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THE
QUICKSANDS OF FASHION.

CHAPTER I.

THE ORPHANS.

“WHAT a lovely morning! How gay the course will be!”

“And in capital order too, after the rain of yesterday. The wind was rather high during the early part of the night, but it subsided after twelve o'clock.”

“Then did you lie awake listening to it, Ralph?”

"I not only listened, but watched at the window; and did not go to bed till I perceived there was every chance of a fine morning."

"One would suppose you were deeply interested in the races to keep awake so long. I hope you have not been foolish enough to bet on any of the horses, knowing the strong aversion my uncle has to any species of gambling, and not without cause; for old Mayflower told me grandpapa nearly ruined the estate by horse-racing and gamb—, I should say high play."

"So old Mayflower told you that, did he, Cordelia?—and what else?"

"Only that he hoped you would not have the same propensity because you are always talking about races."

"That's like his impertinence to make any observation about me or my grandfather, whom I consider a thorough, jolly, old English Squire; and I wish he was alive with all my heart. If he *did* impoverish the estate, it was in a gen-

tlemantly way ; and if he got cheated—which no doubt was the case—that was his misfortune, not his fault.”

“ I am no judge of such matters ; but I think it very wrong for any one to injure his family for his own—what shall I call it ?—his own amusement. How many years has our uncle been trying to bring things round, as good old Mayflower says ! Before you and I were left to his care, he denied himself every amusement, while he now gives us all that is reasonable, and, for our sakes, mixes in society which he has for years shunned.”

“ That will do him good ; and I only wish he would mix in society more than he does ; though it can hardly be called society, since he only keeps to the old-fashioned, proud, stiff set—not the good, old-fashioned set, like my jolly grandsire : but, hark ! I hear my uncle’s stately step crossing the hall.”

In another instant the library door was slowly opened, and Mr. Bonville entered.

And who was Mr. Bonville? And who were those that ceased speaking on his entrance?

We shall merely state who they were—what they were the following pages will portray.

“ Their ancestors were glorious
‘Mong England’s barons bold,
O’er many a field victorious,
They proved themselves of old.”

The title and estates of the Bonvilles had been forfeited—we believe as far back as the time of Elizabeth. Part of the estates, without the title, had been restored or repurchased; but boundless hospitality, and latterly the turf, had greatly impoverished it. Gout had perhaps saved the remnant of the once noble domain, having terminated the life of the late Mr. Bonville, “the jolly old Squire.” A short time previous to that event, he had prevailed on his two eldest sons, Ingelram and Godfrey,

to join him in cutting off the entail, so as to enable him to sell a large portion of the land : this was hardly completed ere Ingelram—the eldest—was killed by a fall from his horse. The death of the father soon after, left Godfrey heir to what remained of the once extensive estate, encumbered with debts and mortgages. For fifteen years after the death of his father and brother, Godfrey practised the most strict, but not mean, economy and self-denial : with the aid of his land agent he cleared off part of the remaining heavy mortgages ; and, by felling and planting trees, draining and cultivating waste land, he greatly improved and beautified the now comparatively small domain. The Hall was kept in repair, but only a part of it inhabited.

The death of his only surviving brother, Bosville, leaving two children totally unprovided for, made a material change in the arrangements at Bonville Hall—the orphans

being left entirely to their uncle's care, and almost dependent on his bounty. Bosville was only a Lieutenant in the army; but had every prospect of rapid promotion when he fell in action; and in less than a year afterwards his lovely young widow sank with sorrow into the grave, after imploring Godfrey's love for her hapless infants—for such they were; the boy being only six years of age, and the girl, two. It was the close of a cold winter's evening when they arrived at the Hall, under the care of a soldier's wife. They were received by the housekeeper, Mrs. Burns, and conducted to the library where Mr. Bonville awaited them. The boy drew back when he encountered the grave, if not austere countenance of his uncle: not so the girl, who, smiling up in his face, extended her little hands as though to meet his embrace; and that embrace was of the most paternal warmth, for her laughing eyes recalled to his mind her father when, a child

like herself, he would twine his little arms round his neck, and say, “Bozzy love Godfrey best.”

Godfrey now vowed that that brother’s children should be his ; and well he fulfilled that vow, greatly as it disarranged the plans chalked out for himself ; and which, with little variation, he had adhered to, excepting when his young brother enlivened the Hall with his joyous presence—for Bosville was his junior by fifteen years, being the fruit of the old ’Squire’s second, and not very prudent marriage. The small portion left Bosville by his father only just served to purchase him an ensignoy (the army being the only profession which the old ’Squire said a gentleman could follow) ; and his education was left to Godfrey, who gave him a most liberal one. At the age of twenty he formed an attachment for a very lovely but penniless girl, and they married without asking the advice of any one. This was anything but agreeable to Mr. Bonville ; however, when he

saw the beautiful young bride, all his displeasure vanished ; but, as before mentioned, Bosville had hardly obtained his Lieutenancy, when a glorious death terminated his gallant, though brief career.

* * * *

For the first five years after the arrival of the children at the Hall, Mr. Bonville, with the assistance of Mr. Marsden, the Rector of the parish, prepared his nephew Ralph for a classical education, and then he was sent to Rugby. The little girl, Cordelia, having parted from her first nurse, who was obliged to return to her own husband and children, had an excellent young woman provided to take charge of her by Mrs. Burns ; and when old enough, her uncle taught her also the rudiments of learning.

Mrs. Marsden, with whom she spent as much time as was convenient—the distance from the

Hall to the Rectory being only half-a-mile through the park—Mrs. Marsden, perhaps, from having no daughters of her own, had not kept up much of those accomplishments so necessary for ladies; household duties, charity-schools, etc., filled up the greater part of her time. Cordelia was therefore at the age of ten, quite uninstructed in every elegant branch of female accomplishment; but high principles and good manners had been instilled into her from earliest infancy; although her limited knowledge of what other girls were proficient in, called forth many rude laughs and jests from her brother when at home during the vacations.

To remedy this in some measure, she was sent as weekly boarder to the only tolerable school at D——, the nearest town, which was five or six miles distant.

This was really a great sacrifice on the part of her uncle and good Mrs. Burns—the latter

being now occasionally a sufferer from rheumatism.

"And who," said she, "is to see after the poultry and eggs when Miss Cordelia is gone, and tell me about the fruit and the bees? for Peppin is almost past work; nobody but master—God bless him!—would give the poor old soul employment."

To school Cordelia went. Every Monday morning she would wend her way on her little pony, with Joe, the grandson of old Miles, the lodge-keeper, walking besides her; and Mr. Bonville himself would accompany her as far as the lodge by the high road.

The park had once been extensive and well stocked with deer; but the deer had long been disposed of, and the park divided, and let in small portions. It, however, still bore a picturesque appearance—for it was divided with good taste; old trees and clumps of hawthorns were left standing, so as to conceal

young plantations ; and old lodges and huts, once inhabited by keepers, were now tenanted by labourers, and a few old dependents, on the bounty of him who had ever more consideration for others than himself. Had *self* been the first consideration in his heart, he would have kept Cordelia always at home ; for, to him, she was like a sun-beam in a winter's sky ; while her merry laugh would echo through the woods and glens as she bounded off in pursuit of a butterfly, or the lambs on a bright spring morning. And was it no sacrifice, on *her* part, to leave the woods—fields—birds—flowers—and flies, for the formal school-room, and yet more formal walks through the streets of a dull country town, or along the turnpike road, when she was called to order if she turned aside to gather a primrose or violet ? But she knew how much she required, and that it was for her good ; she therefore resolved that nothing on her part should be wanting to benefit by the advantages thus placed before her, with

heart and hand. Her good temper and amiability gained for her the love and good will of the school girls, as much as her perseverance and diligence did that of the teachers ; and at the expiration of four years, she was at the head of every class. She had a fine ear for music, and her voice promised to be of great compass ; she drew as well as the generality of the school girls, and danced with grace and elegance. Her temper, we have said, was good ; proud she might be deemed, but not with her inferiors ; for she could descend to them, although she might not brook their placing themselves on a par with her ; to her equals, and those above her, she could be haughty ; but her truthfulness, love of justice, and disdain of flattery and partiality, claimed the love and esteem of all who knew how to appreciate those virtues. Any act of injustice would rouse her indignation ; and she feared not to give utterance to it, even if her governess or teachers were the aggressor. If the truth

of any statement was to be elicited, Cordelia was the one appealed to.

"I shall ask Miss Bonville," would the governess say; "and if she knows the true state of the matter, it will be explained."

Enemies she doubtless made by this line of conduct, but it was only among a class she despised; and that she made no attempt to conceal.

It was the wish and indeed the intention of Mr. Bonville to send her, when she left the school already mentioned, to a very excellent one that Mrs. Marsden had heard most highly spoken of; but a severe fit of illness, which brought him to the very verge of the grave, rendered it impossible for him to part with the only solace left to cheer the bed of pain.

The recovery of Mr. Bonville was so slow, that Cordelia, much as she might wish for the advantages pointed out to be acquired at the

establishment alluded to, unhesitatingly relinquished all thoughts of going.

"At all events," she said, "not till my uncle is quite restored to his former health; for no accomplishment can weigh in the balance with duty and gratitude."

And thus, at the age of fourteen, Cordelia was installed as nurse at Bonville Hall; and a more indefatigable, kind, and affectionate one could hardly be found in so young a girl. Every hour that could be spared from these duties, was devoted to study; and, fortunately for her, the library was well chosen, although the publications were not of the most recent date, for the present owner had not added many to the collection; some few, however, he had of late years purchased, and all objectionable works had been carefully removed.

Again Mr. Marsden cheerfully devoted an hour or two to assist her, whenever his other duties allowed him time to walk to the Hall;

and when Mr. Bonville was sufficiently restored to health, it afforded him so much pleasure to instruct her, that selfish as he said it was to keep her at home, he could not bear the thought of losing her.

Thus things went on for two more years, with little change or variation, except when Ralph came home for the vacations; but those were not always spent at the Hall, he having more than once passed them with one or other of the "fellows."

About a year before the opening scene in this tale, he had finished his studies; but was so undecided and wavering in his choice of a profession, that his uncle fully agreed with Mr. Marsden in thinking it would be best for him to remain at home till he could decide between the army and the bar. For the church he appeared by no means fit, which was a source of some disappointment to Mr. Bonville—the living now held by Mr. Marsden, being in the gift of

the owner of the Bonville estate—and a very good living it was.

On account of his nephew and niece, Mr. Bonville now went out more than he had ever done since his father's death. The old carriage was repaired and varnished, a new coachman and horses procured; and if the liveries were not so gay as formerly, still they were the same colors—brown and yellow; and a very respectable turn out it was; more than answering the brightest wishes of the delighted Cordelia, as she clapped her hands the first morning it was brought round to the door to take them for a drive, and try the horses.

"Oh! is it not a beautiful carriage?" she exclaimed; "it looks quite new—and the horses! what a good match! I do say greys always look best. When in school I used to watch the carriages pass, and no horses looked so well as greys; and to think of our uncle's kindness! how can we ever love him enough?"

"The horses are very well," replied her brother; "but if they had more spirit, they would be better; and, as for the carriage, it might have suited Mr. Noah to get through the mud in after the flood subsided. Don't look so terrified; I shan't say a word of my disapproval to the old fel—I mean the old boy—that is, the old gentleman; but I am not going to sit in that lumbering vehicle like a Lord Mayor, although I may honor it by filling a corner as far as the race-common next week—if we go."

And turning on his heel, Ralph left the apartment, his sister gazing after him with sorrow, disappointment, and amazement.

CHAPTER II.

THE RACES.

THE morning of D—— Races in the year 17—, had arrived, and a glorious morning it was—as we have observed in the first page. All within and without Bonville Hall was in motion—the servants hurrying in every direction, even the dogs appeared to wonder at the unusual bustle pervading every quarter.

The parrot in vain called—"Delia, come to poor Polly!" and the cat rubbed her head against Mr. Bonville's knee, looking up for the

accustomed saucer of milk, and purred her loudest ere she attracted attention.

Mrs. Burns was leaning on her stick, receiving Mr. Bonville's orders about the supper, and giving hers about safely packing the basket of sandwiches and sherry ; and above all, telling Cordelia to be sure not to let her uncle sit in a draught, and to keep the carriage-window down on her side. " And you do look so nice," continued the worthy woman ; " there won't be a prettier lady on the course to-day, I'll be bound."

" Then there will be a sad lack of beauty," exclaimed Ralph with a derisive laugh, as he took out an opera-glass and surveyed his sister from head to foot ; but Mr. Bonville approaching, took her hand and led her to the carriage ; and in a few minutes everything was ready, and off they started.

They passed several parties of rustics in their holiday garbs crossing the park (for the foot-path to D—— was three miles nearer

than the turn-pike-road) who all stood aside, bowing rather to the carriage than the occupants. Then the following words might be heard—"I say, Jack, if that ben't 'Squire Bonville's new coach, as how I heard about!"

"To be sure it be, Bill, I see'd him himself in it."

Presently a party of girls stood aside, dropping short curtseys, and exclaiming, "Well, if there ben't Miss Delia's own self, as sure as I am alive, in that great coach! To think that the 'Squire be a going to the races!"

On reaching the park-gate, they found the old couple, Miles Forster and his wife, standing each side waiting for their arrival.

"God bless you, sir!" exclaimed the former, "I hope you will enjoy the sport. It be a longsome time since the Bonville coach has been see'd on the course; the horses be great beauties, and Miss Delia be looking prettier nor ever. Ah! there will be plenty a looking at you, Miss."

"What fools there are in this place!" muttered Ralph; "really, Cordelia, you should not encourage such stuff. You looked as pleased at the old fool's compliments as if they had been paid by the first noble in the land."

"I should not have looked pleased then, for I should have fancied them unmeant; whereas, on the contrary, old Miles means what he says."

"Then you think yourself a beauty—do you?"

"I have never thought about it; but that's no reason why old Miles may not think so."

"And he doubtless is a judge of beauty, as a proof of which, he chose that squinting, lame hag for a wife."

"Don't call poor old Priscilla a squinting lame hag," said Mr. Bonville, with a slight frown, "her lameness was caused by an act of humanity, which I thought you knew of; if not, hear it now. The horse of a lady took fright when hunting, and she lost all control

over the spirited animal, which was scouring down the coach-road. Priscilla, at the risk of her own life, rushed forward, shut the gate, and caught the bridle, when a violent kick lamed her for life; but the lady was saved. The defect in her eye was occasioned by another accident. She was called up one night to attend a poor woman; the wind was high, and the branch of a tree was blown right in her face, and completely deprived one eye of sight. She was, therefore, neither lame nor squinting in youth; so those defects now are no proofs that Miles is not a judge of beauty."

"Well, I have no wish to dispute the soundness of his judgment; but Cordelia always believes everything people say to her."

"No, dear Ralph, not everything; for then I should think you a very cross, disagreeable brother, and I know you are not. But see! what lots of carriages! what a number of horses! and was there ever such a throng of people? Why, there will be no room for our

carriage ! Look at that one ! What a handsome lady ! It must be the Marquis of Netleigh's ; he and the lady are both bowing to you, uncle."

Thus they proceeded ; the delighted young creature giving utterance to every thought with that simplicity and singleness of heart which are so pleasing in youth.

But alas ! how often advantage is taken thereof by the heartless wordling to blight the fair bud of promise ere it expands into bloom.

They reached the course just in time for the first race ; and Ralph hurried to the grandstand. This was rather tantalizing to his sister, for she had no one to tell her to whom the most conspicuous equipages belonged. Her uncle could only enlighten her by pointing out some of the county nobles and gentry ; but few, even of those, remembered him ; for younger members now filled the places of those who, in the days of feasting, visited at the hall. Such, however, as the hand of Time had spared, re-

cognised and welcomed one who had ever won the respect of all classes that knew his sterling worth and independent spirit—choosing to retire rather than mix with his equals, when he could not support the appearance necessary to the rank and station of his forefathers. The Marquis of Netleigh, for one, drew up, and holding out his hand welcomed him with unmistakable sincerity, exclaiming—

“ If you, my dear sir, wished to be unnoticed, that lovely young face beside you would render the thing impossible, for she is a perfect Bonville !”

“ She is, my lord ; and the daughter of poor Bosville.”

Introductions then followed on both sides.

The Marchioness was, as Cordelia observed, very handsome, although past the meridian of life, but she was much younger than her lord.

We will not enter into the conversation that ensued, or relate the particulars of the races.

The *Sporting Calendar* of that year, no doubt, gave a correct account of the races ; and the newspapers of the day, (although they were by no means so numerous as in these enlightened times) no doubt gave that of the company ; suffice it for us to say Cordelia was highly pleased with all she saw, but chiefly with the Marchioness who, evidently, appeared pleased with her.

The sports ended, Mr. Bonville took leave of the Netleighs, who remained at D—— over the race week.

Ralph hurried up to his uncle as he was leaving, saying he had accepted the invitation of Lionel Champernowne to stay with him ; and telling Cordelia the first thing she did on reaching the hall, to put up a change of linen, etc., in his saddle-bags, and send them off by Joe, who was to ride “Juba.” Shaking hands with uncle and sister, he then started off.

Cordelia looked after him with a pang of regret she strove to conceal ; for had her uncle

asked the cause of the tears she felt rising to her eyes, she could not have explained it ; but an undefined fear of some portending evil overshadowed all the recent pleasure and delight she had experienced.

" I hope my Cordelia is not dissatisfied, and does not envy her brother's partaking more largely of the amusement of the races ; it is a man's sport, and young men must not be debarred from mixing in society—at least good society ; and such I consider the Champernownes," said Mr. Bonville.

" I dissatisfied ! I envious of my brother ! Oh ! no, my dear uncle, it is not that ; but I thought he might—I don't know what I wished—but I think I should have liked him to return with us. He might have gone back to D—to-morrow, and have ridden 'Juba' himself. 'Juba' may not be so well taken care as at home ; he is so spirited, and a strange groom, perhaps, will not understand how to manage him !"

"Well, if that is your chief cause of uneasiness, Joe can stay and take care of him ; and all things considered, that will be the best for all parties. Joe is a steady, sober youth, and will see that the horse is taught no tricks, which the ostlers are sometimes put up to by those jockeys, who, I verily believe, are up to every trick to suit themselves."

And Mr. Bonville leant back, as though he wished to avoid further conversation on a topic which recalled many painful recollections of the past.

The remainder of the drive was performed in silence, by both uncle and niece. We will not dive into their thoughts ; but when they stepped out of the carriage, there was a serious, if not a sad expression on the brow of each, very unlike what it had been in the morning. It was more particularly observable in Cordelia ; although she made every effort to dispel the gloom overshadowing their evening repast, which was served up with a degree of comfort

and elegance that showed no pains had been spared by the domestics to do honour to their loved and respected master.

On entering the house-keeper's parlour, the butler, after closing the door, took his place opposite Mrs. Burns, who was waiting to hear the news of the day from him ; expecting all had been canvassed over the supper-table in his presence ; and, above all, that some kind message had been sent to her in commendation of her skill ; which was invariably the case when any addition was made to the usual simple repast. The gloom of the dining-room, however, seemed to have deprived the butler of speech ; and the good lady having waited in vain for him to commence, broke the silence with—

“ In the name of goodness, Mr. Ford, what is the matter ? The coachman says no accident happened ; yet Deborah said, when she brought the things out from helping you, that not a word was spoken by Master or Miss during

supper ; and you look just as if you had been at a funeral ; something, I am sure, went wrong ; if you know, tell me ! ”

“ I wish I could, Mrs. Burns ; but I am as ignorant as yourself. All I know is that Miss Bonville went, before she sat down to supper, and packed up Mr. Ralph’s saddle-bags ; and Joe was dispatched with them on ‘ Juba,’ with orders to remain at D—— during the races.”

“ I hope Mr. Ralph has not given his uncle cause for displeasure by doing so. I think it would break Master’s heart were he to show any signs or fancy for betting.”

“ I can’t say whether that’s the case or not, but I have my fears about him ; although I say nothing, I can see and hear better than some think.”

“ Why what have you seen and heard ? If any thing is going wrong, you ought to tell me at least ; for you know I have nothing so much at heart as the real well-doing of the family.”

“ I know it, Mrs. Burns ; and had I any-

thing to tell, you would be the first person to hear it; but there are some things done that one don't quite understand; and one has a sort of feeling—presentiment I think it's called—that they are not right, although one cannot say they are quite wrong."

"I think I understand what you mean—but there's the library bell for prayers. We will talk again to-morrow, for it's getting late, and there wont be time after prayers."

The under servants appeared at the door, and then, preceded by the butler and house-keeper, they took their way to the library.

The gloom overspreading the brow of uncle and ince during supper had passed away; the usual placid look had resumed its place on the countenance of the former, and the cheerful one on that of the latter, as they knelt down in their accustomed places; and when Cordelia rose, and kissing her uncle, wished him "good night," not a trace of disquietude remained in her clear blue eyes. Taking Mrs. Burns'

hand, and placing it on her own arm, she led her through the hall to the foot of the great staircase ; then, kissing her cheek, said—

“ Good night, darling old Burny ; to-morrow I'll tell you about all that has happened to-day, for it will take a long time.”

“ I want sadly to know ; can't you tell me a little now ?”

“ No, no ! I love to try your patience ; for you say there is nothing like patience. Patience—patience—always patience, when I want to know anything ; so good night, Burny !”

And away Cordelia ran up the stairs, holding up her finger, and nodding her head, till she turned off towards her own chamber. Whether she dreamt of the past, or the future, we cannot take upon ourselves to say ; or whether Mrs. Burns did ; so we will hasten over the night, and also the early part of the succeeding day, and then pay a visit to a pretty room—such as we often find in old mansions—in the back, or garden front.

Such a room is sometimes called the steward's, and sometimes, when no chapel is attached to the house and a large establishment kept, the household assemble there for morning and evening prayers—it being nearer the servants' departments.

This little room at Bonville Hall had, for years, been a sort of lumber repository ; here were huddled together old carriage boxes, gun cases, implements of the chase of every description, heaps of fishing-rods and nets, targets, bows and quivers, broken musical instruments : all bespeaking the various amusements of the former inhabitants of the hall.

When Cordelia returned from school, she had asked, and obtained permission from her uncle, to have this room cleaned out and appropriated for her own special use.

This cleaning out was rather a Herculean labour ; but when effected, it amply repaid the trouble bestowed, for things of some value, useful and ornamental, were dragged forth

from the obscurity in which they had so long been shrouded. The oaken wainscot was cleaned and repaired, the windows mended, and the floors scrubbed and rubbed ; old carved oak chairs and tables were collected from other rooms where their presence was not missed ; all Cordelia's books and boxes, with her work-table, arranged with taste ; and some old china, that had been for years shut up in a dark closet, was brought forth to the light of day.

The windows did not open to the floor ; but the window seats were so low, that it was equally easy to step out through the long casements into the flower-garden, which was on this side of the house and had always been kept in order—gardening being one of Mr. Bonville's favorite employments and amusements. A high quickset hedge, with palings on the other side, had once shut it out from the park, and completely obstructed the view ; but this, at the suggestion of Cordelia, had

been removed, excepting a few clumps of haw-thorns which were left standing here and there ; and a ha-ha had been cut about a year before the commencement of this tale, not only for the sake of improvement, but to give employment to a few poor men during a very severe winter. The green-houses had long been suffered to go to ruin, and most of the glass work had been disposed of—as the expense of keeping them up was totally out of the question ; but having cleared off some of the most heavy mortgages, Mr. Bonville's income was improved ; and he had recently had a small conservatory made, communicating with Cordelia's parlour.

It was in that room the day after the races that Cordelia and Mrs. Burns were seated.

When the former had finished relating the occurrences of the preceding day, the latter said—

“ But nothing you have yet told me explain

the cause of both Master and youself looking so out of spirits when you came home ; perhaps, though, you were only a bit tired.”

“ No, not tired—but—I know I may speak even my very thoughts to you, Burns.”

“ Sure, Miss, that you know well enough. Did I ever say a word you wished me not ? No, not even to Ford, who is like my own brother ; and even if I did tell him, it would go no further, for we have nobody to care about but yourself and Master.”

“ And dont you care about Ralph ?”

“ Yes, sure ; but not so much as for you, he is so different : but, I suppose, it is only because he knows more people. He is not like his father, who was the best-hearted young gentleman one could meet. Some say he is like what the old Squire, your grandfather, was, before I remember him ; but not so tall and portly—not so open-hearted ; yet, in some of his other ways he is like him.”

“ That,” rejoined Cordelia, laying her hand

on her companion's, "is what I fear. Oh ! Burns, if Ralph should be inclined—induced—enticed—to love horse-racing and cards, or to bet—what may not the consequences be ? I love—dearly love my brother—yet you know not how it vexes me to hear him speak so carelessly, and express so little gratitude and pleasure for all the kindness of our uncle. It is true, he speaks respectfully *to* him—but there is a chilly, dissatisfied manner with him, and he never consults my uncle about anything. Then too, he is often writing and receiving odd-looking letters, which he either crams into his pocket, or, after glancing over the contents, tears and throws into the fire; and if any allusion is made to his numerous correspondents, he laughs, and avoids a direct reply. One morning I was rather late in entering the library, and when I bent over his shoulder to kiss him, I saw a letter open in his hand, and it looked like a long bill ; instantly he crushed it up, and a suppressed oath escaped him,

which made me start ; and my uncle looked up with astonishment, and said—

“ ‘ Surely I did not hear aright. To swear at any one is sinful—ungentlemanly ; but how much more so at your sister ! ’

“ ‘ I am sorry I forgot myself,’ replied Ralph ; ‘ but it was not at my sister. The writer of this letter is always annoying me with his foolery.’

“ ‘ Then why not drop the correspondence ?’ asked my uncle.

“ ‘ I mean to do so if I can, and shall write by this post to tell him so.’

“ Ralph was unusually kind to me for some days afterwards, and I think he was sorry—till one day he asked me what I done with all the money I hoarded ?

“ I said I never had any to hoard, for the little I had was spent in clothes for the poor. He called me a stupid thing, and left the room. Now, Burny, do you think he owes money to

any person? I have read of young men, when at school, getting into debt; and if Ralph should have done so, it will vex and anger our uncle, for he allowed him very handsomely—so old Mayflower told me."

"Well, Miss, I hope he doesn't owe any money; but if I could find it out I would pay it myself, rather than vex Master; so try and find out when Mr. Ralph comes back. And now please to tell me about the Marquis and Marchioness, for I have not seen them for many years: it's more than forty years since I left Netleigh Castle. The present Marquis was only Lord Ashenhurst then, and just of age; he did not marry for some time after I left. Ah! I remember the grand doings when he came of age, as well as if it was only yesterday. What goings on there were at the Castle! and indeed not only then, but whenever the family were in the country; and here, too, in the old Squire's time, till after that sad

business about poor Miss Clarissa and your grandfather's second marriage ; things took a sad turn soon afterwards."

" I wish, Burny, you would tell me all about the Netleighs and aunt Clarissa, for when I found her portrait in cleaning this room, my uncle's mingled pleasure and distress puzzled me. The picture, you know, he said he thought was destroyed ; and what care he took to clean it and hang it up in his own room. How beautiful she must have been ! Yet you told me never to talk of her, and that you would tell me all about her when I was older."

" So I will Miss, when I have time—but now I must go and see about dishing up the dinne."

" But when *will* you tell me ?"

" The first time Master go goes out for a long evening."

" Then I think he will go this evening, for he told Mayflower this morning, that he should

walk over to goodman Burton's to see about building the new shed for the cows ; and when he goes there he always has tea with Dame Burton, for she makes such nice brown bread and her butter and cream are better than any body's. Therefore you and I, Burny, will have our tea here ; and you promise to tell me all I want to know."

" Well, I suppose I must, for you have waited with patience, and are two years older than when you found the picture of your beautiful but unfortunate aunt."

Leaning on her stick, the housekeeper then hobbled away towards the kitchen ; while Cordelia sprang out through the window to gather a carnation and spray of myrtle for her uncle ; and then hastened to arrange her hair and dress, before joining him at dinner.

CHAPTER III.

THE HOUSEKEEPER'S TALE.

CORDELIA accompanied her uncle and his steward, Mayflower, to the end of the avenue when, wishing them a pleasant walk, she returned to the house, proceeded direct to her own parlour and gave orders for the logs on the hearth to be lighted, lest Mrs. Burns should feel chilly ; and for the tea things to be brought in, because the old lady liked her tea early. She then placed her work-table near a window, and dréw a low easy chair opposite ;

and hardly was the arrangement completed ere her guest entered.

"Well, Miss!" she exclaimed, "there is nobody like you to make a place look comfortable and cheerful. Now that bit of fire, although the weather is warm, makes the room look more lightsome, and somehow I can never talk so well without a fire, I am so used to one. I sometimes think that was the reason of my having the rheumatics; for going from the kitchen, where there was always a good fire, into the long passages and crossing the great hall, was like stepping from summer to winter."

"It was a pity you did not think, till the mischief was done, of burning a log in the hall; there was always plenty of wood."

"Yes, Miss; but Master never complained of being cold, and I made it my study to save in every way."

"I know you did, Burny; and my uncle often says he never could have brought things into order, had it not been for you, Mayflower,

and Ford. But pray do begin and tell me about Aunt Clarissa ; for now Deborah has set the kettle on the hearth, we shall have no further interruptions—do begin, or my patience will evaporate.”

“ Well, I must go back many years, and begin with myself, or you will not understand things rightly. Let me see—how shall I begin ? Well, my father rented two farms ; one, belonging to the late Marquis of Netleigh, ‘ The Oaks,’ which was as good as a freehold, the rent being very trifling ; the other, ‘ The Dingle,’ a small one belonging to your grandfather, Squire Bonville ; so my father was well to do ; at least everything prospered with him till my poor mother died. I was then about ten years old, too young to manage the house and dairy ; he therefore, within a few months of her death married the daughter of a neighbouring farmer. He thought, poor soul, and so did most people, that she was a steady, thrifty person ; but alas ! he soon found out

his mistake ; she proved a vixen, and, what was worse, a drunkard ; and thought no treatment too bad for me. My poor father was broken-hearted. To part with me he thought would be better, than for a child of my age to witness the disgraceful conduct of the woman given me for a mother ; so one evening when I was hardly twelve years old, he took me to Netleigh Castle, and asked to see Mrs. Warner, the housekeeper. He then told her of the wretched home I had, and begged her to give me some situation under her. She was a kind-hearted old lady, and at once complied with his request, although there was no place vacant ; but she said I might make myself useful in some way or other, which I did for three years without any wages (for my father would not let me receive any). I assisted the dairy-maid and laundress, attended to the poultry, and helped in the still-room ; in short, there was nothing that I could not turn my hand to ; so that at the end of three years

I was promoted to be Mrs. Warner's own maid, or rather under-housekeeper. This situation I had held for some years, when the present Marquis, then Lord Ashenhurst, came of age. Oh ! I think I see him now entering the great hall with his father leaning on his arm, and followed by his five brothers and two beautiful sisters. Such a fine family they were ! My lord the Marquis, after presenting his eldest son to the tenants and gentry assembled, named each of the others, all of whom he said were to serve their king and country with heart, arms, or voice—those were his words. And then there was such a cheering, that the very walls shook." Here the old woman wiped the tears from her eyes.

"And did they all serve their king and country ?" asked Cordelia ; "where are they now ? Surely not all dead !"

"No, not all ; but the handsomest—and I was going to say the best—the second son ; Lord Gilbert was killed in battle in Indy, and the

third Lord Edmund, was lost at sea, Lord Ronald married a sister of the present Marchioness and died a few years after, leaving one son—Mr. Lionel Champernowne, Mr. Ralph's friend, who will succeed his uncle, the present Marquis. Lord Arnold is still alive, and has, I believe, one son and one or two daughters. Lord Aubrey is a clergyman ; and has a son and several daughters."

" Whom did the Ladies Champernowne marry ?"

" Lady Geraldine, the eldest, died young ; the other, Lady Belinda, between whom and Master, it was said there was a mutual affection, and I believe, indeed I know it to be true, only this estate was left in such a ruined condition that they were obliged to relinquish all hopes of marriage. Lady Belinda married——"

" But could they not, if they loved each other, have lived in this dear old Hall ?" interrupted Cordelia.

" She, I was told, would have shared any

home with him ; but that sad business of poor Miss Clarissa's changed everything ; and Lady Belinda married the old Lord Fitzammon—not to please herself, but others."

" But about my poor aunt, pray begin."

" Well, I remained three years at the Castle after Lord Ashenhurst came of age, and sad things were said of the goings on at the Hall. At that time my step-mother died, and I went home to take care of my father's house, which was within five miles of this place, so I heard much more of what was going forward here, than when at the Castle. The death of Madam Bonville, the mother of Master—whose heart every one said was broken—was quickly followed by the Squire's marriage with your grand-mother."

" And who was my grand-mother ?"

" Why—why—" and Mrs. Burns moved her chair, and sipped her tea and took snuff.

" You may as well tell me at once, Burny, for I know she was not a lady."

"Who could have told you that, I wonder?"

"One of my school-fellows whom I had offended, said she was only a kitchen-maid."

"That was false. She was lady's-maid to Madam ; and I will say no one ever accused her of impropriety of conduct. She was too proud and scornful to let herself down ; and so after Madam's funeral, she went home to her mother ; only for a short time though ; for to the surprise of every body, Squire Bonville soon brought her back as his bride."

"Was she handsome? I believe there is not a portrait of her."

"No, there is not, although she was considered a beauty. This marriage was, as you may fancy, a sad cause of vexation to all, but chiefly to Miss Bonville. She felt it very hard to be placed under her mother's maid who, instead of trying to soften the matter, I am told, aggravated it by her overbearing pride. Excuse me, dear Miss Delia, for speaking thus of your grand-mother; but you asked me to

tell you everything about your aunt ; which I cannot do without naming her step-mother. Remember I did not live here at that time, so I only repeat what was told me. Well, after the second marriage, things went on worse. The house was always full of not the best company. Some were titled people ; but there are many bad people who have titles : they used to be hunting and racing all the day, and drinking and gaming all the night."

" What did my uncles do ? Had they no influence ?

" The young squire, Mr. Ingelram, was a sad wild one, and Master was at school, and did not always come home for the holidays. He came home, however, one Christmas when your papa was about three years old, and arrived rather late, owing to a heavy fall of snow. Proceeding direct to the dining-room, from whence issued shouts of boisterous laughter, he was struck on entering with indignation and disgust ; for there, on the table, was stand-

ing, or rather staggering, his little brother Bosville—your father—naked, with the exception of some vine-leaves and grapes, which were wreathed round his head and waist!"

"How dreadful! Where was my grandmother? Could she allow her child to be so shamefully treated?"

"She was ill and confined to her bed; and your aunt, dear soul, dared not oppose her father, even if she knew of what was going on. But as I was saying, there was the child, a beautiful boy of three years old, on the table, holding up a goblet of wine, wild, intoxicated, surrounded by men in a worse state, who were singing some dreadful song, and calling the poor baby a god!—the god of Wine, I think!—Master stood for a moment horror-struck, and then rushing forward, snatched up his infant brother, and in defiance of every attempt to obstruct his retreat, carried him to his own room, not venturing to trust him in the nursery. The child was very ill in consequence of the

quantity of wine he had taken; indeed, for some time his life was despaired of. Master and his father had a terrible quarrel the next morning, and Master blamed his eldest brother most severely for permitting such an outrage. From that time the affection commenced between little Bozzy, as your father was called, and Mr. Godfrey, who has proved his in every way, not to him only, but to his children."

"Indeed he has!" exclaimed Cordelia, "dear, good uncle! what do not Ralph and and myself owe him?"

"Everything, Miss Cordelia. Well, I believe after this, Mr. Godfrey prevailed on his eldest brother to join with him in restoring a little order, for some of the company took their departure, and the Christmas passed off pretty well. Your grand-mother was not able to leave her room, and Miss Bonville presided at table, and visited about with her brothers. She was, at that time, a perfect beauty, and was considered the best horsewoman in the

country for miles around. I have seen her riding after the hounds—but she only did so when Mr. Godfrey was at home—and it was beautiful to see her of a bright morning on her favorite horse, that looked proud of his beautiful burden. She would pat his neck, and then giving full rein, off they would go, taking the lead, clearing every fence as though borne on the wind—her clusters of hair flowing back—her eyes sparkling—her cheeks glowing—and her clear, musical voice echoing, as she would call on a favorite hound, or stop to assist some awkward or timid rider who had been thrown, or was fearing to take a leap—and then her merry laugh when the feat was over! Oh! she was a lovely creature!

“It was the beginning of the February after what I mentioned about your father happened, when, one fine morning, all the party from the Hall passed our house with the hounds in full cry. In a little time, however, the weather changed suddenly and a heavy snow-storm

came on. Several of the gentlemen rode back to my father's for shelter, and we offered them some of our family dinner, which they accepted. They were all talking about Miss Bonville and wondering whether she had gone home, or taken shelter like themselves.

“‘Clarissa take shelter, indeed!’ exclaimed Mr. Ingelram; ‘she would not have it whispered that she feared to encounter snow, rain, or hail.’

“‘Then are you more timid than your sister?’ asked one of the gentlemen.

“‘I only came here to shew you the way, Sir John,’ replied Mr. Ingelram; ‘but hark! that’s her voice.’

“I was standing at the lower end of the kitchen, and ran to the door, and there was Miss Clarissa on her horse, covered with snow, the wind blowing it right in her face, so that she was nearly blinded.

“‘Send some of your men, Burns,’ she exclaimed, ‘down to the causeway, for there is

a post-chaise upset, and the poor driver is totally unable to extricate the horses. I left Godfrey with them—do pray send to their assistance.'

"Her request was instantly complied with, not only by our men, but by the young squire and the other gentlemen. I begged Miss Clarissa to dismount, saying she could render no help, and she did so, and, shaking off the snow, went into the kitchen. I led her horse to the stable, for the men had all run to the causeway, and when I entered the kitchen, Miss Clarissa was standing by the fire, with her hat off, drying her long hair which fell nearly to her feet. She said she feared whoever was in the chaise must be hurt, as well as the driver, who, she thought, had broken his leg. I and the servant girl bestirred ourselves, while your aunt went every few minutes to the door to listen ; for the snow fell so fast, that we could not see to the end of the fold. At length, we heard voices ; and presently the

gentlemen entered, carrying another who was evidently much injured, although his bearers were laughing and saying he was more frightened than hurt ; but hurt he was, and that most sadly too, for, besides being dreadfully bruised, his arm was broken and the blood was trickling from his face and hands, which had been cut with the glass. He was placed on the settle, and Miss Bonville hastened to render every assistance. There she stood forgetful of herself, her beautiful hair still falling loose about her shoulders, the eyes of the gentlemen, particularly those of the stranger, all turned on her : and never did I behold a more lovely creature than she was at that moment—tears of pity glistening in her deep blue eyes—her glowing cheeks, caused by the sudden change from cold to heat and the excitement of the accident—her lips parted and showing her small white teeth—her graceful and commanding figure, so well suited to the

riding habit! But the looks of the gentlemen recalled her to herself; when hastily gathering up her hair into a knot, she put on her hat, just as Mr. Godfrey entered, saying, the chaise was utterly unfit for present use and one of the horses lamed, and the postillion had one leg so crushed that it was worse than a broken bone. After a very short consultation it was decided to send for the carriage from the Hall, so that the injured men might be encouraged thither. My father offered to take care of the postillion; but the young squire said it was best for him to go to the Hall too, as the doctor could attend on them both there. Here Miss Bonville observed that the village apothecary, old Fleming, was not capable of setting broken bones, and that her brother Godfrey had better ride to D—— for Green, who was the only skilful surgeon in the neighbourhood, while she herself would ride home and send the coach.

"The storm was now nearly over, so Mr. Godfrey and Miss Clarissa set off at the same time, though in different directions.

"'Be sure,' she said to me, in her sweet voice, 'that they move the poor sufferers gently; and I wish if you would be so good as to accompany them to the Hall in the carriage; it shall bring you back—will you do so, Lucy?'

Dear soul! she felt and thought for all—and how was she repaid? It makes my heart bleed to think of the falsehood—the ingratitude—the villainy of man; it's enough to make one refuse ever to do them a kind office. I am thankful I never trusted *myself* to any of the artful creatures; I might have married over and over again, but I have seen enough of their ways."

"But all are not false, Burny; there's my uncle, and Mayflower, and Mr. Marsden, and, I hope, many more good men in the world be-

sides ; and you know there are wicked women as well as men."

"Yes, I am sorry to say, plenty ; but then it always happens that the good of each sort fall to the lot of the bad. Now, there was my father—a better man could hardly be met—and, let me see ! I could name many others whose lives were made miserable by marrying."

"And many, I hope, have been, and still are, made very happy," rejoined Cordelia, smiling. "My dear father and mother were very happy while they lived ; and there are Mr. and Mrs. Marsden, and old Miles and his wife, and—I could think of many more ;—but now proceed about my aunt, or you will not finish to-night, and I want to hear all about her."

"Well, I was saying, she set off for the Hall, and I stood looking after her as she cantered with the fleetness of a bird, clearing

every hedge and gate, till she got to the common ; but there she was soon lost to my sight. I then re-entered the kitchen where they were all talking about the accident. It appeared in consequence of the wind blowing the snow right in the face of the postillion, that he did not perceive a donkey standing in the middle of the road. The donkey setting up a loud bray startled the horses, so that, instead of keeping the road, they got on the causeway, which you know is too narrow for a carriage, and down went the chaise, the horses plunging and kicking so that the poor driver lost all power over them, and the gentleman inside was incapable of extricating himself. Their shouts, however, were at length heard and answered by Miss Bonville and Mr. Godfrey, who hastened to the spot. They might have died had it not been for your aunt and uncle, for we should never have heard their cries for help ; and there was very little travelling along that

road in the winter ; it was to them, under the mercy of God, the travellers owed their lives ; and oh ! how that mercy was abused, at least, by the one who ought to have felt the most grateful, for he had been taught and knew what was right ! When I re-entered the kitchen, the gentlemen were all talking, and I had time to look at them. The wounded stranger was an officer, and he lay on the mattress which we had placed before the fire ; he was in great pain, and his head was bandaged ; but, from what I could judge, he was a very handsome man. Near him sat the young squire, who had been, as he himself said, acting the doctor ; and a little apart stood Sir John Morton. He was the ugliest person I ever set eyes on—not that we should call any human creature ugly. It was not altogether that his face was plain, for I might have seen others equally so ; but there was something disgusting in his expression."

" What was he like, Burny ? Old, young, tall, or short ?"

" Why it was no easy matter to guess his age, for his face was so bloated by intemperance, and his nose and forehead covered with carbuncles. His eyes were bloodshot, and his lips as thick as a negro's ; but he had not the white teeth of the poor blacks, for his were all decayed or nearly so ; he had thick coarse red hair, and great long ears sticking out from his head. His figure was of a piece with his face—short—shoulders high and broad—very long arms—bow-legged ; altogether he was the most disgusting looking man I ever saw ; and when he spoke, he was still more disagreeable ; for he stammered most dreadfully. I could hardly bear the sight of him, and yet I could not take my eyes from off him ; as I have heard say about those dreadful snakes which fix their gaze on the poor birds till they fall dead from fright : but

Sir John did not fix his on me ; they were fixed on a higher prey."

" Surely you don't mean to say this horrid man had the presumption to look at—to think of my beautiful aunt ?"

" Yes, I do, Miss Delia ; he never took his eyes off her while she was in the kitchen, and he had been watching her through the window from which he was only turning away when I entered. I cannot remember all the talk that passed till the coach arrived. When it did, the two cripples were placed in it with as much care as we possibly could, and I got in with them. It was a painful journey for us all ; my heart ached enough at every jolt ; and when we reached this place, it was considered best for them to remain in the coach till Mr. Green arrived, which he did very soon after us. I shall not relate about setting the broken bones and dressing the bruises and wounds. I remained here throughout the whole

erations, in compliance with
Miss Bonville and Mrs. Page—
—and promised to stay a few
days. Captain Ormonde—that was
her bed—but hark ! the
eight ; I must see about
and will finish my tale
have not told you half yet,
' come."

wish to hear the end. When

"The first evening we can have to ourselves ; for I should not like Master to know I am telling you. I don't think he would be displeased, but it would recall to his mind what had better be forgotten ; not that he ever can forget, although he never alludes to the past, not even to me who know all his sorrows and goodness. Dear Miss Delia, you are the greatest comfort left to him ; and whatever you do, let it be your first study to make

his latter days happy, for he had not much happiness in youth ; his heart was too good, too feeling, to admit of his being happy when those he loved were not. I only wonder it did not break under the cruel weight of ills heaped upon it by the selfishness, the sins of ——. But I will say no more now, only remember let it be your study to make amends for the unkindness of others.”

“ I am sure,” replied Cordelia, “ nothing that I can do shall be wanting to cheer and contribute to my uncle’s comfort. I would sacrifice every wish of my heart ; but I have nothing to sacrifice ; the greatest pleasure I have is to please him.”

“ May it ever be so ! But we cannot answer for ourselves ; we must pray for strength to do what is right ; our own will is not sufficient.”

Saying this, Mrs. Burns left the room.

Cordelia rose at the same time ; and, with slow steps wandered through the flower gar-

den, ruminating on what had been told her ; and then she endeavoured to assume her usual cheerful look and manner, to meet her uncle, whom she hastened to welcome home just as the bell announced the supper hour.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HOUSEKEEPER'S TALE.

"CORDELIA, will you like to accompany me this afternoon to Farmer Walton's?" said Mr. Bonville to his niece, the following day at dinner. "I find there are some repairs wanting to the roof of the barn, and I am going to see about it. I shall, also, look over all the cottages; and if any repairs are required they shall be done, for the timber sold so well that

Mayflower agrees with me in thinking part of the money may be appropriated for that purpose ; and the tenants never ask me to do more than is absolutely necessary. Will you come or not ?"

" I don't like you to go alone."

" I shall not go alone, for Mayflower will accompany me ; so if you would rather stay at home, do so. And I think you had better, for it's very hot this afternoon. You can come and meet us after tea."

" I shall like that best. Which way will you return ?"

" Along the road ; for I shall go through the wood. Mind, don't be later than seven in setting out, for the evenings get chilly."

This arrangement being made, Mr. Bonville and his steward took their departure ; and Cordelia hastened to the housekeeper's room.

" Come, Burny," said she, you must be my guest again ; and you, Deborah, run and light the fire and bring tea to my parlour, like you

did yesterday. Come along, Betsy!" and taking the old domestic's hand, she led her to the same apartment where we described them the previous evening.

Here they again installed themselves; and the housekeeper recommenced her tale, as follows:—

"I stopped here for two or three days, and was sorry to find how uncomfortable Miss Bonville was. I had heard a great deal, yet I did not believe all; but, when in the house, I could not shut my eyes and ears. The day before I was to leave, Miss Bonville appeared very unhappy; and there were traces of tears on her cheeks when she entered the room where Captain Ormorne was lying on the sofa asleep, or, rather, pretending to be so; but she strove to assume a cheerful manner and laughed and talked, asking me if I did not admire her dress. Now, I had been thinking to myself that I never saw her dressed so unbecoming, and I said so. 'That's just what I wish,' she

replied, with a forced, almost hysterical laugh; and taking my arm, she drew me out of the apartment and hurried me to her own; when, locking her door, she burst into such a fit of weeping that my heart ached—for she had used to be so merry and gay. I knew her from childhood, as she often came and stayed for weeks at the Castle, with the young ladies. Every one, from the old Marquis down to myself, loved her, and rejoiced when she came; and the young lords used to call her ‘Beautiful Bonny Bonville !’ I tried to comfort her, while my own tears fell as fast as hers.

“‘Oh ! Lucy Burns,’ she sobbed, ‘what shall I do when you are gone, and Godfrey is returned to college ? There will not be a person left to whom I can speak ; and something whispers it is not right for me to be left alone in attendance on Captain Ormonde,’ and she blushed, and turned her face away. ‘He is very handsome ; is he not, Lucy ? It is going

into the way of temptation, and it's wrong to do so, when we daily pray not to be led into the way of temptation. And then, Lucy, that horrid Sir John ; do you know, I have cause to think he loves me ; and what is worse, my father encourages, at least, does not discourage his attentions.'

"‘Surely, Miss,’ I replied, ‘you must be mistaken, at least regarding your papa ; for he never can suppose you could like such a loathsome looking creature as that Sir John. He may be in love with you, but if he looks at his own face in the glass, it must be sufficient to silence his presumption—for presumption it is in such an object to think of you.’

"‘I don’t know whether it is presumption ; but the very thought of him makes me wretched ; and my father looks at me so unkindly if I refuse Sir John’s offered arm to conduct me to the dining-room ; and he always sits by me at table : when Godfrey is at home things are not quite so bad.’

" 'I wish the family were at the Castle,' I rejoined ; ' you could go and stop there.'

" 'No, Lucy, I should not be allowed ; for Mrs. Bonville—I can never bring myself to call her mamma—Mrs. Bonville has insisted on my father refusing all invitations for me when she is not included. Do you know the Marchioness wrote and entreated as a favour that I might accompany herself and daughters to Bath for the winter, and then proceed with them to London. I implored my father, and even begged his wife, to permit me to go ; but need I say both refused. I would have tried to respect the woman had she complied with my request. I now detest—hate—but no, I will not hate her, for dear little Bozzy's sake. When you are gone, Lucy, day after day shall I be left alone shut up in my own room, or attending on this handsome stranger ; and then be expected—ordered to dress for dinner, and to endure the odious attentions of a man I abhor, with no other female present ; for Dr.

Tarn, who was sent for from W—— to see Mrs. Bonville, says she must not leave her own apartments till summer.'

" 'I am sure, Miss,' said I, 'I don't know what you can do; but in my mind its not at all proper for a young lady like you to be left in this way. Are there none of your dear mamma's family that you can go and visit? Mr. Godfrey might take you.'

" 'My lamented mother,' she replied, 'had no near relations—she was an only child. There is an old maiden aunt of hers whom I might go and see, and Godfrey and I talked it over, and my father was spoken to on the subject. His reply was that perhaps I might go when Mrs. Bonville was well enough to preside at table. But it's now I want to go; or at least to have some female companion to stay with me.'

" A thought at that moment crossed my mind. Mr. Green, the surgeon, had one child, a girl; and she had a large fortune independent

of her father, which was left her by a distant relation of her mother's. I had never seen her, but had heard some one say it would not be a bad hit for the young squire to marry her, as her money would clear off part, if not all, of the incumbrances on the estate; so I said :

“ ‘Can’t you ask Mr. Green to let his daughter come and stay with you?’

“ ‘A good thought, Lucy,’ said Miss Clarissa, clapping her hands. ‘Mary Anne was at school with me, and although we used to quarrel, still I don’t dislike her; and I often helped her on with her lessons. I am so glad you thought of her; I will ask Green this very day. My father will not object to it, nor can Mrs. Bonville; at least I don’t think she can. Hush! I hear Green’s voice—I will go and ask him at once.’

“ Well, dear soul, off she ran, and her sorrows were for the time forgotten; she was so light hearted. In about ten minutes she returned, exclaiming—

"‘Its done ! Green will bring Mary Anne to-morrow. He said she would be delighted to come, and it was so proper for me to have some one to help to amuse and nurse Captain Ormonde ; and then I made him go and tell Mrs. Bonville. Oh ! kind, wise Lucy, for putting it into my head. You won’t go till after Mary Anne arrives, will you ? Because—because—although Captain Ormonde is quite the reverse of that horrid Sir John, yet I don’t like being alone with him ; he looks at me too much : not that I am afraid of his beautiful eyes—are they not beautiful eyes, Lucy ?’

"‘I can’t say that I have noticed them much ; besides only one is to be seen ; the other is concealed under the bandage. What colour are they ?’

"‘I don’t exactly know,’ she said ; ‘all colours I think.’

"‘They must be very odd eyes then,’ I replied, trying to make her laugh ; for the dinner bell was going and I saw her give a sort of

sickening shudder ; and then she turned to the glass, and pulled her beautiful hair in the most unbecoming way over her sweet face. When she was gone down to dinner, I went to stay with the Captain. Mr. Green had dressed all his wounds and bruises, which he said were going on very favorably ; but the arm, which was broken in two places, would take a very long time to heal, and therefore he advised him not to travel for at least three weeks. The Captain then begged him to write and state his case to the War-office, and the letter had to be signed by the old squire and another justice. Mr. Green enquired whether his family had been apprized of the accident. The Captain said he had no relation nearer than an uncle, and that Mr. Godfrey had written to him. As for the poor postillion, he could not be removed for six weeks, if then. The Captain expressed great regret for the trouble he was giving Mr. Bonville and his family, and said very fine things : at the time,

no doubt, he felt grateful, but you shall hear how he repaid it.

"The next day, Mr. Green brought his daughter in his whiskey, and very kindly took me home in it, as he was passing near 'The Oaks,' and the day but one following, Mr. Godfrey returned to college. For more than a fortnight, I was too busy at home to come over to see how they were getting on, but I often heard from some one or other about them. The weather was fine and the days getting long ; so one morning, when my father was going to a fair, he brought me behind him as far as the lodge, where he put me down, and I walked round by the back way to the Hall. I asked for Miss Bonville, and was directed to the little drawing-room, whither I proceeded. The door was ajar, and, I suppose, unthinkingly, I entered without tapping ; but, for a moment I stood struck with surprise, for nearly opposite me, sat the Captain, on the sofa, with his uninjured arm round Miss Green's waist ! She

was standing by his side, bending her head down, and listening to something he was whispering in her ear. I suppose some movement of mine caused them both to start ; and instantly they saw me their faces flushed scarlet. The lady recovered herself first, and laughingly said—

“ ‘ Captain Ormonde, you must not hold me in this way, for I shall not give you the solution of the charade ; you must find it out yourself. Ah ! Miss Burns,’ she continued, laughing, ‘ the Captain is so spoiled by Miss Bonville and myself, that I don’t know how he will ever be brought to order again ; not, I fear, till he gets to the barracks.’

“ Before I could make any reply, Miss Clarissa came into the room. She welcomed me with all her usual kindness ; but I was struck with the change which had taken place since I had last seen her. Beautiful she still was, if possible, more so than ever ; but all the roses had left her cheeks—the merry smile no

longer dimpled her pretty mouth—her eyes were red as if from weeping—her clear musical voice had an impatient, and, at times, a melancholy tone, and she was much thinner:—altogether she was sadly changed. I looked from her to Miss Green, and never did I see a greater contrast between any two girls. Without being ugly like Sir John, Miss Green was coarse and common looking, not only in face, but in figure. Her manners were not vulgar, because much care had been taken with her education, and she wore handsome clothes; yet they were lost on her; whereas your aunt, although in a gown not better, nor so good as the housemaid's, looked the lady. I watched the Captain, as he turned his eyes from one to the other; and then they rested on Miss Clarissa's face, while hers sunk beneath his gaze, and the roses, for a moment, resumed their place on her cheeks. Miss Green was standing looking out of the window at the time, observing what a lovely day it was, and

asking your aunt what made her return so soon from her walk.

“ ‘ Because I thought you might like to go out, and I came to fetch you,’ replied Miss Clarissa.

“ ‘ You know,’ rejoined Miss Green, ‘ I am not fond of country walks.’

“ ‘ Then you lose much pleasure, Mary Anne; for the fields and woods are lovely this time of the year; the primroses and wild anemones are beginning to appear beneath the trees; and the banks are covered with violets.’

“ ‘ I should be afraid of snakes; are there many about here?’ asked Miss Green.

“ ‘ Not many, I believe. I have seen one or two. Do you see any about ‘ the Oaks,’ Lucy? it’s very sheltered and warm there.’

“ ‘ Yes, Miss Bonville,’ I replied, ‘ I do sometimes see one or so. And there was one caught, not very long ago, near the causeway; and the person who caught it did not like to

kill it, so the reptile turned its head and bit the hand which spared it ; that's the way such creatures repay those who save them !' and I fixed my eyes, while speaking, on the Captain. His fell, and then he laughed—a forced laugh it was.

" He and Miss Green exchanged smiles, and she coloured, and glanced towards me ; but I gave her and the Captain such a stern look, that both were evidently confused. Miss Bonville, dear soul, did not notice all this, for she had removed to the other side of the room, and was taking off her hat ; saying, as I was there, she would not go out again.

" We then began talking of different things ; and your papa came in for his lesson. While his sister was attending to him, I watched every look that passed between the Captain and Miss Green ; and all I saw confirmed my suspicion that there was something wrong going forward. I would have given anything to get Miss Bonville to myself ; but she did not take the re-

peated hints I gave ; and when I asked her to go to the aviary, the Captain and Miss Green immediately followed, so that I could not say a word. I was in hopes to get speech of her when she went to dress for dinner ; but when the half-hour bell rang, I was told the house-keeper had tea ready sooner than usual, on my account. There was now no chance of my speaking to Miss Bonville ; so I took my leave, saying that I hoped she would ride over some fine morning and see me.

“ ‘ And don’t you ask me, too, Miss Burns ? ’ said Mary Anne ; ‘ my father often says what a pretty place ‘ the Oaks ’ is .’

“ I replied we should be glad to see as many as chose to come ; adding that the Captain might like to view the scene of the accident ; and, oh ! I gave him such a look.

“ From Mrs. Page I heard enough to convince me that things were in a sad state. The old squire drank harder than ever, and the

young one was following his example ; they played all night—two or three friends of Sir John's having been invited from London—and Mrs. Bonville was always blaming Miss Clarissa for not amusing the gentlemen, and not staying in the drawing-room at night. This, the butler said, she could not do without subjecting herself to the fulsome attentions of Sir John, who disgusted her enough at dinner—where she was compelled to have him beside her. The Captain, who now dined with the family, always sat by Miss Green, who cut his meat ; although his own servant had been sent for, and stood behind his chair.

“ I asked why the young squire did not make up to Miss Green ? He did at first, Mrs. Page replied ; but he soon got tired of her ; and said the Captain might take her for any thing he cared—for she smelt so strong of physic that he would not have her at any price ! The butler, also, remarked he was sure Sir John did everything to encourage the Captain's atten-

tion to her, so as to keep him from Miss Clarissa.

“ ‘I should hope,’ observed Mrs. Page, ‘Miss Bonville would not think of a man who has not a penny besides his pay. To be sure, the Captain is handsome—but beauty will not make the pot boil; and’ she continued, with a knowing look, ‘he knows that; and will have no objection to Mary Anne Green’s money, to help it.’

“ ‘If such is his opinion,’ I replied, ‘it’s to be hoped Miss Clarissa don’t give him a thought, although she dislikes Sir John — which no one can wonder at; he is such a fright !

“ ‘He is frightful enough,’ said Mrs. Page; ‘that he can’t help, but I believe he has every bad propensity a man can have. Lucy Burns,’ and she whispered, ‘my heart misgives me about these two men. May the Almighty defend my dear young lady.’

“ But she was prevented finishing what she intended to say by the door being thrown open,

and Mrs. Bonville's maid, Peacham, entering. She appeared angry at not being told tea was ready ; but Mrs. Page said it was ordered early on my account, and that she was to have hers at the usual hour. This put an end to all conversation between the housekeeper and me. Peacham, however, had plenty to say, chiefly about her own importance—never having lived but with titled folks till she came to the Hall ; indeed, had she known *who* Mrs. Bonville was, she should never have set her foot inside the doors ; but she had been completely deceived by Madame Lemonnier, who had been requested by Mrs. Bonville, when she sent orders for some dresses, to send her a first-rate lady's maid. ‘And to think of recommending *me* !’ she exclaimed, ‘when I have never lived but with ladies of rank.’

“I dare say you have as high wages here,” I said ; “ladies of rank don't give much.”

“‘You mean *salary*, not *wages*, Miss Burns ;

but that's the last consideration with me. I think more of rank. You know nothing of the world—the London world, I mean ; there, ladies' women always take precedence according to the rank of those with whom they live. I assure you, I shall find much difficulty in regaining my place in society when I leave here, which I intend doing very shortly. Every one in this place is so distant and formal, or else so vulgar. Miss Bonville never talks like other young ladies. Miss Green is, in my opinion, far more agreeable, although she is only the daughter of a country apothecary—surgeon, I should say. She is no beauty to be sure ; but under my hands for a year, she would be passable, with her fortune which, I believe, is large; is it not, Miss Burns ?

“ I suppose it is,” I replied ; “ but I don't care about her or her fortune ; it's nothing to me, Mrs. Peacham.”

“ ‘ Nor to me ; only Taylor, the Captain's valet, offered to bet half-a-dozen pairs of long

white French kid gloves, that it's not twenty thousand pounds. I wish I could find out for a certainty ; don't you think you could, Miss Burns ?

" ' Is it for himself or his master that Taylor is so inquisitive ? ' said Mrs. Page, looking at me slyly. ' Neither would object to her with twenty thousand pounds.'

" Turning towards the clock, I saw it was half-past four. There was no time for me to hear more ; so, hastily wishing both good evening, and telling Mrs. Page to remind Miss Clarissa of her promise of coming to ' The Oaks,' I left, and was just five minutes at the park gate before my father rode up.

" I did not mention a word of what I had heard ; but I thought it over and over again, not only what I had heard, but what I had seen ; and the more I reflected, the more I felt sure there was underhand work going forward. I was glad I had made the remark about the snake ; for I felt as certain as though I had been told, that the Captain was playing a

double game. How I wished to see your aunt! But days passed, and I heard nothing. I did not even hear that she had been out riding, like she used to. Every fine day, I kept watching the way across the common, in hopes of seeing her coming; but in vain. I was miserable, and would have walked over to the Hall; but then I thought I might miss her by going the footpath:—the turnpike road was too long a walk for me, and my father could not spare the mare, as it was now a busy time at the farms. Three weeks had passed on this way, when one afternoon, as I was contriving in my own mind whether I could go over to Bonville on the next Sunday in time for church, where I should be sure to see some of the family, I was startled by the dogs barking, and the sound of wheels rattling over the pitching before the gate. It was about three o'clock, and I had just tidied myself; the fellows were all in the field at work, and my father—who was now getting very infirm and

weakly—had finished his pipe, and was asleep in the chimney corner. I hurried to the door, where I saw Mr. Green in his whiskey, with Mary Anne. Before I had time to say a word, he told me there had been a pretty blow-up at the Hall, for the old squire had found out there was some love-making between the Captain and Miss Clarissa, and that he had locked her up in her own room, and ordered the Captain to quit the house at a moment's notice. At the park gate Mr. Green encountered him and his man, Taylor; they were going to walk to the next village, and get some mode of conveyance to London; and the Captain begged Mr. Green to send his bill there by post, thanking him for all his kindness, and adding, he was very sorry Mr. Bonville had taken such a fancy into his head, as he never meant more than civility to Miss Bonville. Mr. Green hastened to the Hall, where he found everything in the utmost confusion—the old squire in a most dreadful passion, and Sir John Morton stammer-

ing that had it not been for the Captain's broken arm, he should have called him out. Mr. Green said what he could to soften the matter, but it only made it worse; he therefore told his daughter to pack up her clothes, and he brought her away.

"She looked very sullen, and what little she said was all against Miss Bonville—that for her part, she thought there was more between her and Taylor than the Captain, for she had seen him give Clarissa a letter slyly. I said if he did, it was doubtless from his master, who, I had reason to think, was a double-faced, ungrateful creature. With a sneering laugh, she said she thought him a very handsome man, and ill used; and that time would bring many things to light which would surprise some people. I could hardly forbear asking her, before her father, whether she had ever given the Captain the solution of the charade which she was telling him when he had his arm round her waist. However, I did not ask her,

for which I have always blamed myself, as it might have opened old Green's eyes to her duplicity, and prevented much misery."

" You have a most retentive memory, Banny," said Cordelia.

" I remember everything about poor Miss Clarissa, as well as if it only happened a year ago, and perhaps better. Often, when alone, I repeat to myself every word that was spoken about her. Oh! it was a dreadful business! May the authors of all her sufferings have repented of their cruel conduct; but we, as good Mr. Marsden says, are not to judge. There is a just and righteous One, who will judge all with equity—the rich and poor, without any respect of persons. But I must hasten on with my tale. The Greens only stopped at our gate about ten minutes; and when they were gone, I re-entered the house with a heavy heart. My father was still asleep. When he awoke I told him what had happened, and asked whether I might go over to the Hall the next day; and he consented to

my doing so. I got up very early in the morning, so as to finish my work before breakfast, and directly after, I started off over the common. When I reached the Hall, I went at once to Mrs. Page's room. She was looking the picture of misery ; and hardly had I sat down when Peacham came hurrying in, saying her mistress wanted her instantly. Mrs. Page left the room, while Peacham began saying what a house they had, and all owing to Miss Bonville's flirting in the way she did, when she was engaged to Sir John Morton.'

" 'Engaged to Sir John !' I exclaimed. 'I thought she couldn't abide him.'

" 'That,' Peacham said, 'was nothing to the purpose; for people in high life never thought of marrying for love. Matches were always made up between the parents and friends. Young ladies who had small fortunes, and only beauty and family, were usually married to rich men; while heiresses, particularly those who had only money, were always

glad to exchange it for a good position in society. I had no patience to hear her nonsense, so I cut her short by saying I wished to see Miss Bonville, and asked where she was.

"'In her own apartment,' she answered; 'but you must obtain her papa's or my lady's permission ere you can see her!'

"At this moment Mrs. Page entered the room, red with anger.

"'Lucy Burns,' she exclaimed, 'I am ashamed to tell you your presence here is not agreeable to *Madam*. Our dear young lady is a prisoner in her own room, and even *I* am not permitted to see her. What conspiracy may be hatching by spies I know not; but since I cannot defend her, I will never remain a passive witness to acts of cruelty against the daughter of *my* dear, respected lady, whose place is so vilely filled. You, Nancy Peacham, may go and tell your mistress what I say, for I have given notice to leave, and am quite ready to go in an hour's time.'

"I begged her," in pity to Miss Clarissa, to remain, and Peacham having sneaked out of the room, I whispered that I would go to Mr. Marsden and ask him to write to Mr. Godfrey. I then hastened out and went round at the back of the house, where I thought I should be less liable to meet any of the gentlemen, for I was told there were several strange ones, besides Sir John, staying here ; I had not got far, when I heard some one running after me : it was Mayflower, then a young man. He pushed a letter into my hand, and begged me, for God's sake, to send and have it put in post at D——, for he could not get a horse, and he did not know whom to trust ; the letter was for Mr. Godfrey, to beg him to come home, as there was some foul work in hand. We were both startled by loud laughter and talking near the walk we were in, so Mayflower darted off through the shrubs, and I ran on as fast as my legs could take me : I was ready to sink every step I

went. At last, I stood to take breath, and consider about the letter. I decided on going to the Rectory, as was my first intention, and asking Mr. Marsden (the curate) to let his boy ride to D——, and put the letter in the post ; otherwise I must take it home with me, and send one of our boys. There was nothing but disappointment: Mr. Marsden was gone out, and would not be at home till the following Saturday. The poor old Rector was in his dotage, so it was useless to speak to him ; and there was nothing left for me but to hurry home as fast as possible.

“ Immediately on reaching ‘The Oaks,’ I made the plough boy saddle the mare, and set off to D—— with the letter ; ordering him to make the utmost speed there, and walk the mare back ; but I did not say a word to anybody, except my father, about what I had heard. Tired as I was, I never slept a wink, but lay awake the whole of that night, and rose the next morning with both my heart

and head aching. That day and the next passed—I don't know how—for I could think of nothing but your poor aunt. I was listening and looking out every ten minutes, as though I expected to hear something very dreadful. Just as we were having our supper in the evening of the second day, one of our out-door workmen, who lived in a cottage on the common, came and asked me if I would go and stay with his wife while he went for the midwife. The poor woman had not expected for another fortnight; but she had overworked herself to get a few shillings more to help in the hour of need. Away I went, and stopped with her till all was over. It was about eleven o'clock, when I left the cottage; I refused to let her husband take me home, for it was a beautiful night, the moon was just rising, and it was not more than a twenty minutes' walk. I had not gone above half way, when I heard a horse coming behind me at a quick rate. I felt rather frightened,

being on the open common, where there was not a tree or bush to hide me ; the horse was on the wood-side, which was in deep shadow, as the moon was rising behind. I turned to look without stopping ; the horse was checked ; and then, in another moment, I saw it coming towards me. Terrified, I darted off, but was quickly overtaken, and the words—‘Lucy ! dear Lucy Burns !’ saluted my ears. I was nearly shrieking, but checked myself, and turned round to see whether my ears deceived me, or whether it was an apparition—for the voice was Miss Bonville’s ! But how could she be there at that hour of the night ? Yet it was she herself ! I trembled like a leaf.—Bending down her head, and laying her hand on my shoulder :

“ ‘ Lucy,’ she said, ‘ betray me not. I am sold to a wretch, and nothing is left but flight to save me from a fate worse than death. Death ! oh ! that would be welcome, and I should be at rest with my mother.’

“‘Oh! Miss Clarissa,’ I said, ‘don’t go. I will hide you in our house, and no one will think you are so near home; come—do—dear, dear Miss Clarissa; even my father shall not know where you are; pray come; for I have sent a letter to your brother, Mr. Godfrey, and he will soon be here.’

“‘I shall not be safe at your house,’ she rejoined; ‘they will search every place. My father will tear me from you—I am not of age. As the wife of Captain Ormonde, I can alone find safety and protection.’

“‘Captain Ormonde!’ I exclaimed; ‘are you sure he is to be trusted?’

“‘Trusted! Lucy! What mean you? He has sworn everlasting faith.’

“‘Men break their faith,’ I replied.

“‘But *he* will not, cannot be false—so ungrateful,’ she said; ‘but I dare not stay; even now they may be in pursuit. Farewell, Lucy. When you hear me blamed, say it was to pre-

vent my father committing a great sin, or myself committing suicide, that I took this step.'

"She bent down and kissed my cheek, and I felt her tears fall like rain. Without another word, she gave full rein to her horse, and off they went at the back of our house, clearing every hedge and gate. I stood till she disappeared, and then slowly pursued my way home. I could hardly call to my father to throw the key of the house down for me to let myself in; my heart felt ready to burst. I crept to my room, bolted the door, and threw myself, as I was, on the bed, for I had not power to take off my clothes, and cried myself to sleep."

Here the old woman's tears fell fast; and Cordelia's eyes were not dry; but she forbore making any remark, lest it might retard the conclusion of the narrative. After taking a pinch of snuff, and wiping her eyes, Mrs. Burns thus proceeded—

"I was awakened in the morning by my father calling out—

"Lucy, beest thou still a bed? Get up! do; the whole country is in commotion about Miss Bonville, who is lost, drowned, or run away."

"I jumped up all of a tremor. It was late; but I could not guess the hour, for the weather had changed—the rain was falling in torrents, and the wind blowing so, that I thought the house was falling. Between the blasts, I could hear strange voices, and I considered while washing and tidying myself, what to say about having spoken to your aunt. Little time, however, was allowed me to consider, for again my father shouted out from the foot of the stairs—and down I went. In the kitchen stood the young squire, and Tom, the whipper in, covered with mud. Mr. Ingelram was in a dreadful passion, and, in a loud voice, demanded what I knew about his sister; for

that I had been out late the night before, no doubt to aid and abet her in her disgraceful folly. He called her the vilest names, swore he would shoot her, and the low minion Taylor whom she had disgraced herself with, called me a meddling go-between, and threatened both my father and self with ruin, and I don't know what else. My father—poor old man—was trembling with terror, imploring me to say all I knew.

"You know, Miss Delia, I have a spirit of my own, when roused ; and the young squire's language had done so in no small degree. I defied his threats, called him an unnatural brother, and told him he had joined with his father to sell his sister—that she had done right in eluding their wicked designs—that she had not degraded herself with a servant ; and, I hoped, by that time, she was the wife of Captain Ormonde. I denied having aided her ; but said I would have done anything

short of a crime to save her from the object of her detestation, whose conduct was worse than his appearance.

“The rage and astonishment of the young squire rendered him furious ; while Tom, the whipper-in, who stood behind him, encouraged me with his looks.

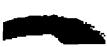
“Seizing my arm, and shaking his whip over my head, Mr. Ingelram demanded, in a voice nearly choked with passion, which way—I will not say what he called his sister—was gone. My blood boiled up at his vile words, and clenching my fist in his face—

“‘Strike me dead, if you like!’ I exclaimed ; ‘but if I knew, I would not tell you. Quit this house, for you have no right here. My father is a tenant of Squire Bonville’s, and he always pays the rent to the day : there is law for tenants as well as landlords ; but you are not ours yet.’

“‘Well done, Lucy Burns !’ cried Tom, with a whoop. ‘I’ll stand up for you, and any

other girl, when gentlemen forget the use of the whip. You, Sir,' he continued, turning towards Mr. Ingelram, 'may look for another whipper-in: I engaged myself to whip dogs, not women, and I'll be d—d if I stay longer in any place where the treatment of them ben't understood. I be glad our dragging the pond has given Miss time to get clear off.'

"Mr. Ingelram appeared rather ashamed; and asked Tom to get his horse, which he did, and then they left. My poor old father was nearly dead with fright, and the servant girl and fellows little better. I was blamed; and, perhaps, I was too hasty: but who could bear to hear a lady slandered so—and by her own brother, too! I could not; and shame, I say, to every woman who will not stand forth and defend the traduced. If in no other way, let them spurn the vile slanderer, who inflicts wounds that Time itself, perhaps, can never heal."



CHAPTER V.

THE HOUSEKEEPER'S TALE.

" 'My poor old father,' continued Mrs. Burns, 'was sadly alarmed lest he should have to give up 'the Dingle,' but I had no fears on that head : my fears were all for Miss Bonville. At last we heard that Mr. Godfrey had been at the Hall, but had left the next day in pursuit of his sister, and that Mrs. Page was gone. Next came a report that a Sheriff's officer had come to arrest the old squire for a gambling debt ; then we were told that the matter was hushed

up for the present, and that the entail was to be cut off when Mr. Godfrey came of age, which would not be long first; but nothing could I hear about your aunt. Never did time creep on so heavily. Summer came, and the hay harvest—which you know is a gay time—commenced; but I took no pleasure in anything. It was one day when all our people were out except myself; the dinner things had just been brought in from the meadows—my father liked the hay-makers to have their dinner out of doors, he said they were always merrier—and I was putting them to rights, when who should come in but Mr. Godfrey! Oh! he was sadly changed. He came, he said, to ask me all I knew about his poor sister. I told him every thing; even what I saw pass between the Captain and Mary Anne. He regretted I had not told his sister of that, because it might have prevented the step she had taken; yet he said there was no other way of avoiding the detested marriage they were

forcing her into ; for a special license had been obtained, and a clergyman—a friend, or rather a companion of Sir John's—was at the Hall, ready to perform the ceremony the night she escaped ; how she discovered it, nobody knew.

“ ‘ I cannot, Lucy,’ he continued, ‘ even to you, repeat all I now know ; it is too humiliating to my father and brother ; and Morton’s conduct was brutal in every way ; but I am sure it was Captain Ormonde, not his servant, as they try to make me believe, whose protection poor Clarissa relied on to save her from the horrid wretch, Morton. I have endeavoured—but without success—to discover her place of retreat. I wrote to the Colonel of Ormonde’s regiment, and received for answer that his leave of absence had not then expired. I have not written again, for my father’s affairs have claimed the whole of my time ; but I see by the papers that the regiment is ordered to America.’

“While we were talking, an old woman who used to go about the country selling tapes, thread, etc., and who, when I had no one else to send, would do any little errand for me at D——, came in. She was very near sighted, and did not notice Master, who was sitting in the window. I left him, to speak to the old woman, intending to take her to the back kitchen and give her something to eat, but ere I could do so she exclaimed—

“‘Have you heard the news, Miss Lucy, that Doctor Green’s girl is married?’

“I thought she meant one of the maids ; and I said ‘no,’ and that it was nothing to me.

“‘But every body is talking about it,’ she continued, ‘for some folks thought the Captain was the person Miss Bonville had run away with.’

“I was struck with amazement, and asked what she meant. She then said that Miss Green, who went to see some friends in London, was married to the Captain, who

had met with the accident just below ; and that Doctor Green was in a fine way, for his daughter never wrote him a word of what she intended to do, and he knew nothing of it till he saw the marriage in the newspaper ; and that she was gone with her husband to America.'

"Master never moved or spoke while the old woman was speaking. I got her into the other kitchen, and when I returned, I found him like a person turned into stone. At length, the big tears rolled down his cheeks ; and I heard the words—'my poor, poor, sister, where art thou ? I will know all ;' and he rose from his seat. I begged him to take comfort, and said what I did not feel. He asked for the loan of our mare to go as far as D——, which he had ; and the mare was sent home at night, and also a note from Mr. Godfrey, saying he and Green were starting off for Plymouth, which they hoped to reach before the troops sailed. But notwithstanding

their haste, they arrived too late. The marriage of Captain Ormonde and Mary Anne, however, was true; but not a trace of Miss Bonville could be obtained. The names of the soldiers' wives who accompanied their husbands, they ascertained; but Taylor's was not amongst the number; he was described as the Captain's servant and a single man.

"Summer ended, and nothing was heard of poor Miss Bonville. In the autumn, a great part of the landed property was advertised for sale; yet the old squire could not be prevailed upon to part with the hounds and horses for another year; saying, when he was advised to do so without loss of time, 'he hoped he might die ere he was compelled to part with them'; so he commenced hunting again as if nothing had happened. Winter set in and December was very fine. One day when Mr. Marsden was passing 'The Oaks,' he called in and told me Mr. Godfrey was gone to London, to settle with the lawyers, because the young

squire was never sober enough to be trusted with anything in the way of business. Mr. Marsden was changed too, for if ever a man loved, he loved your aunt ; he never told it, but he loved the very ground she trod on.

“ What a pity he did not tell her ! ” interposed Cordelia ; “ but she, I suppose, did not love him.”

“ Only as a brother,” rejoined Mrs. Burns.

“ Mr. Marsden said he hoped, indeed he had a presentiment Godfrey would hear something of Miss Clarissa, and that whatever her fate was, it would be better to know the worst, than to be kept in a state of uncertainty. As for himself, he said, the thoughts of her unsettled his mind, even when in the most solemn acts of his duty ; and as for poor Godfrey, he only wondered he had not sunk beneath the weight of woes which pressed so heavily on his noble, generous heart. Mr. Marsden then wished me good day, and pursued his way. The weather

changed in a day or two ; it became very cold and foggy, and I could not help thinking how bad it must be for Master in London, where, I am told, they burn candles all day, in the fogs.

" It was a week after this—a dark, gloomy day which I shall never forget. The wind was howling, and there were incessant showers of sleet, which froze in falling ; indeed it was with difficulty any body could keep a safe footing. I was spinning wool, and my father looking over his parish accounts—for he was overseer at that time—when all of a sudden the dogs barked, and looking out, we saw Mr. Marsden on his pony. One of the men ran out of the barn to hold it while he alighted, and I hurried to meet him. He would have fallen down had I not caught hold of his arm ; when with quivering lips he faltered out the words—

" ' Lucy—she is dead ;' and he sank down on the settle.

“ ‘ Dead ! ’ I repeated, ‘ Miss Clarissa, do you mean ? ’

“ ‘ Yes, Lucy ; starved ! She perished from want, while we were surrounded with comforts.’

“ He motioned for me to close the door ; which I did. My father had risen from his chair ; but, on hearing Mr. Marsden’s last words, he sunk down again, and covered his face with his hands. Mr. Marsden leant his head on the table, and sobbed ; while I stood speechless.

“ Mr. Marsden, however, was the first to recover ; and, holding out his hand, he said—

“ ‘ Lucy, I ought to possess more resignation to the will of God ; but He felt for the misery of man ! I am a man, and men should feel for their fellow-men—how much more for women ! Lucy, you must come home with me. Her poor remains are refused a resting-place, even for one night, under her father’s roof ; and, also, a last earthly resting-place beside her

mother. She may have erred in not complying with her father's commands ; but, surely, resentment should not extend to the dead ! in the grave, all ill-feelings should be extinguished. But the subject is too painful to dwell upon now. I will tell you another time, for you loved her from a child. You will come to the parsonage, will you not ?

" 'Come, sir ; oh ! yes,' I replied ; 'is that all you wish ? I am ready to come now.'

" 'It will do to-morrow morning ; for Godfrey says, in his letter, that the hearse, bearing the dear remains of that once young and lovely one, cannot reach Bonville till to-morrow evening. You know, in the poor old Rector's state, he must not be disturbed ; and I want some one to arrange my apartments, for the reception of—of—the undertaker. I have much yet to do—her grave must be prepared—I think she loved to sit under the old yew trees, at the back of the church.'

"I could not speak for sorrow ; but my

father promised I should be at the parsonage by nine the next morning ; and Mr. Marsden began his way home, heedless of wind and rain. Darkness was gathering round, so my father ordered one of our fellows to walk with him across the common—lest the pony might take a wrong turn.

“ I looked out my black gown, and got myself ready ; and the next morning I reached the rectory a little after nine, and set to work at once to prepare the rooms.

“ I cannot tell you every particular, for it would take me a week ; but I will tell you enough for you to understand.

“ The letter Mr. Marsden had received from Mr. Godfrey was short, and written in great distress of mind ; saying he had found his sister in a state of starvation ; and that she expired soon after—forgiving her persecutors, and imploring forgiveness for herself. Her dying request was that she might be buried by her mother. Mr. Godfrey went on to say

that he would attend her poor remains down to Bonville ; and entreated Mr. Marsden, immediately on the receipt of the letter, to acquaint his father with the melancholy event, and the last request of poor Clarissa.

" The family were at breakfast when Mr. Marsden reached the Hall ; and he was shown into the library, where Mrs. Bonville was presiding. Seeing there was no chance of her leaving the room, he broke the sad news by degrees, never, dear soul, thinking but that they would be distressed ; instead of which, they all burst out in a torrent of anger. The old squire, however, soon showed signs of softening down when told his daughter had died from want. But his unfeeling wife demanded whether the foolish creature was married, and to whom ; it could not be Captain Ormonde, for she supposed the man had not two wives !

" Mr. Marsden replied that was a question he was unable to answer satisfactorily ; but Mr. Godfrey would give every information required

when he arrived. In the meanwhile, he trusted the corpse might rest for one night at the Hall, and be thence conveyed, the following morning, to its last earthly resting-place—the family vault—as it was Miss Clarissa's dying request.

"Your grandfather made no reply; but the young squire swore that her request should not be granted, and your grandmother seconded, and applauded him; adding it would set such a bad example, and give encouragement to every girl who was inclined to disobey her parents; and that, as nothing satisfactory was known of Miss Bonville's marriage, she, as a virtuous wife, would never sanction such proceedings.

"Mr. Marsden rose up, and looking at her, said, in a tone of stern rebuke—

"'Virtuous you may be in the literal sense of the word, but you are deficient in the Christian virtues of charity, pity and humility.'

"Saying this he left the room, the loud

laugh of the young squire ringing in his ears. While endeavouring to open the hall door, he felt a little hand pulling his coat, and looking down, there he saw your papa, Master Bosville, with tears streaming down his face.

“ ‘Don’t be angry with Bozzy,’ he sobbed ; ‘I love Goddy and poor Clary ; tell her that she shall come and sleep at home, and I will be so good.’

“ ‘And did my father say so ?’ ejaculated Cordelia. ‘Oh ! how thankful I am ! But proceed.’

“ Mr. Marsden took him up, and kissed and blessed the dear child, and then, with a heavy heart, came to ‘The Oaks,’ as I have already stated.

“ The next morning, I went, as I said, to the parsonage, and set to work with the servant girl to get the place tidy. Mr. Marsden was in the church-yard, giving orders about the grave ; but he came in shortly after to consult with me about who should be in readiness to

bear the coffin from the hearse, for there was no coach-road then up to the front of the rectory. Ere we could think of any one, Pippin came in, saying he and the other servants at the Hall, having heard of the refusal made to the dying request of their dear young lady, begged they might attend and carry her to the grave, for they had gone in a body to the squire, and said if their petition was refused, they should all quit the place, as they did not mind a month's wages, which was all they could lose. This offer Mr. Marsden accepted, and told Pippin to return and say, which ever four of the men the butler chose to send, must be at the rectory about four o'clock that evening. Mr. Marsden himself proceeded to the park gate, to be in waiting to tell Mr. Godfrey not to go up the coach-road, but through the village. When Mr. Marsden got to the lodge, he found the gate was locked, and the key taken away by the orders of the young squire, who had sent one of the men-servants with the

order—the old people at the lodge not daring to refuse.

“It was quite dark when the hearse stopped there, and Mr. Marsden got into the mourning coach to Mr. Godfrey, informing him, as kindly as he could, of the cruel refusal of Miss Clariſſa’s dying request. While the stoppage took place, a man, who was sent to watch from the village, gave a shrill whistle, and then stepped up to the undertaker, and told him to wait a few minutes, for the villagers were bringing torches: and so they did; and forming two lines, walked each side of the hearse and mourning coach. It was a solemn sight on that gloomy evening, to see the mournful procession winding along the narrow road—the tolling of the bell borne mournfully on the wind. The butler, coachman, Pippin, and Mayflower, were waiting at the gate of the rectory, in readiness to take the coffin out of the hearse. There was not a dry eye, nor do I think there was a person able to walk, who

did not attend from the village. Poor Master was hardly able to stand, and he leant for support on Mr. Marsden, who wanted it himself. I received them at the house, and led the way to the best parlour, where the coffin was placed. Mr. Marsden had settled for the funeral to take place at a very early hour the next morning, fearing if it were later and many people were assembled, some disturbance would be made, which would surely be the case, if the real cause of the body resting at the rectory was known. This Mr. Marsden had strongly impressed on the servants to keep as secret as possible. They then all departed, and Mr. Godfrey, who was sinking with sorrow and fatigue, wished to go to the Hall and make another appeal to his father ; but Mr. Marsden advised him not, unless he could prove his sister was the wife of Captain Ormonde. Covering his face with his hands, Mr. Godfrey groaned, rather than said—

“ ‘ It was a sham marriage—the villain de-

ceived her—she believed herself his wife—till he tore the veil aside. Read that,’ continued he, handing a letter to Mr. Marsden—‘that broke her heart. I will tell you all.’

“‘ Not to-night,’ said Mr. Marsden and I, at the same time. ‘ You require rest—let us intreat you to retire.’

“‘ No—no—I shall be better when I have relieved my heart of the load that weighs me to the very dust. Oh ! that I were at rest with thee, my sweet—my gentle sister, and thy poor infant !’

“‘ Infant !’ I almost shrieked.

“‘ Yes,’ rejoined Mr. Godfrey, ‘ it perished with its mother.’

“ The undertaker, having sent the hearse and coach to the village, at this moment appeared at the door. I rose, and showed him the room where refreshments were laid, and then returned to the two gentlemen; and we again advised Mr. Godfrey to take some rest.

“ ‘ I will,’ he said, ‘ after I have told you of her sufferings and wrongs, here, ere all that remains of her is removed from my sight.’

“ Motioning to me to sit, for I was standing, he commenced—

“ ‘ You know law business took me to London; and I was resolved no efforts of mine should be spared to find my poor sister. The third day after my arrival, there was a dense fog, and the lamps in the street were lighted. I was, however, obliged to meet my lawyer. To save expense, instead of being at a first-rate hotel, I was staying at a respectable little inn, or public house, in Holborn, nearly opposite Chancery Lane, where my lawyer resided; and thither I was going. I was standing near a lamp, waiting for an opening between the coaches to cross; and, just before me, I saw a woman in tattered garments leaning on a besom, holding out her hand, and begging. I was passing on, when her words in a hollow, sepulchral voice—‘ One

penny, I am starving !' startled me : the voice —the heart-rending tones so utterly wretched instantly arrested my steps. 'Who are you?' I asked. A faint shriek followed — and she fell down on her face at my feet. I lifted up the inanimate form, and tore the covering off her head. It was Clarissa—my sister! Wasted as the features were by want and misery, I knew her, and lifting her into a hackney coach that stood near—'Drive on!' was all I could utter. She lay perfectly still —so still, that I thought death had terminated all her sufferings. I was recalled to a sense of my position, by the driver stopping and asking where I wished to take the creature. For a few moments, I was too stunned to reply. By taking her to the inn, where my own respectability was not known, I might subject both of us to incivility, or even insults ; but a thought flashed across my mind—my father's tailor, Longman, might take her in : and to his house we were driven—Clarissa lying in-

sensible in my arms. On stopping, I desired the servant to ask Mr. Longman to come and speak to me. He did so, and I told him of my distress, and implored him to take me in. He said his lodgings were occupied, but begged me to stay while he spoke to his wife. I had not long to wait—for the kind-hearted couple both came to my assistance, and bore the hapless Clarissa between them to their own room. Never—never—shall I forget that moment, when the lights revealed to my gaze the abject wretchedness of that once beauteous form and face—the traces of famine in its almost last stage—the bones protruding through the skin—the deep hollows round the closed eyes! But the outlines of the face were still beautiful, and so was the long auburn hair—though matted with damp and mud from *the streets she had swept*—she—she—the daughter of—of—a Bonville! I knelt before her, clasped her fleshless hands, and im-

plored her to look—to speak to me—yet she moved not.

“‘She is dead !’ I cried.

“‘But no, she began to give some faint signs of life. I heard Mrs. Longman whisper to her husband, and then she said to me—

“‘This, sir, is no place for a young man : go with my husband—go, sir, pray—he will tell you in the next room ; there is no time to lose if you wish the life of this poor creature to be prolonged an hour.’

“‘I obeyed, and Longman told me of my sister’s situation, and then went for a surgeon and nurse. What followed, I know not—for I threw myself on the floor, stupified with grief. I heard many voices and feet passing and repassing my door ; and then Mrs. Longman came and told me my sister wished to see me, and begged I would command my feelings, if possible, for that she could not survive many hours ; the infant she said was

dead—starved. I felt as though turned into marble—and taking my arm, Mrs. Longman led me to the chamber of the dying sufferer. Her eyes were fixed on the door, watching for my entrance ; and a beam of joy—yes, joy—as in happy days—flashed from them, when I approached and knelt beside the bed ; and, taking her hand, I pressed it to my lips—my heart. In the other hand she clenched a paper—and placing it in mine, she murmured—

“ ‘ Read this, dear, dear Godfrey, and tell my father my heart was broken, and that since abandoned by him, whom I thought my husband, to encounter insults—want—I have resisted every temptation to sin.’

“ ‘ Drawing me to her, with the little strength left, she kissed my cheek, while I placed my arm under her head, and whispered every soothing word of comfort and hope.

“ ‘ Not—not here—not in this world,’ she said ; ‘ but, through the mercy of God, I trust in another—with my mother ; lay me

by her side even in this—and implore forgiveness of my father for my disobedience—I know it's sinful, but surely he will forgive—me—'

"Again she kissed my cheek—her lips were cold, and she spoke no more; but fixing her eyes for a few moments on mine, they closed in sleep—a gentle sweet sleep—in which she remained for nearly an hour. I never moved, and Mrs. Longman and the nurse sat so still that not a sound disturbed the solemn silence of that awful hour, when death was every moment approaching nearer to strike the last unerring dart. At length, its victim gave a slight movement, opened her eyes, and fixed them on the foot of the bed; the hand that held mine grasped it more tightly, she heaved a gentle sigh, and all her sufferings were over. Her hand became stiff and cold, her eyelids partly closed, yet still a sweet placid smile lingered round her mouth on which the shaded light from a lamp fell. It was midnight—the

church clocks struck twelve. I feared to move, for I could hardly believe her dead, and I looked at each of the women to motion their approach. Both were sleeping—every thing was wrapped in total stillness—I even suppressed my own breathing, lest it might disturb the dead, and I feared to loosen the cold stiff fingers which held mine in their icy grasp. What I felt in that hour none can tell, but those who have witnessed the last moments of their most beloved one—and such my sister was to me.

“ The days of childhood rushed back as though they were but as yesterday, when hand-in-hand we would wander through the park and gardens, seeking the first violets or primroses for our beloved mother, whose smile or kiss was the only coveted reward. And then our schooldays flitted before my memory—our tears at parting—our joy when greeting each other’s return—each year seeming to add to the beauty and graces of my sweet sister ;

and there she lay, stricken in the spring of youth—the victim of man's selfish cruelty ! A groan of anguish burst from my overcharged heart, which roused the women. Starting up, they approached the bed.

“ ‘She is dead—quite cold,’ they murmured : and disengaging my hand, they led me forth, and consigning me to the care of Longman, returned to perform the last sad office to the poor body.

“ They brought me this tress of her hair.”

* * * *

“ Both mother and infant were starved—the infant, ere it saw the light ; and they were placed in the same coffin. My poor sister’s sufferings were so great that sense, for a time, deserted her ; and when restored, it appeared she was unconscious of what had taken place, for she only asked for me, and never alluded to her infant.

"Now, Marsden, I will retire, for I need rest. Read these letters when I am gone.

"I lighted Mr. Godfrey, dear good soul, to his chamber, and then went down to the parlour, where Mr. Marsden and I intended remaining the whole night with the corpse.

"We remained some time completely overcome with sorrow. Neither spoke, but we sat listening to every sound. At length all was silent, and he read the letter to me.

"One was written by your poor aunt ; you shall read it yourself." And taking a packet, carefully wrapped up in a silk case, out of her pocket, Mrs. Burns handed it to Cordelia.

"Are these the letters ?" asked Cordelia.

"This is not your aunt's own writing. Master let Mr. Marsden copy them for himself, and I begged of him to give me a copy also. I have read them over and over till my heart has been nearly broken.

" Shall I take and read them in my own room when I retire at night ?

" No, Miss Delia, read them now, for I shall be better able to explain any part you may not understand, and the writing is become very pale, and paper much worn in the folds. I have often wished to get a new copy, but I can't write well enough myself, and I did not think it proper to let Mayflower read them, for Mr. Marsden made me promise no one was to do so ; but you are different to others, and I don't consider I am doing wrong by showing them to you, therefore after you have read them you can copy them for yourself.

" In compliance with this request, Cordelia began as follows in the next chapter :

CHAPTER VI.

THE HOUSEKEEPER'S TALE.

" MY BEST BELOVED BROTHER,

" When this reaches your hands, mine will be cold, and the heart that is now breaking will have ceased to beat—for my last task will be to post this record of my woes, wrongs, faults, and sins. But I did not wilfully sin, save in disobeying my father; and had I obeyed him by marrying Sir John Morton, I should have insulted my Heavenly Father, by swearing at His altar to love and honor a

man my heart abhorred. But let me not judge myself. I will merely state the truth of events, and leave you to condemn or pity me as your heart prompts.

" Let me pass over the discomforts of home after the death of our beloved mother.

* * * * *

" The unfortunate accident which befell Captain Ormonde first called forth my pity ; love soon followed, and he was not long ere he declared his affection for me ; but he begged me not to inform any one of his proposal, not even Miss Green, as he hoped to be promoted shortly, and when a Major, he should propose to my father for me. A few days after this, my father told me Sir John Morton had demanded my hand, that he had promised it ; and it was useless for me to make any demur, for comply I should. I did refuse, however, and implore my father on my knees to have pity on me, as of all men, I detested—abhorred

Sir John. In a dreadful passion my father left me, and hastened to Mrs. Bonville, who told him the reason of his daughter's refusal was, that she had accepted the offer of Captain Ormonde. He hurried out of her apartment to the Captain's, called him a low, sneaking scoundrel, and ordered him to quit the house instantly. He then dragged me to my chamber and locked me in. Peacham was the only servant allowed to come near me, my own maid, Weston, being discharged and turned out. The Captain's servant, Taylor, however, bribed Peacham to convey me a letter, in which he told me I was sold to Sir John, who, having won very large sums of both my father and Ingelram, which it was impossible to pay without ruining the estate—offered to relinquish all claims in exchange for my hand; and that the only way for me to save myself was, to escape and fly with the Captain, who, in order to lull suspicion, had left for London; but that he, Taylor, would remain in an obscure

public house at D——, to receive and conduct me to his master. I was almost distracted on reading this letter; but whatever doubts I might have entertained, regarding the truth of the statement, they were soon dispelled, and my worst fears were confirmed by Mrs. Bonville and Ingelram's coming to my room, and urging me to comply with my father's request. Finding their entreaties failed, they proceeded to threats, and upbraided me with selfishness, for preferring the ruin of my family to a man who did not care for me, only wanted to marry me in opposition to my father's wishes; but they said opposition on my part I should find unavailing; for whether I consented or not, the wife of Sir John I should be. Two days only were allowed me to make up my mind.

“Oh! had my father come to me—had he spoken one kind word, and told me it was to save him from ruin and dishonour, I would have submitted, even if my heart had broken at the altar; but I would not submit to that

woman, who ever sought to crush my father's love for me—me to whom he was always kind and affectionate till she was brought to fill my mother's place. Ingelram, too ! what right had *he* to sacrifice his sister to the vile love of gambling—to barter her for *gold* ?

“ My father had, till lately, only betted on horses : it was the brutal Morton and his low, worthless set, who introduced every mean species of gambling into our once happy home.

“ Driven nearly to madness, I consented to fly ; and Taylor managed, with the aid of the under groom, to effect my escape. That very night the marriage was to be solemnized in the drawing-room by special license ; but it was to take place after the servants had retired, fearing they would interfere to save me !

“ On my way to D—— I encountered Lucy Burns. Oh ! had I accepted her offer of shelter—had I been advised by her, what misery would have been spared me ; but I trusted to Ormonde, and was lost ! On reaching

D——, I found Taylor waiting for me with a chaise and four at the appointed place. We started immediately, and never stopped, except to get from one chaise to another, till we reached London. We drove to a hotel, where Taylor gave orders for every attention to be shown me till the next morning, when the Captain would come from the barracks. He did so ; and prevailed on me to accompany him thither, where, he said, every arrangement had been made with the chaplain to unite us ; for that an officer on duty could be married without any inquiry or needless delay. On arriving at the barracks, I was conducted to a room where a clergyman was waiting I asked if there was no church or chapel where the ceremony might be performed ; but Ormonde assured me it was of no importance ; and besides, he said, the more quietly the ceremony took place, the better ; because any delay might give time for my father or brother to arrive and prevent it, which might be done, as I was

under age. This overcame my scruples ; and in the presence of Taylor and a soldier's wife, our nuptials took place. Immediately afterwards, we left the barracks, for lodgings in London.

"I wanted to write to you, Godfrey ; but Ormonde begged I would not until he knew where his regiment would be ordered. For about three months we remained together ; we lived very retired, and I saw no one. The first few weeks Ormonde never left me ; but by degrees I saw less of him : that, however, was not strange, as his duties required his presence at the barracks. At length a visible change took place, not only in the manner of my husband, but in the people of the house, who demanded their money. Ormonde promised to settle the account in a few days, as orders were given for the regiment to leave for Ireland. This satisfied the landlady, and then he went out on business. A week elapsed, and he did not return ; but a letter came by post from

him—yes, Godfrey—he had the heart to write and say he was *the husband of another!*"

"Oh ! Burny," exclaimed Cordelia, looking up from the paper ; "can men be so bad ? Surely Captain Ormonde could not have written himself to break the heart that trusted so faithfully in his love and honour."

"Read on, Miss Delia, and you will see."

Cordelia, after pausing a few seconds, continued :—

"He informed me that Mary Anne was his *lawful wife*, and his marriage with me only a sham one, which would not stand good in law. He enclosed a ten pound bill, advised me to get away without saying a word to the woman of the house, and concluded by saying he should never cease to love me, but he could not support a wife without money, and for *that*, and *that only*, he had married Mary Anne."

* * * * *

"After reading Ormonde's letter, indigna-

tion overpowered all other feelings ; and crushing the horrid paper in my hand, and placing the ten pound note with my watch on the table, I put on my cloak and hat, and walked out of the house. In what direction I went I know not, nor did I know the distance I had gone, until the increasing darkness warned me of the approach of night, and recalled to me the horror of my situation and the necessity of a place of shelter. Knocking at the door of one of the meanest houses, I asked for a week's lodging, and was told I might have a room by paying for it in advance. This I did, and entered. What happened after I hardly knew ; I only remembered giving my diamond ring to the woman of the house to sell, and that I was ill—very ill, and confined to my bed.

“ The woman was kind to me ; but when able to leave my bed, I felt very weak, and my money, I was told, was nearly all spent. She was poor, and only made a scanty living by letting one of her two small bed-rooms, and

working for the tailors. I offered to help in her work, if she would supply me till she could think of something else for me to do ; and this request was complied with. But I soon found there was not sufficient work for both. I would have endeavoured to get a servant's place—a governess's situation I knew could not be procured without references—but my state of mind and body precluded all chances of obtaining one. At last I wrote to you, Godfrey ; but no answer ever came. Still I worked on, so as to keep a shelter over my head. Bread and water was my only food, and of the former I had but a scanty portion ; yet, even of this I was to be deprived. I had often heard the woman speak of her daughter, who was in service, saying she was thankful she had kept her place, for she dreaded her being at home on account of her bad temper and propensity to drink. I had been in this humble abode about two months, when the daughter made her appearance, and proved to be the servant of the

house where I had lodged with Ormonde. Despite the change in me from want, anguish of mind, and illness, the girl recognised me, and instantly commenced a torrent of abuse. Every epithet that only the most depraved can utter, was applied to me ; and, seizing me by the hair of my head, she thrust me out into the street, where a tribe of the lowest miscreants, ever ready for a broil, were hastening towards the spot attracted by the loud tones of the half-intoxicated virago, who was pouring forth the venom of her tongue on her poor victim. In endeavouring to make my way through the mob surrounding the door, my clothes were nearly torn to tatters; but, with a desperate effort, I freed myself from the brutal wretches who were pulling me about in the most indecent manner, and rushed along the narrow street pursued like a wild animal. At length I sank down in a state of insensibility, and was taken up by a constable, conveyed to some court of justice, and committed to Bridewell

as a disorderly character, found drunk and creating a disturbance in the street."

"This," interrupted Cordelia, "was too dreadful. Could she not assert her innocence, and convince them of her sobriety?"

"She, poor soul," rejoined the good house-keeper, "had no one to speak in her behalf. Misery, want, and the outrages heaped upon her, might—no doubt did—deprive her of all power of exertion."

"How long my imprisonment lasted," Clariissa's letter continued, "or what my sufferings were, I shall not speak of. I prayed for death to terminate my woes; for, on being discharged from prison, I was a houseless, destitute wanderer. Where was I to apply for redress or relief? Only from the workhouse; and from that I shrunk with greater horror than a prison—as, perhaps, I might be compelled to divulge my name, and be passed as a pauper to my father: there was madness in the very thought. Penniless I traversed street after street. Evening

was closing ; insults from wicked men saluted my ears, and taunts from abandoned females at my shabby attire. I looked round for some church-yard, where I might lay me down between the tombs and die. One, at last, burst on my sight, but the gate was locked, and I turned away in despair. At that moment a gentleman crossed the street ; and, in taking his handkerchief out of his pocket, his pocket-book fell to the ground. I picked it up, and hastened after the owner presented it to him. He opened it : ' You are an honest woman,' he exclaimed, and gave me a seven-shilling piece. I would have knelt to bless the hand which saved me, but he passed on. Thus was I enabled to procure a lodging. But what was I to do to earn my daily bread ? My situation would prevent my obtaining a servant's place ; and no one would intrust me with needle-work —one totally unknown. I bought a besom and swept the street before some shops ; for which the owners gave me scraps of food, or a few

pence. This miserable occupation I continued till an accident prevented my going out for two days; when, on proceeding to resume my labour, I found another person had taken it, and I was driven away."

Little more was written. Clarissa's letter concluded by saying she was going forth to perish, as she could no longer pay for her lodgings, but ere she lay down to die, her last act would be to post the packet enclosed to Mr. Marsden, begging him to give it to her best beloved brother, Godfrey, although he had cast her off, and imploring forgiveness of her father.

* * * *

It was some time after Cordelia ceased reading, before Mrs. Burns regained sufficient composure to resume her narrative; but at length she did as follows.

"For a long time Mr. Marsden and I sat,

unable to speak for sorrow. To think what that dear sweet young thing had endured ! She who was so beautiful, so good to all, and whose heart ever felt for the sorrows of others —she whose greatest pleasure was in contributing to the comfort of the poor—she who never refused their requests, or turned aside from the cry of distress or misery—to think that when hardly nineteen, *she* should perish from want ! Well, it is not for us to pry into the ways of Providence. He knows what is best for our everlasting happiness, and in this world, happiness or misery does not last long.

“ But I must hasten to finish about the funeral, and what happened after, before Master comes home.

“ When Mr. Marsden had finished poor Miss Clarissa’s letter, for some time we sat in silence completely overwhelmed with sorrow. At length the good man rose, and motioning to me, we both knelt, and in a low tone he

prayed, and then he read from the Bible till the clock struck five. I then called up the servant girl and got some breakfast ready. At seven, the servants came from the hall, dressed in their full liveries—as there was not time for them to get mourning—except the butler, who always wore black. During the night, the weather had changed and some heavy rain fallen, but the wind rose towards morning and the fog cleared off.

“By eight o’clock all was ready. The servants had hatbands, and there being no other pall-bearers, the pall rested on their shoulders, nearly concealing their dress. Master followed as chief mourner, supported by the butler, whose place was taken by the village shopkeeper in bearing the coffin, and Master needed support, for he could hardly stand. Weston, whom I had sent for, came just in time to attend, so she and I walked after Master. Notwithstanding all the precaution we had taken, I verily believe all the inhabi-

tants of the village were assembled, and walked after us to the church-yard, but the strictest order and silence prevailed, as though each individual strove to stifle his sorrow.

"At the church door, Mr. Marsden stood in readiness. We entered, and he went through the burial service with a firmness which only the good can possess. Just as we left the church a slight shower of rain fell, but the cloud soon passed away, and the sun shone forth above the hills. As we reached the humble grave prepared near the old yew trees, the solemn rites re-commenced, the coffin was lowered, and the words: "I heard a voice, &c.," were sung by all present. We then all knelt, and the last prayer was being uttered, when we were startled by the sound of a huntsman's horn. I raised my eyes to Mr. Marsden, his lips quivered, yet he stopped not till the last word of the blessing was pronounced. He then looked in the direction of the hall, from whence the sounds of the horn

proceeded ; the clatter of the horses drew nearer, and we heard a loud ‘ Whoop !’ We all crowded round the grave as though to protect the dead, and the sexton hurried to throw in the earth. Another louder, nearer ‘ Whoop !’ and the young squire was seen galloping at full speed down the coach road, followed by one man only and the hounds ! He checked his horse, and then waving his hand and cheering on the dogs, prepared to leap the boundary wall of the church-yard ; when the word ‘ Shame !’ was shouted by the villagers, and Master sprang forward to stop him. But it was not needed ; a stronger arm than his had defeated the presumptuous attempt. The horse reared ; then, goaded by the spur of the rider, bounded forward, but striking his fore feet against the top of the wall, he fell back upon Mr. Ingelram !

“ The men-servants rushed forward to extricate their young master, but not a man among the villagers moved a step ; and, with

difficulty, they got him from under the horse. The poor animal's back was broken, and Mr. Ingelram's skull was fractured — or rather smashed against a heap of stones—and he was *dead!*"

* * * *

Cordelia's feelings became so excited with the painful recital, that the good housekeeper thought it best to defer the conclusion of it till another day, particularly as the time drew near for the return of Mr. Bonville, and she did not wish him to find his niece discomposed. Although he had never prohibited any of the domestics acquainting Cordelia with the circumstances above related, he himself had never alluded to any of them in her presence: Mrs. Burns, therefore, advised her not to do so.

Cordelia accordingly endeavoured to erase the traces of her tears, ere she went forth to

meet her uncle ; and fortunate was it that twilight had arrived before he did. She walked along between him and old May-flower, listening to all the incidents he had to relate, of trifling importance in themselves ; but to her—who took an interest in all that concerned the weal or woe of those she knew, particularly the poorer class—nothing was trifling. So on they walked that lovely autumn evening, up the avenue of noble elms, some of the topmost branches of which were beginning to give signs of approaching decay. Twilight was giving place to the deeper shades of night ; and they were, in their turn, gradually rolling away before the soft light of the moon, whose rising beyond the distant hills was every moment becoming more perceptible ; till at length she appeared in all her calm, majestic splendour, gliding upwards, and taking the lead amongst the fair assembly illumining the night :—like some young beautiful daughter of a high and long-renowned

line of ancestors, who, gliding into the ball-room, takes her place without a single dissenting voice at the head of the fair girls, who are content to follow in the wake of the Queen of the Revels.

CHAPTER VII.

CONCLUSION OF THE HOUSEKEEPER'S TALE.

SEVERAL unforeseen incidents prevented Mrs. Burns proceeding with her melancholy tale for some days; but it may be as well for us to conclude it here, so that it may not again interrupt the regular order of events as they occur in the following pages.

It was necessary to explain to the reader some past occurrences in the Bonville family, which roused feelings, passions, and vices that otherwise might have slept in the depths of the

heart—that deep recess where every passion, whether good or evil, lies dormant. Well would it be if some were never awakened; for when released from their bonds, it were as easy to check them in their career, as for the child to stop the progress of the flames itself has kindled in some loose straw, by heedlessly throwing away a lucifer match, and all attempts to quench them only serve to increase the rapidity of the devouring element, till every combustible matter is consumed. Such is the case with bad passions:—if once they obtain the mastery over the mind, they stop not till soul or body is the victim.

It was, as we have observed, many days ere Mrs. Burns could find time to conclude her sad history of the departed inhabitants of Bonville Hall to their fair young descendant, who possessed every amiable quality for which its female members had for centuries been as eminent, as the males had been celebrated for deeds of renown and boundless hospitality—

till the latter virtue degenerated into unnecessary profusion, and outstepped the boundary of prudence. Virtues, when carried to the extreme, become in time allied to vices: hospitality, to wasteful extravagance—charity, to indiscriminate liberality—patience, to weakness—prudence, to cold-hearted selfishness, parsimony, and suspicion :—in short, the Christian should be watchful over all the feelings of his heart, whether good or evil.

Perhaps we ought to relate events as they occurred; but we prefer finishing the house-keeper's tale first; and no doubt it will suit our readers best, particularly those who only procure books of this class from Reading Clubs or Public Libraries, when they seldom have but one volume at a time—of new works. We often hear the words—“How tiresome it is I cannot get the second or third volume! I forget who such an one was—how provoking it is!”

We shall therefore take up the thread of our narrative at the death of Ingelram, and give it in Mrs. Burns's words.

"Never shall I forget that awful moment. The servants, who had dragged the horse aside, drew back horror-struck at the sight of the lifeless body of their young master; while many of the villagers, falling on their knees, covered their faces, and the words broke forth—

"'It is the judgment of God!'

"A deep groan followed, and Mr. Godfrey staggered forward, and fell down in a fit beside the corpse of his brother. The undertaker appeared the only person who knew what he was about. He ordered a doctor to be summoned, and Master to be conveyed to the Rectory; and begged me to attend him thither, while Mr. Marsden went to the Hall to break the dreadful news to the old squire. But the tidings reached the Hall before he did—people are always ready to hasten with melancholy

news ; and hardly had he got half way up the coach road, when he was met by the wretched father, although nearly a cripple from gout.

"I will not shock your feelings, dear Miss Delia, by describing your grandfather's despair and sufferings. He was, with difficulty, conveyed back to his room—the gout flew to his stomach—and in three days death terminated his sufferings of mind and body ! His mental agonies were dreadful ; but good Mr. Marsden, who never left him day or night, much as he wished to be at home, said he became deeply penitent at the last, and wished to see Mr. Godfrey ; but he was alas ! in a state of insensibility at the time, his noble mind having sunk under the pressure of woes. He still lay at the Rectory, where I remained, and devoted my whole time to him.

" When informed of the state his son lay in, your grandfather sent him his blessing, imploring forgiveness for all the wrongs he had done him, and recommending little Bosville to

his care; and the last words he uttered were—

“ ‘Place my murdered, beautiful Clarissa between her dear mother and me—her cruel father.’ ”

“ I will not tell you about the inquest on Mr. Ingelram and all that took place at the village, only that the corpse remained at the inn till the funeral. At the Rectory there was no room that could be spared without disturbing Mr. Godfrey, who was ordered to be kept in perfect quiet; and so it never entered the doors of the home in which he had forbidden his sister’s remains to lay for one night! I verily believe people came twenty miles to see the funeral, although it was to take place in the most quiet and unostentatious manner. All the Bonvilles used to have very grand funeral processions by torch-light; but Mr. Marsden took upon himself to order everything according to, what he knew would be, the ap-

probation of his friend Mr. Godfrey. But, notwithstanding all the pains taken to keep the funeral quiet, the news got wind, like everything does, and long before the hour fixed, hundreds were collected. The coffin containing your aunt was taken up the night before and placed in the church, to be conveyed with the others to the vault. It was a mournful sight to behold ! I could only see part from the stairs' window, for I could not leave Master. It was a bitter cold, dark morning ; and the hearse that had brought Miss Bonville now went to the Hall for her father, and the mourning coach, also ; Mrs. Bonville having avowed her intention of following with her little son as chief mourners. At first, this was opposed ; but she expressed such deep sorrow and repentance for her past conduct, that Mr. Marsden thought it would be cruel to make further opposition.

“ Just as the hearse and mourning coach re-

turned through the park gates, the procession with the body of the young squire, turned the corner of the road from the village ; and at the church-yard gate, it halted till your grandfather's coffin was taken out. That was borne by six tenants to the church, followed by Mr. Ingelram's, borne by six others ; then Mrs. Bonville stepped out of the coach, and led your dear papa ; while Page and Weston walked close behind to support her in case of need. She was scarcely able to stand ; and, greatly as she was disliked, no one could help feeling pity for her. All the servants, even those who had been discharged or left on their own account, were present, and followed. When in the church, a chair was placed for Mrs. Bonville ; but she refused to sit down, and knelt at the foot of her husband's coffin, with her hands crossed on her bosom, as though to still the beatings of her heart. When the coffins were carried down to the vaults, she placed the hand of her child in

that of Mrs. Page, and motioning for them to leave the church, she descended to the vault, where Miss Clarissa was placed by her mother, and tottering forward, knelt down as if imploring forgiveness of both mother and daughter.

“As soon as all was over, Mr. Marsden took her hand, and led her up the steps. She made no resistance, nor did she speak; but was placed in the coach with her little son, Page, and Weston—whom she said she had sent for, to witness her unfeigned sorrow and repentance for all the wrongs she had heaped on the child of her best friend and patroness.”

“And how did my dear uncle bear all that?” asked Cordelia.

“Why, he knew nothing for some time; and when he recovered, it was a sad task for Mr. Marsden to tell him. It was best, however, to do so as soon as he was able to hear it, because he was now the Squire; and the other executor, Mr. Rivington did not and,

indeed, could not act without him : the will was to be read and proved ; and they wanted to know how Mrs. Bonville was left. So poor Master was obliged to stifle his own distress ; and, perhaps, it was best for him, for had he not been in a manner compelled to exertion, his heart might have broken ; indeed I have often wondered it did not. Mr. Rivington came from W——, and the will was opened ; and it was found that Mrs. Bonville's jointure was very trifling, and only five hundred pounds left to her son.

“ Master's first visit to the Hall after his father's death was a sad trial ; but as Mr. Rivington said there was so much to be done, the sooner it was got over the better ; they, therefore, sent for the carriage to convey them here, as it was snowing very fast. The interview with Mrs. Bonville was very distressing. So far, however, from making any complaints about the scanty provision made for herself and child, she said it was far more than she

deserved, for she considered herself the cause of all the late unhappy dissensions in the family, and in a great measure of the present ruinous state of affairs; as she, on her marriage, wished to do everything the reverse of her amiable predecessor, and never attempted to check her husband in any of his extravagance; and that her jealousy of Miss Bonville made her not only encourage, but suggest everything to annoy her. She, however, solemnly declared neither she nor his father knew of the last dreadful intention of Ingelram, and that when the horrid intelligence was brought to the Hall, it seemed like a voice from Heaven condemning her to everlasting punishment: that she should have gone from the church a wanderer on the world for bread, had it not been for the thoughts of bringing disgrace on a name she was not worthy of bearing; and that she was now ready to submit, and to linger out the remainder of her wretched life in any way or place Master would point out.

“ You may suppose this was enough to move even the hardest heart to pity ; and your uncle’s is the kindest. He, therefore, told her to remain in any part of the Hall she chose, but not to interfere with him in any way, and that he should provide for her son. Mr. Marsden told me of all that passed, for I never named her to Master, nor did he to me.

“ She chose one of the most dismal rooms—the one you know, Miss Delia, in the furthest end of the long gallery——”

“ Surely not that where the windows are mere loop-holes, and the bats and owlshave taken up their lodgings !”

“ Yes, and there she lived quite alone. She did everything for herself, and never troubled a servant. Her food was sent and placed outside the door, and by degrees she left off taking anything but bread-and-water ; and when Master or Mr. Marsden remonstrated with her, her reply was—

“ ‘ Since Miss Bonville perished through

want, bread-and-water is good enough for me.'

"She would never permit any fire to be lighted in the coldest weather ; and the only indulgence she allowed herself—if indulgence it might be called—was a lamp burning at night, for at all hours she used to be heard pacing up and down the apartment. No nun could subject herself to greater self-denial."

"Did she never see any one, or go out?"
inquired Cordelia.

"Her little boy—your papa—was taken to see her every morning, but ten minutes was all she allowed him to stay. She attended church regularly, and sat with the poor people, to whom she distributed the whole of her little income ; and that sum Master has continued to bestow ever since. She always wore black-stuff gowns, and was clean and neat in her person and room. She survived your grand-father two years. Her death was beautiful to witness. I was sent for when she was taken ill, and

stayed with her the last week of her life. By her own earnest desire, she was buried in the grave in which Miss Clarissa lay for the few days previous to her removal to the family-vault : beneath the old yews, your grandmother now rests, with a simple head-stone, on which are engraved the letters—E. B.

“ I have often thought to myself that if one who had received so little religious and moral education could thus show such deep sorrow for her sins, what must those have to answer for who have been trained in the paths of morality, yet act in direct opposition to its precepts. Mrs. Bonville was a fine and handsome young woman, but proud, vain, and haughty, which made her refuse many offers in her own station in life ; one from a farmer, another from a tradesman in W——, either of whom would have placed her in a respectable position in which she might have been happy : but in the station she had used every art to be placed in, she felt herself

only an intruder, with temper and spirits too high to allow her to stoop to conquer. She could not bear to see the homage paid to her beautiful and accomplished step-daughter; and the weak, or rather, bad habits, of Mr. Ingelram she not only connived at, but encouraged, by supplying him with money to the utmost of her power, without his father's knowledge, in order to have him on her side; for she was foolish enough to fancy it was in his power, when the entail was cut off, to name her son as next heir instead of Master. But the less said now the better; she is gone to her account, and a more sincere penitent never departed this life."

Here I cannot help observing how wrong it is for girls to aspire at marrying above their station. Seldom do such marriages prove happy; for, however passionate the husband's devotion may be during the first few months, or, we will say, years, it will in time give place to disappointment, if not disgust, when he

compares her to whom he linked himself in an unguarded hour, with those females of his own rank, to whose superiority and refinement of manners he was accustomed ; and if he did not appreciate them, yet, when thrown entirely in his hours of relaxation on the pretty illiterate creature whom he chose perhaps for beauty only, he looks upon her merely as a doll decked out to please the eye, with little more within than those painted bits of wood or wax that sit bolt upright just as their infant owners place them ; and well it may be if she is contented to remain passive in the hands of her possessor, without attempting to break the bonds that unite them. Men ought to reflect ere they pay undue attention to girls in an inferior rank to themselves ; it may blight their reputation be they ever so pure, and prevent their forming connexions suitable to their station, and being happy and respectable members of society. Sometimes, but not often, does a man marry for love alone, in defiance of the world's sneers ;

and to retain that love, the wife must possess many attractions besides a lovely face.

I have often thought actresses stand the best chance of being happy in a high station; for they must be women of education and fascinating manners. But if they were guilty of the slightest deviation from the path of virtue ere they entered the pales of matrimony, they are always shunned by those of their own sex; and how grievous in after days it must be for their daughters, when old enough to mix in the society to which their father's rank entitled them, to find another matron must chaperon them! It is *then* the mother feels her degradation, when she is deemed an improper protectress for her own children, and is treated by them with scorn; or, what is equally humiliating, sees the blush of pity or shame mantle their cheeks for the errors of their parent.

Aspire not, then, my young friends, too high; for be assured happiness is not always attendant on rank or wealth—above all, not

on unequal matches. If you marry beneath you, you are ashamed of the low relations of your husband ; and having given up your own, you are, perhaps, thrown entirely on those whose vulgar habits and manners render it impossible for you to respect or love them ; and what is still worse, even he, for whom you have sacrificed all, may prove a brutal, selfish tyrant, from whose chains the grave is the only harbour, you have to look to, for refuge and shelter, from the storm and the ruffled ocean on which you have trusted your frail bark.

But this is straying from the straight road; to return therefore—

“ When his mamma died,” continued Mrs. Burns, “ little Master Bosville was left, at the age of seven, with no one to care for him but his good and noble brother. The establishment here was reduced to four servants : Ford, Mayflower, Pippin, and one servant girl of all work, whom Priscilla Miles used to help in the washing. I saw much mismanagement in the

kitchen ; but it was not for me to speak. I did, however, to Ford, so that he might look after the girl more strictly.

“ I could not stay here longer ; for my father was getting almost bed-ridden with rheumatism, and it required all my time to take care of him and the farm. We had now only ‘the Oaks,’ of which there were still some years of the lease unexpired : ‘The Dingle,’ had been sold when the squire’s other land was. Well, I returned home, and remained there four years ; when my dear old father died.

“ Master I had seen but little of, for he lived like a hermit—never going beyond the grounds, and to church. The old Rector was dead, and the living was given to Mr. Marsden, who had married ; and both he and Mrs. Marsden did every thing to make Master comfortable, and were as fond of your papa as if he had been their own child.

“ About a week after my poor father was buried, I was sitting alone considering what I

had best do ; for it was more than I could undertake, as a lone woman, to keep on ‘the Oaks ;’ when, who should come in, but Ford.

“ Master,’ he said, ‘ had sent him to know how I was. He would have come himself, only that he had been obliged to go over to W——, on business, with Mr. Rivington, and did not hear of my loss till he got home ; and was now in bed with a dreadful cold and sore throat.’

“ Ford and I had a long talk ; indeed, had he not made his appearance, I intended to have come over here the following week to consult him. His advice to me was to give up the farm ; many, he said, would be glad to take it for the remainder of our time ; and that, if I would like to take the place of housekeeper at the Hall, I might make myself very comfortable. But, you understand, Miss Burns,’ he said, ‘ the wages are trifling.’

" I at once consented ; and Ford went over to Netleigh Castle, and arranged every thing satisfactorily with the steward, about 'the Oaks.' By Christmas all my affairs were settled; and I took up my abode here—and have remained here ever since. The stock at 'the Oaks,' sold very well, and I found myself in possession of nearly four hundred pounds ; this I lent Master, to make up a mortgage that he was unexpectedly called upon to pay, which did some good.

" At first I had many difficulties to contend with to bring things to a state of order ; but, with the help of Ford, I soon set all right. I got a good, hard-working, steady girl ; and with the dairy, and the produce of the garden, we kept the house without asking Master for a shilling from one year's end to the other. Mrs. Page and the late butler had married and taken to one of the inns at D—— ; to them we sent fish, fruit, etc ; and they, in return, sent us many

useful presents. Pippin supplied the house with vegetables and fruit, and sold all that was not wanted—which paid his wages. He also took care of the poultry and pigs. Our home-made wine is, you know, excellent—Master has never bought any other since the old squire's death; and there yet some dozens of old port and claret in the cellars."

"But your's and Ford's wages?"

"Oh! for mine, I brought two cows with me, and had the run of them. I have kept up that number always, so the butter and cheese they produce pay mine. Ford makes something by a few sheep; and Mayflower by the wood that's not wanted for other purposes. You have no notion how much money has been saved to pay old debts and mortgages, and, indeed, some land has been repurchased. Master's wants were very few—Longman—you remember Longman, don't you?"

"Oh! yes; he that used to make me a red coat, and brought me the beautiful wax doll!"

Was it he who showed such kindness to my dear uncle and poor aunt?"

"Yes; and when he came down every summer for orders, to these parts, he always stayed a day or two here, and made Master a new suit of black. Naming him, reminds me of a very extraordinary circumstance. You remember about Miss Clarissa leaving her watch, and the ten-pound note, to pay for her lodgings? Well, a year or two after her death, Master was obliged to go to London again, and he lodged at Longman's; and what should he see on the mantel-piece, in his parlour, but his sister's watch! You may fancy how great was his amazement. On questioning Mrs. Longman, he found that her son had bought it at a pawn-broker's and presented it to her for a Christmas gift. So Master and the young man went to the pawn-broker's, and, after some trouble, they traced the person from whom the watch had been bought; and, who should it prove to be but that wicked hussy, the servant girl! She was

then in prison, awaiting her trial for another robbery, and had—it was proved—not only kept the watch, but the ten-pound note. The good-for-nothing creature was convicted and transported. Master paid the landlady the full amount of her bill, for his poor sister's lodgings, and sent something to the mother of the girl ; and Mr. Longman promised to supply her with constant work. So, you see, she lost nothing for her humanity, nor did her daughter go unpunished for her cruelty to Miss Clarissa. Master begged Mrs. Longman would keep the watch, in remembrance of its former owner.

“ After I became domesticated here, everything went on very regularly. Economy was the principle we all studied and practised ; yet the poor were never turned away from the gate or forgotten. We kept early hours, so everything went on well. Master worked in the garden and the woods, and taught his young brother. In public matters, he never concerned himself ; but I knew he used to have

newspapers in the old squire's time, which he gave up to save expense; so what did I do but told Mr. Longman to ask the lawyer in London, Mr. Trueman, who was always employed by the family, to send one now and then; and he very kindly sent a daily paper, and some books occasionally.

"It was a sad trial for us all when dear Master Bosville went to school; but it was for his good, and so he went. How sadly we all missed his merry laugh! but then there was the pleasure of welcoming him home every holidays.

"Thus time passed till his commission was bought. Master gave him a very handsome fit out, and he did look so well in his regiments; we all felt so proud of him, and he was so highly spoken of.

"A few short years again passed, and he wrote to say he was married. Master was very vexed--angry, he said he could not be with one who had never before given him a

moment's displeasure ; but when your papa came and brought his young wife, even vexation vanished in her presence ; she was so very beautiful and amiable. I think it was impossible for her to give offence to any living thing ; and not to love her was equally impossible. Never, from the time your aunt left the Hall, till your sweet mother visited it, had I seen Master look so happy ; indeed, at times he was cheerful. But alas ! it was only like a gleam of sunshine in a winter's day.

" At the end of a month, your papa and mama left, promising to visit the Hall whenever they returned to England. In a few months we heard of your brother's birth, and then of your father's promotion. Soon after, you were born, and Master wrote for your mother to come and stay here with both of you ; but she would not leave her husband, they loved each other so truly ; perhaps too much for this world. Alas ! it was not to be

of long duration ; death terminated the bright dream. Your father fell in the heat of battle, and your mother's heart was soon broken. In three months after your father's death, you and your brother were orphans in a foreign land."

Tears for some time prevented the old woman proceeding with her tale. At length she said—

" Do you remember anything of your dear mother, Miss Delia, for you were two years old or nearly, when she died ? "

" I have a faint recollection—like a dream—of a lady falling down and Ralph screaming with terror, and of her being dressed in black, and never speaking, only weeping over us; then it appears as if I awoke from a long sleep and found myself here, and you, dear Burny, kissing me and placing me in my uncle's arms."

" Yes, he loved you from the first moment you twined your little arms round his neck.

Oh ! you were a dear baby, and Master Ralph was a fine boy ; but you were always more affectionate in your ways.

“ Did we not give great trouble to you all ? ”

“ No ! I got a very good girl to wait on you both, and after a time the house had a more lightsome appearance. Master again commenced teaching, and Mrs. Marsden came more often to see how we were getting on.

“ There is one thing I may as well mention here ; it’s about Mary Anne Green—or rather Mrs. Ormonde.

“ What about her ? Do tell me ! ”

“ Not long after she went to America, old Green married again, on purpose, he said, to leave what property he had from his ungrateful daughter. For a long time, no body heard anything about her, or her husband. At length, Master read in the newspaper, that the villain, Ormonde, had been detected in carrying on a correspondence with the enemy, and

was tried by a court-martial and condemned to be shot. However, by some means the news reached those who employed him, and he was rescued and carried off by a party of wild Indians. Nothing more was ever heard of the vile wretch, but his wife and three children were sent to England—penniless. As she married without a settlement, all her fortune was soon squandered away, and she was treated with every insult that her husband could heap upon her—even taunted with her personal defects. She and her children were landed at Liverpool, and they begged their way to D—, in hope of finding her father alive. But he was dead, and the widow turned the houseless wanderers from her door! Mrs. Ormonde was therefore obliged to go to the work-house; the children were bound parish 'prentices and turned out very bad—the boys were transported for life, and the girl was very depraved. Mrs. Ormonde, at length, got the overseers to allow her a shilling a week, rather than live in

the workhouse, and she is, I am told, still living, and gets a scanty subsistence by gathering herbs for the chemists, and mushrooms, and water cresses ; and she even carries meat for the butchers. I met her once when I went to spend a day with Mrs. Mason—Page that was—who sometimes gives the wretched creature scraps of broken bread and meat, but I could not endure the sight of her, and she turned out of my way. Such is the end of duplicity and ingratitude !

“I think I have now told you all about your family; but I cannot tell you half of Master’s goodness. I am, however, glad to say he has cleared off all the debts and mortgages, excepting mine ; but that I have begged him to keep, and he pays me the interest. I have saved a good bit of my money ; all that I spend is upon clothes, and that’s little or nothing, and I have no relations that I know of.”

Here the old lady was summoned away—and so am I.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RECRUIT.

THE reader was introduced to Bonville Hall, the first day of D—— races. It was now the morning after the termination of those sports ; and Cordelia, having passed a sleepless night, thinking of the sad fate of her aunt, had just sunk to sleep, when she was awakened by the bell for prayers. Starting up and hastily performing her toilet, she descended the great stairs, and entered the hall just as the servants were crossing it. After prayers, she took her

accustomed place at the breakfast table, while her uncle told Mayflower to remain in the room, as he had some matters to consult with him about, which could be done during breakfast, to save time.

Well was it for Cordelia that her uncle was so fully occupied, otherwise he must have remarked her languid and nervous state. To eat was impossible, so to avoid that being noticed, she took up a pamphlet which lay near.

Breakfast was half over, when she was startled by several voices speaking in a tone of distress; and Mrs. Burns' well known tap made her rise from her chair, instead of saying —“Come in!” Mentioning the tap at the door, induces me to divert, for a moment, from my tale, to make a few observations on the subject, which will, I trust, be pardoned by the reader.

“Now, to me, the custom of servants tapping at the door ere they enter a room, is a

most disagreeable one, and astonishes me in houses, the heads of which consider themselves of some standing in society, and think they know all its rules. If the cook or housekeeper comes for orders, or wishes to speak to her master or mistress, it is all very right and proper to tap. But what I allude to and dislike is, when one calls at a house, for the man or maid-servant to tap at the drawing-room or parlour door, ere he or she ventures to open it for one's admittance ; and again, when in the midst of conversation or reading some interesting book, to be startled by the horrid tap, and the grating sound—"Come in." It makes one fancy where this is the practice, that the inmates, when alone, are engaged in some improper way, which they are afraid of even their servants discovering. If people fancy it impresses a feeling of deference on the minds of their domestics, they greatly err. It gives one only the idea of vulgar pride ; and such nar-

row-minded people, who are too high and lofty for servants to presume on their presence unbidden, ought to wait on themselves, or have one of those unfortunate, unloved persons—a humble friend or relative—to stand between them and their menials, if they cannot have their groom of the chambers stationed always outside the room which contains their mightiness. However, I leave people to please themselves ; for it is as easy for the leopard to change his skin, as it is to make self-opinionated folks alter their habits ; and the worse those habits are, the more obstinately they defend them, and persevere in cultivating the rank weeds.

Again I ask the reader's pardon, and return to my tale.

Opening the breakfast-room door, Mrs. Burns entered, and Cordelia saw old Miles standing outside, looking the picture of misery.

"Oh ! sir," exclaimed the housekeeper, approaching her master's chair, "Joe Miles is gone for a soldier!"

"Gone for a soldier ! Do you mean Joe has enlisted ?" asked Mr. Bonville, rising from his chair. "When—where—how ? I can't believe it ; he was such a steady, sober young fellow ; there must be some mistake."

"I fear it's too true," faltered the grandfather, coming forward ; "Will Saunders saw him a parading the streets at D—— yesterday with the soldiers, and he had ribbons in his hat. Oh ! sir, it will break my old woman's heart. He was our only stay—the only one left of all our grandchildren, and he was so good—so dutiful. We will give all our little savings to help buy his discharge, and will live on bread and water till we work out the rest of the money—for Will says it will cost as much as twenty guineas to get Joe free. My poor boy ! my poor old woman!"

And the grandfather sobbed aloud.

"Where is Will Saunders?" asked Mr. Bonville.

"Here I be, sir."

And Will stepped forward.

"Do explain all you know about this business," said Mr. Bonville.

"Why, sir, I went to D—— yesterday, and while I was sitting in one of the windows of the 'Nag's Head,' a recruiting party stopped afore the door for beer—for you knows, sir, as how the sergeants always stop at the publics where they sees the greatest parcel of young chaps, hoping to entrap some one or t'other. At first I took no notice of them; but hearing a great talking, I looked out of the window, and there, sure enough, was Joe Miles as drunk as a trooper!"

"Drunk! Joe tipsy!" exclaimed Cordelia.
"No one ever saw him so before; you must be mistaken, William."

"No, Miss, it be as true as you stands

there ; for I runned out and caught hold of his arm, and, says I, ‘ Joe, my boy, are you ’listed ? What will the old people say ?’

“ ‘ Never mind what they say,’ said the sergeant, ‘ there’s nothing like being in the King’s service. Come, my fine fellow, follow a good example ; look at this purse !’

“ And holding one up, he tried to put a shilling into my hand ; but drawing back, I says—

“ ‘ None of your shillings for me.’ And I got away in a plaguy hurry, the soldiers calling out— ‘ Look at the clodhopper !’ ”

“ Why, where was my nephew ? Surely he might have got the poor boy off if he is not sworn in. Did you see anything of my nephew, Mr. Ralph ?”

“ I seed him, sir, on the grand stand with some other gentlemen, but that was afore I seed Joe. After that, I looked about for the young squire, but I could see or hear nothing of him, and I don’t know where he puts up ;

besides, it was getting time for me to come home. I got a lift for a few miles behind a fellow I knew something of, and it was he who telled me it would be a matter of twenty guineas to buy Joe off, because as how soldiers are wanting for Indy and 'Mericay ; and the bounty be much more now nor was ever given afore. You, sir, never seed such a lot of recruits there was p'rading the town, treating every fellow they knew with beer, and buying ribbons for their sweethearts, who were a crying and making a fine ado."

"I regret much sending Joe with the horse," continued Mr. Bonville ; "but my nephew asked me to do so, doubtless thinking him a sober, steady lad. He must have been enticed purposely, being a well grown lad ; but since he is, as Will says, enlisted, what is to be done ? I will hower write to Ralph, and desire him to use every effort to get his discharge ; that is, if his enlisting was not his

own voluntary act ; if it was, my good Miles, you must submit."

" Oh ! sir, I am sure it was not, and if he was drunk, he must have been enticed on purpose, as you say, sir ; for no one ever saw my poor boy so before."

" I believe you, Miles ; I always considered Joe a sober, steady lad."

The letter to Ralph was despatched, and Cordelia walked with the distressed grandfather to the lodge, where she found his old wife overwhelmed with grief, sitting on the stone seat outside the door, with her hands clasped, her head bent down, apparently, and in reality, unconscious of everything but her sorrow.

" Don't take on so, dame," said her husband ; " here is Miss come to see thee ; and the squire has written a letter with his own hands to Mr. Ralph about our poor lad. Take heart, then, for he may come back to us yet ; and if not, it ben't any disgrace to be a soldier. Who knows what he may become ? mayhap a Captain."

"Oh ! Miles, don't talk so ; he will never come back to us. He was the last of all our children's children, the child of our darling pretty Kate, the only one left to help us in our old age—to see us laid decently in our grave. No one will care for us now he is gone—my good, my kind-hearted Joe!"

"Don't say there is no one to care for you, Priscilla," said Cordelia, seating herself beside the old dame. "You know *I* care for you, and my uncle, and Mrs. Burns, and Mayflower, and all at the Hall care for you ; and there is still a hope of Joe's being discharged : my brother will do everything in his power to get him off; so do not distress yourself in this way. How many other young men do the same thing daily!"

"Perhaps so, Miss ; but they may have some cause to make them wish to leave their home. Joe had no such wish. It was only last Sunday he said as how he hoped to live here always ; and besides I think he had a liking

for Ruth Hawthorn, only they are both too young to marry just now."

"Does Ruth like him?"

"Like him, Miss! What girl would not? Joe is the comeliest looking boy in the parish. To look at him on a Sunday! and even in his everyday clothes he looks better than many in their best. Oh! Miss, his good looks made the soldiers 'tice him to his ruin."

"I hope not to ruin; by doing his duty, he may in time be promoted."

"Then you think he can't be got off."

Here they were startled by the abrupt entrance of Ruth, who, on perceiving Miss Bonville, stopped short on the threshold, and covering her face with both hands, faltered—

"Is it true that Joe—poor Joe—is gone for a soldier? It was all my doing—my foolish, wicked pride—and—and—oh! Dame Miles, my heart will break. I have ruined you—and—and myself, and all—"

"Surely Ruth," said the poor old woman,

"you could not refuse our boy, whom any girl might be proud of. There was Margaret Wilfred had a liking for him, everybody knew; and that was why her father sent her away; for although he is only a farmer, he holds up his head as high as a squire."

"There is much excuse for John Wilfred," said Cordelia; "he is a freeholder, and my uncle says the farm has been in his family as long as the Hall has been in ours; not that I say this by way of disparagement to your Joe, dame. But did you refuse him?" asked Cordelia, turning to the weeping girl.

To this question Ruth made no reply, but her distress increased; and turning aside, and covering her face with her apron, she walked away, evidently unable to control her emotion. Cordelia hastened after her and begged her to come back, but Ruth, in a tone of impatience, almost stifled with sobs, said—

"Don't follow me. I wish—I must be

alone. Pray go away—you can do me no good."

"Perhaps not now, poor girl," said Cordelia; "but if Joe does not return, I will see you to-morrow."

But Ruth heard her not; she was hurrying onwards in the direction of her home; and Cordelia returned to the lodge, where she remained the whole day, reading to the poor old pair from the Bible, part of the time; and at others, talking of their little concerns, and looking at their garden and poultry, to while away the time till the messenger sent to D—— returned.

It was late in the evening when he made his appearance, and his first words confirmed the report brought by Will Saunders. The man said he went to the inn with the letter for Mr. Ralph, but was told he had left the evening before with the gentlemen for Netleigh Castle, and ridden Juba there, as Joe was out of the way. The people at the inn saw nothing

of Joe till he passed by with the soldiers quite drunk : the Captain of the regiment lived at this inn, but he was gone to dine at the Castle, and had taken his servant ; and the recruits, they believed, had been sent off to head-quarters that morning with the sergeant.

This was all the information the man could obtain ; he therefore brought the letter back to know whether he was to go after Mr. Ralph : if so, he must get another horse.

This he was ordered to do, for the Captain being at the Castle, it was hoped something might be done to effect the freedom of Joe by purchase or interest.

But all hopes on that head were extinguished the next day on the arrival of Ralph, who returned with the messenger. He appeared much annoyed at the affair ; and informed his uncle that Joe, the very night after he reached D ——, got intoxicated and absented himself without giving any account of where he had been, or making any apology, for which he had reprimanded

him. Joe immediately left the inn, and he, Ralph, saw nothing more of him until he heard of his enlisting. He then went to him, and found him in a state of noisy mirth, treating not only the idle fellows that usually follow the recruiting parties through the streets, but also the women and girls. Ralph had then, he said, applied to the Captain for his release; but it was too late—Joe having been sworn-in the previous morning, and received the bounty.

Mr. Bonville was both astonished and pained by the account; and closely questioned all the servants, who one and all avowed they had never seen Joe intoxicated, or heard that he was addicted to drinking or any bad habit. It was therefore concluded he had been enticed to drink for the purpose of enlisting him, which had but too well succeeded.

“I shall go and speak to old Miles and his wife, myself,” said Mr. Bonville, taking up his hat; “it may be some comfort to them to know that now they are left alone in their old age,

they shall never want, or leave their present abode."

"Really," exclaimed Ralph, as his uncle closed the door, "one would suppose no clod-hopper ever enlisted before! I should be glad to know where we are to get soldiers, if such a fuss is made about every drunken booby that likes to have his own way. For my part, I think it would be a charity if one half of the stupid louts were taken for nothing, instead of giving them the bounty money, which is more than they deserve, till they are taught to know their duty and hold up their heads."

"How can you talk so unfeelingly, Ralph?" rejoined Cordelia. "It is true, I suppose, there must be soldiers, when nations cannot agree; but I think it very bad to entice simple young men to drink, and then take advantage of their weakness. There are too many idle fellows, I fear, in every town, and if they will not work, it is better for them to be made soldiers. But Joe, whom we may call an only

child, and the only support of two old people who fed and clothed him in childhood, when he must otherwise have been a burden on the parish, and looked to him, in return, to keep them from the workhouse in their old age—I do say it is a cruel thing for *him* to be taken from them; he was such a sober, industrious lad."

"I cannot help smiling, Cordelia, at your romantic notions. This Joe seems to have excited a deep interest in both you and my uncle. I wish you may not have your simplicity abused; but for my part, I have not the same high opinion of this rustic swain. I have a strong suspicion that he had a reason of his own, for leaving not only the old Damon and Phyllis, but a young Chloe, perhaps. However, I'll say no more; time will disclose things that are now concealed."

And turning on his heels and whistling to his favorite greyhound, Ralph quitted the library, ere his sister could reply, or question

him as to the meaning of the words which sounded so unfeelingly to her kind heart.

She felt her cheek glow. A week before, such might not have been the case, so innocent—so ignorant was she *then*, of the perfidy of man ; a thought of guile never entered her mind ; but the account, related by Mrs. Burns, of her aunt's cruel treatment, and the heartless ingratitude of Ormonde, had torn away the veil which then shrouded her unsuspecting nature. She had read tales of love—had wept over the woes of forsaken damsels—had despised false hearted knights ; but when she found there were such sorrows in real life—in her own family—amongst those she knew, her feelings were quite different. Surely, she thought, Joe cannot have deceived poor Ruth —yet the manners of the girl were very strange. But Joe, she argued, could not wear the mask of hypocrisy like men of Ormonde's stamp.

Ah ! Cordelia, who does *not* wear such masks ? High and low, rich and poor of both

sexes—all, with few exceptions, are not what they *wish* to appear in the world's eyes. Man deems it no sin to deceive woman ; yet if *she* resorts to the same weapon to repel the shafts aimed at her weak points, she is accused and condemned as guilty of being mean, cold hearted, and selfish, while he escapes with only the remark—

“ Oh ! he is a good-natured fellow, and if girls are so silly as to believe every thing men say, they deserve to pay for their folly. How could she suppose he meant any thing but to amuse himself, having nothing else to fill up his time ? A man cannot marry every girl he talks to or dances with.”

Certainly not ; yet he has no right to amuse himself at the expense of any girl's happiness, which he does when, by looks and manners, he makes her believe he intends more — for there are a hundred ways of making love without avowing it in downright plain terms. How often do such proceedings entail on

an inexperienced warm-hearted girl endless wretchedness in this world, and perhaps in another ! At all events her prospects in this life are marred ; for when she has fixed her affections on one who never means to realise the hope he has raised, *she* still lives on that hope, and refuses offers from other men, who, although perhaps deficient in the outward glare of polished, fashionable, and fascinating manners, possess sufficient sterling worth to render life respectable and happy. And if, when hope is for ever crushed, she is induced by the advice of friends or relatives to give her *hand*, seldom does *she*—poor unhappy victim—dare to summon courage to place sufficient confidence in the partner of her future life, to tell him *she* has no *heart* to bestow ; and thus *she* continues wearing a mask of seeming love, which it requires all her art and blandishments to prevent her husband and the world from penetrating. And oh ! the corroding misery

of striving to appear what we are *not*, even in the presence of a friend or acquaintance ! but tenfold more galling must the feeling be with him from whom there should be no disguise. Between husbands and wives no secrets of their *own* should exist : I say their *own*, for no man or woman of sense should ever seek to pry into what is imparted to the other in confidence by a friend ; and matters of business or state affairs, women have no right to meddle with.

Let not only the young beware of deception, but let parents also watch with vigilance their children's entrance into life—fashionable life—and check their sons when paying undue attention where they feel assured nothing is meant ; and let every mother fly with her daughter—as from a pestilence—from that man who assumes the *appearance* of a lover, without *avowing* his intentions to the object of his *pretended* admiration—or it may be his *real* admiration as

far as the ball-room is concerned. If circumstances prevent flight, it surely is in the power of all parents to shun, or close their doors against such pests of society ; and close them too more securely than against the midnight robber or assassin, who can but deprive you of gold or life, and for which the law will avenge you. But against him who seeks to destroy the peace—the happiness of your daughter, the laws are defective if not utterly silent ; because every female ought to be the guardian of her own honor. She may be so—but how can the young and guileless guard against deception clad in the robe of truth ?

Rouse yourselves then, fathers of England ! Stand forth as the champions not only of your own daughters, but of those who have no living father to protect them ! and defy the sneers of the worthless set of artful serpents who are ever whispering in the ears of the simple and trusting !

And you, mothers, impress on the minds of

your daughters that the sure way to secure lasting happiness is by placing implicit confidence in their parents, who can—or *ought* only to have the present and future welfare of their children at heart.

CHAPTER IX.

LIONEL.

THE library at Netleigh Castle was a spacious apartment, and of a much earlier order of architecture than any other part of the edifice : very likely it might, with the adjoining suite of rooms, in days of yore, have been the banqueting hall. Two windows facing the south and three the east, gave it at all seasons a warm and cheerful appearance, and rendered it the favorite morning resort of the family, more particularly when they were alone.

The wainscot and floor were of oak, dark from age; and the bookcases and furniture were of the same wood, curiously carved; the drapery and chair-covers were of green velvet, and the folding screens of green and gold leather. A few portraits of mail-clad warriors, ermine-robed senators, and severe-looking divines—whose countenances bespoke little of the meekness of Christianity or the milk of humanity—were hung on high above the book-cases, on which were placed some fine antique busts.

The large library table was heaped with books, pamphlets, and newspapers; and on another table nearer the eastern windows was spread the breakfast, at which sat the Marquis and Marchioness of Netleigh.

A handsome young man, hat and whip in hand, was holding the door open, and in the act of quitting the apartment.

“Make my compliments to Mr. Bonville,” said the Marchioness, “and say I shall call as

soon as I have a morning to myself. I must judge of Miss Bonville's manners before I ask her to meet people ; for I never will invite any one of whom I may feel ashamed."

"Am I to repeat *all* that, or only the first part of the message ?"

"Why, you know perfectly well how much to say," retorted the Marchioness, smiling ; "really, Lionel, you are the very spirit of perversity this morning. But pray don't linger, for I fully expect you to return in time to receive Lady Conway and Gwendoline—so off with you, since go you will."

The young man disappeared, and in a few moments he was cantering across the park.

For some little time the lady sat silent, evidently pondering on something not very pleasing, for her brows were contracted, and she bit her lips. She then turned her eyes on her lord, who, however, was completely absorbed by a pamphlet, and stirring his tea. The lady was very handsome, although arrived

at, or even past a certain age. Her morning dress was costly, and the becoming more than the fashion was studied. Every slight personal defect—of which however she had very few—was concealed, and every beauty set off to the greatest advantage; yet so as not to leave the least possible appearance of its being intentional. Her complexion was lovely without the slightest aid of art.

For some time neither spoke, till his lordship looked at his watch, and exclaimed—

“ Why, surely, I forgot to wind it last night ! Janet, can you tell me the hour ? I have to look over some papers with Brown, this morning.”

“ You have always, my love, some appointment or other ; so that I can never get you to afford me one half-hour’s conversation. You get up so early, and when night comes you are so sleepy, that there is no obtaining a word from you.”

“ Well, Janet, I shall be very glad to listen

to any thing you wish to say now, that is, if it is not eleven o'clock ; I have fixed that hour for Brown to come here to me."

" Well, I suppose he may wait ? If I don't speak now, you will be making some blunder about Miss Bonville, as she appears to have made a very deep impression on your heart !"

" Not on my heart, my dear Janet ; none, but yourself, ever did." And rising from his seat, and taking her hand, he drew a chair beside her.

" Now, what blunder is it you fear I shall commit about Miss Bonville, in my old age ?"

" You know," began the Marchioness, " how much I wish to bring about a match between Gwendoline and Lionel."

" You never mentioned this to me, Lady Netliegh, however much you may have thought of, and wished it ; and I have been given to understand she smiles on one of the Georges."

" Nonsense ! nothing more than a youthful

fancy—You know, on my father's death, his property was divided between his three daughters : I, alas, have no child to inherit my portion ; therefore, by the union of Gwendoline and Lionel, all, at least the greater part, would once more be united. Lady Conway fully enters into my views ; and has given the girl as few opportunities as possible of forming any acquaintance, where there might be a probability of marring this now first wish of my heart, which has engrossed every thought since the loss of my darling boy."

Here tears filled the eyes of both the noble parents ; but in a few moments, the lady proceeded—

" For Lionel I have never felt much uneasiness, he is such a devoted admirer of beauty ; and I never saw a girl to equal Gwendoline, till Miss Bonville met my sight !"

" Miss Bonville is, indeed, very lovely !" observed the Marquis.

" And you, my lord, appeared greatly to ad-

mire her. I do so myself; and, if my wishes succeed regarding my niece and nephew, I will do every thing to advance Miss Bonville's settlement in life ; but, should Lionel take a fancy to her, all my plans will be overthrown."

" Well, my love, it's impossible to guard against such casualties ; but had you consulted me before, I would have made some excuse to prevent Lionel going to Bonville Hall, since you have set your heart on this match. I must confess it would be a very desirable one, could it be accomplished with the free wishes of the young people ; but I have witnessed so much unhappiness between those whose unions were contracted by their respective families, without consulting the wishes of the most deeply interested parties, that I never will do more than give my advice ; if it is taken, well and good ; if not, they must abide by the result."

" Why really, my dear Marquis, you are getting quite romantic ! Pray don't proclaim this new sentiment of yours, or all your nephews

and nieces will be taking it in their heads to run off with the housemaids and grooms. One would suppose you had imbibed the rage for *equality*. The next thing I shall hear will be your introducing a bill in Parliament for an equal division of property, and the abolition of titles. Really you astonish me in no small degree. How can you laugh at such things?"

The Marquis did more than smile; but checking himself, he replied—

"Far from wishing, or even dreaming of aught so absurd, I only mean that I never will force, or even persuade any young person to sacrifice his or her best feelings for lucre. You and I, my beloved Janet, have, I believe, lived very happily for more than thirty years; and our union was founded on mutual affection. When I tendered both heart and hand for your acceptance, you had two brothers living; it was not wealth, therefore, that attracted my attention; and you refused even a Duke, with mines of riches, for me—me, a poor Marquis;

for my father's large family obliged him to clip from his eldest son all that he possibly could—and yet, my Janet, we have lived happily, have we not?—although I am more than ten years your senior."

" We have indeed lived happily ; but where is your equal to be found ? Pardon me beloved George ;" and she laid her head on that shoulder, while the arm which had encircled her waist in youthful loveliness, drew her gently to the faithful heart which had never strayed from her—his first, his only love.

" You must not think me unfeeling ;" she continued, " for believe me, I would not wish to barter hearts for gold. Did I think that my nephew or niece had already bestowed his or hers elsewhere, I would not interfere ; all I wish is to prevent their forming other engagements rashly. They are both young and handsome, and if they could love each other, where could either marry to greater advantage ? You cannot, therefore, blame me for wishing

and endeavouring to secure their happiness, particularly that of Gwendoline, ere she is brought out, which she must be at the next Drawing-room. How much better it will be—what snares she will avoid, when it is known she is engaged to her cousin!"

"Well, my love, I shall not, you may be assured, do anything to interfere with your plan which, as far as human foresight can penetrate, is certainly very wise: but don't be too sanguine, for I must candidly confess I have my doubts regarding its success."

"Why—What do you know?"

"I know nothing, only I cannot help thinking Gwendoline's inclination points in another quarter."

"You do not mean one of the Georges!" exclaimed the Marchioness.

"I do."

"Nonsense, my lord!"

"Love," replied the Marquis, "is not always attended by sense; most frequently the re-

verse ; so, not only Miss Bonville, but the Georges must be kept at a proper distance till your plan is accomplished."

All further debate on this weighty matter was terminated by the groan of the chambers entering to enquire whether his lord was ready to receive the steward.

The lady retired to her boudoir ; and while she is ruminating on what had just passed, we will give a few more particulars regarding the Champernownes than the reader has been able to gain by the slight allusion made to them by Mrs. Burns.

The Marquis of Netleigh was, as we have already mentioned, the eldest of six sons, two of whom died unmarried. Lord Ronald, when visiting some friends in Scotland, fell in love with, and shortly married the eldest daughter of Sir Donald M'Donald ; she had little besides beauty, for her portion but of that a very large one—she and her two sisters being celebrated far and near as "the Graces."

Soon after her marriage, her sisters came to visit her ; and at the same time she invited her brother-in-law, the Marquis, who was at first sight pleased with, and on further acquaintance, completely captivated by the charms of the youngest, Janet. Only one remained—Margaret ; and she within a year after, married the Earl of Conway ; but after being married some time, she died in giving birth to a daughter. About two years subsequently, the Earl took a second wife, who became so much attached to the child of her predecessor, that the little Lady Gwendoline could hardly believe she was not her own mother. This latter lady had no child ; therefore, on the death of the Earl, his orphan daughter was a great heiress. Her mother's two brothers were unfortunately drowned when bathing. Sir Donald never recovered the shock of his sons' melancholy fate, and made no will ; the title and Highland estates, went to his next male heir, and all his other property—by far the greatest

portion—was divided between his daughters. The children of the Marquis and Marchioness died very young; consequently Lionel, the son of her sister and Lord Ronald Champernowne, was heir presumptive to the title and estates of Netleigh—Lord Ronald himself having died a few years after his marriage. It may easily be imagined that with such brilliant prospects, and, moreover, being eminently handsome, Lionel's acquaintance was eagerly sought, both far and near, by every mother who had marriageable daughters; and those daughters donned their most becoming dresses, and assumed their most bewitching smiles and manners to second their mother's designs, which were equally, if not more agreeable to themselves—that they might ensnare or captivate, whichever it may be called, the *affections*, or at all events the *attentions* of this “most delightful darling of a man.”

But Lionel had hitherto escaped all the “man-traps” and “spring-guns” set by the gentle

sex, although they were partially concealed beneath veils of lace and sweet tones and songs, to allure him onward a step too far for him to retreat unscarred : Lionel was not so easily to be caught. Perhaps, having been from boyhood used to mix in the society of high-born beauties, his eye was so accustomed to gaze on loveliness, that the charm of novelty had lost its power.

For some years previous to the opening of this tale, the Marquis and Marchioness had rarely resided at the Castle, having spent a great portion of their time in France, till, like many others, they were driven home during the reign of Terror. Now, however, they determined upon fixing themselves at this the family domain, renewing their former intimacies with old friends and acquaintances, and visiting the most desirable of the new families who had settled in the neighbourhood.

For Mr. Bonville, the Marquis had a sincere respect. They were friends in boyhood and

youth, though since that period they had scarcely met ; the Marquis having, after attaining his majority, left England for the Continent, where he travelled for five years. He was consequently absent when the dark clouds burst over Bonville Hall, and did not return to Netleigh for some years after, with his lovely wife. One and only one interview then took place between the friends, when Mr. Bonville resisted every entreaty to mix in society, and convinced the Marquis that the mode of life he had adopted was the best for him to continue—at all events till his brother grew up. The Marchioness, who accompanied her lord to Bonville Hall, was charmed with the interesting recluse and the young Bonvilles. She was warm-hearted *then*—and indeed she had never greatly changed, although perhaps she had become more worldly. And who does *not* when constantly mixing with the heartless, selfish people constituting the greater portion of

the higher class—and indeed every other class?

* * * * *

At Rugby, Lionel and Ralph met. The former was about leaving when the latter went; but they had met at different places afterwards when spending the vacations with some of the other "fellows." The inclination of both pointed to the army; but the Marquis, since the death of his son, wished Lionel—and Lionel had consented—to study for the bar, so as to be fitted for a statesman's career. At the next dissolution of Parliament, he was to represent one of his uncle's boroughs; and he promised Ralph his own and the Marquis's influence to advance his prospects in the army, particularly in the E. I. C. service, observing India was the place to get rich; but, however, the Marquis had two other nephews besides



Lionel to think of. These were the two Georges—one the son of Lord Arnold, and the other, of Lord Aubrey ; both of them were only sons, but each had sisters. More than one perhaps of *these* young ladies might have some thoughts, even hopes of the future Marquis—for such Lionel was now considered ; but we have seen there were other views for him backed by beauty and wealth, which are all powerful when united.

The Marchioness had not seen her niece Lady Gwendoline for three or four years. It had been her wish for Lady Conway to join her in Paris with Gwendoline, so as to accomplish her education there ; but the Revolution prevented it, and since then various engagements or other causes had set aside every arrangement planned or thought of for their meeting.

Gwendoline was a sadly spoiled child, and since her father's death more so, his widow being left her sole female guardian. This at first gave some little offence to the Marchioness,

and made her more fond of her nephew, who was consequently considered her heir, for she had much property entirely at her own disposal. Whether it was in consideration of this or not, Lady Conway not only consulted the Marchioness, but expressed the greatest deference for her opinion; and when the latter wrote to the former in confidence, and communicated her wish respecting the union of the hearts, hands, and fortunes of the cousins, Lady Conway not only agreed to the proposition, but entered with alacrity into all her views.

The little Lady Gwendoline was, as we have observed, sadly indulged by her father; but she was doubly so by her step-mother who, being far beneath her husband in family, had at first only attracted his attention by her wealth; being the only child of a West Indian planter, with a small portion of beauty, a very defective education, and a good temper bordering on, if not quite amounting to, weakness;

for to deny those she loved anything that lay within the compass of her power to bestow, was impossible, particularly if the object of her attachment was a beauty of any kind. Gwendoline being a lovely child, from the first moment of their meeting completely gained the mastery over her new mother; no wish however unreasonable was ever refused; and if the Earl did so, his wife would endeavour to soften the refusal and if possible would gratify the wish without his knowledge, thus making the matter worse by resorting to little acts of duplicity from not liking to vex her husband or Gwendoline. Another still greater fault she had was bribing the child to behave well before people with promises of the most tempting reward.

The Earl was what was called a very prudent man regarding his child's worldly wealth, for even the interest of her mother's fortune remained untouched after her death in reserve for Gwenny—as he called her—in case a son

should ever be born to inherit the title and entailed property. This did not happen ; so on the death of the Earl, the title and estates attached thereto passed to the heir male, but all the other property to his daughter. Lady Conway's jointure was not very large ; but her own fortune was, and on that she supported her establishment in good style ; and still Gwendoline's remained untouched ; so that by the time she came of age, or married, she would be entitled to an immense fortune entirely at her own disposal. It was not, therefore, to be wondered at—indeed, it would have been more a matter of wonder had her aunt *not* been anxious to reunite the fortune of her family by the marriage of the two representatives in the direct line.

The education of the young beauty had been wofully neglected. Governesses without number had been engaged, and dismissed whenever their pupil became tired of their company ; for she was to be taught only at her pleasure.

Women of high principles would not stay when they considered it next to dishonesty to receive remuneration for what they did not teach, and found they must submit to the caprices of a spoiled child. Others were detected in acts of duplicity and in subverting the mind of the girl ; and one even had the effrontery to introduce her brother—a worthless libertine—as a drawing-master ; who, had he not been discovered by the chaplain, would have prevailed on Gwendoline to elope with him. What little she learnt was by fits and starts, and the chaplain had seized on every favourable opportunity to render every aid in his power, chiefly by instructive conversation. Her temper was naturally good, and she was generous to a fault. She had more than once been seen giving away her cloak, on a cold day, to a half clad beggar on the road ; but she never asked whether those who excited her compassion were deserving or not. At other times, she would

turn away in disgust from poor objects, or throw her purse at them.

Having explained who Gwendoline was and how situated, we will shortly introduce her personally to the reader.

CHAPTER X.

THE ARRIVAL.

THE sun was setting in glorious splendour, casting the trees on one side of the noble avenue leading to Netleigh Castle in long dark shadows, while those on the other were tinged with the brightest golden hue. In the distance might be seen those skirting the park, which were beginning to don their autumnal robes — particularly the horse-chestnut and beech trees ; the bright colors of these, with the scarlet clusters of the mountain-ash-berries,

being rendered more vivid by the slanting rays of the sun, which seemed to linger as though reluctant to leave so lovely and tranquil a scene. Everything wore an air of calm repose. The deer were scattered about in herds; some lying down, apparently weary with the gambols of the day; others peacefully stalking along in proud security between the hawthorn bushes, laden with their crimson berries. On the lake the swans were sailing lazily; and a pair of peafowls had sought the highest branch of a noble elm for their roost. The orange trees, which had not yet been removed to their winter shelter, exhaled their sweet odour; while the white jessamine, and some late honeysuckles that clustered round the windows of the Castle, also emitted their delicious perfume. At one of these windows, which were belonging to the drawing-room, stood the noble and beautiful mistress of this fine domain—the Marchioness. She was now clad in her evening attire, and looked, if possible, more handsome than in the

morning. She was evidently watching with impatience the arrival of some person, and listening to catch some sound in the distance.

At this instant the hall clock chimed the quarter-past five ; and, with an expression of visible annoyance, she hastily moved to the fire-place, and rang the bell. On its being answered by the groom of the chambers—

“Has Mr. Champernowne returned ?” she asked.

“No, my lady.”

“Then order dinner to be kept back half-an-hour.”

Again she placed herself at the window, just as Lionel came in sight by a nearer road than the avenue—or rather no road, for he was trespassing on his uncle’s grounds, and had done so on every other person’s over which he had ridden, by leaping all the fences in defiance of the warning of being “prosecuted according to law.”

At the same moment he came in sight, the

sound of a distant carriage wheels greeted the ears of both himself and the Marchioness; and hastily dismounting and throwing the bridle of the horse to his groom, he approached the window, saying—

“I am in time, you see, my dear lady aunt, for I hear the carriage approaching. Shall I wait to hand my fair cousin out, or change my habiliments?”

“Oh! hasten and dress by all means—despatch—off with you!—the carriage is just in sight.”

While the Marchioness was speaking, the Marquis had entered, exclaiming—

“How slowly they are coming! quite at a snail’s pace. But the horses are doubtless miserable hacks.”

“Will you, my lord, receive them?” rejoined the Marchioness; for, slowly as they come, that provoking boy will not be dressed in time to do so.”

Inclination would have taken her to the

entrance hall likewise, but perceiving a second carriage containing the servants, and not liking for them to witness the meeting, she contented herself by remaining at the window. The first who alighted was Lady Conway, with rather a large dog under one arm ; then Lady Gwendoline sprung out, carrying a much smaller one, which she caressed in the fondest manner. After receiving and returning the salute of the Marquis, she drew back, exclaiming—

“ Pray don’t wait for me ! Take care of mamma, while I see after all my darlings—they are such sweet loves ! ”

During the few moments she was standing giving her orders, her aunt was taking a survey of her. Lady Netleigh was more than pleased—indeed few could be otherwise at first sight.

In form Gwendoline was perfect, though rather below the middle height. She was dazzlingly fair, yet the roses bloomed on her

cheeks in all the freshness of health and the spring tide of youthful loveliness: her pouting lips were like ripe cherries, but the teeth were too large and rather projecting; her nose was small, but rather too pointed, which gave a pertness to the expression; her eyes were bewitchingly blue—like an April sky when peeping between the white clouds after a passing shower: and her golden hair clustered in natural curls round her face, and fell over the shoulders and back. She was in fact a perfect Saxon beauty.

We must complete the picture by describing her attire, which was according to the then fashion for travelling costumes. It consisted of a dark riding habit with lapels of black velvet and a collar of the same; a blue silk waistcoat embroidered with silver, and the shirt-collar tied with a black ribbon: on her head she wore a white beaver hat with no brim, only a silver band and buckle, and a plume of short white ostrich feathers, which

partly shaded her face and mingled with the ringlets of gold.

When the second carriage stopped, a negro page was the first to alight carrying a large birdcage in which was a macaw.

“ You beauty !” cried the fair girl, “ how do you do after this long rumbling journey ? And there is Cracknut ! You, Jones, take his cage, while Wilmore sees that everything else is safely carried up; and Tippoo, follow me, that I may see my darlings safely established in their new lodgings—take care, Jones—but first I must speak to my aunt.”

And away she bounded, passing the group of powdered footmen, who were gazing with no small wonder and amazement at the young beauty and her collection of birds and animals —besides those of the human species varying in colour, sex, and costume.

The negro boy was perfectly jet black, with woolly hair ; his head was enveloped in a white turban, and he wore a scarlet dress. He car-

ried the screaming macaw in one cage, and a pair of love-birds in another.

Then came Jones, a Welsh girl, in a red cloak, high crowned black beaver hat, and full bordered cap. She carried a squirrel in one cage with tinkling bells, and in another a little monkey, busily eating a large apple. These two attendants kept at a short distance behind their young mistress, while Wilmore, the abigail followed with another further advanced in years. Lady Conway's waiting woman stood to superintend the removal of countless and nameless packages—baskets for the dogs to sleep in—and others containing different sorts of provision for all the tribe of pets, both two and four legged, as though they had been entering the ark.

After receiving and returning the warm embrace of the Marchioness, Gwendoline rejoined her attendants, who followed to the apartments whither Lady Conway and herself were conducted. On the stairs they encoun-

tered Lionel whom they had not seen for some four or five years. The change in both cousins was so great, that had they met in any other house they would have passed each other as strangers. As it was, a short greeting was exchanged, and whether it was to please him or not, to the surprise of Wilmore, her young lady said she should change her dress for dinner, an undertaking she seldom troubled herself about.

It therefore caused a little bustle to get a dress unpacked, and the last dinner bell had ceased ere Gwendoline ran down stairs, just in time to take the offered arm of Lionel, who conducted her to the dining-room.

Lady Conway could hardly conceal her delight and astonishment on perceiving her daughter so becomingly dressed, and turning her eyes to the Marchioness, she encountered a glance of equal approbation with a slight nod, which seemed to say—

“Our wishes cannot fail of being realized.”

But, however satisfied *they* might feel—for we are all too ready to believe what we hope—an indifferent spectator would have said the thoughts of the young gentleman himself were anywhere but with the present party. It is true he laughed at many things his fair neighbour said, and asked several questions about their journey the dogs, birds, etc.; and whether she was so fond of riding as she used to be; but still it seemed an effort for him to do so.

The party was this day confined to themselves, and the chaplain, the Rev. Richard Pratt; for the Marchioness told Lady Conway she thought that as they might feel fatigued after their long journey, it would be more agreeable for them not to meet strangers; but she did not say she, wished to judge of Gwendoline's manners ere she introduced her to any one. Knowing what a spoiled child she was when last they met, she thought it was not impossible but that she might feel rather ashamed of her; at all events, after seeing and

judging for herself, she would be better able to decide who were the best people to invite to meet the self-willed little beauty. When the ladies left the dining-room, the Marquis thought he would find out what his nephew's opinion was of the two young ladies, in order to transmit it to his wife, if she questioned him, which he felt assured would be the case now he knew her wishes regarding the cousins. He therefore commenced by asking Mr. Pratt whether he did not think Lady Gwendoline very lovely ; her very originality of manner was, in his opinion, he said, a relief to the generality of romantic girls he usually met in company. To this, of course, the reverend gentleman fully agreed.

“ And what say you, Lionel ? ” continued the Marquis.

“ Oh ! I—my lord—was it to me you spoke ? —I—I beg pardon—about Gwenny you are talking.”

"Yes—do you not think her much improved?"

"Certainly—there was always room for that; when last I saw her, she was the most self-willed, obstinate little hoiden I ever met. She did nothing but ride about on her Welsh nags and donkeys, and on a mule as stubborn as herself, and I verily think she conquered it at last. We were always quarrelling; for I would not give in to her whims, and say black was white, which everybody else did."

"Why, I thought you were more gallant," replied the Marquis, smiling, "than to differ, much less quarrel with a young lady, and particularly one so lovely as Gwendoline. I never saw such blue eyes, and her veins appear like threads of silk beneath her white transparent skin; indeed, it is to me a matter of amazement it is so fair, if, as you observe, she was continually riding about."

“ She did, now I remember, wear a great front of some old bonnet when the sun shone, for she is—at least she was—not deficient in vanity or self importance ; and although we quarrelled, she is not, I believe, bad tempered.”

“ I am glad to hear this of her at all events,” returned the Marquis, “ for much can be done when the temper is good. But you never told me anything about her before.”

“ You never asked me, and I thought so little about her, for she was, and is perfectly indifferent to me.”

“ Why, you forget what a fortune she is already, besides what Lady Conway, may, and doubtless will, leave her. Such a rich and lovely girl should be kept in the family ; ours is not over rich.”

“ Then one of the Georges had better secure the prize,” retorted Lionel, smiling ; “ they are both fine young fellows ; and

Arnold George and his sisters have been visiting much more than I have at Lleweny Court."

" Well, the little Saxon does not appear to please you at present; but our sentiments change regarding beauty, so yours may, Lionel: take my advice, and think and judge more indulgently of her, for there is every allowance to be made for her faults—or whims, as you call them. Do you not acquiesce with me, Pratt?"

" Certainly, my lord; and what a delightful task it would be to lead such a sweet young creature in the right way—to fill up so many vacant hours that are wasted in unprofitable amusement, such as breaking in horses and dogs—how much more beseeming to every Christian husband to instruct a wife!"

" It would be all very proper, no doubt, sir," returned Lionel; " but I fear the labour would be thrown away on Gwenny, at all events by me. I am, therefore, quite read

to leave the field open for the Georges." Then turning to the Marquis, he said—

" You, my lord, have not made any enquiries about Miss Bonville, whom you pronounced so very beautiful that I feared my lady aunt's jealousy would be awakened—that is, if she has any."

" Ah ! yes, I had nearly forgotten her ; so I fear I am guilty of fickleness. But what think you of Miss Bonville ? I have only seen her in a carriage, and then she had a very old-fashioned hat on ; what is she like in a room ?"

" Why I think her the finest girl I have ever seen, though her features are not regular, and she appears not to have taken care of her complexion. Her eyes—I don't know what color to call them—they are so veiled beneath the long-fringed lashes ; and then the abundant clusters of her rich brown hair ! I am sure she might wipe the feet of any god with it. And such teeth and lips ! and her

hands perfectly Norman. Her feet I could not judge of; they were disfigured by shoes constructed by some village cobbler, I should think; and her dress fitted vilely, it would have made any other girl look a fright; but I don't think any style of dress would misbecome Miss Bonville; for after being a few minutes in her company, I thought her even well dressed—excepting her shoes, which I think were tied with straps of leather like a plough-boy's."

" You appear to have taken a very minute survey of the young lady's exterior," observed the Marquis; " what may be your opinion of her mental qualities? did she give you a chance of judging?"

" She said little, for she is evidently very shy; but what she did say was to the purpose. She speaks beautifully; and her greatest charm —like her namesake Cordelia—is ' her voice—soft, gentle, and low; an excellent thing in woman.' "

"Why really, Lionel!" exclaimed the Marquis, "whether with voice or face, Miss Bonville appears to have perfectly charmed you."

"*You* raised my expectation, my lord; and, I confess—which is very seldom the case—the reality did not fall short of the description."

"I did not describe her further," retorted the Marquis, "than that I thought her face very lovely, and that she was a perfect Bonville—which Mr. Ralph is not, although a fine young man."

"I suppose he will have the whole of the property," remarked Mr. Pratt, "which will be considerable, I understand, as Mr. Bonville has, by strict economy and self-denial, cleared off all the encumbrances, and repurchased a great portion of the land which had been sold, and has entailed it more strictly than ever on the male heir. If so, Miss Bonville stands but a poor chance of marrying; for people begin to think more of money than they did

formerly. If the mania increases, Cupid must be represented wearing a golden bandage."

"Not a bad idea, Pratt!" laughed Lionel; "but I am told, and, indeed, from what I noticed to-day, Mr. Bonville is very fond of his niece; so she will, in all probability, have some money, although Ralph says he is the only male left of the family to inherit the estate."

"He and his sister are, I believe the last of the line," continued the Marquis. "Respecting the entail, what I know is, that on the marriage of the late Mr. Bonville with his first wife, the Honourable Miss Poynings, her fortune was given up to clear off the debts then encumbering the estate, and everything was settled on her children; so if her husband survived and married again, the children by the second marriage could have no claim upon the property. When Godfrey came of age, he joined with his eldest brother Ingelram in cutting off the entail; but possessing more sense

than Ingelram, he would not consent to do so unless the Hall was re-entailed on himself, and in default of either brother leaving a son, it rested with the survivor to leave it to whom he pleased."

"It was rather odd," remarked Mr. Pratt, "for the father to give his consent to that when he had married a second time, and had a son."

"Not so strange," answered the Marquis, "having married so foolishly; besides, there was a small estate which he had purchased and could bequeath as he chose, and which he promised Godfrey should be left to little Bosville. But the infatuation of the father and eldest son for gambling during the latter days of their lives, induced them to risk even what was intended for the poor child, when Godfrey was in London seeking his sister; therefore, the small annuity said to be left to the widow, and the five hundred pounds to her child,

were paid by the generous, kind-hearted Godfrey."

"So then he can leave the property to his niece if he likes," said Lionel.

"Yes," replied the Marquis; "but he will never act unjustly; only it would be a friendly act for some one to undeceive Ralph, if he supposes the Hall is his by *right*. There is something very arrogant in the manners of that young man. Did you not think so, Pratt, when he was here?"

"Why, my lord, I must confess there was something overbearing about him," replied the chaplain.

"I think," said Lionel, interrupting him, "the ladies will not consider themselves very highly complimented by our remaining here so long. Lady Conway used to like a rubber, and you, Pratt, have no objection."

"Not to a quiet rubber, and shilling points—but guineas I—"

"No one will propose such, be assured;" and taking the reverend gentleman's arm, Lionel led him towards the drawing-room. A few words were whispered as they went along, but what, the Marquis did not hear, even if he noticed that any were uttered; at all events, no further allusion was made, as if by mutual consent, to any of the Bonvilles.

I trust the readers will not be greatly disappointed if we do not follow the gentlemen into the drawing-room, for we begin to think there is too much of drawing-room life described in most of what are styled "Fashionable Novels," and "Illustrations of Good Society." Now we have been in much good society in our time, and we have also heard the opinion of people of the highest rank and of courtly manners, who, from their infancy, have been accustomed to all the appendages requisite to their birth and state; and we have seen a smile curl their lips when reading the description of some scene,

where the attempt has been made to ape their conversations, &c. Just as though people of rank did not talk of passing events like the generality of other folks! Indeed, we have found them far more simple and plain in their discourse than those who *wish* to be considered people of refinement, deep learning, and superior knowledge of the world. Real good sense, and good manners never attempt to make any display, but are far more anxious to conceal their superiority.

We, therefore, mean only to describe dinners, drawing-room amusements, balls, etc., as slightly as possible, for it is not *there* that the secrets of families are canvassed over, or the real sentiments of the heart laid bare. It is in the hours of retirement with a valued friend —the husband or wife of their youth, or a confidential humble companion—aye, and even the *soubrette* and valet know more of the joys and sorrows of the hearts of the great, than any

of the hundreds of "select friends" who throng their halls on festive occasions.

* * * *

The first evening of Gwendoline's arrival at Netleigh Castle passed away pleasantly—at least to all outward appearances. Lady Conway, much as she loved a rubber, was rather too fatigued to play, and sat on a comfortable sofa beside the Marchioness, out of hearing, but not out of sight of the subjects of their conversation, who were seated near a table, looking over a very splendid edition of "Buffon's Natural History," and discussing the beauties of the monkey tribe.

The young lady certainly laughed too much and rather too loud; but the aunt thought her nephew would soon check his fair cousin of such habits; and, taking her all in all, there was little to find fault with, and there was every reason to hope that her wishes would be fulfilled.

"And," whispered the Marchioness to Lady Conway, "the less company we see the better for the present. The party coming to-morrow are not likely to do mischief; there will be no one of sufficient importance to create any fear. I must, however, try to keep as clear of the Bonvilles as possible, without its appearing intentional. Ralph is a handsome young man. I wish I had told Lionel not to invite him, which, perhaps, he has done for to-morrow; I shall be very vexed if he has."

No observation or reply being made by her neighbour, the Marchioness turned round and perceived she was asleep.

"Poor thing! she is no doubt very tired," said the Marchioness to herself, as she rose and walked over to see how the game of piquet progressed between her lord and the chaplain; deeming it wisest not to interrupt the cousins—lovers she hoped they soon would be.

CHAPTER XI.

GWENDOLINE.

“Thank Goodness! she is gone. Lock both the doors, Jones, then I will get up and enjoy my tea. How charmingly I have deceived them all! and for the trifling sum of two paltry guineas!”

And Lady Gwendoline sprang out of bed, and threw herself into a large eider down-stuffed chair near a bright fire, laughing heartily, while Jones bustled about to prepare her toilet.

The medical man who had been sent for (in

the absence of the family physician) had advised the Marchioness not to allow the invalid to get up till he saw her again the following evening; not that he apprehended anything serious, indeed he felt perfectly assured she was only suffering from a severe cold; but as the weather was so changeable, he thought it would be safest for the young lady to remain in bed, particularly as she said she was so anxious to begin hunting; and if up, there might be some difficulty to prevent her going out.

With these wishes, Gwendoline had apparently reluctantly complied. Little did her aunt think it was all a sham, and that she had bribed the apothecary by placing two guineas in his hand.

While the tire-damsel drew on her stocking and placed a beautiful scarlet slipper on her foot, Gwendoline was stretching out her leg, and viewing it with no small degree of self-approbation.

"I cannot imagine," she exclaimed, "why they all rave about that detested Miss Bonville

—Cordelia, as she begs me to call her. I
call her by her Christian name indeed! That
would be placing myself on a par with the
proud beggar, for she is little better, brought
up by her uncle's charity; and he is poor
enough. And for me, a lady born—me
the envied heiress of both father and
mother, besides my dear, silly, ugly, old
mamma's wealth—*me* to be neglected—
slighted for this penniless Bonville girl! No;
I will not set my foot below while she remains
in this house—Castle—Hall—whatever it may
be called. It's the first time I ever experienced
such treatment. George—I mean Aubrey
George—I don't care a farthing for, he is
always making love to every new face; but
Arnold George—it's past bearing in *him*; he
so handsome—he that made every body think
he was my most humble of slaves, and now to
see him, even while talking to me, watching
that detested Bonville girl! I will not endure
such treatment;” and she stamped her little

foot, and rising, approached the glass. "Tell me, Jones," she continued, "is her face, with her long nose and great green eyes, more beautiful than mine? Lionel, too, he must be watching her."

"I thought, my lady," observed Jones, "you couldnt abide Mr. Lionel, or his cousin Mr. George."

"You are very stupid, Jones; do you think I love one of them? I only want to make people suppose they care for me, and to make them useful—I, who have hitherto had only to look at a man and he was instantly at my side! Arnold George I did and do care a little for, only I don't let him know it. My aunt and ugly, silly mamma say I must not think of marrying any man without a title; but I sometimes think I would rather do so, for then my husband would not be higher than myself, and I am resolved to have my own way always. But I know what's in the wind, don't you, Jones?"

"I don't know what you mean, my lady, unless it's about Mr. Lionel, who will be Marquis some day; and Mrs. Barlow told Wilmore how that mamselle, the Marchioness' waiting-woman, told her that their ladies were plotting to make a match between you and him."

"Indeed, Jones! I thought as much; but they shall find themselves disappointed, unless I find the Bonville wants him, and then I would have him to spite her. Oh! that I could find out for a certainty whom she loves, for both Lionel and the two Georges had eyes for no one but her. It was only in compliance with my aunt's wishes that Lionel opened the ball with me; his eyes were watching her every movement, and his ears listening to catch every sound of her voice. Never was I so treated before. You know, Jones, when my ugly mamma gave way to my coaxing, and took me to the assize and race balls when I was

a mere child, every gentleman in the room asked my hand as the greatest honor."

"Yes, my lady, and you used to come home with your shoes all in holes, and tired to death, so that my Lady Conway would not let you get out of bed for two or three days, because your feet were all blistered ; and then all the young gentlemen would call of a morning to know how you was. My Goodness Gracious ! there was no end to their coming. And poor Parson Lloyd looked broken-hearted, for you made him fancy you was in love with him, and he used to be for ever looking at you in church, and reading the wrong Psalms."

"Ah ! yes, Jones," said the young flirt, with rather a troubled laugh ; "but I was a little to blame about poor Gwillym Lloyd, for he was too kind and good to be trifled with, and I gave him some reason to suppose I did not dislike his attention ; I wanted to hear how he would pop the question ; but, however,

he had too much sense to commit himself so far as that."

" Well, my lady, I don't think it would have been at all unnatural for him to love you ; for the Lloyds are a great and old family, and he is young and very comely, and has been at Oxford, and talks all the outlandish tongues like the Apostles. Now it was a piece of great impudence in that painting man, Elmore, whose sister was only a governess, to look at such as you."

" Oh ! name him not, Jones—Do you think you can find out whether Lionel or Arnold George is in love with this Cordelia ? Oh ! that there had been no ball here ! I did not dislike her till then ; but to see her receive the attention of every man worth dancing with except her brother, was past enduring."

" I wonder you won't flirt—as you call making love—with Mr. Ralph Bonville," observed the abigail ; " he is a nice-looking gentleman."

"He's well enough, as far as looks go ; but that would not spite his sister, and I like nothing so much as to get other girls' lovers."

"Well, now, that is very unnatural like ; but I suppose you knows best. I should be afraid if a girl was to die, and I had 'ticed her sweetheart away, that her spirit would come to me at night."

"Spirits, indeed ! how foolish you are, Jones."

"Why, my lady, dont you know—"

"Oh ! don't begin with your ghost stories ; I like to hear about the living. Hark ! is not that the servants' supper bell ? Go and find out all you can. I shall lock you out, and pretend to be asleep if any one knocks. Be sure you give three taps when you return, and if any one is with you, four."

The little Welsh maiden quitted the room, and Gwendoline was left to ruminate on the ball of the preceding night—that ball which was given in honor of the fair niece of the noble

owners of Netleigh Castle, and to which all the county families had been invited. The Marchioness had found it impossible to avoid inviting the Bonvilles, and therefore she did the thing with a good grace.

All went on well till the ball night; but we have seen the effect of it on Gwendoline: and this gives me an opportunity of making some remarks on balls—those weighty events to most girls—more particularly their first ball.

Have their expectations been realised ? Have they not more frequently ended in disappointment, heart-burning, envy, jealousy, and malice ? How many bad feelings have been awakened in a girl which before lay dormant and might, perhaps, have slept for ever, had they not been roused by her seeing a friend, school-fellow, or companion of her childhood, selected in preference to herself by some person of rank or wealth, who she hoped would have chosen her and whom, perhaps,

some silly relative had advised her to use all her power to please, we will not say *catch*, but such is the more plain acceptation of the term ; for out of the number of young ladies who go to balls, there are at least fifteen out of every twenty who go for the purpose of getting husbands and not for the love of dancing. Methinks I hear the gentlemen laugh, and say—"That is true enough ; the girls are always dreaming of making conquests."

Yes, and so are you ; for how many daughters and sisters of your best friends, whom you have flattered at their fathers' or brothers' tables, are neglected or shunned at a public ball, for the sake of paying attention to some stupid heiress or titled lady who, out of the ball-room, laughs at the folly and presumption of the "green-horn." On the other hand, a silly girl's head may be turned by dancing with a man of rank, who perhaps to gain a vote, or because she dances well, will ~~descend~~ descend to ask her for the quadrille *after* the

next, and will very likely not fulfil his engagement if it does not suit him, or the moment after forget there is such a person in existence. How often, too, have I seen girls shrink behind the by-standers, or pretend not to see an old friend or acquaintance because “she is not fashionably dressed,” or because “she is such a figure;” and if she is prettier or better dressed than themselves, they will say to a stranger who may have committed a fatal blunder by asking her name: “I know very little of her; she is not in *our* circle, but we sometimes invite her to make up a set of odds and ends.”

And, again; not only girls, but also some of the more lordly race of men will beat about the bush to catch the eye of a titled lady, so as to get a passing stiff bow or curtsey, while she turns and asks her neighbour—

“Do you know that person who stared? I

believe I ought to bow, but I have not the slightest recollection of who it is."

Not that the really well-bred and high-born ever *cut* any one, for they never form an acquaintance that they cannot acknowledge at all times: they will not speak familiarly in one place, and stare at you in another as if to say—"Who are you?" It is only low, half bred *upstarts* that commit such paltry, mean breaches of the rules of good manners and etiquette.

Such are some of the customs of the ball-room. Assume not, therefore, my young friends, these manners with your ball costume, and shun not those friends, whose worth and estimableness of character render them far more valuable than the transitory acquaintances of an hour who, for that short period, may condescend to smile or flatter while they divert themselves at your expense. Be assured furthermore that men and girls of good

sense, although they may and do attend balls, seldom, very seldom, seek their partners for life in such scenes ; they like an elegant, graceful partner for the dance, but look for something of more sterling worth in the *one* on whom not only their own happiness, but that of future generations may depend.

I trust the reader will pardon this long digression from my tale, to which we will now return, and see what gossip Jones gleaned in the housekeeper's room.

CHAPTER XII.**THE LOVERS.**

SEVERAL gentle taps had been given at different times at the chamber door, but not the right number; consequently the young pretended invalid gave no answer, and the applicants for admission concluded she was asleep; and indeed so protracted was the absence of the waiting-maid, that her mistress nearly fell asleep in reality, despite her impatience. At length, footsteps were heard, and four raps succeeded each other on the door. Slowly

Gwendoline rose from her downy chair, and admitted her maiden, who was accompanied by the Marchioness and Lady Conway. We will not repeat all the questions and answers that passed ; but merely say the two ladies were dismissed as quickly as the rules of good manners would permit ; and they took their departure with a hundred charges to Jones to call them up if the invalid should be worse.

No sooner were they gone and out of hearing, than the object of their solicitude gave vent to a hearty fit of laughing, so that Jones feared they would return, thinking she was seized with a fit of hysterics.

Having composed herself in some measure, Gwendoline demanded of Jones, whether she had heard any news.

In reply, Jones informed her that Monsieur François, Mr. Lionel's valet, told her he never saw his master so much in love with any lady as with Miss Bonville, who, he said, was the

finest girl he, Mr. Lionel—had ever seen; and Monsieur further said not only his master but the two Mr. Georges were both wild about her.

“Well, what have you heard besides?” asked Gwendoline, impatiently. “Is she wild about one or all of them? Tell me every thing, Jones, for I am—oh! I am nearly wild myself. Speak—what else did you hear?”

“Why, Mamselle Rosalie, my Lady Marchioness’ French maid, tried to make us understand—for she, you know, talks such gibberish—that Miss Bonville don’t like Mr. Lionel, can’t abide him—but she is sure she likes Mr. Arnold George; only Miss Bonville is so proud and close[’] that Mamselle Rosalie cannot pump any thing out of her. Then, Mrs. Barlow says she overheard my Lady Conway and the Marchioness talking together, and saying how unlucky it was Miss Bonville ever came in the way, as they feared

it would mar their plans ; and what was to be done for the best, they knew not ; because if she went home, Mr. Lionel would always be at the Hall, and if she remained here, they could not keep them apart. And then my Lady Conway said you were breaking your heart about Mr. Lionel, and that if money could make him love and marry you, she would give up all she had in the world."

" Foolish, ugly old thing ! *I* breaking my heart for Lionel ! This is too bad. I'll let them see how little I care for him. I'll dress and go down to the drawing-room this instant —get me my dress, Jones."

" Oh ! please don't do that, my lady ; for they'll never believe you are sick again. Think of some other way to let them see you are not breaking your heart ; oh, please !"

" Well, I will think. I will pretend to be in love with George—I will even pretend to like the Bonville—I will elope with—even Gwillym Lloyd. To think that *I* should be

s slighted for that penniless girl ! What's the use of all my fortune, if I can't marry whom I please ? But I will—that I will."

Leaving Gwendoline to ransack her mind for the best way of proving her indifference to Lionel and mortifying Cordelia, we will see what is going forward in another part of the Castle.

In the saloon were assembled most of the party who had remained after the ball—some playing at whist, others at chess, and the rest engaged in conversation. On a sofa sat the Marchioness, with Cordelia by her side. The sofa was placed in one corner of the apartment, against the wall, so that no one could stand behind it.

Lionel, perhaps—like his fair cousin—might have gained the secrets of his aunt's boudoir from the housekeeper's-room, or his own eyes might have delighted him; at all events he kept aloof from Miss Bonville.

Not so, Arnold George; for seating himself on an ottoman, at the feet of his aunt, he en-

deavoured to engage the whole attention of the object of his admiration; so that at last his kind aunt rising, said—

“ George, you can take my place, and be sure don’t give it up till I reclaim it.”

She then crossed the room, and taking Lionel by the arm, said—

“ We have not had a game of piquet this age; come, let us have one.”

They accordingly sat down in a distant quarter from that she had quitted; but how the game progressed, we cannot pretend to say. When it was ended, the players both moved towards the sofa; and whatever they read in the faces of the young pair, the looks of the Marchioness bespoke no small satisfaction, as she kissed the fair and polished brow of the beautiful blushing girl, while the eyes of Lionel flashed with ire, and turning on his heel, he moved, with haughty steps, to where Ralph was seated.

The Marchioness stood for some moments,

and contemplated the young lovers—for such she felt convinced they were ; and with all her partiality for her fair niece, she could not help acknowledging to herself that Cordelia's beauty was of a higher order ; while the happy handsome George was no less worthy of her admiration.

“ For he was tall and strong,
Right blythsome roll'd his een ;
Sweet was his voice whene'er he sung :
He scant had twenty seen.

But who the countless charms can draw,
That grac'd his mistress true ?
Such charms the old world seldom saw,
Nor oft I ween the new.

Her auburn hair plays round her neck,
Like tendrils of the vine ;
Her cheeks red dewy rose-buds deck,
Her eyes like diamonds shine.”



Shortly afterwards, the company separated and retired to their apartments.

Cordelia, after dismissing the woman servant who assisted at her toilet, sat absorbed in deep thought, till recalled to herself by the clock striking one. She then rose with the intention of going to bed; but on looking for her watch to wind it, she recollect ed it was left on the mantel-piece in the drawing-room, a young lady having asked permission to take the impression of one of the small seals; 'she thought it best to fetch it lest it might be thrown down by the servant in the morning; so wrapping a large shawl over her dressing-gown, she opened her chamber door very cautiously, descended the stairs equally, so, and opened the drawing-room door. But she started back with alarm, for at a little distance from the fire sat some gentlemen, still at cards; but so completely absorbed were they with their game, that they noticed not the opening of the door.'

This gave Cordelia time to take a momentary survey of the party. Lionel, Mr. Pratt, Ralph, and old Lord Germaine were playing, while one of the Georges was standing with his back to the door looking at them ; but she could not distinguish whether it was Arnold or Aubrey, for they were so near of a height and their regimentals were the same. On the table were piles of guineas, and her watch lay by those next her brother !

She stayed to see no more, but retreated without even closing the door, and gliding up the stairs with noiseless steps, re-entered the room and locked herself in ; when throwing herself on the bed, she gave vent to a flood of tears—tears of bitter anguish, for the fears which had for some time oppressed her were now no longer doubtful—her brother was a *gambler*—and her good, self-denying, estimable uncle had, alas ! laboured for nought. Should she inform him of her brother's fault ? Then what would be the result ? The noble heart

might break at the ungrateful return made for all the care he had so liberally bestowed on the penniless orphan, or else indignation might usurp the place of pity, and his doors be closed against the ingrate. Could she endure to see her brother a homeless wanderer ?

For hours she lay pondering on what plan to adopt. To sleep, was impossible ; so she rose and drew back the window curtains. The moon was about setting, but she could not see it ; her room faced the east. Bathing her aching temples and drinking a glass of water, she continued pacing to and fro till morn began to dawn, and then she once more sought her couch, and overcome with sorrow and fatigue, fell into a heavy sleep, from which she did not awake till long after sunrise.

It was the end of October, and a white frost was glittering on every blade of grass, but it was rapidly disappearing beneath the warm rays of the sun, which seemed to penetrate between every leaf still fluttering on the trees, and

through the clear waters of the lake which reflected the landscape as though it were a vast picture.

Often have I thought when gazing on the moon—the pale faced moon—the fair Queen of Night—the favorite of poets and writers of every age and every nation who have sung of love, friendship, and deeds of noble daring; war, hate, revenge, malice, treason, and acts of deep and black treachery, which have been perpetrated beneath her soft and fitful light—often have I thought, “Oh ! could she but enumerate such in the book of fate, and drop one leaf on this terrestrial globe which she illumines with her silvery rays, what secrets would be disclosed—what acts revealed !—acts which would throw all that have been recorded, save by the pen of inspiration, into the shade—dark as those deep crevices of earth’s caverns, where neither hers nor the more glorious rays of the orb of day can penetrate ! But if the moon’s faint rays peer into many a secret nook

and witness deeds which are concealed from the preying eyes of mortals, how far more stupendous must be those scenes which are witnessed by the sun, whose piercing rays of fire dart to the ocean's rocky foundation and caves of coral and glittering gems, that would shame those in the crowns of the most potent rulers of the empires and kingdoms of this little globe of ours ! That same glorious orb, which darts its rays to the ocean's rocky bed, also shines on palaces and halls of state, peers into the statesman's most secret cabinet, and witnesses the tears of the fair young victim when being adorned in all the trappings of wealth and fashion, to be led to the altar, on which her heart and all its best affections are to be sacrificed ; where she is to stand, compelled to breathe vows of falsehood and perjury in the presence of her God—surrounded by throngs of heartless spectators linked to her by nature's dearest and closest ties, beneath whose eyes her feelings are petrified, and whose

looks overpower any effort she might make to free herself from the hateful fetters wherewith she is being shackled :—as the yells and shouts of the Hindoo priests and the loud discordant music, drown the shrieks of the victim on the funeral pile!

Such spectacles the bright orb daily gleams upon. But it likewise shines on many a fair and happy bride in the humble grades of life ; and on many a rural scene, where all is calm and serene, and where no ambitious thoughts arise. It rises and sets in splendour on many a fair spot of earth, where man has never trod to scare the gorgeous tenants of the groves, whose songs, blended with the murmur of the rippling streams, are the only sounds that disturb the sweet silence, and where flowers of brightest hues blossom in all their natural perfection uncultivated by the hands of man. It peeps into bowers, where lovers repose in all the confidence of youth's first affection, and where no jealous fears intrude : it gleams on

the young warrior girding on his sword: its resplendent beams rest on the battle-field, when the sword is steeped in gore and the roar of cannon and martial music overpower the groans of the dying. Its rays play on the cradle of helpless infancy, and on the couches of happy, joyful children, who wake each morn to resume their sports amidst gay flowers, and chase butterflies over meads enamelled with daisies: it glads the heart of the husbandman when gazing on the fields of golden grain, which he trusts will repay his unceasing toil: it throws its warm rays through the loopholes of the captive's loathsome dungeon, and into the close, cheerless manufactories, where thousands of youths are labouring under the eye of the hard task-master, debarred from sports natural to their age. On many a couch of pain, by which the watchers are exhausted and no longer able to resist the claims of nature for a short repose: on many a pale corpse, stretched in that narrow receptacle to which all that

remains of mortality is consigned are it is borne to its last resting place—the grave; and on many an aching and breaking heart that hides its sufferings from all else, does the sun shine as if in mockery—as on that October morning it shone on the sleeping Cordelia.

Bright and warm though its rays were, she woke not till rather a loud rap on the door made her start up, exclaiming—“What’s the matter?”

“Nothing, ma’m,” replied the maid, “only it’s so late, and my lady feared you were not well.”

Rising, and unbolting the door, Cordelia asked the hour.

It was past ten. To get down for breakfast was impossible; besides, her head ached intensely; and this was a sufficient excuse for her to request that some tea might be brought up.

While the servant was gone, voices under her window and the sound of carriage wheels

attracted her attention, and she looked out just as the two Georges leapt into a gig.

Arnold George looked up at the window, but Cordelia drew back ere he could have caught a glimpse of her. Waving their hands at those stationed under the portico, they then started off at a rapid rate down the coach road, and she heard talking and laughing below. Ralph's voice she distinguished, and Lionel's also, and she expected to see them follow; for the previous night she had heard some of the gentlemen talking about cub-hunting.

At this instant the servant brought the tea, and offered to light a fire, advising her to return to bed, as she looked so feverish.

"And the place, ma'am," she continued, "is all in a bustle since the order came for the young Mr. Champernownes to join their regiment without a moment's delay; there is a rebellion in Ireland, and—but I must go—there's another bell ringing, and most of the visitors are going this morning. Your fire,

ma'am, shall be lighted in a few minutes ;" and away went the maid.

Laying her aching head on the pillow, Cordelia tried to compose her mind, but could not. What ! had George gone without *one* word of farewell, after what he had avowed the preceding night ? Surely he might have written *one* line. Perhaps, he had, and left it with some one to give to her, but her non-appearance at breakfast had prevented that being done.

After the fire was lighted she got up and tried to dress, but that was next to impossible ; so again she lay down, listening to every sound. It was noon, however, ere any one asked for admittance to her room, and then it was the Marchioness herself, who, after apologising for her tardy visit, insisted on her keeping quiet up stairs. She then told her the cause of the hasty departure of the young officers.

" Poor Arnold looked the picture of misery," she continued; " you saw him, doubtless—but I

forget, you were not up. We are very dull below ; all our guests have left, with the exception of Lord Germaine, with whom that naughty little niece of mine is flirting to her heart's content, and he, I believe, is making himself an old fool."

"I thought Lady Gwendoline was too ill to leave her room," observed Cordelia.

"So did I ; but to my no small astonishment, I found her in the breakfast-room when I descended. She is now gone for a ride with the gentlemen—but I will not talk more now to you ; remain still, and get well quickly, like that incorrigible Gwendoline."

END OF VOL. I.









