ringlets, the graceful proportions of the slender form, the unconscious elegance of her movements, are

all enhanced by the well-adjusted costume ; while the little rose-coloured parasol which interposed between herself and the glaring sun, throws a glow over the pretty picture. It is Rose St. Colmo, who instead of entering the house after church, still lingered in the gardens. Her search for strawberries was, however, soon interrupted by the old butler, who, with a napkin held between his shiny bald head and the scorching sun, came to summon her to luncheon.

On entering the dining-room, the usual Sunday spectacle which presented itself at that hour, met her eyes. It was her brother, lounging on the green morocco sofa, with a huge carving-knife by his side, serving *pro tempore* as pamphlet-cutter, deeply intent on a fishing article in *Bell's Life in London*. He, too, was one on whom the light of human beauty shone paramount ; and a head bent

over the newspaper, which for contour and feature might have formed the model for a sculptor's deity. Colonel St. Colmo and poor Minna, whom over-done calisthenics had slightly lamed, now entered, in their persons also offering samples for Olympus ; lending truth to the words of Lamartine—“*La beauté est un don inconnu, et une puissance magique. Il n'est permis à aucune être vivant d'y échapper. Etre belle, c'est regner.*”

As the four seated themselves at table, the governess joined them. She was young and dressed with precision, but the “*don inconnu*” was wanting ; though her countenance owned an expression equally difficult to analyse. The cover was removed from a dish containing slices of roast-beef ; a remnant of feudal tyranny still existing in the land, where people who have been seeing roast meat at their dinners all the week, still on

the Sunday, exercise the *droit du Seigneur*, by this lien on the servants' beef. The dish was handed, and the butler withdrew to the vassal's portion of the joint; leaving the party at liberty to discuss the first appearance of Miss Mavesyn at Stokebree church—the rustic village church of Breeford having till now been her sole place of worship. The St. Colmos, however, were not a talkative family, and ate in silence. Perhaps a portion of their excessive beauty might be ascribed to the composure of manner which marked them. Stillness and perfection seem analogous.

Instead of giving an opinion of the young heiress, however, Colonel St. Colmo said to the governess—"I wish, Miss Morant, among the many useful things you teach the girls, you could impart something of your own neatness, which always strikes me at luncheon more than at any other time. In this warm

weather, it is absolutely a pleasure to see any one looking so cool and fresh as you do at every hour of the day."

Miss Morant smiled, with a pretty little gesture of acknowledgment for Colonel St. Colmo's compliment; while his son raised his eyes in examination of the three ladies. They first rested on the strawberry gatherer; who, with her bonnet thrown with its blonde and roses on the cold meat on the sideboard, and her gloves and parasol by her side, with her flushed cheeks and dishevelled hair, rather fell short of one's notions of Sunday neatness and serenity. The other sister, with her golden curls all crushed on one side, the lace collar and flounces all crumpled, and a certain print on one of her soft cheeks, showed evident signs of having just left the drawing-room sofa. The eyes of the young man then glanced furtively over the governess, whose well-arranged collar and ribbons

—whose smooth dark braids and quiet coolness of look, had elicited Colonel St. Colmo's approving notice. "As for Rose," the brother remarked; "she looks like an over-worked straw-bonnet maker; while Minna, with her bed-ridden look, makes one wonder why a girl who comes down to breakfast at ten, sleeps on the sofa all day, and starts to bed again at ten, should ever take the trouble to get up. As for Miss Morant,"—he stopped suddenly, for with the swiftness of electricity the eyes of the governess turned on himself.

"And Miss Morant?" she said, as if impatient at his silence.

"Is Miss Morant,"—he said quietly, cutting the string of the soda-water bottle which lay beside him.

"Eric, I think that you are too harsh to your sisters," the Colonel said, looking fondly at them; as their soft violet eyes, turned towards him, seemed to claim his

interposition. His kind looks were all-sufficient; and the lovely girls, reassured, continued their luncheon in peace; until Miss Morant, taking up one of the tiny gloves which lay beside her, said, "I do not think these nice French gloves look very like a straw-bonnetmaker's, Mr. St. Colmo. Indeed," she added, looking at a crimson stain on one of the fingers, "I should have thought them too pretty to pick strawberries in."

Rose looked confused, as her brother said quickly, "By George! what extravagance! gather strawberries in three-and-sixpenny gloves!"

"What could I do?" replied his sister; "the sun would have tanned my hands so dreadfully."

Eric did not appear to see that leaving the strawberries might have offered a resource; and the subject was changed by Miss Morant

asking the Colonel if he had seen the heiress, and what he thought of her. He professed scarcely to have remarked her; and then inquired of Eric, what his opinion was. "Fine eyes—spicy eyebrows—but no more profile than my dog Tiny," Eric answered, with something of a horse-dealer's brevity; adding—"But I am going to take another peep at her. Rose, if you can muster another pair of gloves, I'll drive you to Breeford church this afternoon. And you too, Miss Morant," he added, without looking at the lady he addressed.

The dog-cart was soon at the door. The governess suggested that Miss St. Colmo should sit behind, as affording more room for her flounces.

"If Rose sits there she will be infallibly planted on the first rough bit of road we pass over," said Eric. "No, no, Miss Mo-

rant, you shall sit there. You are wide awake enough to take care of yourself."

Accordingly, Miss St. Colmo was assisted into the fore part of the vehicle, the governess scrambling up by herself behind. However, Eric St. Colmo was not so ungallant as his words would imply, but came round and gave Miss Morant some hints as to the precautions she was to take, recommending her to plant her feet firmly on the foot-board. A lynx-eyed person might have seen him press the little foot he affected to place in the safest position, and have seen, moreover, that same little foot give a slight and contumacious kick ; but the St. Colmos were not lynx-eyed, and the dog-cart and its freight drove off without any of this by-play being observed. Minna St. Colmo passed languidly from the hall to her old *gîte* in the shaded drawing-room, while her

father prepared for his usual Sunday walk to The Lodge. As he stood waiting for his hat and gloves to be given him—a smile of affection playing over his noble features; and while his eye followed the dog-cart through the drive, his whole figure offering a bright specimen of matured vigour and graceful bearing—none would have wondered at the earnestness with which his visits were expected by the accomplished widow, to whom this Sunday homage was usually paid.

Among the many varieties of coin which circulate in this wide world, there is a description which all admire, all pronounce pretty—"beautifully got up" is the phrase—and many make use of; knowing at the same time that, with all its clever gilding—all its adroit imitation of sterling things—it is one of the brilliant lies, which in things as well as words, pass current in the *salons* of the

gay world. Who thinks worse of the gilt whist-marker because it looks so like a sovereign? The baker may nail the false sixpence to his counter; but the auriferous bauble is useful in society; and though all know exactly its worthlessness, no one casts it from them because of its fictitious character. How many men and women moving in society find their emblem in the whist-marker!

Mrs. Villaroy was one of these; and, the child of parents who "brought her up" for the gay world, well did she fulfil her destiny. Tolerably good-looking, slightly accomplished, with good taste in dress, and very "wide awake," she was soon in general circulation; and that too in a society much superior to anything her own birthright opened to her. And even when, on the death of the mother, and the decrepitude

which early gout brought on a *roué* father, she stood alone, as it were, and had to stem all the waves of dissipation by herself, she did it well, still keeping up the stream. There was scarcely a castle, abbey, or hall, of the “nice people” who met her in town, which had not some pretty sleeping apartment appropriated to the use of the charming Fanny Carlow; and she passed from one to another in a very atmosphere of smiles, whether of valediction or of welcome. Some Frenchman tells us—“*Qu'on ne vant dans ce monde que ce qu'on vent valoir.*” This aphorism, which, known and acted on, is the secret of the currency of much false coin, was fully considered by Miss Carlow. But there were other reasons for a high value being placed on her besides her own appraisement. There was a cleverness and tact in all she did, which, being brought to bear on

the tastes and amusements of the high-born merry-makers who cherished her, made her actually essential to them. Plays, proverbs, *tableaux-vivants*, and *fêtes* of every description, requiring something more intellectual in the arranging, than could be looked for in the usual run of housekeepers and grooms of the chamber, in the hands of Miss Carlow all came to perfection. Not only would she enact Ophelia with a pathos which made the young men wish that she was always mad and tumbling in the water, but she would actually double for the grave-digger, and repair Hamlet's bugles between the acts. Her opinion on theatrical costumes was supreme; and, what was better, even while studying her part in an extempore charade, she would set merrily to work with the ladies' maids to make them. She even wrote the little pieces which were occasionally played at Otterburne

Abbey;—that is, she made a sort of mosaic from the works of the old dramatists that she found in the library, and which “did beautifully” as the Marchioness told her. This sort of work gave her a literary distinction, which, in a measure, changed her character. She left off trimming shepherdesses’ aprons and tacking pink cotton roses into boughs of real laurel, to read all the literature of the day—at least, that most usually talked about. The works of some titled young authors came particularly to her notice ; and she found that the lordly Apollos ceded to her much of their attention, when, professing to criticise, she dropped the honey-dew of praise,—honey so much the sweeter as distilled from the coral lips of an attractive young woman. Their attentions begat ambition ; and from censor to Countess, seemed no impossible shift in her

little drama. Giving her, however, all due credit for her literary discernment, these noble authors wooed to the peerage brides unpoetical.

No one minds being foiled, whose aim has not been guessed ; and Miss Carlow, while throwing aside sundry hot-press octavos, felt little pique in thinking that her views must be directed elsewhere. While considering that “where?”—the Honourable Robert Villaroy made proposals, and was accepted. Though poor, he was the next heir to an earldom ; and, with an exceeding quiet and gentlemanly demeanour, he was pronounced a very “good match” for Fanny Carlow. The “good match” in this case offering as great a contrast as a whipped sillabub and some old lava from Vesuvius.

The proposal had taken Miss Carlow so much by surprise, she failed in guessing why

it had been made ; Mr. Villaroy always having been the least demonstrative of the cavaliers of her acquaintance. Indeed, such was his exceeding dulness and incapacity, that she had always during his visits given him picture-books to look at—a measure which her good-temper taught her would obviate the awkwardness of his taciturnity. Her own album offered the most variety ; and this, whether in her father's small lodging in Park Street, or in the country houses at which they occasionally met, was for ever before him. It was this very album, in conjunction with some comic songs, which gained her his hand. A grandfather's or godfather's will, accidentally seen, has sometimes worked such results ; in this instance it was brought about by a huge green-morocco book, filled with every variety of caligraphy and design, and which had seemed as a treasury of laurels,

all bearing witness to the triumphs of the possessor. To the credulous and slow mind of Villaroy, every registered compliment and well-feigned sentiment, had seemed as vouchers of the perfections of her they celebrated ; stamping as precious, one of whom he was not equal to form an opinion. Even after marriage the charms of the album failed not. And he used to be seen hanging over it with the same complacency with which a husband might study plans of coal mines, brick-fields, saw-mills, or other property accruing to him from a wife. As regarded the comic songs, he was somewhat in the position of the gentleman who bought *Punch*. Mrs. Villaroy, without the excitement of a listening and laughing audience, was as inanimate as the wooden puppet. Even when the spirit of buffoonery was set in motion for special occasions, somehow the archness

and comicalities, which had been the arduous study of the morning, failed at night in yielding the delight which the “capital hits” of Fanny Carlow had been used to produce. To crown the *maladresse* which marked much of Villaroy’s proceedings, he actually died before the heirless Earl he was to succeed ; leaving as heir presumptive the orphan—people said half-witted son of his younger brother, then living with his mother almost in poverty. Fortune at times does like thus to play at “Bob cherry” with her cherished gifts. However, Mrs. Villaroy, after a regulation period of mourning, again commenced her flutter through the houses of her ancient allies ; a proceeding which had suffered discouragement during the lifetime of her dull and silent husband. Her popularity now received considerable accession by a curiously clever little girl, her only child ; and whose

small thin body seemed to contain a condensation of the spirits of Molière, Garrick, Farren, and Buckstone. Not only did she astonish people by her performance of the parts assigned to her, but she enacted little dramas of her own, *improvisés* at the moment, which fettered while they frightened her audience. Reckless of consequences, the little thing caricatured the noble host of the moment, as freely as she did any of his household; and, throwing away the cotton nightcap and *casserole* of the French cook, she would drawl out with equal exactness all the vapid and grandiose sentences of his master. However as time passed on, poor little Yolande,—as she had been named after some Norman ancestress, and with reference to the title which should precede it—became too sickly for such exhibitions; and, with large eyes and mouth, and a yellow skin—the

usual guerdon of precocious and rakish children—was pronounced as being no longer presentable. With an exceeding passion for reading, the new arrangements which left Yolande at home when her mother made her round of visits, was unregretted ; and with a nondescript attendant, half housekeeper, half governess, but wholly indulgent to what she considered the neglected child, Yolande passed her days in museums, picture exhibitions, dioramas, catholic chapels, and lecture rooms. When at length the period for her “coming out” arrived, it was a great mortification to Mrs. Villaroy to find her daughter, *un-come-out-able*. The gaunt mouth, the hollow eye of her forced childhood, were still her chief characteristics ; while her tall and meagre figure seemed entirely to have escaped the ameliorating influence of the dancing-master ; the only regular professor whom

Mrs. Villaroy had engaged. At this time Mrs. Villaroy discerned signs in her own case, which told her that a day for retirement was come ; and, added to a sense of personal decadence, a ready tact made her feel that the pampered taste of her friends already overlooked her ; and that in the grand battle of life, she was, like militia and mercenaries, called into action only when there was a failure of the regular troops. Her sister-in-law, the mother of the young man who had succeeded to the title and estates of the Earl of Villaroy, had offered The Lodge at Stokebree as a residence. It was now gladly accepted ; and the gay Mrs. Villaroy actually subsided into a quiet country life. It brought a sort of happiness with it ; and strange to say, like the parched and blackened boxes of mignionette in a sunny balcony recover their freshness when consigned as *passées* to a back court,

so did her good looks return. Mrs. Villaroy had been further influenced in her choice of country retirement, by the idea that the equivocal attractions of her daughter would have a better chance than in London Society; where young ladies, to borrow another floral image, like the choice flowers of a nursery ground, priced, tied, and ticketed, eclipse all ordinary blossoms. Yolande knew nothing of this notion. She liked the country as affording more time for study; desiring to drain every cup of knowledge or of science held forth to her, with a thirst, which, to minds constituted like her own, knows no assuaging.

Mrs. Villaroy settled at Stokebree about three months before the death of Mrs. St. Colmo. An acquaintance had immediately ensued between the two families; and though there was but little sympathy

between the rather impenetrable Miss Villaroy and the beautiful sisters of Fernacres, still, the slow progress, usually made in country acquaintanceship, was in a measure accelerated by the show of interest and active benevolence which sickness and death call up in rural parishes. The poor afflicted girls found more comfort in the well-mannered and delicate compassion of Mrs. Villaroy, than in the more boisterous exhibitions of feeling in Mrs. Colyton ; which, almost like the echo of a wake, only wanted the “pil-lalu” to be utterly repulsive.

Colonel St. Colmo seemed to share their feelings ; and, as time went on, found in the amiable occupant of The Lodge a charm against the ennui and discomfort which a widowed hearth and embarrassed circumstances involve. People began to talk as people in the country will talk, in spite of the slowness of idea

usually attributed to them ; and the notion of a marriage between the widower and the widow was rife in the talking coteries of the neighbourhood. Mrs. Villaroy heard the report, and smiled. Colonel St. Colmo heard nothing ; and continued his Sunday visits with a constancy which showed how he appreciated them.

On the present Sunday the conversation of Colonel St. Colmo with Mrs. Villaroy fell naturally on the subject of Miss Mavesyn and her great wealth ; and with that sweet look of confiding earnestness she knew so well how to assume, Mrs. Villaroy said that she had been thinking how excellent a wife the orphan would make for “that dear beautiful Eric.” The Colonel smiled. The words of Mrs. Villaroy seemed to give utterance to the thoughts which had occupied his mind during his walk to The Lodge ; and which,

partaking a little of the character of the old speculations of the —th Hussars, had been employed in considering the ways and means by which so desirable a union might be effected. To a father's eye, which saw clearly all the advantages of his son's exceeding personal beauty,—and men have much the habit of over-valuing the influence which personal beauty does exercise over women,—the time and opportunity alone seemed necessary for such a consummation. Still, there was a delicacy—imbecility his old brother officers would have called it—in discussing *viva voce* the matter of marriage, for which the fortune of the bride-elect seemed as yet the only disposing element. Thus he hesitated to reply. Mrs. Villaroy mistook his silence.

“Ah! I see, that terrible Scotch pride blinds you to the advantage of securing so

admirable a fortune for your splendid Eric. But you are wrong, Colonel St. Colmo—quite wrong. Weaving in all its branches, now-a-days, puts people among the privileged classes."

The Colonel smiled, but negatived the idea that pride was in any measure adverse to the case in point; and, thus assured, she entered with earnestness and cordiality into all the necessary steps. The calling—the first invitation was all settled; and Colonel St. Colmo left The Lodge with an acute sense of Mrs. Villaroy's kindness in taking up so warmly the interests of his son. Men—above all manly-minded men—seldom seek for ulterior motives in the actions of others. Had the Colonel submitted those of Mrs. Villaroy to the investigation of a suspicious heart, he might have seen that there was something more designed than the enriching

of Eric St. Colmo, in all that she was prompting. But Colonel St. Colmo, even while holding the soft hand of the widow at parting, so cordially placed within his own, was too impressed with all the disparaging circumstances connected with himself, to believe he could excite in any woman a deeper feeling than friendliness and indulgent consideration.

It had been arranged that the St. Colmos and Mrs. Villaroy should together make their first visit to The Cedars, and, accordingly, the next day they proceeded thither, in the old phaeton still kept by the impoverished Colonel.

When passing through a low and gloomy stone hall, which, wainscoted with black oak, seemed interminable in its limits, the ladies thought of the monks and madmen who had formerly occupied it, and could almost fancy they were to be led into a

cell of one or other of the class ; but, following the servant up a highly-polished oak staircase, and passing across an immense landing-place, almost requiring the expertness of skaters to pass in safety, they were ushered into an exquisitely-furnished drawing-room, whose six windows looked out upon the cedars on the lawn, through which glimpses of the beautiful country beyond caught the eye.

“ Poor girl ! I dare say she will be tremendously shy,” whispered Mrs. Villaroy to the Colonel ; but, ere he could reply, a door at the further end of the room opened, and the young heiress appeared. As she advanced towards them, there was so little peculiarity in her manner, that they forgot to remark whether she was embarrassed, or entirely at her ease. A sense of pleasure was visibly experienced by her, as she

received the graceful greeting of Mrs. Villaroy, and that of Colonel St. Colmo and his daughter; and she fell into all the lady-like *banalités* of a morning call with calm self-possession. By courteous questionings, they learnt that she did not live alone, but that a widowed lady, the sister of her lawyer, had been engaged by him to reside with her as companion. Before the conclusion of their visit, Mrs. Beresford entered, and was presented to them. She, too, was devoid of any marked characteristic; and, as the party proceeded homewards, there was almost a feeling of disappointment expressed at the absence of any feature or singularity in their new acquaintance, offering something to talk about.

## CHAPTER VI.

"All her excellences stand in her so silently, as if they had stolen upon her without her knowledge. The lining of her apparel, which is herself, is far better than outsides of tissue;—she is decked in innocence, a far better wearing."

SIR THOMAS OVERBURY.

MISS MAVESYN's return visit had been paid, and a dinner party was formed by Colonel St. Colmo, who looked to it with no little interest, as it was then that Eric would be presented to her, whom all Mrs. Villaroy's conversations made him more ardently desire might ultimately become the wife of

his son. As to Eric himself, it was impossible to elicit whether he had any hopes or plans connected with the heiress, though his sisters had tried to spur him on to make the agreeable. But there was in his character so much of concentration, and so complete a hiding away of all his feelings, only suffering much roughness to come to the surface, with a dislike to the observation of others, that it was impossible to guess at what lay below. And yet there was a fidget, a nervousness, evident enough on the day when the family of the St. Colmos were assembled in expectation of their coming guests.

The whole party had arrived before Miss Mavesyn was announced. It consisted of Mrs. Villaroy, Mr. and Mrs. Colyton, Mr. Hume, the Vicar of Stokebree, and his sister, two people who seemed dressed, drilled, and directed by a propriety so despotic, that the

notion of freewill seemed by no means to have found a place in the articles to which they subscribed. There was also a more distant neighbour—Sir Patrick Stowell and his three daughters. He an old Peninsular hero, whose physical courage and proved military talent even now seemed to fill the minds of all who knew him with a fierceness of admiration worthy those days of Rome, when hard blows and the tricks of war claimed most from fame. The remoteness of the day of his glory had in nothing dimmed it; and, though his age and infirmities made his goings out and comings in a rash affair, and his very planting in some corner of the room, as breathless an undertaking as would be the placing some animal on its legs who has been run over, or otherwise damaged, and whose ever standing again is a doubtful matter, still the presence of Sir Patrick and

his daughters, on all gay occasions, was always coveted. Lady Stowell, who was as infirm and nearly as old, never appeared. She too had gone through a Spanish campaign with considerable glory. Since the peace she had occupied herself in educating her daughters, and had now retired on her laurels. The three girls were universal favourites ; Lady Stowell's educational system having produced three as unaffected and happy-hearted young women as could be met ; though their accomplishments, consisting of one or two marches and the bugle calls on the piano, with some Spanish boleros on the guitar, were rather under the average. They lived retired, and knew little of life. But supposing the world one great army, their knowledge would have been infinite. Their talk was continually of soldiers ; not as young ladies talk of them, and call them

"the military," and think balls look gay when "enlivened" by them; but they entered into the very science of war; and an improved knapsack, taken into consideration at the Horse-Guards, had actually emanated from Gussie Stowell. This in no manner interfered with their feminine character and attractions, or the merry spirit of their hearts. Every one loved them, seeming, in fact, only returning the love they felt for everybody.

A Sir Ralph Sutton, a bachelor squire—one on whom celibacy sat so well, it seemed the rule, marriage the exception—and two of the heavy dragoons, then quartered in Exeter, completed the party. These were all engaged in the preliminaries of company talk,—tuning the instruments by discoursing of weather and crops before the grand crash of more interesting topics were introduced,—when Miss Mavesyn was announced.

There was less of her usual tranquillity of manner as she advanced to Miss St. Colmo's greeting; and, when she turned to the Colonel, there was almost an expression of trouble, as she uttered her fears that she was late; explaining it by the circumstance of Mrs. Beresford feeling unwell just as they were stepping into the carriage. Colonel St. Colmo reassured her on the point, by taking out his watch and showing her that she was only ten minutes later than the hour mentioned; and as his cook was generally a quarter of an hour behind hand, this gave her still five minutes. With a gentle smile at the exactness of his calculation, there was a complete return to the perfect serenity of her usual expression. It was evident that she gave his words full credence. Perhaps one of the chief blessings of youth and inexperience is that concomitant, credulity.

Who would not undergo the deceptions which such a spirit may involve, to be saved the task of ringing and testing all the false words uttered ?

With the perfect trust which her simplicity yielded, was the usual accompaniment—unconsciousness of exciting the attention of others ; and Miss Mavesyn sat in quiet conversation with Colonel St. Colmo, utterly blind to the fact, that the whole party, as far as good breeding would allow, were in earnest observation of herself. One indeed rather exceeded the permitted extent of scrutiny. It was Eric St. Colmo, who remained fixed in deep and critical examination of the heiress. And there were other eyes as intent in watchfulness of himself. Miss Morant, sitting in the unmolested solitude which usually befalls governesses in general society, seemed to have no other use for the leisure

thus left to her, than to follow and analyse the glances of the absorbed Eric.

There was scarcely sufficient in the delicate features and slight figure of Miss Mavesyn to lay claim to good looks. Light, very light eyes, almost of the tint of steel, owed all they owned of beauty to their sweet and confiding expression and the dark, long eyelashes, with the marked eyebrow above. In a family like the St. Colmos, who judged with personal and long-bigoted adherence to the beauty of aquiline noses, Miss Mavesyn's would have been pronounced as partaking of the heresy of the *nez retroussé*; but it had the palliative of delicate and well-defined nostrils. Her lips were full, but there was nothing sensual in the character; and there was a pretty dimpling movement in the under one, which gave animation of expression; particularly when, in listening

attentively, her pretty white teeth were displayed by the unclosed mouth. On the occasion of the dinner at Fernacres, there was a magnificence in her dress which at once gave her an air of distinction ; and though perhaps men could scarcely detect the superiority of rich white silk with Brussels lace flounces, over the *tarlatanes* of the younger ladies present, still all felt that she was exceedingly well dressed. Perhaps the sense of this to herself gave a confidence which, owing to the private nature of her past life, might otherwise have been wanting. In this case, Mrs. Beresford had shown no little *nous* by recommending the best *modiste* to her wealthy charge. And who can say what degree of assurance is not lent, by deal packing-cases, acres of tissue paper, temporary cradles of red tape, meant to deter a sleeve from jostling a *Berthe*, the printed address with all its brief

:instructions as to which side should be “uppermost”—the stern decree that it should be “kept dry,” with the arbitrary summing up, “with care?” There is a tone of importance in all this which takes away uncertainty as to the appropriateness of the dresses worn; giving, what is the best result, while it is the criterion of one used to society,—a calm indifference as to external adornment.

The dinner being announced, Colonel St. Colmo, before giving his arm to Mrs. Villaroy, presented his son to Miss Mavesyn, who led her to the dining-room with precisely the air of one on whom an unpleasant office is imposed. This was probably owing to shyness—to the wish of showing to those present that he was innocent of any designs on the heiress—and to the knowledge that one of the party was intently watching him.

Miss Mavesyn seemed too fully impressed with the kindness of the St. Colmo family to detect at the moment that the son and heir was less friendly; and she entered into conversation with him with that freshness of manner which showed so plainly how naturally the young heart, after past years of seclusion, felt the charm of youthful association. But Eric could not talk—that is, not with the description of people he was now with. He could growl out that broken monologue of which a young man's discourse with one of his own genus most frequently consists; and he could listen quietly to the counter growl; but as to conversing with any female, beyond asking a pastry-cook's girl whether she used Macassar oil or *fixateur* for her ringlets, the thing was not in him. The sense of this deficiency, whenever forced on his attention, always made him cross.

"Did you ever see anything so tiresome?" whispered Mrs. Villaroy to Colonel St. Colmo, as the time for the ladies quitting the dinner-table was approaching. "How badly that noble-looking Eric is behaving! He is actually suffering Mr. Hume quite to monopolise Miss Mavesyn's whole attention; who doubtless is beginning to gain that influence over her he asserts over every one, and which will probably end by his making her supply a curate to Stokebree, and build a mortuary chapel for the use of the proprietors of The Cedars."

Colonel St. Colmo saw exactly what Mrs. Villaroy saw; and guessed what she guessed. Both were right as regarded the impression which the Vicar was producing on the mind of Miss Mavesyn, but wrong in assigning any decided purpose in the interest he was creating. He was merely doing what he

aspired to do with every new person to whom he was presented,—gain an influence that should never lose its force while he willed its existence.

People always at once pronounced that Mr. Hume was a handsome man, without the least knowledge of the features which might be supposed to constitute the beauty so immediately acknowledged. A critical inspection would have shown them there was none; and yet, even when the epithet handsome was modified, there was a warmth in the assertion that he was, at any rate, a good-looking man, which was tantamount. His age was about thirty-six, and all his good looks were in fact the mere beauty of expression, emanating from a clear and open forehead; the effect of which was much strengthened by the dark brown hair that clustered around it; and which was of that wavy

growth, it lent itself with docility to the brush which banished it entirely from the fair expanse of front. Strongly marked eyebrows also contributed, by their contrast, to the brightness of the brow that they adorned ; and gave in fact all the depth of expression attributed to the eyes ; and which in themselves owned nothing beyond the circumstance that a strong and mighty mind looked out upon the world through their medium. In conformity with clerical costume, of which he maintained most rigorous opinions, everything of the nature of whisker was banished from cheeks that owned, however, too much of tint and flesh to awaken any idea of religious austerity. There was another symptom against it ;—the thick and slightly protruding under lip, besides the expression of firmness which it lent, had in it something of a coarse and sensual nature. But to belie this there was

a delicate and finely-curved nostril, speaking at once of refinement, intellect, and sensibility. That he was earnest in the business assigned to him on this earth, no one could doubt. But to behold him standing rather in advance of the altar, his hand slightly resting on it, delivering the commandments of God, not from a book, but with a force of tone and spirit, as if the authoritative prohibitions originated with himself, one recognised in him rather the high priest of the Hebrew temple than the minister of a dispensation whose chief feature was blessing and encouragement. However, his denunciations and vehement teaching had effect; and many a poor body took up their position in a prominent place in his church, in sheer dread of the visit on the Monday, which their non-attendance would have entailed.

On joining the ladies in the drawing-room

Mr. Hume would have again resumed the subtle questioning and sweeping arguments with which he had sought to enthrall the interest of the young heiress, but for the interference of Miss Morant, whose present position with the St. Colmo family, nominally that of a friend, and actually that of a house-keeper, was still one that gave her liberty to mix with, or retire from, as she liked best, the friends invited to their house.

With much kindness and *savoir faire* Miss Morant had devoted herself to the amusement of the young stranger; while the Miss Stowells and Miss St. Colmos were discussing points only of interest to themselves, and Mrs. Villaroy was dozing on the sofa by way of listening to Mrs. Colyton's account of her son's travels in the Troad. The uncomfortable feeling of being *hors de combat* was thus dispelled; and by the magic which clever

people exercise over the simple, Miss Morant had lured the orphan to the pleasure of talking of her earlier years. Thus she, whose natural modesty of disposition, increased by her retired life, would have prompted her always to keep self in the background, fascinated by the adroit questioning and implied interest of her auditor, had babbled unconsciously and exclusively for the space of an hour of self. It is a great link for the disjointed members which sometimes meet in the world, when the *abandon* of egotism can be established. With those who are already linked in love, egotism is but another way of showing it; and where love is not, egotism is its best semblance. Greatly as Miss Mavesyn admired the beautiful family who had so cordially made her acquaintance; impressed as she was by the elegant and courtly manners of Mrs. Villaroy, there was

more of cordiality in her parting good night to Miss Morant, than to any of the others. Perhaps it was this cordiality which led Miss Morant to follow her into the hall, whither Eric St. Colmo had led her to see her into her carriage. There they found Colonel St. Colmo, who had been superintending the packing of the old Hero. It was rather an interesting spectacle to witness the care and cleverness of his pretty daughters in all the exits and entrances of their infirm father. The assistance of servants was always declined; and one of these nice girls on each side, straining every nerve to support him, while cheering him with fond and encouraging words, had something in it touching and endearing ; and bystanders almost forgot to pity poor Sir Patrick for the utter prostration of all his warlike strength, while rejoicing for him in the happiness of possessing such devoted and merry-hearted daughters.

Sir Patrick's carriage had just driven off, and yet there seemed some delay in that of Miss Mavesyn's coming up, though she stood shawled in waiting. On inquiry, it turned out that the storm which was evidently approaching had made her coachman nervous; a flash of lightning having frightened the horses as they turned out of the coach-yard, and put, as the coachman had expressed the symptoms, "his heart in his mouth." Miss Mavesyn, though sharing his fears, ordered the carriage to be brought round. Thanking Colonel St. Colmo for his wish that she should remain at Fernacres the night, she assured him that she had no very great apprehensions, and sprang lightly into the carriage, while Eric went to the horses' heads to inquire into the state of the nerves of the timorous coachman.

When Colonel St. Colmo returned to the drawing-room, he found his daughters and

the still lingering bachelors in the verandah, admiring from thence the lighting up of the distant horizon, as each flash poured out of the threatening clouds. Already there was that peculiar movement of the leaves, the scared twitter of the awakened birds, which announced the impending storm, warning the remaining guests to depart.

In the little summing up of remarks on the dresses and general demeanour of the dispersed party, opinion was strong against Eric's stupid inattention to Miss Mavesyn. "She would make him such a nice rich wife," the pretty Rose St. Colmo observed, while trying experiments with her faded bouquet in the ringlets of her sister. Miss Morant thought the Vicar had just the same view of her as regarded himself; and believed, with her religious turn of mind, his talk of Complines and Gregorians would have great effect.

Such in fact had passed through Mr. Hume's thoughts in his homeward drive. Both Miss Morant and Mr. Hume were clever people; yet in this case, the simplest and most open heart which ever laid all its sweet womanly loving thoughts of God and man before the world, was unread by them.

The next morning, while at breakfast, to the surprise of all except Miss Morant, who seemed always to have a degree of omniscience as regarded the household of Fern-acres, and by her knowledge in this instance seemed worried and made nervous, Eric came into the room with his arm in a sling, and with a pale and fatigued countenance. His story was soon told. Finding, the night before, that Miss Mavesyn's coachman was in genuine terror, and the footman not much better, he had made the latter get on the box, while he sprang into the back seat as

the carriage passed the lodge-gates, in order that he might see how they got on. What he had anticipated, occurred. They had proceeded about two miles, when in a very exposed part of the road, a most tremendous flash took place. Both servants had closed their eyes, and the horses, with something of the same instinct, had turned short round, a step much jeopardizing the safety of the carriage and its occupants. Eric had quickly descended, and taken their heads ; but while leading them round, a second flash had caused them to plunge, which had brought the end of the pole with such violence against his arm, he had thought for the moment that it was broken. The servants then coming to his assistance, had enabled him to hold back the horses from a ditch, the depth of which they seemed bent on ascertaining. In a few minutes all things were set right. Eric re-

ceived from the window the heartfelt uttered thanks of Miss Mavesyn for his foresight in accompanying them thus far, and her grateful acceptance of his offer to take the place of the coachman, whom fear seemed to render almost powerless, and himself drive her to The Cedars. This he did ; and the horses, kept in a smart trot, seemed to think no more of the lightning. On his walk back, for he resisted all Miss Mavesyn's offers of a horse, he had found his bruised arm stiff and painful, but forbearing to call up other aid on his return home, than the man who had sat up for him, and who had bathed it with warm water, he now found it almost powerless.

Colonel St. Colmo could not refrain from being pleased with Eric's chivalry in spite of the suffering arm. It was so seldom that he went out of his way to be civil to ladies, that an overt act of attention like the present

had double effect. While discussing it, the door opened, and Miss Mavesyn was announced. She had learned from her own servants of the hurt Mr. St. Colmo's arm had sustained, and had driven over, full of anxiety, to make inquiries. She expressed her regret seriously, but without exaggeration; and turned looks of such sweet concern towards Eric, that he felt an inward sense of self-gratulation that his services had been signalized by his own hurt. With an extreme and ever-abiding sense of shyness, which showed its existence by bluster and growl when most assailed, by silence and apparent indifference when only slightly affected, the incident of the last night seemed to have placed him on more satisfactory terms than he could ever have expected to be with a young lady. With his peculiar temperament, the knowledge that he had been instrumental

in saving Miss Mavesyn from grievous injury and alarm, in putting him in the light of a benefactor, exempted him from those demonstrations of good-will and courtsey which he found so difficult to render. It would ever have been to him a matter of less embarrassment to stop a runaway horse than rise to take a lady's coffee-cup. But as ladies' lives were not often in jeopardy, while there was a constant call for the "good boy civilities," which, as he expressed it, "he could never come," his life, as far as women were concerned, passed in a constant sense of shortcomings. Now all was smooth; and his beautiful face looked so animated and expressive as he talked over with Miss Mavesyn all the particulars of the occurrences of the last night,—with manly indifference passing over his own share of the transaction, yet making them all laugh by his account of

the imbecile fear of the two servants, that his delighted father felt that accident had done more for the advancement of his son's interests with the heiress than a year's *mal-adroit* wooing could have effected.

In fact, there was a certain consequence, for the moment, vested in Eric, that planed away much of his roughness. The words, "St. Colmo, you are such a devilish good-looking fellow, you ought to make all the women in love with you," had been so constantly repeated to him by the officers of his regiment, that, while impressing him with a sense of what was required of him, it had, at the same time, made him so acutely aware of his deficiency in everything that could enable him to set up for what is technically called a "lady's man," that he had abjured that society which would bring that office into play. The consequences

were, that his shyness and feelings of awkwardness were all increased. And yet he had a loving heart, which, but for the injudicious style of bringing him up, would have sent him sighing and suing to fair ladies in his own grade of life ; but a faulty method, while giving him strong impressions of his own personal and other merits, with a craving for, and a susceptibility to, praise and commendation of every kind, had neglected the discipline and the careful education which could alone have stamped his good qualities with the polish which should make them pass current. The results were that, in general society, he never felt at his ease ; and, therefore, from a certain pride of heart, adopted a bluntness and boorishness of manner, which was meant to imply that his holding himself aloof, whenever forced into company, was a matter

of choice, not necessity. The direful truth was, that Eric St. Colmo was a *dunce*. A fact he rather felt than deplored; and, unskilled in that address by which even dunces pass muster—incapable of making up by aural attention for the deficiencies of his early education—he was that uncomfortable creature, a gentleman feeling himself unequal to the society of gentlemen; a splendid, noble-looking young man, shrinking from the looks and words of fair girls, as a scapegrace collegian might evade contact with university dons.

Now all things seemed altered, and a dawn of joy arose, to which Eric had hitherto been a stranger. Emboldened by the presence of his father and sisters, who, in their warm affections, had never seen or hinted at a fault; receiving kind and flattering attentions from one who he knew had

cause to regard him ; and, reassured by her gentle and simple manner, so different, in its straightforwardness, from the coquetry and quizzing humour of half the girls he usually met, he found that he could be of consequence to a young woman, for whose person, mind, and manners, he felt an admiration which would have prompted the wooing, even without the charming ten thousand a-year in the background, promising not only future comforts, but, what was better, to relieve, as he would have expressed it, "poor Dad's liabilities."

Charmed with Eric's animation, thinking that his manly beauty had never shown to greater advantage, and, sharing his sanguine anticipations, Colonel St. Colmo had induced Miss Mavesyn to have her ponies sent to the stables, and a messenger was despatched to The Cedars, to beg Mrs. Beresford would

send the close carriage for her in the evening, as she was to spend the day at Fernacres.

To one to whom, however happily her young life had passed, the charm of youthful associates had been denied, there seemed to be an inexhaustible interest in regarding and listening to the beautiful family, who so warmly courted her. Naturally of a taciturn disposition, there was still something in the expressive attention betrayed by her mild eyes, as encouraging to conversation as the most animated discourse, and the morning passed merrily away. After luncheon, it had been arranged that they should pay a visit to Mrs. Villaroy and the studious Yolande, Miss Mavesyn driving the Miss St. Colmos in their pony-phæton, and the Colonel and Eric accompanying them on horseback.

As the happy cavalcade drove from the porch, Eric turned to make a parting salute to the governess, who was left there standing alone. Her face was pale, and something like tears glistened in her eyes. He reined in his horse as he perceived these symptoms of sadness, and said kindly—"Do you mind being left all alone, Miss Morant? Should you like me to remain, and walk with you?"

"Not for worlds!" she replied, rather emphatically, clasping her hands as if to make her words more weighty; while that glow rose to her pale cheeks, which had always the effect of making her look handsome, by displacing the excessive paleness of her face,—a paleness rendered more a *dis-sight* from a redness in her eyelids and about her nostrils. This was now merged in the crimson blush which had arisen at the words

of Eric ; and her really fine eyes shone with added lustre.

“ Not for worlds !” she again repeated ; “ but it is like your beautiful self to offer it —kind, noble Eric !”

Eric smiled ; and spurring his horse, galloped after the rest of his party.

## CHAPTER VII.

“I pity bashful men, who feel the pain  
Of fancied scorn and undeserv'd disdain,  
And bear the marks upon a blushing face  
Of needless shame, and self-imposed disgrace.”

COWPER.

MISS MORANT had entered the family of Colonel St. Colmo about the period when the education of the young ladies was understood to be completed, by the fact of their presentation at Court; but as it was just then discovered that they had contrived to go through every French Grammar extant,

without imbibing the least idea of the language, a lady was engaged, whose sole business it should be to perfect them in that particular. Accordingly, one was chosen whose fluency and accent were vouched for as perfect. But little else was considered. She came from a respectable family, who had received her from a family as respectable; and thus, without further thought, a young stranger was admitted to that strict intimacy in the St. Colmo family, which the office of governess involves. As it turned out, Adèle Morant seemed the very person fitted for the situation; for, besides giving her pupils a facility in speaking French by a method peculiarly her own, she imparted to them much useful knowledge; while by a delicate tact she made herself almost indispensable to the whole family. At the time when Colonel St. Colmo found that his embarrassed circum-

stances needed retrenchment in his expenses, he gave Miss Morant her dismissal; candidly explaining why. She as candidly informed him, that from habit she found in his family a more happy home than she could secure with strangers; adding that she would gladly cede her position and salary as governess, for the post of housekeeper—*dame menagère* she called it—provided always that it did not alter her relations with his daughters. Her earnestness constrained the Colonel to accede to her wishes; besides seeing that, in fact, she had managed the house ever since she had lived with them. He also knew full well how necessary she was in a household, where, from excessive refinement of idea and overwhelming indolence of disposition, the details of housekeeping would be a very Slough of Disgust as well as Despond.

Well did Miss Morant acquit herself of her

new duties; and proofs of her exceeding cleverness and management were of daily occurrence; while, strange to say, the servants—a race who, for the honour and glory of their masters, look so darkly on all expedients of economy—were dazzled into approval of all her devices, by the very excellence and long-sightedness of her views.

Taught by the consideration shown her by the St. Colmo family, the neighbourhood received her with equal attention. Far from presuming on this, the manners of Miss Morant were marked by a reserve that seemed at once to show her cognizance of her position as a dependant, and a disinclination to attempt making others forget it, by bringing greater cordiality into play. This calm, or rather cold good-breeding, never forsook her, even in all the intimacy that existed between herself and the St. Colmo family;

and the only interruption to the apathy that distinguished her, was a degree of trouble when the indiscretions and deficiencies of Eric became manifest. But as time went on, and a strict intimacy commenced between the inhabitants of Fernacres and the heiress of The Cedars, the coldness of Miss Morant with strangers seemed in a measure to disappear, and she paid evident court to Miss Mavesyn. She in her turn showed rather an increase of that calm gladness with which she received the attentions of all around, by betraying a livelier pleasure in those of Miss Morant.

"I am certainly cut out by that curious little governess of yours," Mrs. Villaroy said one evening to Colonel St. Colmo, after watching for some time the pleased interest with which Miss Mavesyn seemed to gather up Miss Morant's words; her hand resting

with tender intimacy on her arm as she listened. "But I will not be jealous," Mrs. Villaroy added; "it may be that with one in Miss Morant's grade in society, she may be less sensible of the disadvantages attending her own bringing up; and at any rate, I rejoice that one who must be as well disposed to further the suit of *Eric le bel* as myself, should be thus taken to the heiress's favour."

In spite of the gentle tone with which Mrs. Villaroy spoke of the ill success of all her conciliatory advances towards Miss Mavesyn, and the soft looks of her fine eyes as she deprecated the preference shown to the governess, there was evidently some little spleen at heart; and the Colonel considered that it was justly felt; and that, in this instance, the orphan falsified the idea he had formed of that amplitude of heart which seemed to furnish

love for every living creature. It was certainly most easy to be discerned that Miss Mavesyn did not like Mrs. Villaroy ; and so far, the influence by which she was to further Eric's views had failed. But he also felt that there was a considerable step gained by the interest betrayed for Miss Morant ; and he gladly acceded to Miss Mavesyn's wishes, expressed that evening, that the governess should spend the next fortnight with her ; not only from the kindness which made him rejoice that she should ensure an agreeable companion during Mrs. Beresford's absence, but that Eric's interests should be forwarded through Miss Morant's means.

Perhaps the idea of giving pleasure to Miss Mavesyn was more prominent in Colonel St. Colmo's mind when arranging the visit of Miss Morant, than that of the service

she might render the aspirations of his son. In truth, there was something jarring to his feelings in the notion that there was much like conspiracy in these plans of taking captive the affections of a creature so ingenuous and loving as herself. And even the oft-repeated assurance of Mrs. Villaroy that she had “a decided fancy” for his son, did not quite satisfy new—and what in his younger days he would have termed—thin-skinned scruples.

Miss Mavesyn’s pleasure in securing the lively society of Miss Morant, after the dulness of Mrs. Beresford, and which the indisposition necessitating change of air increased, was scarcely to be wondered at. Indeed, at the best of times, this good lady, from faultless but direful monotony of thought and action, was a blank as far as social intercourse went. This same dulness was not wholly owing to her position as a dependant. There was no

question of future maintenance. Her lawyer-brother had made that secure ; and she had gladly accepted the charge of Miss Mavesyn, in preference to taking the head of his establishment. And why ? Her Berlin-wool worked so much cleaner in the country than in the smoky precincts of Bedford-Row. Berlin-work ! Here was the secret of all her outward dulness and inward composure ; the one idea which in girlhood, wifehood, and now in widowhood, had filled her whole soul. She rose in the morning for the work ; she retired at night to gain vigour for its execution. If she was silent, it was to think of it ; if she spoke, it was to discuss it. In short, no miser's soul was ever more deeply buried in his strong boxes, than was her own in the wools of her work-basket ; and so far the soul of the sempstress had a softer bed than that of the miser. But after

all, it is a woful cramp of the varied powers of any soul to suffer it to sink into the narrow frame of monomania, and so look out upon the things of this world with the singular vision of a Cyclops. Under the rule of one idea, Mrs. Beresford saw everything through the medium of Berlin-work. Houses, rooms, landscapes, people—all were judged with reference to it. Time, even existence itself, was estimated by the amount of work done; so many rugs, ottomans, screens, and sofas, making up the sum of life. In her phraseology, an early death would be spoken of as cut off in the first ottoman. The desire for old age would be meekly specified as the hope of reaching the fifth sofa. While an active and bustling life would be spoken of disparagingly as inimical to a proper frame of mind for needlework. The idea of men ever taking up a carpet-needle, was as re-

pulsive as the notions of women using the probe or trepan. And no female surgeon could excite more disapprobation in the minds of Englishmen, than did in hers the knowledge that poor old Sir Patrick Stowell had whiled away a rainy winter by working himself a carriage-rug. With her eyes constantly bent on the varying tints of her wools, they seemed to afford her language as well as ideas. She characterised Colonel St. Colmo as a fine purple, in which there was a richness of tint that left nothing to be wished for. Rose St. Colmo was a perfect azure. Mrs. Villaroy was a flaring orange, which looked better at candle-light. Miss Mavesyn a neutral tint, which harmonized well with everything. Mr. Hume she thought too scarlet. Not that she reflected on his Tractarian notions as coquetting with the red stockings or hat of a Cardinal, but that his

character was too glaringly pronounced. With her head constantly bent over her frame, counting stitches when a quick answer was required, matching colours when her attention was desired, there was still a gentleness and grace in all her actions most attractive, and a kindness which had greatly endeared her to Miss Mavesyn.

However indispensable every member of the household of Fernacres seemed to have agreed to consider Miss Morant, Colonel St. Colmo never dreamt of limiting her stay at The Cedars ; and in consequence a month had nearly passed ere she returned. In that interval, Eric was a frequent visitor ; there appearing always a good reason for his presence being required. Sometimes it was a fish-pond to be drawn ; then a new regulation for the stables ; and lastly there was a bowling-green to be restored ; in all which busi-

ness Colonel St. Colmo could not forbear perceiving that it was through Miss Morant's tact that Eric was associated. And yet there was ever something at variance with this seeming furtherance of his hopes ; and an inconsistency for which the father could not account. And it was a matter of regret during his own visits to The Cedars, to perceive how much more remarkable was the amount of affection and confidence exhibited by the heiress towards Miss Morant, than any intimations of interest in Eric, beyond those manifestations of goodwill which seemed inherent in her very nature.

On Miss Morant's return, Eric did not fail occasionally to bring complaints against her, for what he termed "taking the wind out of his sail,"—or "putting spokes in his wheel." These she warded off with great liveliness and good-humour, making him feel that his

cause could not be in better hands ; though no actual word escaped her, to show either that she recognized his pursuit of the heiress, or was accessory towards promoting its success. Once indeed she betrayed some confusion, on his suddenly, in his roughest and most angry manner, demanding of her, after a morning visit he had paid to The Cedars, what business she had to tell Miss Mavesyn of his persisting in drowning his spaniel Zulma, after she had escaped the first attempt, and had met him at the door with her usual demonstration of affection ? adding that Miss Mavesyn had talked all sorts of nonsense about it.

A crimson flush passed over Miss Morant ; and she looked quickly up to Colonel St. Colmo, as if to see his feeling on the subject. The blush faded to a ghastly paleness ; but she said with a faint smile, and apparently

without effort or study—"It was rather unfortunate, Mr. St. Colmo, that your drowning poor Zulma was the only proof I could bring forward of your possessing some force of character; a fact Miss Mavesyn seemed much disposed to doubt."

"Force of fiddlesticks!" Eric growled out with dark and suspicious looks. His father saw only good intentions badly executed, in Miss Morant's revelation respecting the drowned dog.

There was so little openness in the disposition of young St. Colmo, and so much roughness of manner, that, gentle and affectionate as his own family were, they shrank from much colloquy with him; giving him credit for the love and good feeling so rarely expressed, and regarding him accordingly. To Colonel St. Colmo this acerbity of tone was peculiarly distasteful; probably

because he had made several efforts to lessen it ; and therefore it called for something like a lecture or disapproval at every recurrence. He tried to palliate it to himself by supposing that there was a depth of sensibility, which rather chose to encase itself beneath this ruggedness of exterior, than risk any stirring influence by betraying the “quick” of his soul. There were moments and circumstances which corroborated this idea ; but with a fastidious taste as regarded conduct, the snap-and-growl manners of his son were too repulsive to his feelings for the trust that they were but the rind which covered the sweet kernel, to lessen his distaste to much communion with him. Therefore with the exception of some desultory questions as to the condition of affairs with Miss Mavesyn, to which he had been urged by Mrs. Villaroy, and to which the

answers were vague and evasive, he forbore touching further on the subject.

The note of preparation was, however, sounded, of an archaeological meeting in the neighbourhood. This, which was the signal for a general muster, was mentioned by Mrs. Villaroy to Colonel St. Colmo, as an excellent opportunity for some definite step to be taken by this "laggard in love," which Eric seemed disposed to prove.

The father was not backward in using his authority on the subject. Indeed there was that high sense of honour in his feelings regarding women, that made him impatient that attentions should be paid to any, without the declaration which should prove such attentions valid. On telling Eric how likely the occasion was to present itself at this fête for making proposals of marriage to Miss Mavesyn, he dwelt on the questionable im-

pression of his honour which a young man gave, when, after a certain show of preference, that proposal was not made. Eric seemed to feel more impetus in his wooing, from the notion that there was a call upon his honour, than from his love; and told his father that he was prepared to follow his counsels.

It was hard to say whether the archæological meeting now in agitation exercised most the young ladies' taste in antiquarian affairs, or in those of the toilet. For this year the place of rendezvous was to be at Sir Ralph Sutton's house; which in itself offered much to administer to the peculiar views of archæologists; besides the attractions which the permitted inspection of a bachelor's house usually assumes to young ladies.

To Eric St. Colmo the notion of attending

a meeting where anything more learned than the best bait for salmon should be discussed, was rather disturbing. By a kind of instinct he avoided all occasions which might lead to the unveiling the slender stock of polite learning which a succession of indulgent teachers had managed to make pass for more extensive acquisitions. But when to this pitfall for dunces, which an antiquarian meeting is likely to prove, was added the fact that there he must look out for a fitting opportunity of declaring a passion that he was not quite sure he felt, his rising that fine September morning in a state of much mental disquietude was not surprising.

It had been arranged the preceding day that Rose St. Colmo and Miss Morant should accompany Miss Mavesyn in her barouche, while Colonel St. Colmo and his son were to journey in the dog-cart. However, while

waiting for the two ladies at the porch at Fernacres, she besought the Colonel, with so much of that timid yet cordial earnestness which marked her manners towards him, to take the vacant corner of the carriage, that Eric was suffered to follow them alone.

As occasionally the carriages neared each other, the extreme beauty and manly bearing of his son struck Colonel St. Colmo with a feeling of ineffable satisfaction. He was sure too that Miss Mavesyn remarked the especial good looks which that day seemed called into action by Eric. Her soft eye at times rested on him with looks of pleased surprise ; and then turned to the father as if to call to his recognition the fact of his son's surpassing beauty. At least so the Colonel and Miss Morant construed the gentle glances ; particularly when, Rose St. Colmo remarking merrily that she was sure

Eric felt immensely handsome, Miss Mavesyn said, with all that pretty matter of fact which gave a charm to her simplicity, "I dare say he does, I never thought men could be so handsome."

The antiquarian meeting of that day commenced, as those things usually do, by a speech from one of the members, laudatory, gratulatory, and complimentary. That is, he commended Sir Ralph for the courtesy which had furnished such favourable ground for their research, he extolled the progress of the society, and finished with a flourish something about the beauty of the fair daughters of Devonia. Considering this speaking man had been retailing the same sort of oration for the last twenty years, the little murmur of applause with which his concluding words were received was ample meed; and the whole thing sounded so like

speeches after suppers, on occasions familiar to him, that Eric began to think that an archaeological meeting might be a good thing; and, in the spirits which it gave him to find an opening speech no more erudite than he could have delivered himself, he bent over Miss Mavesyn, whispering that the orator's last words must have reference to the lady of The Cedars.

Both Colonel St. Colmo and Miss Morant saw the blush rise to the cheek of Miss Mavesyn—both saw the inquiring look lifted by those mild eyes to the gallant Eric; and both thought that his cause was advancing.

The affairs of the day now went on. The clergyman of the village read a paper on the subject of his old parish church. The date of its origin, 1446, was sufficiently respectable to prove its right of admittance into the good.

graces of the antiquarians present; and although not much more was read on the subject than a succession of churchwarden's bills, proving that a good deal of lime had been spent on it, and the font re-leaded in the sixteenth century; the vicar managed to occupy the attention twenty minutes. Perhaps the rustling of silk mantillas, and the swan-like motions of young ladies' necks who tried to look behind them, showed a want of interest in the affairs of Stoke Sutton Church, after its antiquity had been duly marvelled at.

Another speaker arose as the vicar folded his paper. His purpose was to prove that the green mound known as Castle Sutton, about half a mile distant, and even then in view from the large hall in which they were assembled, was, on the contrary, Damerel Tower, belonging to a family always at

enmity with the Suttons. This was an interesting fact; and, considering that the only proof of there ever having been a castle there at all, consisted of a small portion of wall jutting from the green sward at a little distance from the mound, evinced considerable research. The notion that Castle Sutton had never been more than an encampment, was intrepidly contradicted, and a description was given, and views shown, of the entire *locale* of Damerel Tower, by the learned archaeologist, who kept up the interest of the meeting for three-quarters of an hour. None yawned but a stupid old man, who muttered something about castles in the air.

A still more novel discussion ensued. It was an animated and graphic description of a village some miles distant, and named as the birth-place of Sir Walter Raleigh. The history of this remarkable man was closely fol-

lowed up ; and then came the crowning feature of the paper, which gravely announced and took upon itself to prove that the plays, falsely attributed to one William Shakespeare, were in fact the fruits of Sir Walter's muse. A learned and analytical research into dates was then commenced ; and the fact being proved that the appearance of most of the dramas was contemporaneous with Raleigh's imprisonments, and that succeeding retirements from the busy world had each been productive of a fresh play, falsely attributed, but purposely ascribed to the butcher's son, a review of the pieces took place ; in which it was shown that courtiers spoke there as only courtiers could have spoken ; kings discoursed as only those who had heard kings discourse could describe ; remote islands were painted as could only be done by those who had voyaged in distant seas ; while passages

were quoted to show why the statesman had wished to father on the manager who produced them on the stage those plays which spoke daggers to many who assisted at their representation. The paper ended ; having successfully uprooted every bay-leaf from the brow of the Stratford deer-stealer, to plant them on the helmet of the warrior Raleigh. It was strange the excitement which took place. The public mind was at once divested of error ; and every Devonshire squire, as he proceeded with his lady-charge to the capacious marquee where the dinner was spread, felt as if Hamlet, Macbeth, and Othello were hanging in glory over his own head.

Eric St. Colmo thought within himself that the man had much better pitched upon Kemble as the author of Shakespeare, considering that the Colonel of his regiment had pronounced that none but Kemble understood

him ; but even he had been excited by the discussion, and he placed himself by the side of Miss Mavesyn at the well-spread board with feelings of unfeigned pleasure.

The feast went merrily. If there is a thing that makes people hungry, it is antiquarian research ; and, when all the goodly company had satisfied this weakness, and found themselves wandering through the grounds of Sutton Place, there was a unanimous feeling of goodwill towards the hospitable Sir Ralph, who had so amply provided for this feature in archæology. And now was come the moment for Eric's venture. Emboldened by the quiet kindness of Miss Mavesyn during dinner, he drew her arm within his own, and led her into a remote part of the shrubberies. They walked for some time in silence, and, as Eric looked down upon the tranquil, happy

face of his companion, he felt his hopes rise higher. He could scarcely tell whether she was in pleased contemplation of the pretty wood-walk through which they lounged, or whether she was actually awaiting the avowal which even then trembled on his lips. Eric had never felt so much in love, and, with tones of natural feeling and tenderness, he said—

“Miss Mavesyn, will you listen to me, while I tell you how much of my happiness depends on yourself?”

She looked up quickly, and, catching his anxious glance, said kindly—

“Oh! surely I will listen to you. You must tell me exactly what I can do for you.”

This frank answer rather embarrassed poor Eric. He saw in a moment that she was unsuspecting of his intentions; and it

was with something like reproach that he said—“I had flattered myself that you were pretty well awake by this time to all my hopes.”

At this moment a quick step behind them caused them to turn, and they then perceived Miss Morant running swiftly towards them.

“Oh! how I have sought for you!” she said, breathlessly. “All the strangers are gone, and Sir Ralph Sutton has invited all his own acquaintance to take coffee, and walk through his picture-gallery.”

“Thank you, Miss Morant, for taking all this trouble. We will come directly. But I fancy that Mr. St. Colmo has something he wishes to tell me,” Miss Mavesyn answered, looking up inquiringly to the embarrassed Eric, who, very red and very angry, tried to appear careless as he muttered—

"Not now; not now."

"Perhaps I am in the way?" Miss Morant said, quickly, at the same time making no effort to withdraw. Eric rather uncourteously assured her to the contrary, and the trio proceeded to the house.

There was much to be seen in Sutton Place, besides the fine old picture-gallery; and room after room was viewed with even a further interest than that with which the young ladies present invested Sir Ralph. Pictures were praised, china extolled, furniture admired, with every variety of expression; and the gallant Sir Ralph moved in a very atmosphere of feminine eulogy. He did or he did not take it to himself, and still gazed on to further sights. A portrait of his mother by Gainsborough, which hung in an apartment that officiated as his library, magistrate's room, study, armoury, and

dressing-room, was next visited. All found the picture beautiful, and the image of Sir Ralph; which bifold property was not falsely attributed to it. But, while all the balmy incense of feminine flattery failed to move him, an object in a recess near him, for the moment, took his charmed attention. It was the youngest Miss Stowell, who, having taken his yeomanry sword from the supports where it hung, had unsheathed it, and now poising it with the prettiest Amazonian air in the world, with her graceful figure sufficiently erect to have contented the most rigorous of Martinets, was evidently attempting the broad-sword exercise.

Who can account for the contrarieties of human nature? All the silken laudations that had floated about Sir Ralph's ears, died into empty air; while the murderous and slightly burlesque attitude of that young girl,

struck on his perceptions with a force of which his whole being was susceptible. He gazed furtively on the unconscious Lizzy, who was still examining with unaffected interest the warlike toy; but he attempted no nearer approach. He was surrounded by ladies who had a claim upon his best attentions, and who asserted strictly that claim. He gave them; and yet during the succeeding hour in which the party still lingered in his house, he never quite lost sight of the young Miss Stowell.

There are strange influences at work within this world of ours, and there are strange moments for their development. For the last five years Sir Ralph Sutton had been constantly meeting the daughters of the Peninsula hero, with, as he supposed, no other feeling drawn into action, than sincere admiration for their excessive amiability, and the unswerving

and zealous filial attention they so gracefully lavished on the infirm old knight; and yet his last thoughts as he closed his eyes that night were, that he would decidedly make proposals to Sir Patrick for the hand of that curiously bewitching Lizzy.

Love has certainly a depreciatory power over self-estimation; for Sir Ralph awoke the next morning from all the full-blown glories of opulent, independent and comely bachelorthood, to the sad arithmetic of casting up, with all the anxieties and delicate perturbations of an opera-hero, his disabilities as a lover. He had always repugned all ideas of public life, thinking that political influence was very much like sitting by a tray of ices at a public fête; where, if people did not pester you to death to help them, it was only because they jostled you in helping themselves. Now, with the modesty which is

inseparable from budding attachments, he regretted that it was not at least as an Under Secretary of State he was going to his wooing; so to make up by personal distinction for the disparity between his own age and that of her whose hand he sought. All went well, however. Sir Patrick, after a little despondency at the idea of losing his favourite Lizzy, directed the Baronet to tell his own love story. It was so far eloquently spoken, that in a month the neighbourhood was accurately informed of the approaching nuptials of Sir Ralph Sutton and pretty Lizzy Stowell.

## CHAPTER VIII.

“Count, 'tis a marriage of your making,  
So be it of your wooing.”

BYRON.

ERIC St. Colmo rode to his wooing the morning following the antiquarian meeting at Sutton Place. Not, like Sir Ralph, with the sensitive misgivings of newly-awakened love, and the disparaging consciousness of fifty-five years of bachelorhood attached to him ; but with all the frothy bluster of a young man naturally shy, and yet one, whose glass and the out-of-door-world's admiration have

taught him that he is pre-eminent in beauty —one who has talked and thought himself into the comfortable assurance that “a good looking young fellow is sure to get on with women.”

In spite, however, of this mental fanfare-nade, it had only been through the serious and earnest remonstrance of Colonel St. Colmo that he had resolved on a decided step. It had been a matter of much vexation to his father to learn that the proposal to Miss Mavesyn had not yet taken place ; and he could scarcely dissemble his surprise. He had seen his son enter the shrubberies with the heiress ; and with a perturbation for which he could scarcely account, his thoughts had accompanied them. He had again encountered them in the drawing-rooms of Sutton Place. And though Miss Morant was then on the other arm of Eric, there was a

manifest anxiety and agitation on his fine features which seemed to speak of some desperate love-making. Perhaps he was a little shaken in this belief by the calm countenance of Miss Mavesyn ; and yet the circumstance of her still being on his son's arm, betokened that at least no rejection had taken place ; while the kind and inquiring looks she directed to her cavalier might be construed as a proof that her love had been asked and given ; particularly as there was a curious look of triumph on the countenance of Miss Morant, which tallied with what he believed she would feel at the success and brilliant prospects of Eric. All this was proved to be a delusion by a sort of shuffling explanation given by Eric that night ; but when in the same breath he declared his intention of being off the next morning after breakfast, and—“ popping, even if the devil himself stood by,”

—adding as a gratuitous amplification of his speech, the necessity of which, or even its application, the Colonel did not quite discover—that he believed a spiteful woman worse than the devil—the anxious father felt satisfied. He saw him depart the next morning in all the glory of early manhood ; and as he beheld him springing on his impetuous and fiery horse with the grace which well formed limbs, vigorous muscles, and a good riding-master impart ; smiling with a countenance bright with health and manly beauty—a reflection as it were of the divine image—the red clay, however, as regarded Eric, without the “breath”—the Colonel thought him certain of success. As he turned from the porch where he stood to witness his departure, something like a sigh arose in his bosom, as though from the consciousness of the small deserts of him who sought the treasure ;

and he looked sad as he half articulated—  
“Can he ever deserve her?”

What was the thought, and why the sigh  
of Miss Morant, as she too turned from the  
window, where she had watched the setting  
forth of the marriage-bent Eric?

Noon had long passed before the wooer  
returned from The Cedars. At the sound of  
the stable-bell, Colonel St. Colmo hurried  
from the library to meet his son; and again  
the lattice above was opened. Eric threw  
the bridle to the groom, whom he told to  
prepare some bait, for he meant in a few  
minutes to go a-fishing, having seen a school  
of mackerel from the cliff as he had ridden  
homeward; and then he turned into the  
shrubbery with his father.

It was with mingled feelings of vexation  
and regret, that Colonel St. Colmo learnt that  
Eric’s noble courage had entirely failed him

in the enterprise of the day. "She was so deuced cool," he muttered in extenuation of his failure. "If I had been her great grandfather she could not have been more at her ease; and I should like to see a fellow get up a declaration with any woman who took him so cheaply."

"But what have you been doing all the morning?" inquired the Colonel, scarcely controlling a smile. "Doing!" Eric answered, "doing! Why she took me with her to Marshal's nursery-ground at Breeford, and then took me back again. She has got a craze for a new filbert-walk; and she talked to me about it as if I were a gardener. I tell you what, father,"—he said, changing his tone suddenly from the whine of complaint to that of business—"if you mean me to marry Miss Mavesyn, you must manage it yourself. I believe she likes me, indeed I

know she does, that is, I am almost sure she does; but I must put it all into your hands. If you were to tell her to marry the Pope, I believe she would think of it and that old goose, Mrs. Beresford, begin to work him a footstool. I tell you what, sir," he again gravely affirmed—"I never saw two women more inclined to think a man a divinity than they do you; and I fancy my cause could not be in better hands."

The Colonel thought so too. He felt the exceeding and affectionate deference shown by Miss Mavesyn to himself in a thousand ways; but he also felt that in this case he should be averse to exercise it. He was fully aware of the felicitous escape from utter ruin and obscure poverty, a union with herself would prove to Eric; but there were times when an acuter sense of honour showed him that it were perhaps doubtful whether

he should be acting justly in using his influence in furthering the views of his son. He now resolved to consult Mrs. Villaroy on the subject. There was a decision in her mode of forming her opinion on many matters, which led him to think she must at least have studied them ; and he was therefore the more disposed to consider her likely to be an excellent arbiter in the present delicate emergency.

Eric turned to depart ; and, after giving further orders to his servant, hastened towards the beach, by a pathway that led through fern and rocks to the precipitous descent by which the shore was reached, and near where his own little boat was usually moored. He had scarcely got midway down the steep declivity, when at a sharp turning he came suddenly upon Miss Morant ; who, crouching on a projecting piece of rock, seemed await-

ing him with that degree of interest, that she seemed regardless of the pelting of one of those sudden and smart showers, for which the Devonshire coast is so famous.

“ Well, Mr. St. Colmo,” she said bitterly, though with an affectation of gaiety, which her anxious countenance belied ; “ how has your wooing prospered this cloudy morning ? are you an accepted or a rejected lover ? ”

“ Neither one or the other, Miss Morant,” Eric answered, with a scowling brow. “ And now I have given you a civil answer, perhaps you will tell me what business it is of yours ? ”

“ Business ! business ! ” the governess repeated, scornfully. “ Should I be in this frightfully giddy path on business ? Should I stand here, drenched and frozen, on business ? ”

"Well, you needn't loook so deuced fierce, or toss your head so confoundedly," he answered; "what I meant to say was, that it is nothing to you whether Miss Mavesyn accepts or refuses me. And I'll be hanged if I know how you found out I was going to propose."

"Nothing to me! nothing to Adèle Morant anything which concerns so nearly, dear, beautiful Eric St. Colmo!" she repeated softly, half in colloquy, half reproachfully. "Nothing to me!" she continued in the same tone; "who from the first moment that I beheld so splendid, so perfect a creature, have had but one thought,—that of labouring for his happiness."

Poor Eric! she had struck a chord to which his every pulse vibrated. Praise! personal praise! It was the honey-drop with which his infant lip had been pampered. It

was the potent wine which had intoxicated his early youth; and was even now the subtle elixir for which all things else would be bartered, while his craving for it could never be satisfied.

"Miss Morant," he said more kindly, "I don't quite understand you. Sometimes you seem my best friend, and yet in some things you have proved as spiteful a devil as a man can meet with. But you had better take my pea-jacket now, or your poor little body will be washed away." And in a second divesting himself of a coarse sort of boatman's coat, for which he had exchanged his smart riding coat, he wrapped it around her. She smiled tenderly up in his face, and said, as he held the collar of the jacket close to her neck, with something of the handiness with which one occasionally sees a child try to dress a kitten—"Well, if I am spiteful, you

are not. Ah ! Mr. St. Colmo," she continued, "if Miss Mavesyn knew, as well as I do, all your goodness, and could see day by day, all your manly spirit, your princely beauty, she would not require much wooing."

The playwright has said, "Flattery direct seldom disgusts." It seems a sweeping assertion ; but, directed against women, it is the fashion to believe it. The experience of some might show that the most barefaced adulation has its way with men ; and that the wisest of the species, even while they "pooh, pooh" it away, are pleasingly affected by it. That one, then, on whom the clammy moral sirrup had been so prodigally lavished during his earliest years, should now be attracted and caught by it, ought not to be a matter of surprise.

Ah ! mammas of every state and degree,

who, by exciting and gratifying the hunger of personal vanity in your pretty baby-boys,—an appetite, which above all others, grows with what it feeds upon,—how well you prepare your offspring for the future toils of the “cunning woman!” There is a harsh superstition extant, that “all handsome men are fools.” Can we not see that this scandal, and the scantiness of comeliness among “famous men,” arises, not from the incompatibility of good sense and good looks, but from the deleterious system pursued by some of the mothers, who, from too keen a sense of the beauty of their male children, have turned the glorious gift into an abiding curse. Poor Mrs. St. Colmo! how little would she have comprehended—could she have seen her lovely Eric leading so tenderly up the dangerous path a woman whose artifice alone furnished her attractions—that, by

those velvet robes and silken sashes, those long golden ringlets so carefully tended and so prodigally lauded, she had herself prepared the first coil of the snare now thrown around him.

Mrs. Villaroy did not at the next interview enter with the acquiescent spirit she usually evinced towards all his opinions and views, into the scruples which Colonel St. Colmo then expressed against using his influence with the heiress on behalf of his son.

"This is so like you, Colonel!" she said, in her most urgent manner; a manner, by the way, which generally carried all before it, as would a battering-ram covered with feather beds;—there was softness, but there was also force. "But you must allow me to tell you that your delicacy, and some few fine-drawn notions, are in this instance totally misplaced. You fear that Eric is

selfish and prodigal ; these are the faults of the age. You will find few young men in a certain position of life exempt from them."

The Colonel admitted the truth of her words ; but urged how unequal was the gentle nature of Miss Mavesyn to cope with all the self-will and rugged nature of his son.

" Ah ! there, Colonel, you are quite wrong," Mrs. Villaroy said, in a convincing and convinced tone. " There you must suffer me quite to disagree with you. I know, and you ought to know, that love will lend women sufficient tact and forbearance to tame fiercer lions than your splendid Eric."

" But are you so very sure that she does love him ? " the Colonel asked, nervously.

" *O ! si fait*," she answered, laughing. " It is impossible to doubt it. How would you construe her constant visits to Fern-

acres ? It is all very well to talk of her great regard for Miss Morant ; and we will admit the fact ; for it is perfectly evident. We will also allow for her liking of your two nice daughters. But there is something stronger than all this, which turns those two little grey ponies' heads so often towards your house ; something beyond her own cognisance. I am a little learned in these matters," she continued, with an arch look ; "and know more of her heart than that simple-minded heiress does herself. Let her, then, give herself and her riches where her inclination would prompt. Your interposition, and one or two little words from that silly, shy giant, will set all to rights. And after all," she added, going from a playful manner to quite a business tone of voice ; "you must see that you will be arranging no bad thing for her. You will be giving a girl of low

extraction—one who is perfectly friendless, you may say—a charming nest of relations at Fernacres; without even counting *ce beau Paladin* Eric. Surely her gold could scarcely be better spent than in securing a well-born and handsome husband, and affectionate and high-bred kindred? You ought also to remember, Colonel St. Colmo," she concluded, while a quick and furtively scrutinizing glance showed her interest in her words, "that when your great son is so amply provided for, you yourself may look out for some bonny bride."

With that strange matter-of-fact which sometimes marks the wisest, the Colonel took her words literally; and sighing, said, "My dear Mrs. Villaroy, the happiness of your charming society, and the careful watching over my poor girls, is all that a man of broken fortunes like myself should look to."

She gave him her hand as he spoke, for he had risen to depart; and there was a look in the bright sunny eyes raised to his own, which might have offered contradiction to the limit he had put to his views. He felt the warm glance, and, with the kindly feelings it called out, he held the soft hand more firmly within his own; but apparently failed to interpret aught of promise to himself from the circumstance; fulfilling exactly the character the widow ascribed to him as he left her, when, with half a sigh and half a laugh, she whispered, "That is surely the most sensitive and insensible creature I was ever thrown with."

Unconvinced by all the *parlage* Mrs. Villaroy had brought against his objections to making intercession for his son with Miss Mavesyn, Colonel St. Colmo retired to rest that night, anxious and dispirited. At one

moment thinking, with Shakespeare, that “hearts in love should do their own office ;” and then again feeling that, perhaps, it would be wanting in parental care to leave his son unaided in the difficulty which his shy awkwardness made of his love affairs. While pondering the matter, he heard the door of his room softly open ; and by the light of the night-lamp he perceived that it was Eric, *en robe de chambre*.

Approaching the bed, he said, in a low voice, and with less slang than he usually adopted, “Father, you must promise to bring all this love-making to a head for me. You’ll be the making of me, if you gain Miss Mavesyn’s consent; and if she refuses, by Jove, you may as well pitch me to the devil at once ! I tell you what, my Dad,”—he added, in a very low voice, first looking anxiously at the door, and even advancing

towards it, as if to ascertain that it were closed,—“I am rather nearer mischief than I ever was before ; mischief not so easily got out of as old Sloman’s “nishe sheep” parlour was. You may save me—Miss Mavesyn may save me—and if I were not a blockhead I might save myself.”

“What on earth do you mean, Eric ?” the father said quickly, raising himself on his pillow, and trying to scan the features of his son by the faint glimmer of the lamp.

“Hush ! I can’t tell you now, and perhaps never,” he answered, again looking at the door with the same sort of listening earnestness a cat does at the noise of a mouse in the wainscot. “All you have got to do, is to ride over to The Cedars to-morrow, and tell Miss Mavesyn that I love her with the best sort of love a man can give to a woman.”

At the last sentence his voice sunk almost

to an inaudible whisper ; and with stealthy steps he glided from the room, closing the door with a care which precluded all sound.

At breakfast the next morning, Eric St. Colmo alluded in no way to his interview with his father, or to its import. He looked a little anxious when the groom came to the door for orders ; but he held the newspaper so close to his face as the answer was given, that its expression was hid from every one.

At mid-day, Colonel St. Colmo found himself at The Cedars, but with considerably less pleasure than usual to him at all meetings with one who, by her frank yet gentle —her modest but caressing manner, rendered all meetings agreeable.

The thoughts of how and in what manner he should introduce the subject of his mission, made him unusually silent and abstracted. Mrs. Beresford was never very

talkative ; and to-day being engaged in what she called “counting in a troubadour’s leg,” she did nothing towards assisting the flagging conversation.

Miss Mavesyn at length herself put matters in a fair train by saying, “I rather expected Mr. St. Colmo to-day ; he half promised to come and superintend the drawing out of the new filbert-walk. I wish he had come,” she continued, smiling, “to help me against Bedford the gardener. He pleads so pitifully for the old seed-house to be spared, that I fear my walk will be quite set aside. Would you come and advise me, and convince Bedford the seed-house were better away ?” she added, taking her bonnet, which lay beside her.

The Colonel was too glad to be in movement to delay a moment ; and they proceeded together to the garden. The old seed-house

was visited ; and, with decaying drawers, of which the labels were all illegible—the rusty hooks, on which hung trophies of garden tools—the ricketty wooden slab at which the old gardener stood when making cuttings—the sieve for the mould, the decrepid chair for his leisure, the fasces of flower-sticks, the vast bundles of matting, and its loose sandy floor—seemed, while offering the image of a gardener's *sanctum*, from its state of ruin, to call for repair or abolition. To neither course would the obstinate old man consent. “ You can do as you please, miss,” was all they could get him to say, after the most convincing arguments from Miss Mavesyn. And to the Colonel's suggestions and rather pointed intimations, that such were his young mistress's wishes, he still repeated, “ Miss can do as she please ;” showing evidently that he was prepared to

contest the demolition of the seed-house to the last.

They turned away to devise some other direction for the filbert-walk. "Are you as prepared to let every one have their own way as perfectly as you seem inclined to let old Bedford have his?" the Colonel asked. She smiled as she replied, "It is not very easy to oppose when there is so much firmness shown."

Thereupon—as old stories say—the Colonel spoke. His discourse was lengthy, for he had made it up on his road to The Cedars; it was broken, for he had not quite mastered his subject; and his manner was agitated, for, besides feeling from Eric's conduct of the preceding night, how much was involved in the matter now in hand, there was some curious repugnance in his own mind to bring the whole force of his persuasions to the

subject, or of gaining from his personal influence, her consent to that to which, in reality, she might be averse. And yet with all this difficulty in speaking, from a vague dread of hearing her answer, he still deferred coming to a conclusion. At length he had said all that possibly could be said, and in silence waited her reply; and that, too, without casting his eyes once towards her, in order, as he himself thought, that she should not be embarrassed by his observation. After a minute's pause, she at length spoke in low and gentle tones; but it was neither in rejection or consent. As if willing to gain a more perfect transcript of his many words, the precise extent of which she might be well justified in failing to comprehend, she simply asked, "Did you say that Mr. St. Colmo wished to marry me?"

Rather objecting to bring things to so

small and simple a compass as the mere affirmation would have done, the Colonel was half-disposed to something like recapitulation. However, she now caught his meaning at his first words ; and, with a pretty little gesture, half impatient, half imploring, she seemed to beg him to desist. With a fund of indulgence and kindness at his heart, which as yet had seldom failed in all his dealings with men, and never towards the gentler sex, Colonel St. Colmo would have hesitated in importuning consideration for a bullfinch as he now did for Eric. But he appeared strongly led on by his subject ; and wilfully blind to the manifestation of repugnance and distaste to his words, he framed answers to objections, to which Miss Mavesyn had given no actual utterance. But when, after his earnest and feelingly expressed hopes that the irregularity, and

evil and aimless tenor of Eric's past days would, in the realization of the happiness which a union with herself might secure, pass away as the more harmless toys of childhood had already done, he was startled into silence by her saying quietly, and with that simple matter-of-fact tone peculiar to her, "I know nothing of Mr. St. Colmo's past life which makes me averse to marry him."

"Then you will suffer me to tell him he has your permission to plead his own cause," the Colonel asked quickly; seeing better chance of success for Eric's suit than the manner of Miss Mavesyn had promised.

"No, no; never!" she replied, firmly. "I never can—I never could love him, and I would not marry him if I did."

"But why not?" the Colonel felt himself obliged to ask; and yet he almost dreaded

the answer, there was so strange and indignant an expression passed over her countenance.

“Because he has no religion.”

There was something to Colonel St. Colmo’s peculiar views so odd in this answer,—something so trivial in the mode of expression, that he would have smiled at it; and with the *persiflage* which custom warrants, have attempted to laugh her out of the ideas it expressed. But her looks forbade this. There was something of sternness mixed up with the evident regretful feeling that she was, as it were, inflicting pain by the disclosure of evil, perhaps as yet unsuspected by himself; and her looks more than her assertion pained the Colonel. He saw by them that she attached importance to a failure in something whose existence or non-existence had never been a subject of con-

sideration ; and he was now puzzled how to treat it. With any one else he would have talked of methodism, and quizzed the idea of a *devote* at one-and-twenty. But with her this was impossible ; and yet it was not without some little asperity that he said, “ My dear Miss Mavesyn, are you not rather jumping at a conclusion ? Because the customs of society prohibit conversations on religion, are you justified in assuming that Eric is without it ? ”

This was not so jesuitical a speech on the part of Colonel St. Colmo, as it might be considered. For though it inferred that Eric might have as good a notion of religion as a world that did not talk of such matters might expect, it was no more than he really believed. He would as little have thought of inquiring into the stock of linen, as into the creed of a grown-up child. It was

among the things to be taken on trust ; and that trust had even extended to his own views on the subject, and so entirely precluded all idea of self-examination.

The tone of voice in which Colonel St. Colmo had spoken seemed to have given Miss Mavesyn an impression of having offended ; and she looked up rather piteously as she said, “ I am sorry that I have displeased you.”

“ You have not displeased me, Miss Mavesyn,” the Colonel replied ; still lacking the usual gentleness which characterised his manner. “ But I wish to show you that you are judging my poor Eric most harshly ; and through an unfair and contracted medium.”

“ I do not judge—I must not judge,” she said, almost solemnly. “ I have only spoken an opinion ; and that opinion is formed by a rule which cannot err. I have told you of

it, that you should not ask me to do what makes me so unhappy even to think of."

Something like a tear trembled on her flushed cheek. It was the signal for an instantaneous cessation of persecution on the part of the Colonel. Turning to her with a countenance almost as flushed and agitated as her own, and with considerable perturbation of manner, he besought her, with kind and gentle words, to forgive him if he had greatly pained her. Her tears now gushed forth so plenteously, it showed she had lost all control over them; but she held both her hands towards him, as if by that mute signal she would evince full pardon. He held them for a moment, and then, in a hurried manner, took his leave.

Unconscious of the under current of motives which made Mrs. Villaroy desire so earnestly the union of Eric St. Colmo with

the heiress, and rather priding himself on the zeal with which he had pleaded his cause, the Colonel was no little surprised, at their next meeting, to hear her reproaches on his *maladresse* and failure.

"You have so mistaken the thing," she said, with that pretty air of domination which a woman, who considers herself very clever, assumes with a man, who, besides personal admiration, has acknowledged his belief in the fact. "Instead of bolstering up poor Eric's very fragile theology, you ought to have made over his conversion to the young lady. You ought to know that girls, who take up ultra notions of religion, revel in making proselytes. Dear me, dear me!" she added, wringing her soft white hands with an affectation of despair; "when we both know of so many saintly young ladies who have embarked in marriage with fast

young men, expressly to make them ‘betterer,’ as Mawworm says, I wonder you lost the opportunity of pathetically beseeching her to use her influence over your son. I suspect that Eric’s conversion would be a more glorious offering than an altar-cloth or faldstool to Mr. Hume ; and, to tell you the truth, it is to his policy I ascribe Miss Mavesyn’s scruples, as well as the extreme views which my poor Yolande at times seems disposed to take up.”

This was throwing entirely a new light upon the subject, and seemed in a measure to corroborate ideas that had occasionally passed over his mind, when he had seen Miss Mavesyn in company with the Vicar. In the words of Mrs. Villaroy, however—though he saw by them there was yet hope for his son, and a reason for further intercession—there was much that was dissonant

to his feelings. He found in them a tone of disparagement towards Miss Mavesyn, and a line of conduct pointed out for himself, more resembling the trickery of a soubrette, than the persuasions of a father, anxious for the happiness and welfare of his son. Mrs. Villaroy perceived she had gone a little too far in betraying her notions of policy, and adroitly went again over much of the subject ; removing some of the disagreeable impression left by her words, and yet showing to the Colonel that, having gone so far, it was incumbent on him still to advance ; and, also, to reveal to Miss Mavesyn what her influence might work over the religious opinions of his son.

## CHAPTER IX.

“ She had no winsome looks, no pretty frowning,  
Like daily beauties of the vulgar race;  
But if she smiled, a light was on her face,  
A clear, cool kindness, a lunar beam  
Of peaceful radiance, silvering o'er the stream  
Of human thought.”

H. COLERIDGE.

WHEN Mr. Mavesyn, with the painful sense of a dishonoured home, withdrew to the solitude which alone seemed to offer immunity from the wounds of a world, of which his small experience, beyond the respectable routine of a manufacturing life, had taught

him to know as fraught with evil and iniquity,—his one only thought was to keep his children from its deadly influence. As regarded his poor little Junie, this seemed easy; while, for her further security, he laboured to give her a perfect knowledge of religion. To the absence of this knowledge he attributed much that had befallen her unhappy mother; of whom, though she had talked a good deal of the white shoes she had worn at her *premier communion*; and was most zealous that her prayer-book on her wedding-day should be bound in silver and white velvet, a brief retrospect had shown him that her piety had gone no further.

Unlearned in the theology of schoolmen, **Mr. Mavesyn** looked to the Bible alone, as the source from which the mind was to be ennobled and enlightened, and the soul raised to the aspirations and height of Christianity.

The results proved the wisdom of the measures taken with regard to this fount of the religious education of the young Junie. All the most learned and eloquent of theological writings do nothing, unless they bring all their arguments to prove and illustrate the facts and doctrines contained in the Bible. Therefore, one who receives the Scriptures with the degree of faith which such works by their arguments would create, stands precisely where the most learned in theology can stand.

There was so little of ostentation in the religious feelings of Miss Mavesyn, that even when entering with youthful warm-heartedness into intimacy with her neighbours, none dreamt of attributing to her an excess on this point. To talk of, or commend that love of God which formed her happiness,—the very spirit of her existence, would have

appeared to her as superfluous as to tell those who were basking in the warmest rays of parental fondness, to love their fathers and mothers. She believed that the adoration of the Eternal was in every heart commensurate with that heart's capabilities. All her knowledge, natural and acquired, seemed to point out to her that the love of God was our only link to Him;—His love to us, through his Son, the very embodying of love—a love taught by hope and felt by faith. She looked at the sanctified examples held up in Holy Writ, and found still that idea confirmed by every instance of divine love acting and declaring itself by obedience. Her experience of the world was as yet too confined for her to know, that the truths she regarded as essential to her existence as the air she inhaled, could be—if not entirely ignored,—cast aside as a worn-out tale;—that the law

she looked to for the control of her life, could be evaded by the many as unmeet—by the majority as impossible.

It has been said, that where the grand truths of revelation are accepted without hesitation, and spiritually realised—where the whole system grounded upon them is embraced at once, without resistance of heart or a doubt or misgiving of the reason—where this proceeds not from indifference or a perfect balance of the faculties, it is a “*felicity of nature*,” and not a merit. It was truly thus with Junie Mavesyn. Never had a life of righteousness shown more spontaneous growth or fairer blossoming. Still it was unobtrusive and retiring. There was yet a further reason, why so much fixedness of religion had failed to be remarked by her associates. She did not unite with it the desire of making converts; so usual an ac-

companiment of the piety of young females. It is a feeling we dare not blame; and yet one most conducive to harm, used injudiciously, as women sometimes do manage to use things. The truth is, that no one likes to be *Oh! fie-ed* into holiness; and a girl's comments on the spiritual state of others, assume that tone. Could it be fairly ascertained, it might be discovered, that, for the one spark of faith which a spiritual young lady's talk may have illumined, there have been ten faint gleams extinguished. It infers an assumption of superiority; and there is some feeling in the human breast which revolts against such assumptions. Now, a rebellious temper is the worst one in which to listen to the truths of religion; and to it may be ascribed the failure in effect of the polemical lectures of young or of old ladies. Where the heart has failed to con-

ceive and nourish saving thoughts of God's might and mercy, it requires the words of one having authority to throw a gleam of spiritual sunshine on the dark field of still dormant principles.

Pious girls may do much with cottagers, particularly when in the tract-bearing basket, some comfort—something soothing to bodily ailment, may be conveyed; and the religious remonstrance or instruction, whispered to the ear in the distinct, soft voice of a lady-Christian, may in its department, have equal efficacy with the black-currant jelly which cools and clears the fever-parched throat. But it is not over Berlin-work, or crochet, that "truths divine" come mended. A reciprocity of opinion may choose religious topics for conversation, and such may be salutary; but not the teaching of women in equal conditions as regards age, rank, and

education. And even while allowing the propriety of people conversing of the “things which concern their peace,” we must confess to having seen it but rarely answer in general society, unless led by one whose authority and mission is recognised. People are fond of throwing new lights on things ; and the voices which in church all join in one creed, in drawing-rooms have little pet expoundings of their own to bring forward. Then peeps out the demon controversy ; which, whether stalking up and down the Romanist pulpit, bringing forth mediæval practices in rural chapters, or yelling with enthusiasm in Exeter-hall, is as little like the feeling which casts down golden crowns at the foot of the Almighty, as the lurid gleam of a foundry fire is to the calm radiance of the moon.

Though unimbued with the spirit of con-

version, on the decided irreligious tone of mind of Eric St. Colmo becoming known to her, Miss Mavesyn had made sundry earnest though timid efforts to awaken better feelings. However, even with her limited knowledge of human nature, she knew enough to feel that divine love was not a spirit to be called into existence by a woman's words, and that for that gift, a deeper influence was required. Still, she thought that the fear which should usher in the quickening wisdom, was even such as herself might call forth. St. Colmo was proof against her efforts. "Fear!—what the deuce should he fear? Did Miss Mavesyn take him for a sneak of a tub-jumper? Fear!"—and he opened his splendid blue eyes on the anxious young woman. "Fear! If any one thought they could put a fellow of five-and-twenty into a

fright about what was to happen fifty years hence, they might as well make a rat or a rabbit of him!" There was no little indignation at the bare idea; and the advice was given that Miss Mavesyn should at least leave preaching to the parsons.

When Colonel St. Colmo, acting upon the suggestion of Mrs. Villaroy, besought Miss Mavesyn to delay her rejection of Eric's addresses, and rather to use her influence over his affections by luring him to a better sense of religion, she shook her head despondingly, declaring with startling ingenuousness, that she had already made the trial—and failed.

"Things look up, my dear Colonel," Mrs. Villaroy said merrily, when told of this admission on the part of the heiress. "Keep Eric still in the background; and you yourself, with all that charming manner which

makes you so irresistible to us country ladies, will win his bride for him."

Among her other accomplishments, Mrs. Villaroy, during some visits at a fashionable deanery, had got up a good deal of religious talk. This she endeavoured to impart to Colonel St. Colmo, mixing it with arguments from Scripture, teaching the saving nature of a wife's righteousness. But he would none of it; protesting that if his son's success depended on his assuming feelings and opinions to which he was a stranger, he must retire from the mission.

"I would strongly recommend you not, Colonel," Mrs. Villaroy said archly. "If you leave the field open a minute, we are lost. I hear that a certain Dan Colyton is just returned from his travels; and that both father and mother mean to use all their influence with this perverse little heiress to

secure her for their son. *Aux armes, mon Colonel!*"

With the injunctions of Mrs. Villaroy as regarded vigilance and activity in his attentions and representations to Miss Mavesyn, Colonel St. Colmo was well inclined to comply; but as the winter stole over the fair vales of Devonshire, there were less facilities of meeting. Besides this, owing to Mrs. Beresford's indisposition, Miss Morant had again been on a long visit to The Cedars.

When the Colonel willingly gave his permission to what, even in idea, appeared to afford Miss Mavesyn so much delight, he ventured to make one condition—one which the caution of Eric, in keeping his aspirations to the hand of the heiress a secret from Miss Morant, instigated. It was, that in moments of confidence she should not touch upon his son's hopes as regarded herself. There was

a little quickness in her answer, as she repudiated entirely the idea that in their *causerie* over their work they should touch upon subjects usually considered sacred and confidential. As it happened, however, there was no difficulty in abstaining from such delicate topics. Miss Morant's interest seemed more to rest on details of the early years of the orphan, than on her opinions and feelings of the present day. Indeed, she appeared never tired of listening to long dreamy reminiscences of her young hostess regarding her father's care and kindness, occasionally mixed up with histories of her young brother's restlessness and impatience of seclusion, his final escapade and total disappearance.

In consequence of some cessation of gay meetings, the cards that announced a concert and ball at Mr. Colyton's were received with

much interest ; more particularly so when this party was understood to be a rejoicing to celebrate the return of the young heir of Colyton House and lands.

Colonel St. Colmo had always liked young Colyton, though knowing little of him ; and it had been only when he learnt that the rich lawyer actually contemplated uniting his obscure son with the daughter of a St. Colmo, that he felt sorry he had tolerated any acquaintanceship between the young people. However, this had all passed from his mind to give place to the graver interests which now occupied him ; and he only recollect ed the indignity offered by the proposed alliance, on perceiving that on entering the superb drawing-rooms of Mrs. Colyton, poor Rose looked pale and agitated. This was superfluous emotion, as far as regarded any anticipation of the notice which Dan

Colyton, as he was irreverently called, might take of her. In truth, he appeared to consider himself as a stranger to all assembled; and seemed perfectly unacquainted with any present, except a fat chorister from Exeter Cathedral. Perhaps the attention given to this worthy was warranted by his perfect execution of a love-sick madrigal of the sixteenth century, and which he sang with that tenderness of expression, that might give rise to the idea that it was the natural outpouring of the heart of a fat old man, who drank porter and took snuff, as well as the harmonious effusion of an Amyntas.

It was just possible that this disregard shown by young Colyton to all his old neighbours and acquaintances—friends he had none—was impelled by juvenile recollections; and that some of the mockery pointed at his mother, which, in his visits with her to the

magnates around his sharp young eyes had detected, was even now remembered, and so resented. His excessive affection for his mother justified this idea; but, be that as it may, he manifested neither signs of pleasure nor displeasure in his demeanour to those around him; and he leant against the wall near the singers, with his hands behind him, his eyes resting on his well-made shoes, with an air of such utter indifference, it seemed to infect those who would have gazed with curiosity on the traveller; so that people soon appeared as unmindful of him as he of them.

The concert ended, young ladies began to look excited, and to talk together with such deep interest, as quite to preclude the idea that they were at the moment in anxious expectation of being asked to dance. Mrs. Villaroy was seated near the door of the dancing-room, conversing with Colonel St.

Colmo, who stood near her, when young Colyton advancing to her, said quietly but courteously, at the same time offering his arm—

“ My father and mother are so long discussing the claims to precedence of Miss Villaroy and Miss St. Colmo, that I think you will spare them a world of embarrassment, if you will do me the honour of standing up with me.”

Surprised, as it were, by the suddenness of the request, Mrs. Villaroy rose, and taking the offered arm, proceeded to the dancing-room; and the quadrille was formed ere she recollect ed that she had given up dancing for the last ten years. However, there was too much indifference in the manner of Mr. Colyton for her to try to awaken his *nonchalance* to the fact; and they went through the quadrille as though they had

been in the habit of dancing with each other for a season. Mrs. Villaroy, in one respect, differing from the custom of ladies reappearing in a quadrille after a long retirement; who usually, with straitened arms, and an alternate shuffle and hop, look around with a sort of apologetic smile for the juvenility they have been forced into committing.

As they proceeded to the refreshment-room, Mr. Colyton said, with the same calm familiarity which almost ruffled, while it amused, his partner—

“Do you know, Mrs. Villaroy, you have quite settled the question, if there could have been a doubt, that velvet and diamonds are a much prettier dancing costume than that misty, gauzy medium, through which young ladies usually appear. And that *coiffure* is perfect,” he added, looking ad-

miringly at a little plume of the tips of ostrich feathers, which curled gracefully at the back of Mrs. Villaroy's well-formed head. She looked sharply at him, for she feared he was quizzing, and required reproof; but there was too much languor and *sang froid* in his manner for her to fancy that he had energy sufficient for a second motive to his words. Therefore she said good temperedly—

“Are you really ignorant, Mr. Colyton, that you have dragged a wall-flower out to dance, and that the costume you affect to admire is the decent habit of a chaperon?”

He laughed at her words with more animation than he had yet shown, as he replied—

“Well, if that is the case, your neighbours, who know you only as a woman of fashion, and an authoress, may thank me

for showing that they now may add a graceful dancer to the category."

"An authoress, Mr. Colyton?" Mrs. Villaroy asked, with unaffected surprise; "who could have told you that. The utmost of my energies in literature have been one or two *pièces de société*, none of which have ever known the respectability of printers' ink."

"Indeed!" Mr. Colyton replied; "it was a man at the Athenæum, whom I saw before I came down, who told me this, and who affects to have met you at some high-fashioned place, and quoted about a dozen of novels of your writing, all bearing pithy names of wonderful effect. But I am glad to find he was untrue. I should expect your next might be, 'Dan Colyton, or the Ups and Downs of a Parvenu;' or some such tragical combination. Do you know, Mrs. Villaroy," he added, with the quiet,

rapid utterance which made his words pass so pleasantly and glibly, "I really think that the treatment once used in Ireland for those affected with hydrophobia, might be extended to a female novel-writer in a quiet neighbourhood. I mean, you know, a little friendly smothering with a feather-bed."

"I quite agree with you as to the *desagremen* of the thing; and the dread one must have of seeing all one's village annals dressed up for Colburn," Mrs. Villaroy replied in the same tone of *persifflage*. "But I think your punishment might be limited to the system prescribed to a chimney nuisance,—let them consume their own smoke."

"Ah! what a refinement of torture! Fancy poor James having to read his own thousand and one volumes! Oh! that is so like a woman's notions of mercy." And Colyton laughed outright.

Next to receiving attentions from those whose attentions are prized, is the fact that such should see attentions paid; and Mrs. Villaroy rather rejoiced in perceiving that Colonel St. Colmo, who had remarked on the indifference with which Colyton appeared to regard all living things, must now see that she had cut out the fat chorister. She therefore still lent a pleased ear to the "plausible talk" of young Colyton, until a stop was put to it by his father, who with the bustling, business-like manner, which marks little people at great entertainments, came to beg Dan to come and be introduced to Miss Mavesyn.

"She is just at this moment disengaged," the old man added impressively, seeing his son still inclined to linger. "Mrs. Villaroy, will you give your orders that Dan should dance with her."

"There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flow, leads on to fortune," Mrs. Villaroy said mockingly, as rising, she left the father and son together. And when, after the space of half-an-hour, she saw young Colyton still at the heiress's side, she thought that probably he so considered the matter, and felt uneasy for the interests of Eric St. Colmo.

"With what long stories are you suffering Mr. Colyton to take your attention from the dancing, Miss Mavesyn?" Mrs. Villaroy asked kindly, as she placed herself beside her.

"Indeed, Miss Mavesyn has drawn all my long stories upon herself by asking questions concerning an old playmate of mine, the son of the nurseryman at Breeford. A tender hearted fellow, who used to scold me when I was a youngster for taking birds' nests; and even when fostering my love for fishing, used

to preach humanity like old Izaak, and teach me how to put the worm tenderly on the hook."

"Oh ! I know the man perfectly," Mrs. Villaroy answered. "A sort of young Meadows, who hands you a pot of early mignonette with such an air, one is inclined to drop a curtsey in thanking him, instead of the vulgar payment of a shilling. But indeed he is much too good looking for a young lady's gardener, if that is what these questions and answers are to bring about."

"It appears to me that Miss Mavesyn seems contemplating more brilliant advantages for young Marshal than even the felicity of tying up her bouquets. But Mrs. Villaroy," Colyton added, looking slightly ill-tempered at the inference which her light words involved; "I thought it was an admitted and wholesome fact, that ladies never remarked

the personal appearance of men so decidedly in a sphere beneath them."

Though Miss Mavesyn rarely entered as a third person into conversation that was going on, but usually listened with an earnestness of attention that was as encouraging as words, while it showed the freshness of feeling which had such interest in the talk of others ; now, on seeing Mrs. Villaroy look a little piqued by young Colyton's speech, said, as if to extenuate her words—"Mrs. Villaroy means that John Marshal is too good and well-bred, besides being too educated for a servant," and then blushed deeply at her own forwardness in defending one so well able to take care of herself.

Wondering at her blushes, and not at all comprehending that she had come to the rescue, Mrs. Villaroy asked, "Is he really so well educated, Miss Mavesyn ? That is

doubtless owing to the advantage of Mr. Colyton's early acquaintance." This was said with an intention of being malicious; and doubtless some more wordy shafts would have passed, but for the approach of the elder Colyton to conduct her to the supper-room. When seated, she looked around to see how Eric was taking advantage of circumstances; and beheld him with a knot of young men sitting at a side table. A little to reconcile her to this insensibility to his own interests, she perceived that young Colyton had ceded his place by Miss Mavesyn to Colonel St. Colmo; and by the attention which she appeared to lend to his every word, she guessed that perhaps the father was more likely to influence her than the very laconic son.

Acting upon this idea, Mrs. Villaroy had constantly urged Colonel St. Colmo to make

frequent visits to The Cedars; telling him that she fancied she perceived signs of more favourable feelings towards Eric. He obeyed her wishes, but was less sanguine as to the results.

Although his visits to Miss Mavesyn may be said to have been for a specific purpose, it was not always that they could be brought to bear upon it. Still there was a charm in them that well consoled the Colonel for the interruptions and failure of opportunity, which visitors, or other causes, might occasion. Had he stayed to examine into his secret feelings, he would have discovered that he now brought less hope, less energy to the intercessory arguments which he used in the cause of Eric. Not that he felt compunction on the score that it was a misuse of the influence he held over the opinions of Miss Mavesyn to move them in favour of his

son ; and so scatter some of the prejudices she appeared to hold. A father's anxiety for a child seemed to justify him ; while old habits, old ideas still acted with their indelible bias. It had been such a common thing for "our fellows" to assist each other in these delicate matters ; half the —th Hussars owing their wives to the good offices of their brother officers. But that which now crippled his endeavours was the fast-growing conviction that Junie Mavesyn was in everything too perfect a treasure to be consigned to the keeping of such a one as Eric ; while the impression forced itself on his mind, that the very prejudices he had proposed to himself to undermine, were the very bulwarks of her quiet, but solid virtues.

Consistent with his declaration to Mrs. Villaroy, and his aversion that anything like false pretences should mark his proceedings,

he had foreborne to urge the conversion of Eric from his lax notions of religion. There would have been something too meanly hypocritical to make her piety a reason that she should give attention to his opinions, and thus lend indulgence to his hopes. On the contrary, true to the candour of his disposition, he one day, as a man of the world, carelessly remonstrated with her for her extreme ideas. He told her that he regretted to see that she could suffer herself to be influenced by a false notion of the claims of religion, generated in solitude; when a few more years would show her that the living up to the requisitions of the mysterious faith which she affected to understand was as incompatible with the existing order of things as the Roman mythology. He had said thus much lightly and laughingly; for it harmonized too closely with his habitual notions to re-

quire any effort to bring it forward ; and in his desire to shake Miss Mavesyn from what Mrs. Villaroy called desperate methodism, and as which he felt disposed to consider it, he was the more strongly inclined to fling some of the world's missiles against a principle which warred with its toils.

He was standing with folded arms, leaning against the window, near which she sat at work. He believed he had approached the window to scan the beautiful prospect it afforded of the fern and furze-covered hill which rose before it—beautiful even in winter. However, his eyes had rested only on the fair head bent before him, and were either in examination of the extraordinary neatness of her appearance, or of the exquisite shell comb which held up a glossy coil of thick brown hair. She had listened in silence and stillness to his words ; so that the

Colonel was utterly unprepared for the sight of the deep distress which her raised head betrayed to him. With the belief that the emotions of women are usually shown by tears and passionate gestures, the view of this silent agony was in a measure difficult to understand; and he waited that her words might afford explanation.

With a violent effort she at length spoke and with anxious looks asked, “Do you use the words “mysterious faith” in anger to me, to show that you resent my having remarked on Mr. St. Colmo’s light way of thinking, or do you really mean to speak disparagingly upon the subject.”

“My dear Miss Mavesyn, how can you for an instant believe that I should feel anger to you?” Colonel St. Colmo asked hurriedly, alarmed at the effect which his words had produced. “How can you fancy that I

would offend by disparaging that which you respect? Still, I would put you on your guard. And I confess that I firmly believe that young girls may dwell on, what better Churchmen than myself have called the mysteries of religion, to the destruction of all affections, and even of reason itself."

The "mysteries of religion!" There were none to her, who, with the bright eyes of faith, had realized the existence of her Creator; none to her, who had received revelation as the words of the Infinite spoken to man;—man, the masterpiece of those powers of creation which had been expended on this portion of the universe. The first pages of that revelation had shown her man near to God; and her heart had swelled at the image thus given. It had shown her what it had shown to countless myriads—that God and man have affinity. Succeeding pages had

shown her man's gradual alienation ; but still they occasionally revealed "a messenger with him—an interpreter—one among a thousand—to show man his uprightness." (Job xxxiii. 23.) And when, at the widest point of disunion, she found that One had visited this earth, who in His humanity had recalled the estranged affections of man to God ; and in His divinity had renewed and ratified a new and more blessed covenant ; still she saw no mystery ; but recognised in this plan of salvation, the one alone proper, where a world, failing to discern the everlasting God, required his nearer manifestation. She might marvel at the seasons' successions, the phenomena of the elements, and all the secret craft of nature ; but, that God should visit his people,—teach, atone for, and save them, could excite no force of wonderment. All this with rapid and anxious utterance

she had shown to Colonel St. Colmo. She spoke with the simplicity and peculiarity of expression corresponding with her usual style ; thereby proving that her words were the ingathering of her own labours in the rich mines of Scripture ; and flowed rather from the abundance of her heart, than from the acquisitions of the mind.

Contrary to his usual custom, Colonel St. Colmo made no mention of this interview and its agitations to Mrs. Villaroy. And again and again he passed whole mornings at the Cedars, of which he rendered no account to the accomplished seconder of Eric's views. Indeed, a different motive seemed now to actuate those visits, and it was one he could not well analyse, much less describe. And though the furtherance of his son's union with Miss Mavesyn was still the ultimate design—and still kept in view ;—

circumstances had shown him that nothing was less probable, unless some previous change of opinion could be effected. In the constant anxiety manifested by Eric, on the subject of Miss Mavesyn being at length induced to listen to his addresses, in the deep financial involvements which still seemed gathering around, the Colonel believed he saw a guarantee of his son becoming all that she might desire; and to be a means therefore of translating some of her peculiar sentiments into language that would convey them to the mind of Eric, became the Colonel's care. This of necessity involved frequent meetings and religious discussions. They were not without their charm; and as time went on, and Christianity had become a topic of almost daily conversation, his heart was strangely moved to find a woman—and that a young one—reverting by some

mental power to circumstances occurring eighteen centuries back— vividly realising, as it were, each incident of the events recorded, and keeping every saying in her heart with the fervour of those who had received them orally. He had never till now associated intimately with one who could thus live on the leaves of that record ;—alighting on each blossom of hope, not as the summer fly to scan its beauties, but like the bee, there to gather food and sustenance against the dark days of existence.

## CHAPTER X.

“Love gives itself, but is not bought ;  
Nor voice, nor sound betrays  
Its deep, impassioned gaze.  
It comes—the beautiful, the free,  
The crown of all humanity,  
In silence and alone  
To seek the elected one.”

LONGFELLOW.

LOCKE has said that, “to one who is once persuaded that Jesus Christ was sent by God to be a King and a Saviour of those who do believe in him, all his commands become principles; there needs no other proof for

the truth of what he says, but that he said it ; and then there needs no more but to read the inspired books to be instructed.”

That felicitous state of conviction was as yet unfelt by Colonel St. Colmo ; indeed, he could scarcely comprehend its reality, and his mind became unsettled by the exhibition in another, of feelings as yet so dimly understood. He was at once dissatisfied with himself and desponding for Eric. By degrees he became sensible that he could not further presume to contest what he conceived the extreme religious views of Miss Mavesyn, without consulting the authority from whence she took them ; and yet he turned with a nervous dread from a study which he felt assured, if it in any measure affected his onward view, would also throw gloom and censure on all that was past. With Miss Mavesyn too—though her gentleness and

humility were precisely the same as when they had conducted so much to the hold her other attractions gave her over the liking of those who knew her—an antagonistic spirit had arisen. And though his wish was less to question her being right, than to prove that he himself was not wrong; still there was motive and a secondary intention hidden in much that he said, and which infinitely disturbed the tone of harmony till then existing between them.

Colonel St. Colmo could not conceal from himself that he had learnt much that was hitherto unknown to him, from each succeeding interview with Miss Mavesyn; neither could he refrain from feeling that there was more of purpose than chance in the turn their conversations now usually took. At first he himself—seeking a knowledge of her peculiar views, in pursuance of his intention in en-

lightening the mind of Eric in the matter—had introduced the subject of religion. It was now she who brought it forward. And though it was done with tact and delicacy, still it was evident that a lesson was to be imparted. With the pride and jealousy of manhood, which revolts from the notion of learning aught from a female, the Colonel resented, in spite of himself, the superiority it inferred.

To these feelings might probably be ascribed the slight degree of satisfaction with which Colonel St. Colmo found that, even in matters of religious opinion, Miss Mavesyn was not infallible, and that she had incurred some blame in the neighbourhood. The son of the nursery gardener of Breeford, a young man of great industry and worth, but of questionable Church principles,—inasmuch as he had been once seen to enter Ebenezer

Chapel, and that his sister had in fact married one of the preachers of the same establishment,—had been presented by Miss Mavesyn with five hundred pounds, a sum necessary for the purchase of the goodwill and ground of a nursery near Exeter, to which his hopes had turned as a means of ensuring his future prosperity. And not content with this, the heiress had actually driven to Exeter to order furniture for his cottage, the expense of which was to be defrayed by young Mr. Colyton, who interested himself much in the welfare of the playmate of his boyhood.

Mr. Hume had loudly anathematized Miss Mavesyn for this patronage of a waverer. Others had caught the echo. People cannot always find opportunity to display their piety; and there were some who gladly embraced the one now offered of proving their orthodoxy, by distinctly condemning the heiress.

There were also some pulmonary young ladies inhabiting the little bay-window villas of Stokebree, who made their abuse of this overt act against the Church, as they called it, a stepping-stone to the handsome Vicar's favour and his sister's tea-parties. Mr. Hume had probably deeper views in expressing disapprobation of the channel in which Miss Mavesyn had suffered her charity to run; but, be that as it may, Colonel St. Colmo, a little exulting in the idea that the perfectibility, with which somehow he was beginning to invest her, was not intact, still thought it but kind to apprise her of the facts, and the menitory visit she must expect from the Vicar.

Gently and delicately, though with a little spice of triumph, the Colonel informed Miss Mavesyn of the schismatic colouring under which her bounty to the young gardener appeared to her neighbours. He expected a

little anger and some earnest arguments brought forward for her defence; none of which he was at all prepared to confute, except with the simple assertion, that the Vicar, who was supposed to know more than herself, vehemently disapproved her conduct.

Perhaps the cause of religion never was more strongly supported than by the manner in which Colonel St. Colmo's information was received. Nothing could exceed the regret, or the deep feeling of self-condemnation which it seemed to create. The independence of the woman of fortune, the impunity with which one so universally courted and caressed might suppose herself invested, all seemed to fade before the sense of blame; and the unyielding spirit with which she at times had resisted all his efforts to prove her sense of religion too extreme, at once bent to the opinion of one in authority.

A flood of kindly feelings and admiration of her gentleness and humility rushed to St. Colmo's heart. "Sweet, modest-minded Junie! Can Eric ever deserve such excellence?" was the thought which occurred, and almost burst from his lips.

From having rather enhanced the displeasure expressed by Mr. Hume at her prodigality to the unsound nurseryman, the Colonel now pursued the opposite course; and sought to lessen the effect of that which he had disclosed, by stating what he really believed, that there was more ostentation than reality in the blame ascribed by the Vicar, and that the ladies of the neighbourhood had much increased the cabal. But this failed to reassure her; and she sat looking so plaintive and unhappy, that St. Colmo hated himself for having occasioned her so much pain. But when, at her urgent re-

quest, it was arranged that he should see Mr. Hume, and express her contrition for what had passed, there was something so gratifying in the implicit trust with which she leant upon him; something so endearing in the pretty helplessness she evinced, that he felt, in spite of himself, disposed to rejoice at the trouble which had come upon her.

At a grand entertainment given by Sir Patrick Stowell to celebrate the marriage of Sir Ralph Sutton with his fair young daughter Lizzy, and to which all the neighbourhood had been invited, Miss Mavesyn found early opportunity of pleading her own cause with Mr. Hume, and of alleging all which she conceived might extenuate the fault that she was accused of committing. Colonel St. Colmo was near her at the time, and thought there was too much humility in

the tone with which she pleaded guilty to having followed the bent of her own inclinations and the wishes of young Mr. Colyton, without reference to the religious tenets of the person she had befriended.

The way in which Mr. Hume received all her gentle excuses, rather brought to the Colonel's mind a remark which Mrs. Villaroy had once made,—that she believed the Vicar had a tender interest in extending his influence over the mind of Miss Mavesyn. The idea was now eminently displeasing ; and, as if to call in aid to interrupt a conversation which seemed so full of interest, he turned his eyes around the crowded room. They encountered those of Mrs. Villaroy. She smiled significantly, and approaching towards him, whispered, “ This must not be, Colonel. Poor Eric’s cause is more endangered now than it ever was before, considering the religious

bias of that naughty little lady of the Cedars." The Colonel thought so too; and the notion gave him a pang which he ascribed to the knowledge of the wretched state of his own, and therefore of his son's affairs.

"I will tell you what, Colonel St. Colmo, this affair must be brought to a conclusion," Mrs. Villaroy said, half mocking, half in earnest. "You must own to having failed entirely in all your delicate *theologie-diplomatique*. I will try what I can do. If I fail, you may depend on seeing the little heiress Mrs. Hume, before the end of six months. That vicar has wonderful power over the minds of people. And after turning such a fellow as Ned Gibbons from laying down his lobster pots on a Sunday, it will be small matter to make that little gentle thing say 'Yes,' and give her pretty simple self and thousands to his and the Church's disposal."

"Can you prevent this?" asked Colonel St. Colmo, with a consternation in the muscles of his face,—a perturbation in his voice which Mrs. Villaroy almost fancied augured more of debt and difficulty than had become known to her. But she smiled as she said, "*Voyons donc,*" and taking his arm approached Miss Mavesyn and the Vicar.

Mrs. Villaroy, from her long admixture with the world, had, like the confederate of a conjuror, learnt a good many clever tricks. The one was a power of having very much her own way with people, without their exactly knowing how it was that their will was coerced. This kind of invisible *lasso* she now threw around Miss Mavesyn, who made the appointment of being with her the next day at twelve o'clock, without the least attempt at evading her wish on that point, though a little ruffle on her usually tranquil

brow, betrayed that the idea was in something troubous to her. A quick, nervous look at Colonel St. Colmo seemed to ask his opinion on the matter; but somehow he had anticipated the look, and she could learn nothing from his averted countenance. Eric St. Colmo offered a timely interruption to a pause which was becoming slightly embarrassing, inasmuch as it was evident that the Vicar was looking for the renewal of the *tête-à-tête* which, to his great despite, had been disturbed; and which Mrs. Villaroy willed should not be resumed.

Eric, whose gallantry resembled very much that of a poodle dog's, and scarcely ever went farther than fetching and carrying, had brought an ice to Miss Mavesyn, and seemed to feel a right to remain by her side while she ate it. Young Mr. Colyton, without exactly so forestalling the tray, conducted the

bearer to Mrs. Villaroy, and the conversation then became general.

"I have been listening to a great deal of nonsense with respect to the wedding of to-day," Colyton said merrily. "And besides nonsense, people always seem to think that on the occasion of a marriage, they may mix up a little ill-temper with their talk. It is rather tiresome, however, to hear the same parrot-note from all the ladies, touching what they call the disparity of the ages of the bride and bridegroom."

"But do you not think the monotony of the note is redeemed by its truth?" asked Mrs. Villaroy. "There is surely disparity between the ages of a man of fifty-eight and a girl of eighteen?"

"Disparity! I hate the word. Where there is love there can be no disparity," Colyton answered. "Oh! I could quote

such a prodigious list of happy marriages where the ages have been widely different, beginning with Mahomet and his old wife Cadija, that would prove the fallacy of a contrary opinion. Tell me, Miss Mavesyn," he added, addressing the heiress, "if the man you loved found himself seventy when you were only thirty, would it make any difference in your affections if, instead of escorting you to a ball, he asked you to play patience with him at home, and sweeten his arrowroot ? I grant you that it would be a bore,—marriage they tell me is full of bores,—but would it lessen your love ?"

Miss Mavesyn smiled, and a pinky blush stole gradually to her cheek, as, turning to Mr. Hume, she said playfully—"Am I obliged to answer ?"

"Certainly not!" he replied, evidently pleased with the reference.

“Ah, well!” Colyton continued; “human nature is too open in its dealings to require individual opinion to certify to them. I know—Miss Mavesyn might know—Mrs. Villaroy does know—that love has a sort of sliding scale, by which the difference of age, station, and country, can be equalized. And the reason that we do not oftener see it called into action as regards age, is, that few men come to Sir Ralph Sutton’s period of life without having already found a pretty Lizzy Stowell to love. Even in taking a political view of the baronet’s proceedings, I think he has shown great *nous*,” Colyton still rattled on, finding that none of his auditors, for reasons best known to themselves, proffered an opinion. “If an old bachelor thinks it well to marry, he has a much better chance of a quiet life by taking a young thing from her father’s house—one

whose will and wishes have never been beyond parental control—rather than one whose age has taught her independence. And suppose, after all, she should displace the uxorious despot from his throne. It is just the revolution that no man would object to. The rebel—a pretty young girl; her barricades—his torn-up bachelor habits, from whence she might pelt him with roses, or cast sweet glances, as the case might require. Now the woman that the world would have chosen for him would have marched in, with dominion in her air, and a form of government at her finger ends, about as legitimate and as popular as that of poor Louis Dixhuit, when he was shovelled on to the French throne by the allied armies."

Eric, who had always liked young Colyton from a boy, now laughed loud in applause at his friend's animation. There was a general

smile at his volubility, though some of his remarks had rather embarrassed one or two of his auditors; but all marvelled at his high spirits, little divining that at the moment his heart was labouring with tenderness and repressed feelings.

Mrs. Villaroy had made it a condition, on arranging the hour for her interview with Miss Mavesyn on the succeeding morning, that Colonel St. Colmo should be present. He made some feeble objections, but she was inexorable; so, according to the appointment, he was punctual in reaching the Lodge, at the same time that he exhibited unfeigned symptoms of distaste to the affairs about to be transacted. With considerable agitation of feeling, he wandered from window to window, hoping internally, as the hour of rendezvous was past, that something might have prevented Miss Mavesyn from fulfilling her engagement at all.

The truth was, that, however much he desired that things should be brought to a crisis, Colonel St. Colmo rather distrusted Mrs. Villaroy's gentleness and delicacy in a matter that required the extreme of both. He knew that she could be scarcely sensible of the sensitiveness and timidity of the orphan ; and yet he now found that she was decided on exacting from her a direct avowal of favour or disfavour for his son. To be present was to be implicated. This gave him an impression of acute pain ; and he therefore suggested that as he had already waited half-an-hour, he might now be released entirely.

“ You are altogether tiresome, Colonel St. Colmo,” Mrs. Villaroy said, looking the anger her words proclaimed. “ It is anything but agreeable, the attempt to draw this young lady’s love-secret from her. And yet

I feel so assured that, by a little firmness in controverting her silly objections regarding poor Eric's light way of thinking, she may be actually induced to accept him at once, that I am disposed to assist you both ; particularly as it is a step which I am certain will be as conducive to her own happiness as to his. And now you want to back out—just too at the very moment when, unless you are by, to answer for the gratitude and favour of your bantling, nothing can be consolidated."

"But do you believe she is any way favourable to his addresses ?" the Colonel asked, catching only in this long remonstrance the words that seemed to announce the circumstance, and which could alone tranquillize a good deal of uneasy feeling.

"I have always believed so," Mrs. Villaroy replied. "But I also believe that where a

man is tiresome and shy as that great Eric, a woman would rather smother her love than submit it to such vicissitudes of temperature, as the hot and cold fits of an agueish lover like Eric. If you saw half as sharply as I do, Colonel St. Colmo," she continued, rather lowering her voice to a tone of caution; "you would see that your son never ventures to show the least attention to the heiress when Miss Morant is present; and that, moreover, after that mysterious young person's visits to the Cedars, there seems more estrangement between them. My firm belief is, that one half of the anxiety *la Morant* shows for invitations from Miss Mavesyn, is for the reason that, when there, she has a better opportunity of quietly thwarting his pretensions in that quarter. I have always felt positive that it was your governess who first chilled all that warmth of feeling which sprung from the thunder and lightning affair."

The Colonel thought so too ; but he was interrupted in his assent to the words of Mrs. Villaroy, who certainly had a wonderful talent of what she called talking people over, by the announcement of Miss Mavesyn.

There was a degree of hurry different to the tranquil tone which usually marked her manners, as Miss Mavesyn apologised for being later than the hour named by Mrs. Villaroy. She accounted for her want of punctuality by mentioning that she had driven round by Breeford to speak to young Marshal, and had rather miscalculated the distance. Whether she was confused by the recollection of the little heresy—as which her bounty had been considered ; or whether she feared her visit to him might be thought to savour of a stiff-necked opposition to the Vicar, did not appear ; but there was a trouble on her brow

and a trepidation in her words which told of agitation.

“Are we to keep your visit a secret from Mr. Hume?” Mrs. Villaroy said archly.

“Oh! no, indeed not. I mean to tell him myself of the results of my interview with John Marshal. It is all settled; and I have his solemn promise never again to frequent a dissenting chapel.”

“Ah! that is charming; you have acted with your usual good sense,” Mrs. Villaroy said, in that glossy tone of voice she often used while thinking of other things. After a short pause, adding—“And now, my dear Miss Mavesyn, I am anxious to draw your attention to another point, that requires quite as much settling as young Marshal’s orthodoxy. Your friend Colonel St. Colmo and I have come to the decision that you ought really now to put poor Eric out of all the misery

of suspense, and reward the sincere affection which we both know he feels for you."

The Colonel did not quite like this announcement of association in their views; but he was too much agitated at the moment to remonstrate, and listened with averted head and eyes to what Miss Mavesyn's answer might be. Had he looked, he might have seen an alternation of colour on the orphan's cheeks, which would have shown him how she was moved. As it was, while her words were as simple as usual, he fancied that in her tone he could trace a little indignation as well as trouble, as she said, "I believed that Colonel St. Colmo had fully understood that I was unable to accept Mr. St. Colmo's proposals."

"Oh, yes ! He understood all that, as far as it went," Mrs. Villaroy replied ; going infinitely beyond her authority. "And

he honoured you for your scruples. Still I am sure that you will permit me to tell you that in a certain position in life, it is not customary to persist in a refusal where extreme intimacy with the family warrants the supposition that no personal or valid objection can be urged. And I must really just hint to you, that under such circumstances, a young lady of family would feel that she could scarcely continue a rejection which would finally involve a rupture with the family she had affected to regard, and necessarily cause her to be looked coldly upon by a neighbourhood, which would feel itself aggrieved by slight or injustice shown to those who had long been valued and respected."

Miss Mavesyn could scarcely follow the thread of this argument; but its tenor, and perhaps its very obscurity, seemed to cause

infinite dismay ; and with more of gesticulation than she had ever yet used, she clasped her hands, as it were, in agony ; and half-rising from her chair, exclaimed—" Oh ! pray —pray, Mrs. Villaroy, do not say that I ought to marry Mr. St. Colmo."

Mrs. Villaroy caught at the vantage ground this tacit admission of her power gave her ; but with much show of kindness she took the extended hands, saying—" Indeed, my dear young friend, I would not say that you ought to do anything you did not like to do ; but I am so sure that if, in this instance, you do as Colonel St. Colmo and myself wish, you will find your happiness in your concession. Oh ! we perfectly understand your feelings in all this," Mrs. Villaroy added, still holding the extended hands with a caressing expression. " It is all so perfectly natural. New as you are to the world,

we may expect a little averseness to a change of condition—a little doubt as to the results;—and it is this knowledge which has induced us now to urge you on the subject. It is in the absence of parents, too, that we feel our friendship may press you to a step which would have been recommended by them."

There was a look of such consternation cast towards the Colonel from the distressed girl at this assertion, that he seemed to think it in a measure incumbent on him a little to neutralize it; and he exclaimed anxiously to Mrs. Villaroy, as if fearing to trust himself to speak to the orphan, whom she was so unmercifully schooling—"Miss Mavesyn must also bear in mind, that, as parents wishing her welfare, we can bear no ill-will at her decision, whatever it may be."

His words appeared to give her a courage, of which the expressions and commanding

manner of Mrs. Villaroy had robbed her. And putting her hands to her eyes, as if to shut out the angry light which instinct told her would flash from those of Mrs. Villaroy, she said plaintively, and as if half afraid of her own firmness, “Mrs. Villaroy, I cannot marry Mr. St. Colmo.”

Mrs. Villaroy was not, however, so impolitic as to weaken her cause by betraying anger; and though there was a little heightened colour on her cheeks—a deeper lustre in her fine eyes, she said, in the same bland tones she had previously used, “Well, dear Miss Mavesyn, if you act up to those words, you must be prepared for the construction we must put on them.” And then with a manner she meant to be awful and impressive, she added—“No girl can refuse the offer of a young man of family and great personal attractions—one, too, whom she has in

a measure sought herself—without giving rise to the idea that her affections have been previously bestowed. And it is this construction that Colonel St. Colmo and I shall be forced to place upon it."

This was a random shot; and meant, as it were, to shame the heiress into a treaty of capitulation. But what was Mrs. Villaroy's amazement to perceive that her words were listened to with a sort of gasping attention; while a crimson of the most guilt-declaring tint suffused the poor girl's face and neck.

The same idea, by some strange sympathy, flashed at once on the minds of Colonel St. Colmo and Mrs. Villaroy. All this confusion and panic at the accusation seemed strongly to betoken an unworthy love. Who could this be but the handsome young nursery gardener? With the quickness of electricity, corroborating testimony rushed to their

thoughts. They both knew that he had been in constant employ in the new plantations at the Cedars. Then there was the prodigal bounty—the interest shown in his comforts—the praise so frequently uttered—and even the visit of the present day. Recollections of the *mesalliance* of a young peeress, who had eloped from a London school with an inamorato of the same calling, rose up also, to lend the force of possibility to their suspicions. The heart of the Colonel sickened with sorrow; and the paleness of death spread over his features at the bare idea of the degrading sentiment of one, of whom he had conceived opinions vesting her with the extreme of delicacy and propriety. But the quick mind of Mrs. Villaroy saw, at the instant, that, with this unequivocal exhibition of shame, there must be consonant feelings; and probably an acute sense of degradation,

combined with the instinctive bashfulness which attends any admission of love in the breast of a young woman. Now, then, was the moment to probe it to the utmost ; and haply disperse by the excess of anguish, which such desperate chirurgery might produce, the gathering passion that threatened so entirely the hopes of Eric St. Colmo ; while it involved so much of future disgrace and misery to herself.

Mrs. Villaroy did not conceal from her own mind that the apprehension lest two of her favourite expectations—the release of the Fernacres property, and her subsequent union with the Colonel—should be frustrated by this untoward passion, lent a force to the remonstrances she was prepared to offer. No womanly feeling of sympathy or compassion was there to withhold her ; and, with partly an assumption of violence—partly a real and

vehement desire to express her disgust, with a voice which paralysed the Colonel in his dread of the effects it must have on the timid Miss Mavesyn, she said—"Wretched girl, it is too evident what has caused this unfeeling rejection of poor St. Colmo. Some degrading passion that you ought at once to have shrunk from. Some low love that must infallibly ruin and disgrace you."

"Oh ! no, no !" murmured the agitated object of all this unfeminine violence.

"Do not attempt to deny it," Mrs. Villaroy screamed forth with the same sort of din with which boys frighten squirrels off trees—and which increases with the proofs they perceive of its being likely to succeed. "Do not attempt concealment, or we may be led to think you even more disgraced than we now consider you. You have betrayed that there is some secret fancy, some silly shameful liking

for another, which has influenced you. Confess, then, at once the name, lest we look to some one still more base, still more ignoble, who has thus lured you to forget your position as a lady, your delicacy as a woman. As your nearest friends we have now a right to command you at once to declare the name of the low and artful wretch who has gained your love."

Thus adjured—thus stunned as it were to confession, Miss Mavesyn gazed for one moment with the most acute expression of shame and terror at Mrs. Villaroy; and rising from her chair, with a convulsive movement of desperation, she stammered out—"It is no low—no artful person. It is Colonel St. Colmo!"—and fell prostrate on the ground.

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