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MAGNUM BONUM

OR

MOTHER CAREY'S BROOD

BY

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AUTHOR OF 'THE HEIR OF REDCLYFFE' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. III.

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MAGNUM BONUS;

OR,

MOTHER CAREY'S BROOD.

CHAPTER XXXI.

SLACK TIDE.

If . . . .
Thou hide thine eyes and make thy peevish moan
Over some broken reed of earth beneath,
Some darling of blind fancy dead and gone.

Keble.

There is such a thing as slack tide in the affairs of men, when a crisis seems as if it would never come, and all things stagnate. The Law Courts had as yet not concerned themselves about the will, vacation time had come and all was at a standstill, nor could any steps be taken for Lucas's exchange till it was certain into what part of India Sir Philip Cameron was going. In the meantime his regiment had gone into camp, and he could not get away until the middle of September, and then only for a few days. Arriving very late on a Friday night, he saw nobody but his mother over his supper, and thought her
looking very tired. When he met her in the morning, there was the same weary, harassed countenance, there were worn marks round the dark wistful eyes, and the hair, whitened at Schwarenbach, did not look as incongruous with the face as hitherto.

No one else except Barbara had come down to prayers, so Jock’s first inquiry was for Armine.

“He is pretty well,” said his mother; “but he is apt to be late. He gets overtired between his beloved parish work and his reading with Bobus.”

“He is lucky to get such a coach,” said Jock.

“Bob taught me more mathematics in a week than I had learnt in seven years before.”

“He is terribly accurate,” said Babie.

“Which Armie does not appreciate?” said Jock.

“I’m afraid not,” said his mother. “They do worry each other a good deal, and this Infanta most of all, I’m afraid.”

“O no, mother,” said Babie. “Only it is hard for poor Arnie to have two taskmasters.”

“What! the Reverend Petronella continues in the ascendant?”

Bobus here entered, with a face that lightened, as did everyone’s, at sight of Lucas.

“Good morning. Ah! Jock! I didn’t sit up, for I had had a long day out on the moors; we kept the birds nearer home for you. There are plenty, but Grimes says he has heard shots towards River Hollow, and thinks some one must have been trespassing there.”
"Have you heard anything of Elvira? à propos to River Hollow," said his mother.

"Yes," said Jock. "One of our fellows has been on a moor not far from where she was astonishing the natives, conjointly with Lady Anne Macnalty. There were bets which of three men she may be engaged to."

"Pending which," said his mother, "I suppose poor Allen will continue to hover on the wings of the Petrel?"

"And send home mournful madrigals by the ream," said Bobus. "Never was petrel so tuneful a bird!"

"For shame, Bobus; I never meant you to see them!"

"'Twas quite involuntary! I have trouble enough with my own pupil's effusions. I leave him a bit of Latin composition, and what do I find but an endless doggrel ballad on What's his name?—who hid under his father's staircase as a beggar, eating the dogs' meat, while his afflicted family were searching for him in vain;—his favourite example."

"St. Alexis," said Babie; "he was asked to versify it."

"As a wholesome incentive to filial duty and industry," said Bobus. "Does the Parsoness mean to have it sung in the school?"

"It might be less dangerous than 'the fox went out one moonshiny night,'" said their mother, anxious to turn the conversation. "Mr. Parsons brought Mr. Todd of Wrexham in to see the school
just as the children were singing the final catastrophe when the old farmer 'shot the old fox right through the head.' He was so horrified that he declared the schools should never have a penny of his while they taught such murder and heresy."

"Served them right," said Jock, "for spoiling that picture of domestic felicity when 'the little ones picked the bones, oh!' How many guns shall we be, Bobus?"

"Only three. My uncle has a touch of gout, the Monk has got a tutorship, Joe has gone back to his ship, but the mighty Bob has a week's leave, and does not mean a bird to survive the change of owners."

"Doesn't Armine come?"

"Not he!" said Bobus. "Says he doesn't want to acquire the taste, and he would knock up with half a day."

"But you'll all come and bring us luncheon?" entreated Jock. "You will, mother! Now, won't you? We'll eat it on a bank like old times when we lived at the Folly, and all were jolly. I beg your pardon, Bob; I didn't mean to turn into another poetical brother on your hands, but enthusiasm was too strong for me! Come, Mother Carey, do!"

"Where is it to be?" she asked, smiling.

"Out by the Long Hanger would be a good place," said Bobus, "where we found the *Epipactis grandiflora.*"

"Or the heathery knoll where poor little mother
got into a scrape for singing profane songs by moonlight," laughed Jock.

"Ah! that was when hearts were light," she said; "but at any rate we'll make a holiday of it, for Jock's sake."

"Ha! what do I see?" exclaimed Jock, who was opposite the open window. "Is that Armine, or a Jack-in-the-Green?"

"Oh!" half sighed Barbara. "It's that harvest decoration!" And Armine, casting down armfuls of great ferns, and beautiful trailing plants, made his entrance through the open window, exchanging greetings, and making a semi-apology for his late appearance as he said—

"Mother, please desire Macrae to cut me the great white orchids. He won't do it unless you tell him, and I promised them for the Altar vases."

"You know, Armie, he said cutting them would be the ruin of the plant, and I don't feel justified in destroying it."

"Macrae's fancy," muttered Armine. "It is only that he hates the whole thing."

"Unhappy Macrae! I go and condole with him sometimes," said Bobus. "I don't know which are most outraged—his Freekirk or his horticultural feelings!"

"Babie," ordered Armine, who was devouring his breakfast at double speed, "if you'll put on your things, I've the garden donkey-cart ready to take down the flowers. You won't expect us to luncheon, mother?"
Barbara, though obedient, looked blank, and her mother said—

"My dear, if I went down and helped at the Church till half past twelve, could not we all be set free? Your brothers want us to bring their luncheon to them at the Hanger."

"That's right, mother," cried Jock; "I've half a mind to come and expedite matters."

"No, no, Skipjack!" cried Bobus; "I had that twenty stone of solid flesh whom I see walking up to the house to myself all yesterday, and I can't stand another day of it unmitigated!"

Entered the tall heavy figure of Rob. He reported his father as much the same and not yet up, delivered a note to his aunt, and made no objection to devouring several slices of tongue and a cup of cocoa to recruit nature after his walk; while Bobus reclaimed the reluctant Armine from cutting scarlet geraniums in the ribbon beds to show him the scene in the Greek play which he was to prepare, and Babie tried to store up all the directions, perceiving from the pupil's roving eye that she should have to be his memory.

Jock saw that the note had brought an additional line of care to his mother's brow, and therefore still more gaily and eagerly adjured her not to fail in the Long Hanger, and as the shooting party started, he turned back to wave his cap, and shout, "Sharp two!"

Two o'clock found three hungry youths and
numerous dead birds on the pleasant thmy bank beneath the edge of the beach wood, but gaze as they might through the clear September air, neither mother, brother, nor sister was visible. Presently, however, the pony-carriage appeared, and in it a hamper, but driven only by the stable-boy. He said a gentleman was at the house, and Mrs. Brownlow was very sorry that she could not come, but had sent him with the luncheon.

"I shall go and see after her," said Jock; and in spite of all remonstrance, and assurance that it was only a form of Parsonic tyranny, he took a draught of ale and a handful of sandwiches, sprang into the carriage, and drove off, hardly knowing why, but with a yearning towards his mother, and a sense that all that was unexpected boded evil. Leaving the pony at the stables, and walking up to the house, he heard sounds that caused him to look in at the open library window.

On one side of the table stood his mother, on the other Dr. Demetrius Hermann, with insinuating face, but arm upraised as if in threatening.

"Scoundrel!" burst forth Jock. Both turned, and his mother's look of relief and joy met him as he sprang to her side, exclaiming, "What does this mean? How dare you?"

"No, no!" she cried breathlessly, clinging to his arm. "He did not mean—it was only a gesture!"

"I'll have no such gestures to my mother."
“Sir, the honoured lady only does me justice. I meant nothing violent. Zat is for you English military, whose weapon is zie horse-hip.”

“As you will soon feel,” said Jock, “if you attempt to bully my mother. What does it mean, mother dear?”

“He made a mistake,” she said, in a quick, tremulous tone, showing how much she was shaken. “He thinks me a quack doctor’s widow, whose secret is matter of bargain and sale.”

“Madame! I offered most honourable terms.”

“Terms, indeed! I told you the affair is no empirical secret to be bought.”

“Yet madame knows that I am in possession of a portion of zie discovery, and that it is in my power to pursue it further, though, for family considerations, I offer her to take me into confidence, so that all may profit in unison,” said the Greek, in his blandest manner.

“The very word profit shows your utter want of appreciation,” said Mrs. Brownlow, with dignity. “Such discoveries are the property of the entire faculty, to be used for the general benefit, not for private selfish profit. I do not know how much information may have been obtained, but if any attempt be made to use it in the charlatan fashion you propose, I shall at once expose the whole transaction, and send my husband’s papers to the Lancet.”

Hermann shrugged his shoulders and looked at
Lucas, as if considering whether more or less reason could be expected from a soldier than from a woman. It was to him that he spoke.

"Madame cannot see zie matter in zie light of business. I have offered freely to share all that I shall gain, if I may only obtain the data needful to perfect zie discovery of zie learned and venerated father. I am met wit anger I cannot comprehend."

"Nor ever will," said Caroline.

"And," pursued Dr. Hermann, "when, on zie oder hand, I explain that my wife has imparted to me sufficient to enable me to perfectionate the discovery, and if the reserve be continued, it is just to demand compensation, I am met with indignation even greater. I appeal to zie captain. Is this treatment such as my proposals merit?"

"Not quite," said Jock. "That is to be kicked out of the house, as you shortly will be, if you do not take yourself off."

"Sir, your amiable affection for madame leads you to forget, as she does, zie claim of your sister."

"No one has any claim on my mother," said Jock.

"Zie moral claim—zie claim of affection," began the Greek; but Caroline interrupted him—

"Dr. Hermann is not the person fitly to remind me of these. They have not been much thought of in Janet's case. I mean to act as justly as I can by my daughter, but I have absolutely nothing to give her
at present. Till I know what my own means may prove to be I can do nothing."

"But madame holds out zie hope of some endowment. I shall be in a condition to be independent of it, but it would be sweet to my wife as a token of pardon. I could bear away a promise."

"I promise nothing," was the reply. "If I have anything to give—even then, all would depend on your conduct and the line you may take. And above all, remember, it is in my power to frustrate and expose any attempt to misuse any hints that may have been stolen from my husband's memoranda. In my power, and my duty."

"Madame might have spared me this," sighed the Athenian. "My poor Janette! She will not believe how her husband has been received."

He was gone. Caroline dropped into a chair, but the next moment she almost screamed—

"Oh, we must not let him go thus! He may revenge it on her! Go after him, get his address, tell him she shall have her share if he will behave well to her."

Jock fulfilled his mission according to his own judgment, and as he returned his mother started up.

"You have not brought him back!"

"I should rather think not!"

"Janet's husband! Oh, Jock, it is very dreadful! My poor child!"

She had been a little lioness in face of the enemy,
but she was trembling so hopelessly that Jock put her on a couch and knelt with his arm round her while she laid her head on his strong young shoulder.

"Let me fetch you some wine, mother darling," he said.

"No, no—to feel you is better than anything," putting his arm closer—

"What was it all about, mother?"

"Ah! you don't know, yet you went straight to the point, my dear champion."

"He was bullying you, that was enough. I thought for a moment the brute was going to strike you."

"That was only gesticulation. I'm glad you didn't knock him down when you made in to the rescue."

She could laugh a little now.

"I should like to have done it. What did he want? Money, of course?"

"Not solely. I can't tell you all about it; but Janet saw some memoranda of your father's, and he wants to get hold of them."

"To pervert them to some quackery?"

"If not, I do him great injustice."

"Give them up to a rogue like that! I should guess not! It will be some little time before he tries again. Well done, little mother!"

"If he will not turn upon her."

"What a speculation he must have thought her."

"Don't talk of it, Jock; I can't bear to think of her in such hands."
"Janet has a spirit of her own. I should think she could get her way with her subtle Athenian. Where did he drop from?"

"He overtook me on my way back from the Church, for indeed I did not mean to break my appointment. I don't think the servants knew who was here. And Jock, if you mention it to the others, don't speak of this matter of the papers. Call it, as you may with truth, an attempt to extort money."

"Very well," he gravely said.

"It is true," she continued, "that I have valuable memoranda of your father's in my charge; but you must trust me when I say that I am not at liberty to tell you more."

"Of course I do. So the mother was really coming, like a good little Red-riding-hood, to bring her son's dinner into the forest, when she met with the wolf! Pray, has he eaten up the two kids at a mouthful?"

"No, Miss Parsons had done that already. They are making the Church so beautiful, and it did not seem possible to spare them, though I hope Armine may get home in time to get his work done for Bobus."

"Is not he worked rather hard between the two? He does not seem to thrive on it."

"Jock, I can say it to you. I don't know what to do. The poor boy's heart is in these Church matters, and he is so bitterly grieved at the failure of all his plans that I cannot bear to check him in doing all he can. It is just what I ought to have been doing all
these years; I only saw my duties as they were being taken away from me, and so I deserve the way Miss Parsons treats me."

"What way?"

"You need not bristle up. She is very civil; but when I hint that Armine has study and health to consider, I see that in her eyes I am the worldly obstructive mother who serves as a trial to the hero."

"If she makes Armine think so ——"

"Armie is too loyal for that. Yet it may be only too true, and only my worldliness that wishes for a little discretion. Still, I don't think a sensible woman, if she were ever so good and devoted, would encourage his fretting over the disappointment, or lead him to waste his time when so much depends on his diligence. I am sure the focus of her mind must be distorted, and she is twisting his the same way."

"And her brother follows suit?"

"I think they go in parallel grooves, and he lets her alone. It is very unlucky, for they are a constant irritation to Bobus, and he fancies them average specimens of good people. He sneers, and I can't say but that much of what he says is true, but there is the envenomed drop in it which makes his good sense shocking to Armine, and I fear Babie relishes it more than is good for her. So they make one another worse, and so they will as long as we are here. It was a great mistake to stay on, and your uncle must feel it so."
“Could you not go to Dieppe, or some cheap place?”

“I don’t feel justified in any more expense. Here the house costs nothing, and our personal expenditure does not go beyond our proper means; but to pay for lodging elsewhere would soon bring me in excess of it, at least as long as Allen keeps up the yacht. Then poor Janet must have something, and I don’t know what bills may be in store for me, and there’s your outfit, and Bobus’s.”

“Never mind mine.”

“My dear, that’s fine talking, but you can’t go like Sir Charles Napier, with one shirt and a bit of soap.”

“No, but I shall get something for the exchange. Besides, my kit was costly even for the Guards, and will amply cover all that.”

“And you have sold your horses?”

“And have been living on them ever since! Come, won’t that encourage you to make a little jaunt, just to break the spell?”

“I wish it could, my dear, but it does not seem possible while those bills are such a dreadful uncertainty. I never know what Allen may have been ordering.”

“Surely the Evelyns would be glad to have you.”

“No, Jock, that can’t be. Promise me that you will do nothing to lead to an invitation. You are to meet some of them, are you not?”
"Yes, on Thursday week, at Roland Hampton's wedding. Cecil and I and a whole lot of us go down in the morning to it, and Sydney is to be a bridesmaid. What are you going to do now, mother?"

"I don't quite know. I feel regularly foolish. I shall have a headache if I don't keep quiet, but I can't persuade myself to stay in the house lest that man should come back."

"What! not with me for garrison?"

"O nonsense, my dear. You must go and catch up the sportsmen."

"Not when I can get my Mother Carey all to myself. You go and lie down in the dressing-room, and I'll come as soon as I have taken off my boots and ordered some coffee for you."

He returned with the step of one treading on eggs, expecting to find her half asleep; but her eyes were glittering, and there were red spots on her cheeks, for her nerves were excited, and when he came in she began to talk. She told him, not of present troubles, but of the letters between his father and grandmother, which, in her busy, restless life, she had never before looked at, but which had come before her in her preparations for vacating Belforest. Perhaps it was only now that she had grown into appreciation of the relations between that mother and son, as she read the letters, preserved on each side, and revealing the full beauty and greatness of her husband's nature, his perfect confidence in his mother, and a guiding in-
fluence from her, which she herself had never thought of exerting. Does not many an old correspondence thus put the present generation to shame?

Jock was the first person with whom she had shared these letters, and it was good to watch his face as he read the words of the father whom he remembered chiefly as the best of playfellows. He was of an age and in a mood to enter into them with all his heart, though he uttered little more than an occasional question, or some murmured remark when anything struck him. Both he and his mother were so occupied that they never observed that the sky clouded over and rain began to fall, nor did they think of any outer object till Bobus opened the door in search of them.

"Halloo, you deserter!"

"Hush! Mother has a headache."

"Not now, you have cured it."

"Well, you've missed an encounter with the most impudent rascal I ever came across."

"You didn't meet Hermann?"

"Well, perhaps I have found his match; but you shall hear. Grimes said he heard guns, and we came upon the scoundrel in Lewis Acre, two brace on his shoulder."

"The vultures are gathering to the prey," said his mother.

"I'm not arrived at lying still to be devoured!" said Bobus. "I gave him the benefit of a doubt, and
sent Grimes to warn him off; but the fellow sent his card—*his* card forsooth, 'Mr. Gilbert Gould, R.N.,' and information that he had Miss Menella's permission."

"Not credible," said Jock.

"Mrs. Lisette's more likely," said his mother. "I think he is her brother."

"I sent Grimes back to tell him that Miss Menella had as much power to give leave as my old pointer, and if he did not retire at once, we should gently remove his gun and send out a summons."

"Why did you not do so at once?" cried Jock.

"Because I have brains enough not to complicate matters by a personal row with the Goulds," said Bobus, "though I could wish not to have been there, when the keepers would infallibly have done so. Shall I write to George Gould, or will you, mother?"

"Oh dear," sighed Caroline, "I think Mr. Wakefield is the fittest person, if it signifies enough to have it done at all."

"Signifies!" cried Jock. "To have that rascal loafing about! I wouldn't be trampled upon while the life is in me!"

"I don't like worrying Mr. Gould. It is not his fault, except for having married such a wife, poor man."

"Having been married by her, you mean," said Bobus. "Mark me, she means to get that fellow married to that poor child, as sure as fate."
“Impossible, Bobus! His age!”

“He is a good deal younger than his sister, and a prodigious swell.”

“Besides, he is her uncle,” said Jock.

“No, no, only her uncle’s wife’s brother.”

“That’s just the same.”

“I wish it were!” But Jock would not be satisfied without getting a Prayer-book, to look at the table of degrees.

“He is really her third cousin, I believe,” said his mother, “and I’m afraid that is not prohibited.”

“Is he a ship’s steward?” said Jock, looking at the card with infinite disgust.

“A paymaster’s assistant, I believe.”

“That would be too much. Besides, there’s the Scot!”

“I don’t think much of that,” said Jock. “The mother and sister are keen for it, but Clanmacnalty is in no haste to marry, and by all accounts the Elf carries on promiscuously with three or four at once.”

“And she has no fine instinct for a gentleman,” added Bobus. “It is who will spread the butter thickest!”

“A bad look out for Belforest,” said Jock.

“It can’t be much worse than it has been with me,” said his mother.

“That’s what that little ass, Armine, has been presuming to din into your ears,” said Bobus; “as if
the old women didn't prefer beef and blankets to your coming poking piety at the poor old parties."

"By the bye," cried Caroline, starting, "those children have never come home, and see how it rains!"

Jock volunteered to take the pony carriage and fetch them, but he had not long emerged from the park in the gathering twilight before he overtook two figures under one umbrella, and would have passed them had he not been hailed.

"You demented children! Jump in this instant."

"Don't turn!" called Armine. "We must take this," showing a parcel which he had been sheltering more carefully than himself or his sister.

"It is cord and tassels for the banner. They sent wrong ones," said Barbara, "and we had to go and match it. They would not let me go alone."

"Get in, I say," cried Jock, who was making demonstrations with the "national weapon" much as if he would have liked to lay it about their shoulders.

"Then we must drive on to the Parsonage," stipulated Armine.

"Not a bit of it, you drenched and foolish morsel of humanity. You are going straight home to bed. Hand us the parcel. What will you give me not to tie this cord round the Reverend Petronella's neck?"

"Thank you, Jock, I'm so glad," said Babie, referring probably to the earlier part of his speech. "We
would have come home for the pony carriage, but we thought it would be out."

"Take care of the drip," was Armine's parting cry, as Babie turned the pony's head, and Jock strode down the lane. He meant merely to have given in the parcel at the door, but Miss Parsons darted out, and not distinguishing him in the dark began, "Thank you, dear Armine; I'm so sorry, but it is in the good cause and you won't regret it. Where's your sister? Gone home? But you'll come and have a cup of tea and stay to evensong?"

"My brother and sister are gone home, thank you," said Jock, with impressive formality, and a manly voice that made her start.

"Oh, indeed. Thank you, Mr. Brownlow. I was so sorry to let them go; but it had not begun to rain, and it is such a joy to dear Armine to be employed in the service."

"Yes, he is mad enough to run any risk," said Jock.

"Oh, Mr. Brownlow, if I could only persuade you to enter into the joy of self-devotion, you would see that I could not forbid him! Won't you come in and have a cup of tea?"

"Thank you, no. Good night." And Miss Parsons was left rejoicing at having said a few words of reproof to that cynical Mr. Robert Brownlow, while Jock tramped away, grinning a sardonic smile at the lady's notions of the joys of self-sacrifice.
He came home only just in time for dinner, and found Armine enduring, with a touching resignation learnt in Miss Parsons's school, the sarcasm of Bobus for having omitted 'o prepare his studies. The boy could neither eat nor entirely conceal the chills that were running over him; and though he tried to silence his brother's objurgations by bringing out his books afterwards, his cheeks burnt, he emitted little grunting coughs, and at last his head went down on the lexicon, and his breath came quick and short.

The Harvest Festival day was perforce kept by him in bed, blistered and watched from hour to hour to arrest the autumn cold, which was the one thing dreaded as imperilling him in the English winter which he must face for the first time for four years.

And Miss Parsons, when impressively told, evidently thought it was the family fashion to make a great fuss about him.

Alas! why are people so one-sided and absorbed in their own concerns as never to guess what stumbling-blocks they raise in other people's paths, nor how they make their good be evil spoken of?

Babie confided her feelings to Jock when he escorted her to Church in the evening, and had detected a melancholy sound 'in her voice which made him ask if she thought Armine's attack of the worst sort.

"Not particularly, except that he talks so beautifully."

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Jock gave a small sympathetic whistle at this dreadful symptom, and wondered to hear that he had been able to talk.

"I didn't mean only to-day, but this is only what he had made up his mind to. He never expects to leave Belforest, and he thinks—oh, Jock!—he thinks it is meant to do Bobus good."

"He doesn't go the way to edify Bobus."

"No, but don't you see? That is what is so dreadful. He only just reads with Bobus because mother ordered him; and he hates it because he thinks it is of no use, for he will never be well enough to go to college. Why, he had this cold coming yesterday, and I believe he is glad, for it would be like a book for him to be very bad indeed, bad enough to be able to speak out to Bobus without being laughed at."

"Does he always go on in this way?"

"Not to mother; but to hear him and Miss Parsons is enough to drive one wild. They went on such a dreadful way yesterday that I was furious, and so glad to get away to Kenminster; only after I had set off, he came running after me, and I knew what that would be."

"What does she do? Does she blarney him?"

"Yes, I suppose so. She means it, I believe; but she does flatter him so that it would make me sick, if it didn't make me so wretched! You see he likes it, because he fancies her goodness itself; and so I
suppose she is, only there is such a lot of clerical shop”—then, as Jock made a sound as if he did not like the slang in her mouth—“Ay, it sounds like Bobus; but if this goes on much longer, I shall turn to Bobus’s way. He has all the sense on his side!”

“No, Babie,” said Jock very gravely. “That’s a much worse sort of folly!”

“And he will be gone before long,” said Barbara, much struck by a tone entirely unwonted from her brother. “O Jock, I thought reverses would be rather nice and help one to be heroic, and perhaps they would, if they would only come faster, and Armine could be out of Miss Parsons’s way; but I don’t believe he will ever be better while he is here. I think!—I think!” and she began to sob, “that Miss Parsons will really be the death of him if she is not hindered!”

“Can’t he go on board the Petrel with Allen?”

“Mother did think of that,” said Babie, “but Allen said he wasn’t in spirits for the charge, and that cabin No. 2 wasn’t comfortable enough.”

Jock was not the least surprised at this selfishness, but he said—

“We will get him away somehow, Infanta, never fear! And when you have left this place, you’ll be all right. You’ll have the Friar, and he is a host in himself.”

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"Yes," said Babie, ruefully, "but he is not a brother after all. Oh, Jock! mother says it is very wrong in me, but I can't help it."

"What is wrong, little one?"

"To feel it so dreadful that you and Bobus are going! I know it is honour and glory, and promotion, and chivalry, and Victoria crosses, and all that Sydney and I used to care for; but, oh! we never thought of those that stayed at home."

"You were a famous Spartan till the time came," said Jock, in an odd husky voice.

"I wouldn't mind so much but for mother," said poor Barbara, in an apologetic tone; "nor if there were any stuff in Allen; nor if dear Armie were well and like himself; but, oh dear! I feel as if all the manhood and comfort of the family would be gone to the other end of the world."

"What did you say about mother?"

"I beg your pardon, Jock, I didn't mean to worry you. I know it is a grand thing for you. But mother was so merry and happy when we thought we should all be snug with you in the old house, and she made such nice plans. But now she is so fagged and worn, and she can't sleep. She began to read as soon as it was light all those long summer mornings to keep from thinking; and she is teasing herself over her accounts. There were shoals of great horrid bills of things Allen ordered coming in at Midsummer, just
as she thought she saw her way! Do you know, she thinks she may have to let our own house and go into lodgings."

"Is that you, Barbara?" said a voice at the Parson-age wicket. "How is our dear patient?"

"Rather better to-night, we think."

"Tell him I hope to come and see him to-morrow. And say the vases are come. I thought your mother would wish us to have the large ones, so I put them in the Church. They are 3\"."

Babie thought Jock's face was dazed when he came among the lights in Church, and that he moved and responded like an automaton, and she could hardly get a word out of him all the way home. There, they were sent for to Armine, who was sufficiently better to want to hear all about the services, the procession, the wheat-sheaf, the hymns, and the sermons. Jock stood the examination well till it came to evensong, when, as his sister had conjectured, he knew nothing, except one sentence, which he said had come over and over again in the sermon, and he wanted to know whence it came. It was, "Seekest thou great things for thyself."

Even Armine only knew that it was in a note in the "Christian Year," and Babie looked out the reference, and found that it was Jeremiah's rebuke to Baruch for self-seeking amid the general ruin.

"I liked Baruch," she said. "I am sorry he was selfish."
“Noble selfishness, perhaps,” said Armine. “He may have aimed at saving his country and coming out a glorious hero, like Gideon or Jephthah.”

“And would that have been self-seeking too, as well as the commoner thing?” said Babie.

“It is like a bit of New Testament in the midst of the Old,” said Armine. “They that are great are called Benefactors—a good sort of greatness, but still not the true Christian greatness.”

“And that?” said Babie.

“To be content to be faithful servant as well as faithful soldier,” said Armine, thoughtfully. “But what had it to do with the harvest?”

He got no satisfaction, Babie could remember nothing but Jock’s face, and Jock had taken the Bible, and was looking at the passages referred to. He sat for a long time resting his head on his hand, and when at last he was roused to bid Armine good-night, he bent over him, kissed him, and said, “In spite of all, you’re the wise one of us, Armie boy. Thank you.”
CHAPTER XXXII.

THE COST.

O well for him who breaks his dream
With the blow that ends the strife,
And waking knows the peace that flows
Around the noise of life.

G. Macdonald.

"Jock! say this is not true!"

The wedding had been celebrated with all the splendour befitting a marriage in high life. Bridesmaids and bridesmen were wandering about the gardens waiting for the summons to the breakfast, when one of the former thus addressed one of the latter, who was standing, gazing without much speculation in his eyes, at the gold fish disporting themselves round a fountain.

"Sydney!" he exclaimed, "are not your mother and Fordham here? I can't find them."

"Did you not hear, Duke has one of his bad colds, and mamma could not leave him? But, Jock, while we have time, set my mind at rest."

"What is affecting your mind?" said Jock, knowing only too well.

"What Cecil says, that you mean to disappoint all our best hopes."
“There’s no help for it, Sydney,” said Jock, too heavy-hearted for fencing.

“No help. I don’t understand. Why, there’s going to be war, real war, out there.”

“Frontier tribes!”

“What of that? It would lead to something. Besides, no one leaves a corps on active service.”

“Is mine?”

“It is all the same. You were going to get into one that is.”

“Curious reasoning, Sydney. I am afraid my duty lies the other way.”

“Duty to one’s country comes first. I can’t believe Mrs. Brownlow wants to hold you back; she—a soldier’s daughter!”

“It is no doing of hers,” said Jock; “but I see that I must not put myself out of reach of her.”

“When she has all the others! That is a mere excuse! If you were an only son, it would be bad enough.”

“Come this way, and I’ll tell you what convinced me.”

“I can’t see how any argument can prevail on you to swerve from the path of honour, the only career any one can care about,” cried Sydney, the romance of her nature on fire.

“Hush, Sydney,” he said, partly from the exquisite pain she inflicted, partly because her vehemence was attracting attention.
"No wonder you say Hush," said the maiden, with what she meant for noble severity. "No wonder you don't want to be reminded of all we talked of and planned. Does not it break Babie's heart?"

"She does not know."

"Then it is not too late."

But at that moment the bride's aunt, who felt herself in charge of Miss Evelyn, swooped down on them, and paired her off with an equally honourable best man, so that she found herself seated between two comparative strangers; while it seemed to her that Lucas Brownlow was keeping up an insane whirl of merriment with his neighbours.

Poor child, her hero was fallen, her influence had failed, and nothing was left her but the miserable shame of having trusted in the power of an attraction which she now felt to have been a delusion. Meanwhile the aunt, by way of being on the safe side, effectually prevented Jock from speaking to her again before the party broke up; and he could only see that she was hotly angered, and not that she was keenly hurt.

She arrived at home the next day with white cheeks and red eyes, and most indistinct accounts of the wedding. A few monosyllables were extracted with difficulty, among them a "Yes" when Fordham asked whether she had seen Lucas Brownlow.

"Did he talk of his plans?"
“Not much.”

“One cannot but be sorry,” said her mother; “but, as your uncle says, his motives are to be much respected.”

“Mamma,” cried Sydney, horrified, “you wouldn't encourage him in turning back from the defence of his country in time of war?”

“His country!” ejaculated Fordham. “Up among the hill tribes!”

“You palliating it too, Duke! Is there no sense of honour or glory left? What are you laughing at? I don’t think it a laughing matter, nor Cecil either, that he should have been led to turn his back upon all that is great and glorious!”

“That's very fine,” said Fordham, who was in a teasing mood. “Had you not better put it into the ‘Traveller's Joy?’”

“I shall never touch the ‘Traveller's Joy’ again!” and Sydney's high horse suddenly breaking down, she flew away in a flood of tears.

Her mother and brother looked at one another rather aghast, and Fordham said—

“Had you any suspicion of this?”

“Not definitely. Pray don’t say a word that can develop it now.”

“He is all the worthier.”

“Most true; but we do not know that there is any feeling on his side, and if there were, Sydney is much
too young for it to be safe to interfere with conventionalities. An expressed attachment would be very bad for both of them at present."

"Should you have objected if he had still been going to India?"

"I would have prevented an engagement, and should have regretted her knowing anything about it. The wear of such waiting might be too great a strain on her."

"Possibly," said Fordham. "And should you consider this other profession an insuperable objection?"

"Certainly not, if he goes on as I think he will; but such success cannot come to him for many years, and a good deal may happen in that time."

Poor Lucas! He would have been much cheered could he have heard the above conversation instead of Cecil's wrath, which, like his sister's, worked a good deal like madness on the brain.

Mr. Evelyn chose to resent the slight to his family, and the ingratitude to his uncle, in thus running counter to their wishes, and plunging into what the young aristocrat termed low life. He did not spare the warning that it would be impossible to keep up an intimacy with one who chose to "grub his nose in hospitals and dissecting rooms."

Naturally Lucas took these as the sentiments of the whole family, and found that he was sacrificing both love and friendship. Sir James Evelyn indeed
allowed that he was acting rightly according to his lights. Sir Philip Cameron told him that his duty to a widowed mother ought to come first, and his own Colonel, a good and wise man, commended his decision, and said he hoped not to lose sight of him. The opinions of these veterans, though intrinsically worth more than those of the two young Evelyns, were by no means an equivalent to poor Lucas. The "great things" he had resolved not to seek, involved what was far dearer. It was more than he had reckoned on when he made his resolution, but he had committed himself, and there was no drawing back. He was just of age, and had acted for himself, knowing that his mother would withhold her consent if she were asked for it; but he was considering how to convey the tidings to her, when he found that a card had been left for him by the Reverend David Ogilvie, with a pencilled invitation to dine with him that evening at an hotel.

Mr. Ogilvie, after several years of good service as curate at a district Church at a fashionable south-coast watering place, sometimes known as the English Sorrento, had been presented to the parent Church. He had been taking his summer holiday, and on his way back had undertaken to relieve a London friend of his Sunday services. His sister's letters had made him very anxious for tidings of Mrs. Brownlow, and he had accordingly gone in quest of her son.
He ordered dinner with a half humorous respect for the supposed epicurism of a young Guardsman, backed by the desire to be doubly correct because of the fallen fortunes of the family, and he awaited with some curiosity the pupil, best known to him as a pickle.

"Mr. Brownlow."

There stood a young man, a soldier from head to foot, slight, active, neatly limbed, and of middle height, with a clear brown cheek, dark hair and moustache, and the well-remembered frank hazel eyes, though their frolic and mischief were dimmed, and they had grown grave and steadfast, and together with the firm-set lip gave the impression of a mind resolutely bent on going through some great ordeal without flinching or murmuring. With a warm grasp of the hand Mr. Ogilvie said—

"Why, Brownlow, I should not have known you."

"I should have known you, sir, anywhere," said Jock, amazed to find the Ogre of old times no venerable seignior, but a man scarce yet middle-aged.

They talked of Mr. Ogilvie's late tour, in scenes well known to Jock, and thence they came to the whereabouts of all the family, Armine's health and Robert's appointment, till they felt intimate; and the unobtrusive sympathy of the old friend opened the youth's heart, and he made much plain that had been only half understood from Mrs. Morgan's letters. Of his eldest brother and sister, Jock said little; but
there was no need to explain why his mother was straitening herself, and remaining at Belforest when it had become so irksome to her.

“And you are going out to India?” said Mr. Ogilvie.

“That’s not coming off, sir.”

“Indeed; I thought you were to have a staff appointment.”

“It would not pay, sir; and that is a consideration.”

“Then have you anything else in view?”

“The hospitals,” said Jock, with a poor effort to seem diverted; “the other form of slaughter.” Then as his friend looked at him with concerned and startled eyes, he added, “Unless there were some extraordinary chance of loot. You see the pagoda tree is shaken bare, and I could do no more than keep myself and have nothing for my mother, and I am afraid she will need it. It is a chance whether Allen, at his age, or Armine, with his health, can do much, and some one must stay and get remunerative work.”

“Is not the training costly?”

“Her Majesty owes me something. Luckily I got my commission by purchase just in time, and I shall receive compensation enough to carry me through my studies. We shall be all together with Friar Brownlow, who takes the same line in the old house in Bloomsbury, where we were all born. That she really does look forward to.”
"I should think so, with you to look after her," said Mr. Ogilvie heartily.

"Only she can't get into it till Lady Day. And I wanted to ask you, Mr. Ogilvie, do you know anything about expenses down at your place? What would tolerable lodgings be likely to come to, rent of rooms, I mean, for my mother and the two young ones. Armie has not wintered in England since that Swiss adventure of ours, and I suppose S. Cradocke's would be as good a place for him as any."

"I had a proposition to make, Brownlow. My sister and I invested in a house at S. Cradocke's when I was curate there, and she meant to retire to me when she had finished Barbara. My married curate is leaving it next week, when I go home. The single ones live in the rectory with me, and I think of making it a convalescent home; but this can't be begun for some months, as the lady who is to be at the head will not be at liberty. Do you think your mother would do me the favour to occupy it? It is furnished, and my housekeeper would see it made comfortable for her. Do you think you could make the notion acceptable to her?" he said, colouring like a lad, and stuttering in his eagerness.

"It would be a huge relief," exclaimed Jock. "Thank you, Mr. Ogilvie. Belforest has come to be like a prison to her, and it will be everything to have Armine in a warm place among reasonable people."
"Is Kenminster more unreasonable than formerly?"

"Not Kenminster, but Woodside. I say, Mr. Ogilvie, you haven't any one at S. Cradocke's who will send Armine and Babie to walk three miles and back in the rain for a bit of crimson cord and tassels?"

"I trust not," said Mr. Ogilvie, smiling. "That is the way in which good people manage to do so much harm."

"I'm glad you say so," cried Jock. "That woman is worse for him than six months of east wind. I declare I had a hard matter to get myself to go to Church there the next day."

"Who is she?"

"The sister of the Vicar of Woodside, who is making him the edifying martyr of a goody book. Ah, you know her, I see," as Mr. Ogilvie looked amused. "A gushing lady of a certain age? Oh yes, she has been at S. Cradocke's."

"She is not coming again, I hope!" in horror.

"Not likely. They were there for a few months before her brother had the living, and I could quite fancy her influence bringing on a morbid state of mind. There is something exaggerated about her."

"You've hit her off exactly!" cried Jock, "and you'll unbewitch our poor boy before she has quite done for him! Can't you come down with me on Saturday, and propose the plan?"

"Thank you, I am pledged to Sunday."

"I forgot. But come on Monday then?"
"I had better go and prepare. I had rather you spoke for me. Somehow," and a strange dew came in David Ogilvie's eyes, "I could not bear to see her there, where we saw her installed in triumph, now that all is so changed."

"You would see her the brightest and bravest of all. Neither she nor Babie would mind the loss of fortune a bit if it were not, as Babie says, for 'other things.' But those other things are wearing her to a mere shadow. No, not a shadow—that is dark—but a mere sparkle! But to escape from Belforest will cure a great deal."

So Jock went away with the load on his heart somewhat lightened. He could not get home on Saturday till very late, when dinner had long been over. Coming softly in, through the dimly lighted drawing-rooms, over the deeply piled carpets, he heard Babie's voice reading aloud in the innermost library, and paused for a moment, looking through the heavy velvet curtains over the doorway before withdrawing one and entering. His mother's face was in full light, as she sat helping Armine to illuminate texts. She did indeed look worn and thin, and there were absolute lines on it, but they were curves such as follow smiles, rather than furrows of care; feet rather of larks than of crows, and her whole air was far more cheerful and animated than that of her youngest son. He was thin and wan, his white cheeks contrasting with his dark hair and brown
eyes, which looked enormous in their weary pensiveness, as he lent back languidly, holding a brush across his lips in a long pause, while she was doing his work. Barbara’s bright keen little features were something quite different as, wholly wrapped up in her book, she read—

``Oh! then Ladurlad started,
As one who, in his grave,
Has heard an angel’s call,
Yea, Mariately, thou must deign to save,
Yea, goddess, it is she,
Kailyal——"

“Are you learning Japanese?” asked Jock, advancing, so that Armine started like Ladurlad himself.

“Dear old Skipjack! Skipped here again!” and they were all about him. “Have you had any dinner?”

“A mouthful at the station. If there is any coffee and a bit of something cold, I’d rather eat it promiscuously here. No dining-room spread, pray. It is too jolly here,” said Jock, dropping into an armchair. "Where’s Bob?"

“Dining at the school-house.”

“And what’s that Mariolatry?”

“Mariately,” said Babie. “An Indian goddess. It is the ‘Curse of Kehama,’ and wonderfully noble.”

“Moore or Browning?”

“For shame, Jock!” cried the girl. “I thought you did know more than examination cram.”
“It is the advantage of having no Mudie boxes,” said his mother. “We are taking up our Southey.”

“And, Armie, how are you?”

“My cough is better, thank you,” was the languid answer. “Only they won’t let me go beyond the terrace.”

“For don’t I know,” said his mother, “that if once I let you out, I should find you croaking at a choir practice at Woodside?”

Then, after ordering a refection for the traveller, came the question what he had been doing.

“Dining with Mr. Ogilvie. It is quite a new sensation to find oneself on a level with the Ogre of one’s youth, and prove him a human mortal after all.”

“That’s a sentiment worthy of Joe,” said Babie. “You used to know him in private life.”

“Always with a smack of the dominie. Moreover, he is so young. I thought him as ancient as Dr. Lucas, and, behold, he is a brisk youth, without a grey hair.”

“He always was young-looking,” said his mother. “I am glad you saw him. I wish he were not so far off.”

“Well then, mother, here’s an invitation from Mahomet to the mountain, which Mahomet is too shy to make in person. That house which he and his sister bought at his English Sorrento has just been vacated by his married curate, and he wants you to

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come and keep it warm till he begins a convalescent home there next spring."

"How very kind!"

"Oh! mother, you couldn't," burst out Armine in consternation.

"Would it be an expense or loss to him, Jock?" said his mother, considering.

"I should say not, unless he be an extremely accomplished dissembler. If it eased your mind, no doubt he would consent to your paying the rates and taxes."

"But, mother," again implored Armine, "you said you would not force me to go to Madeira, with the Evely ns!"

"Are they going to Madeira?" exclaimed Jock, thunderstruck.

"Did you not hear it from Cecil?"

"He has been away on leave for the last week. This is a sudden resolution."

"Yes, Fordham goes on coughing, and Sydney has a bad cold, caught at the wedding. Did you see her?"

"Oh yes, I saw her," he mechanically answered, while his mother continued—

"Mrs. Evelyn has been pressing me most kindly to let Armine go with them; but as Dr. Leslie assures me it is not essential, and he seems so much averse to it himself—"

"You know, mother, how I wish to hold my poor
neglected Woodside to the last," cried Armine. "Why is my health always to be made the excuse for deserting it?"

"You are not the only reason," said his mother. "It is hard to keep Esther in banishment all this time, and I am in constant fear of a row about the shooting with that Gilbert Gould."

"Has he been at it again!" exclaimed Jock, fiercely.

"You are as bad as Rob," she said. "I fully expect a disturbance between them, and I had rather be no party to it. Oh, I shall be very thankful to get away. I feel like a prisoner on parole."

"And I feel," said Armine, "as if all we could do here was too little to expiate past carelessness."

"Mind, you are talking of mother!" said Jock, firing up.

"I thought she felt with me," said Armine, meekly.

"So I do, my dear; I ought to have done much better for the place, but our staying on now does no good, and only leads to perplexity and distress."

"And when can you come, mother?" said Jock. "The house is at your service instanter."

"I should like to go to-night, without telling any one or wishing any one good-bye. No, you need not be afraid, Armie. The time must depend on your brother's plans. S. Cradocke's is too far off for much running backwards and forwards. Have you any
notion when you may have to leave us, Jock? You don’t go with Sir Philip?"

“No, certainly not,” said Jock. Then, with a little hesitation, “In fact, that’s all up.”

“He has not thrown you over?” said his mother; “or is there any difficulty about your exchange?”

Here Babie broke in, “Oh, that’s it! That’s what Sydney meant! Oh, Jock! you don’t mean that you let it prey upon you—the nonsense I talked? Oh, I will never, never say anything again!”

“What did she say?” demanded Jock.

“Sydney? Oh, that it would break her heart and Cecil’s if you persisted, and that she could not prevent you, and it was my duty. Mother, that was the letter I didn’t show you. I could not understand it, and I thought you had enough to worry you.”

“But what does it all mean?” asked their mother. “What have you been doing to the Evelyns?”

“Mother, I have gone back to our old programme,” said Jock. “I have sent in my papers; I said nothing to you, for I thought you would only vex yourself.”

“Oh, Jock!” she said, overpowered; “I should never have let you!”

“No, mother, dear, I knew that, so I didn’t ask you.”

“You undutiful person!” but she held out her arm, and as he came to her, she leant her head against him, sobbing a little sob of infinite relief, as though
fortitude found it much pleasanter to have a living column.

"You've done it?" said Armine.

"You will see it gazetted in a day or two."

"Then it is all over," cried Babie, again in tears; "all our dreams of honour, and knighthood, and wounds, and glorious things!"

"You can always have the satisfaction of believing I should have got them," said Jock, but there was a quiver in his voice, and a thrill through his whole frame that showed his mother that it was very sore with him, and she hastened to let him subside into a chair while she asked if it was far to the end of the canto, and as Babie was past reading, she took the book and finished it herself. Nobody had much notion of the sense, but the cadence was soothing, and all were composed by the time the prayer-bell rang.

"Come to my dressing-room presently," she said to Lucas, as he lighted her candle for her.

Just as she had gone up stairs, the front door opened to admit Bobus.

"Oh, you are here!" was his salutation. "So you have done for yourself?"

"How do you know?"

"Your colonel wrote to my uncle. He was at the dinner, and made me come back with him to ask if I knew about it."

"How does he take it?"
"He will probably fall on you, as he did on me tonight, calling it all my fault."
"As how?"
"For looking out for myself. For my part, I had thought it praiseworthy, but he says none of the rest of us care a rush for my mother, and so the only one of us good for anything has to be the victim. But don't plume yourself. You'll be the scum of the earth when he has you before him. Poor old boy, it is a sore business to him, and it doesn't improve his temper. I believe this place is a greater loss to him than to my mother. What are your plans?"
"Rotifer, as before."
"Chacun à son goût," said Bobus, shrugging his shoulders.
"I should have thought you would respect curing more than killing."
"If there were not a whole bag of stones about your neck."
"Magnets," said Jock.
"That's just it. All the heavier."
The brothers went upstairs together, and Jock was kept waiting a little while in the dressing-room, till his mother came out, shutting the door on Barbara.
"The poor Infanta!" she said. "She is breaking her foolish little heart over something she said to you. 'As bad as the woman in the "Black Brunswicker,"' she says, only she didn't mean it. Was it so, Jock?"
"I had pretty well made up my mind before. Mother, are you vexed that I did not tell you?"

"You spared me much. Your uncle would never have consented. But oh, Jock! I'm not a Spartan mother. My heart will bound."

"My colonel said it was right," said Jock; "so did Cameron, and even Sir James, though he did not like it."

"With such an array of old soldiers on our side we may let the young ladies rage," said his mother, but she checked her mirth on seeing how far from a joke their indignation was to her son.

He turned and looked into the fire as he said—

"When did Sydney write that letter, mother?"

"Before meeting you at the wedding. She has not written since."

"I thought not," muttered Jock, his brow against the mantel-piece.

"No, but Mrs. Evelyn has written such a nice letter, just like herself, though I did not understand it then. I think she was doubtful how much I knew, for she only said how thankworthy it must be to have such a self-sacrificing spirit among my sons, moral courage, in fact, of the highest kind, and how those who were lavish of strong words in their first disappointment would be wiser by-and-by. I was puzzled then. But oh, my dear, this must have been very grievous to you!"

"I couldn't go back, but I did not know how it
would be," said Jock, in a choked voice, collapsing at last, and hiding his face on his mother's lap.

"My Jock, I am so sorry! I wish it were not too late. I could not have let you give up so much," and she fondled his head. "I did not think I had been so weak as to let you see."

"No, mother. It was not that you were so weak, but that you were so brave. Besides, I ought to take the brunt of it. I ruined you all by being the prime mover with that assification, and I was the cause of Armie's illness too. I ought to take my share. If ever I can be any good to any one again," he added, in a dejected tone.

"Good!—unspeakably good! This is my first bright spot of light through the wood. If it were but bright to you! I am afraid they have been very unkind."

"Not unkind. She couldn't be that, but I've shocked and disappointed her," and his head dropped again.

"What, in not being a hero? My dear, you are a true hero in the eyes of us old mothers; but I am afraid that is poor comfort. My Jock, does it go so deep as that? Giving up all that for me! O my boy!"

"It is nonsense to talk of giving up," said Jock, rousing himself to a common-sense view. "What chance had I of her if I had gone to India ten times over?" but the wave of grief broke over him again.
"She would have believed in me, and, may be, have waited."

"She will believe in you again."

"No, I'm below her."

"My poor boy, I didn't know it had come to this. Do you mean that anything had ever passed between you?"

"No, but it was all the same. Even Evelyn implied it, when he said they must give me up, if we took such different lines."

"Cecil too! Foolish fellow! Jock, don't care about such absurdity. They are not worth it."

"They've been the best of my life," said poor Jock, but he stood up, shook himself, and said, "A nice way this of helping you! I didn't think I was such a fool. But it is over now. I'll buckle to, and do my best."

"My brave boy!" and as the thought of the Magnum Bonum darted into her mind, she said, "You may have greater achievements than are marked by Victoria Crosses, and Sydney herself may own it."

And Jock went to bed, cheered in spite of himself by his mother's pleasure, and by Mrs. Evelyn's letter, which she allowed him to take away with him.

Colonel Brownlow was not so much distressed by Lucas's retirement as had been apprehended. He knew the life of a soldier with small means too well to recommend it. The staff appointment, he said,
might mean anything or nothing, and could only last a short time unless Lucas had extraordinary opportunities. It might be as well, he was very like his grandfather, poor John Allen, and might have had his history over again.

The likeness was a new idea to Caroline and a great pleasure to her. Indeed, she seemed to Armine unfeelingly joyous, as she accepted Mr. Ogilvie's invitation, and hurried her preparations. There was a bare possibility of a return in the spring, which prevented final farewells, and softened partings a little. The person who showed most grief of all was Mrs. Robert Brownlow, who, glad as she must have been to be free of Bobus and able to recall her daughter, wept over her sister-in-law as if she had been going into the workhouse, with tears partly penitent for the involuntary ingratitude with which past kindness had been received. She was, as Babie said, much more sorry for Mother Carey than Mother Carey for herself.

Yet the relief was all the greater that it was plain that Esther was not happy in her banishment; and that General Hood thought her visit had lasted long enough, while the matter was complicated at home by her sister Eleanor's undisguised sympathy with her cousin Bobus, for whom she would have sent messages if her mother had not, with some difficulty, exacted a promise never to allude to him in her letters.
CHAPTER XXXIII.

BITTER FAREWELLS.

But he who lets his feelings run
In soft luxurious flow
Shrinks when hard service must be done
And faints at every woe.

J. H. Newman.

Welcome shone in Mr. Ogilvie's face in the gaslight on the platform as the train drew up, and the Popinjay in her cage was handed out, uttering, "Hic, haec, hoc. We're all Mother Carey's chicks."

Therewith the mother and the two youngest of her chicks were handed to their fly, and driven, through raindrops and splashes flashing in the gas, to a door where the faithful Emma awaited them, and conveyed them to a room so bright and comfortable that Babie piteously exclaimed—

"Oh, Emma, you have left me nothing to do!"

Presently came Mr. Ogilvie to make sure that the party needed nothing. He was like a child hovering near, and constantly looking to assure himself of the reality of some precious acquisition.

Later in the evening, on his way from the night-school, he was at the door again to leave a parish magazine with a list of services that ought to have
rejoiced Armine's heart, if he had felt capable of enjoying anything at S. Cradocke's, and at which Babie looked with some dismay, as if fearing that they would all be inflicted on her. He was in a placid, martyr-like state. He had made up his mind that the air was of the relaxing sort that disagreed with him, and no doubt would be fatal, though as he coughed rather less than more, he could hardly hope to edify Bobus by his death-bed, unless he could expedite matters by breaking a blood-vessel in saving some one's life. On the whole, however, it was pleasanter to pity himself for vague possibilities than to apprehend the crisis as immediate. It was true that he was very forlorn. He missed the admiring petting by which Miss Parsons had fostered his morbid state; he missed the occupations she had given him, and he missed the luxurious habits of wealth far more than he knew. After his winters under genial skies, close to blue Mediterranean waves, English weather was trying; and, in contrast with southern scenery, people, and art, everything seemed ugly, homely, and vulgar in his eyes. Gorgeous Cathedrals with their High Masses and sweet Benedictions, their bannered processions and kneeling peasantry, rose in his memory as he beheld the half restored Church, the stiff, open seats, and the Philistine precision of the S. Cradocke's Old Church congregation; and Anglicanism shared his distaste, in spite of the fascinations of the district Church.
He was languid and inert, partly from being confined to the house on days of doubtful character. He would not prepare any work for Bobus, who, with Jock, was to follow in ten days, he would not second Babie's wish to get up a S. Cradocke's number of the 'Traveller's Joy,' to challenge a Madeira one; he did little but turn over a few books, say there was nothing to read, and exchange long letters with Miss Parsons.

"Armine," said Mr. Ogilvie, "I never let my friends come into my parish without getting work out of them. I have a request to make you."

"I'm afraid I am not equal to much," said Armine, not graciously.

"This is not much. We have a lame boy here for the winter, son to a cabinet maker in London. His mind is set on being a pupil-teacher, and he is a clever, bright fellow, but his chance depends on his keeping up his work. I have been looking over his Latin and French, but I have not time to do so properly, and it would be a great kindness if you would undertake it."

"Can't he go to school?" said Armine, not graciously.

"It is much too far off. Now he is only round the corner here."

"My going out is so irregular," said Armine, not by any means as he would have accepted a behest of Petronella's.
"He could often come here. Or perhaps the Infanta would fetch and carry. He is with an uncle, a fisherman, and the wife keeps a little shop. Stagg is the name. They are very respectable people, but of a lower stamp than this lad, and he is rather lost for want of companionship. The London doctors say his recovery depends on sea air for the winter, so here he is, and whatever you can do for him will be a real good work."

"What is the name?" asked Mrs. Brownlow.

"Stagg. It is over a little grocery shop. You must ask for Percy Stagg."

Perhaps Armine suspected the motive to be his own good, for he took a dislike to the idea at once.

"Percy Stagg!" he began, as soon as Mr. Ogilvie was gone. "What a detestable conjunction, just showing what the fellow must be. And to have him on my hands."

"I thought you liked teaching?" said his mother.

"As if this would be like a Woodside boy!"

"Yes," said Babie; I don't suppose he will carry onions and lolipops in his pockets, nor put cockchafers down on one's book."

"Babie, that was only Ted Stokes!"

"And I should think he might have rather cleaner hands, and not leave their traces on every book."

"He'll do worse!" said Armine. "He will be vulgarly stuck up, and excruciate me with every French word he attempts to pronounce."
"But you'll do it, Army?" said his mother.

"Oh, yes, I will try if it be possible to make anything of him, when I am up to it."

Armine was not "up to it" the next day, nor the next. The third was very fine, and with great resignation, he sauntered down to Mrs. Stagg's.

Percy turned out to be a quiet, gentle, pale lad of fourteen, without cockney vivacity, and so shy that Armine grew shyer, did little but mark the errors in his French exercise, hear a bit of reading, and retreat, bemoaning the hopeless stupidity of his pupil.

A few days later Mr. Ogilvie asked the lame boy how he was getting on.

"Oh, sir," brightening, "the lady is so kind. She does make it so plain in me."

"The lady? Not the young gentleman?"

"The young gentleman has been here once, sir."

"And his sister comes when he is not well?"

"No, sir, it is his mother, I think. A lady with white hair—the nicest lady I ever saw."

"And she teaches you?"

"Oh yes, sir!" I am preparing a fable in the Latin Delectus for her, and she gave me this French book. She does tell me such interesting facts about words, and about what she has seen abroad, sir! And she brought me this cushion for my knee."

"Percy thinks there never was such a lady," chimed in his aunt. "She is very good to him, and he is ever so much better in his spirits and his
appetite since she has been coming to him. The young gentleman was haughty like, and couldn’t make nothing of him; but the lady—she’s so affable! She is one of a thousand!"

"I did not mean to impose a task on you," said Mr. Ogilvie, next time he could speak to Mrs. Brownlow.

"Oh! I am only acting stop-gap till Armine rallies and takes to it," she said. "The boy is delightful. It is very amusing to teach French to a mind of that age so thoroughly drilled in grammar."

"A capital thing for Percy, but I thought at least you would have deputed the Infanta."

"The Infanta was a little overdone with the style of thing at Woodside. She and Sydney Evelyn had a romance about good works, of which Miss Parsons completely disenchanted her—rather too much so, I fear."

"Let her alone; she will recover," said Mr. Ogilvie, "if only by seeing you do what I never intended."

"I like it, teacher as I am by trade."

So each day Armine imagined himself bound to the infliction of Percy Stagg, and compelled by headache, cough, or weather, to let his mother be his substitute.

"She is keeping him going on days when I am not equal to it," he said to Mr. Ogilvie.
"Having thus given you one of my tasks," said that gentleman, "let me ask whether I can help you in any of your studies?"

"I have been reading with Bobus, thank you."

"And now?"

"I have not begun again, though, if my mother desires it, I shall."

"So I should suppose; but I am sorry you do not take more interest in the matter."

"Even if I live," said Armine, "the hopes with which I once studied are over."

"What hopes?"

The boy was drawn on by his sympathy to explain his plans for the perfection of church and charities at Woodside, where he would have worked as curate, and lavished all that wealth could supply in all institutions for its good and that of Kenminster. It was the vanished castle over which he and Miss Parsons had spent so many moans, and yet at the end of it all, Armine saw a sort of incredulous smile on his friend's face.

"I don't think it was impossible or unreasonable," he said. "I could have been ordained as curate there, and my mother would have gladly given land, and means, and all."

"I was not thinking of that, my boy. What struck me was how people put their trust in riches without knowing it."

"Indeed I should have given up all wealth and
luxury. I am not regretting that!” exclaimed Armine, in unconscious blindness.

“I did not say you were.”

“I beg your pardon,” said Armine, thinking he had not caught the words.

“I said people did not know how they put their trust in riches.”

“I never thought I did.”

“Only that you think nothing can be done without them.”

“I don’t see how it can.”

“Don’t you? Well, the longer I live the more cause I see to dread and distrust what is done easily by force of wealth. Of course when the money is there, and is given along with one’s self (as I know you intended), it is providential, but I verily believe it intensifies difficulties and temptations. Poverty is almost as beneficial a sieve of motives and stimulus to energy as persecution itself.”

“There are so many things one can’t do.”

“Perhaps the fit time is not come for their being done. Or you want more training for doing them. Remember that to bring one’s good desires to good effect, there is a how to be taken into account. I know of a place where the mere knowledge that there are unlimited means to bestow seems to produce ingratitude and captiousness for whatever is done. On the other hand, I have seen a far smaller gift, that has cost an effort, most warmly and touch-
ingly received. Again, the power of at once acting leads to over-haste, want of consideration, domineering, expectation of adulation, impatience of counsel or criticism."

"I suppose one does not know till one has tried," said Armine, "but I should mind nothing from Mr. or Miss Parsons."

"I did not allude to any special case, I only wanted to show you that riches do not by any means make doing good a simpler affair, but rather render it more difficult not to do an equal amount of harm."

"Of course," said Armine, "as this misfortune has happened, it is plain that we must submit, and I hope I am bowing to the disappointment."

"By endeavouring to do your best for God with what is left you?"

"I hope so, but with my health there seems nothing left for me but un murmuring resignation."

Mr. Ogilvie was amused at Armine's notion of un murmuring resignation, but he added only, "Which would be much assisted by a little exertion."

"I did exert myself at home, but it is all aimless now."

"I should have thought you still equally bound to learn and labour to do your duty in Him and for Him. Will you think about what I have said?"

"Yes, Mr. Ogilvie, thank you. I know you mean it kindly, and no one can be expected to enter into
my feeling of the uselessness of wasting my time over classical studies when I know I shall never be able to be ordained."

"Are you sure you are not wasting it now?"

It was not possible to continue the subject. Mr. Ogilvie had failed in both his attempts to rouse Armine, and had to tell his mother, who had hoped much from this new influence. "I think," he said, "that Armine is partly feeling the change from invalidism to ordinary health. He does not know it, poor fellow; but it is rather hard to give up being interesting."

Caroline saw the truth of this when Armine showed himself absolutely nettled at his brothers, on their arrival, pronouncing that he looked much better—in fact quite jolly, an insult which he treated with Christian forgiveness.

Bobus had visited Belforest. His mother had never intended this, and still less that he should walk direct from the station to Kencroft, surprising the whole family at luncheon, and taking his seat among them quite naturally. Thereby he obtained all he had expected or hoped, for when the meal was over, he was able, though in the presence of all the family, to take Esther by both hands, and say in his resolute earnest voice, "Good-bye, my sweet and only love. You will wait for me, and by-and-by, when I have made you a home, and people see things differently, I shall come for you," and therewith he pressed on
her burning, blushing, drooping brow four kisses that felt like fire.

Her mother might fret and her father might fume, but they were as powerless as the parents of young Lochinvar's bride, and the words of their protest were scarcely begun when he loosed the girl's hands, and, turning to her mother, said, "Good-bye, Aunt Ellen. When we meet again, you will see things otherwise. I ask nothing till that time comes."

This was not the part of his visit of which he told his mother, he only dwelt on a circumstance so opportune that he had almost been forgiven even by the Colonel. He had encountered Dr. Hermann, who had come down to make another attempt on the Gracious Lady, and had thus found himself in the presence of a very different person. An opening had offered itself in America, and he had come to try to obtain his wife's fortune to take them out. The opportunity of making stringent terms had seemed to Bobus so excellent that he civilly invited Demetrius to dine and sleep, and sent off a note to beg his uncle to come and assist in a family compact. Colonel Brownlow, having happily resisted his impulse to burn the letter unread as an impertinent proposal for his daughter, found that it contained so sensible a scheme that he immediately conceived a higher opinion of his namesake than he had ever had before.

Thus Dr. Hermann found himself face to face
with the very last members of the family he desired to meet, and had to make the best of the situation. Of secrets of the late Joseph Brownlow he said nothing, but based his application on the offer of a practice and lectureship he said he had received from New Orleans. He had evidently never credited that Mrs. Brownlow meant to resign the whole property without giving away among her children the accumulation of ready money in hand, and as he knew himself to be worth buying off, he reckoned upon Janet's full share. He had taken Mrs. Brownlow's own statements as polite refusals, and a lady's romance until he found the uncle and nephew viewing the resignation of the whole as common honesty, and that she was actually gone. They would not give him her address, and prevented his coming in contact with the housekeeper, so that no more molestation might be possible, and meantime they offered him terms such as they thought she would ratify.

All that Joseph Brownlow had left was entirely in her power, and the amount was such that if she had died intestate, each of her six children would have been entitled to about 1600£, exclusive of the house in London. Janet had no right to claim anything now or at her mother's death, but the uncle and nephew knew that Mrs. Brownlow would not endure to leave her destitute, and they thought the deportation to America worth a considerable sacrifice.
Therefore they proposed that on the actual *bona fide* departure, 500\(^\text{L}\) should be paid down, the interest of the 1100\(^\text{L}\) should be secured to her, and paid half-yearly through Mr. Wakefield, who was to draw up the agreement; but the final disposal of the sum was not to be promised, but to depend on Mrs. Brownlow's will.

Such a present boon as 500\(^\text{L}\) had made Hermann willing to agree to anything. Bobus had seen the lawyer in London, and with him concocted the agreement for signature, making the payments pass through the Wakefield office, the receipts being signed by Janet Hermann herself.

"Why must all payments go through the office?" asked Caroline.

"Because there's no trusting that slippery Greek," said Bobus.

"I should have liked my poor Janet to have been forced to communicate with me every half-year," she sighed.

"What, when she has never chosen to write all this time?"

"Yes. It is very weak, but I can't help it. It would be something only to see her name. I have never known where to write to her, or I would have done so."

"O, very well," said Bobus, "you had better invite them both to share the *ménage* in Collingwood Street."
"For shame, Bobus," said Jock. "You have no right to say such things."

"Only that all this might as well have been left undone if my mother is to rush on them to ask their pardon and beg them to receive her with open arms. I mean, mother," he added with a different manner, "if you give one inch to that Greek, he will make it a mile, and as to Janet, if she can't bring down her pride to write to you like a daughter, I wouldn't give a rap for her receipt, and it might lead to intolerable pestering. Now you know she can't starve on 50\% a year besides her medical education. Wakefield will always know where she is, and you may be quite easy about her."

Caroline gave way to her son's reasoning, as he thought, but no sooner was she alone with Jock than she told him that he must take her to London to see Janet in her lodgings before the departure for the States.

He was at her service, and as they did not mean to sleep in town, they started at a preposterously early hour, with a certain mirth and gaiety at thus eloping together, as the mother's spirits rose at the bare idea of seeing the first-born child for whom she had famished so long. Jock was such a perfect squire of dames, and so chivalrously charmed to be her escort, that her journey was delightful, nor did she grow sad till it was over. Then, she could not eat the food he would have had her take at the station, and he saw
tears standing in her eyes as he sat beside her in the omnibus. When they were set down they walked swiftly and without a word to the lodgings.

Dr. and Mrs. Hermann had "left two days ago," said the untidy girl, whose aspect, like that of the street and house, betokened that Janet was drinking of her bitter brewst.

"What shall we do, mother?" asked Jock. "You ought to rest. Will you go to Mrs. Acton or Mrs. Lucas, while I run down to Wakefield's office and find out about them?"

"To Miss Ray's, I think," she said faintly. "Nita may know their plans. Here's the address," taking a little book from her pocket, and ruffling over the leaves, "you must find it. I can't see. O, but I can walk!" as he hailed a cab, and helped her into it, finding the address and jumping after her, while she sank back in the corner.

Very small and shrunken did she look when he took her out at the door leading to rooms over a stationer's shop. The sisters were somewhat better off than formerly, though good old Miss Ray was half ashamed of it, since it was chiefly owing to the liberal allowance from Mrs. Brownlow for the chaperonage in which she felt herself to have so sadly failed.

Jock saw his mother safe in the hands of the kind old lady, heard that the pair were really gone, and departed for his interview with Mr. Wakefield.
sooner had the papers been signed, and the 500L made over to them, than the Hermanns had hurried away a fortnight earlier than they had spoken of going. It was much like an escape from creditors, but the reason assigned was an invitation to lecture in New York.

So there was nothing for it but to put up with Miss Ray's account of Janet, and even that was second-hand, for the gentle spirit of the good old lady had been so roused at the treachery of the stolen marriage that she had refused to see the couple, and when Nita had once brought them in, she had retired to her bedroom.

Nita was gone on a professional engagement into the country for a week. According to what she had told her sister, Demetrius and Janet were passionately attached, and his manner was only too endearing; but Miss Ray had disliked the subject so much that she had avoided it in a way she now regretted.

"Everything I have done has turned out wrong," she said with tears running down her cheeks. "Even this! I would give anything to be able to tell you of poor Janet, and yet I thought my silence was for the best, for Nita and I could not mention her without quarrelling as we had never done before. O, Mrs. Brownlow, I can't think how you have ever forgiven me."

"I can forgive every one but myself," said Caroline
sadly. "If I had understood how to be a better mother, this would never have been."

"You! the most affectionate and devoted."

"Ah! but I see now it was only human love without the true moving spring, and so my poor child grew up without it, and these are the fruits."

"But my dear, my dear, one can't give these things. Poor Janet always was a headstrong girl, like my poor Nita. I know what you mean, and how one feels that if one had been better oneself," said poor Miss Ray, ending in utter entanglement, but tender sympathy.

"She might have been a child of many prayers," said the poor mother.

"Ah! but that she can still be," said the old lady. "She will turn back again, my dear. Never fear. I don't think I could die easy if I did not believe she would!"

Jock brought back word that the lawyer had been entirely unaware of the Hermanns' departure, and thought it looked bad. He had seen them both, and his report was less brilliant than Nita's. Indeed Jock kept back the details, for Mr. Wakefield had described Mrs. Hermann as much altered, thin, haggard, shabby, and anxious, and though her husband fawned upon her demonstratively before spectators, something in her eyes betokened a certain fear of him. He had also heard that Elvira was still making visits. There was a romance about her,
which, in addition to her beauty and future wealth, made people think her a desirable guest. She was always more agreeable with strangers than in her own family; and as to the needful funds, she had her ample allowance; and no doubt her expectations secured her unlimited credit. Her conduct was another pang, but it was lost in the keener pain Janet had given.

As his mother could not bear to face any one else, Jock thought the sooner he could get her home the better, and all they did was to buy some of Armine's favourite biscuits, and likewise to stop at Rivington's, where she chose the two smallest and neatest Greek Testaments she could find.

They reached home three hours before they were expected, and she went up at once to her room and her bed, leaving Jock to make the explanations, and receive all Bobus's indignation at having allowed her to knock herself up by such a foolish expedition.

Chill, fatigue, and, far more, grief after her long course of worry really did bring on a feverish attack, so unprecedented in her that it upset the whole family, and if Mr. Ogilvie had not been almost equally wretched himself, he would have been amused to see these three great sons wandering forlorn about the house like stray chicks who had lost their parent hen, and imagining her ten times worse than she really was.

Babie was really useful as a nurse, and had very
little time to comfort them. And indeed they treated her as childish and trifling for assuring them that neither patient, maid, nor doctor thought the ailment at all serious. Bobus found some relief in laying the blame on Jock, but when Armine heard the illness ascribed to a long course of anxiety and harass, he was conscience-stricken, as he thought how often his perverse form of resignation had baffled her pleadings and added to her vexations. Words, impatiently heard at the moment, returned upon him, and compunction took its outward effect in crossness. It was all that Jock could do by his good-humoured banter and repartee to keep the peace between the other two, who, when unchecked by regard to their mother and Babie, seemed bent on discussing everything on which they most disagreed.

Babie was a welcome messenger to Jock at least, when she brought word that mother hoped Armine would attend to Percy Stagg, and would take him the book she sent down for him. Her will was law in the present state of things, and Armine set forth in dutiful disgust; but he found the lad so really anxious about the lady, and so much brightened and improved, that he began to take an interest in him and promised a fresh lesson with alacrity.

His next step in obedience was to take out his books; but Bobus had no mind for them, and said it was too late. If Armine had really worked diligently all the autumn, he might have easily entered King's
College, London; but now he had thrown away his chance.

Mr. Ogilvie found him with his books on the table, plunged in utter despondency. "Your mother is not worse?" he asked in alarm.

"Oh no; she is very comfortable, and the doctor says she may get up to-morrow."

"Then is it the Greek?" said Mr. Ogilvie, much relieved.

"Yes. Bobus says my rendering is perfectly ridiculous."

"Are you preparing for him?"

"No. He is sick of me, and has no time to attend to me now."

"Let me see ——"

"Oh! Mr. Ogilvie," said Armine, looking up with his ingenuous eyes. "I don't deserve it. Besides, Bobus says it is of no use now. I've wasted too much time ever to get into King's."

"I should like to judge of that. Suppose I examined you—not now, but to-morrow morning. Meantime, how do you construe this chorus? It is a tough one."

Armine winked out of his eyes the tears that had risen at the belief that he had really in his wilfulness lost the hope of fulfilling the higher aims of his life, and with a trembling voice translated the passage he had been hammering over. A word from Mr. Ogilvie gave him the clue, and when that stumbling-block was
past, he acquitted himself well enough to warrant a little encouragement.

"Well done, Armine. We shall make a fair scholar of you, after all."

"I don't deserve you should be so kind. I see now what a fool I have been," said Armine, his eyes filling again with tears.

"I have no time to talk of that now," said Mr. Ogilvie. "I only looked in to hear how your mother was. Bring down whatever books you have been getting up at twelve to-morrow; or if it is a wet day, I will come to you."

Armine worked for this examination as eagerly as he had decorated for Miss Parsons, and in the face of the like sneers; for Bobus really believed it was all waste of time, and did not scruple to tell him so, and to laugh when he consulted Jock, whose acquirements lay more in the way of military mathematics and modern languages than of university requirements.

Perhaps the report that Armine was reading Livy with all his might was one of his mother's best restoratives,—and still more that when he came to wish her good-night, he said, "Mother, I've been a wretched, self-sufficient brute all this time; I'm very sorry, and I'll try to go on better."

And when she came downstairs to be petted and made much of by all the four, she found that the true and original Armine had come back, instead of Petronella's changeling. Indeed, the danger now was
that he would overwork himself in his fervour, for Bobus's continued ill-auguries only acted as a stimulus; nor were they silenced till she begged as a personal favour that he would not torment the boy.

Indeed her presence made life smooth and cheerful again to the young people; there were no more rubs of temper, and Bobus, whose departure was very near, showed himself softened. He was very fond of his mother, and greatly felt the leaving her. He assured her that it was all for her sake, and that he trusted to be able to lighten some of her burdens when his first expenses were over.

"And mother," he said, on his last evening, "you will let me sometimes hear of my Esther?"

"Oh, Bobus, if you could only forget her!"

"Would you rob me of my great incentive—my sweet image of purity, who rouses and guards all that is best in me? My 'loyalty to my future wife' is your best hope for me, mother."

"Oh, if she were but any one else! How can I encourage you in disobedience to your father and to hers?"

"You know what I think about that. When my Esther ventures to judge for herself, these prejudices will give way. She shall not be disobedient, but you will all perceive the uselessness of withholding my darling. Meanwhile, I only ask you to let me see her name from time to time. You won't deny me that?"
"No, my dear, I cannot refuse you that, but you must not assume more than that I am sorry for you that your heart is set so hopelessly. Indeed, I see no sign of her caring for you. Do you?"

"Her heart is not opened yet, but it will."

"Suppose it should do so to any one else?"

"She is a mere child; she has few opportunities; and if she had—well, I think it would recall to her what she only half understood. I am content to be patient—and, mother, you little know the good it does me to think of her and think of you. It is well for us men that all women are not like Janet."

"Yet if you took away our faith, what would there be to hinder us from being like my poor Janet?"

"Heaven forbid that I should take away any one's honest faith; above all, yours or Essie's."

"Except by showing that you think it just good enough for us."

"How can I help it, any more than I can help that Belforest was left to Elvira? Wishes and belief are two different things."

"Would you help it if you could?" she earnestly asked.

He hesitated. "I might wish to satisfy you, mother, and other good folks, but not to put myself in bondage to what has led blindfold to half the dastardly and cruel acts on this earth, beautiful dream though it be."
"Ah, my boy, it is my shame and grief that it is not a beautiful reality to you."

"You were too wise to bore us. You have only fancied that since you fell in with the Evelyms."

"Ah, if I had only bred you up in the same spirit as the Evelyms!"

"It would not have answered. We are of different stuff. And after all, Janet and I are your only black sheep. Jock has his convictions in a strong, practical working order, as real to him as ever his drill and order-book were. Good old fellow, he strikes me a good deal more than all Ogilvie's discussions."

"Mr. Ogilvie has talked to you?"

"He has done his part both as cleric and your devoted servant, mother, and, I confess, made the best of his case, as an able man heartily convinced can do. Good night, mother."

"One moment, Bobus, my dear; I want one promise from you, to your old Mother Carey. Call it a superstition and a charm if you will, but promise. Take this Greek Testament, keep it with you, and read a few verses every night. Promise me."

"Dear mother, I am ready to promise. I have read those poems and letters several times in the original."

"But you will do this for me, beginning again when you have finished? Promise."

"I will, mother, since it comforts you," said Bobus, in a tone that she knew might be trusted.
The other little book, with the like request, in urgent and tender entreaty, was made up into a parcel to be forwarded as soon as Mr. Wakefield should learn Janet Hermann's address. It was all that the mother could do, except to pray that this living Sword of the Spirit might yet pierce its way to those closed hearts.

Nor was she quite happy about Barbara. Hitherto the girl had seemed, as it were, one with Armine, and had been led by his precocious piety into similar habits and aspirations, which had been fostered by her intercourse with Sydney and the sharing with her of many a blissful and romantic dream.

All this, however, was altered. Petronella had drawn Armine aside one way, and now that he was come back again, he did not find the same perfectly sympathetic sister as before. Bobus had not been without effect upon her, as the impersonation of common sense and antagonism to Miss Parsons. It had not shown at the time, for his domineering tone and his sneers always impelled her to stand up for her darling; but when he was "poor Bobus" gone into exile and bereft of his love, certain poisonous germs attached to his words began to grow. There was no absolute doubt—far from it—but there was an impatience of the weariness and solemnity of religion.

To enjoy Church privileges to the full, and do good works under Church direction, had in their
wandering life been a dream of modern chivalry which she had shared with Sydney, much as they had talked of going on a crusade. And now she found these privileges very tedious, the good works onerous, and she viewed them somewhat as she might have regarded Cœur de Lion's camp had she been set down in it. Armine would have gone on hearing nothing but "Remember the Holy Sepulchre," but Barbara would soon have seen every folly and failure that spoiled the glory of the army—even though she might not question its destination—and would have been unfeignedly weary of its discipline.

So she hung back from the frequent Church ordinances of S. Cradocke's, being allowed to do as she pleased about everything extra; she made fun of the peculiarities of the varieties of the genus Petronella who naturally hung about it, and adopted the popular tone about the curates, till Jock told her "not to be so commonplace." Indeed both he and Armine had made friends with them, as he did with every one; and Armine's enjoyment of the society of a new, young, bright deacon, who came at Christmas, perhaps accounted for a little of her soreness, and made Armine himself less observant that the two were growing apart.

Her mother saw it though, and being seconded by Jock, found it easier than of old to keep the tables free from sceptical and semi-sceptical literature; but this involved the loss of much that was clever, and
there was no avoiding those envenomed shafts that people love to strew about, and which, for their seeming wit and sense, Babie always relished. She did not think—that was the chief charge; and she was still a joyous creature, even though chafing at the dulness of S. Cradocke's.

"Gould and another versus Brownlow and another, to be heard on the 18th," Mr. Wakefield writes. "So we must leave our peaceful harbour to face the world again!"

"Oh, I'm so glad!" cried Barbara. "I am fairly tingling to be in the thick of it again!"

"You ungrateful infant," said Armine, "when this place has done every one so much good!"

"So does bed; but I feel as if it were six in the morning and I couldn't get the shutters open!"

"I wonder if Mr. Ogilvie will think me fit to go in for matriculation for the next term?" said Armine.

"And I ought to go up for lectures," said Jock, who had been reading hard all this time under directions from Dr. Medlicott. "I might go on before, and see that the house is put in order before you come home, mother."

"Home! It sounds more like going home than ever going back to Belforest did!"

"And we'll make it the very moral of the old times. We've got all the old things!"

"What do you know about the old times—baby that you are and were?" said Jock.
"The Drakes move to-morrow," said his mother. "I must write to your aunt and Richards about sending the things from Belforest. We must have it at its best before Ali comes home."

"All right!" said Babie. "You know our own things have only to go back into their places, and the Drake carpets go on. It will be such fun; as nice as the getting into the Folly!"

"Nice you call that?" said her mother. "All I remember is the disgrace we got into and the fright I was in! I wonder what the old home will bring us?"

"Life and spirit and action," cried Babie. "Oh, I'm wearying for the sound of the wheels and the flow of people!"

"Oh, you little Cockney!"

"Of course. I was born one, and I am thankful for it! There's nothing to do here."

"Babie!" cried Armine, indignantly.

"Well, you and Jock have read a great deal, and he has plunged into night-schools."

"And become a popular lecturer," added Armine.

"And you and mother have cultivated Percy Stagg, and gone to Church a great deal—pour passer le temps."

"Ah, you discontented mortal!" said her mother, rising to write her letters. "You have yet to learn that what is stagnation to some is rest to others."

"Oh yes, mother, I know it was very good for you, but I'm heartily glad it is over. Sea and Ogre are all
very well for once in a way, but they pall, especially in an east wind English fog!"

"My Babie, I hope you are not spoilt by all the excitements of our last few years," said the mother. "You won't find life in Collingwood Street much like life in Hyde Corner."

"No, but it will be life, and that's what I care for!"

No, Barbara, used to constant change, and eager for her schemes of helpfulness, could not be expected to enjoy the peacefulness of S. Cradocke's as the others had done. To Armine, indeed, it had been the beginning of a new life of hope and vigour, and a casting off of the slough of morbid self-contemplation, induced by his invalid life, and fostered at Woodside. He had left off the romance of being early doomed, since his health had stood the trial of the English winter, and under Mr. Ogilvie's bracing management, seconded by Jock's energetic companionship, he had learnt to look to active service, and be ready to strive for it.

To Jock, the time had been a rest from the victory which had cost him so dear, and though the wounds still smarted, there had been nothing to call them into action; and he had fortified himself against the inevitable reminders he should meet with in London. He had been studying with all his might for the preliminary examination, and eagerness in so congenial a pursuit was rapidly growing on him, while conversations with Mr. Ogilvie had been equally pleasant to
both, for the ex-schoolmaster thoroughly enjoyed hearing of the scientific world, and the young man was heartily glad of the higher light he was able to shed on his studies, and for being shown how to prevent the spiritual world from being obscured by the physical, and to deal with the difficulties that his brother's materialism had raised for him. He had never lost, and trusted never to lose, hold of his anchor in the Rock; but he had not always known how to answer when called on to prove its existence and trace the cable. Thus the winter at S. Cradocke's had been very valuable to him personally, and he had been willing to make return for the kindness for which he felt so grateful, by letting the Vicar employ him in the night-schools, lectures, and parish diversions—all in short for which a genial and sensible young layman is invaluable, when he can be caught.

And for their mother herself, she had been sheltered from agitation, and had gathered strength and calmness, though with her habitual want of self-consciousness she hardly knew it, and what she thanked her old friend for was what he had done for her sons, especially Armine. "He and I shall be grateful to you all the rest of our lives," she said, with her bright eyes glistening.

David Ogilvie, in his deep, silent, life-long romance, felt that precious guerdons sometimes are won at an age which the young suppose to be past all feeling—guerdons the more precious and pure because un-
connected with personal hopes or schemes. He still knew Caroline to be as entirely Joseph Brownlow's own as when he had first perceived it, ten years ago, but all that was regretful jealousy was gone. His idealisation of her had raised and moulded his life, and now that she had grown into the reality of that ideal, he was content with the sunshine she had brought, and the joy of having done her a real service, little as she guessed at the devoted homage that prompted it.
CHAPTER XXXIV.

BLIGHTED BEINGS.

Allen-a-Dale has no faggot for burning,
Allen-a-Dale has no furrow for turning,
Allen-a-Dale has no fleece for the spinning,
Yet Allen-a-Dale has red gold for the winning.

Scott.

The little family raft put forth from the haven of shelter into the stormy waves. The first experience was, as Jock said, that large rooms and country clearness had been demoralising, or, as Babie averred, the bad taste and griminess of the Drake remains were invincible, for when the old furniture and pictures were all restored to the old places, the tout ensemble was so terribly dingy and confined that the mother could hardly believe that it was the same place that had risen in her schoolgirl eyes as a vision of home brightness. Armine was magnanimously silent, but what would be the effect on Allen, who had been heard of at Gibraltar, and was sure to return before the case was heard in court?

"We must give up old associations, and try what a revolution will do," Mother Carey said.

"Hurrah!" cried Babie; "I was feeling totally
overpowered by that awful round table, but I thought it was the very core of mother's heart."

"So did I," said the mother herself, "when I remember how we used to sit round with the lamp in the middle, and spin the whole table when we wanted a drawer on the further side. But it won't bring back those who sat there! and now the light falls anywhere but where it is wanted, and our goods get into each other's way! Yes, Babie, you may dispose of it in the back drawing-room and bring in your whole generation of little tables."

There was opportunity for choice, for the house was somewhat over-full of furniture, since besides the original plenishing of the Pagoda, all that was individual property had been sent from Belforest, and this included a great many choice and curious articles, small and great, all indeed that any one cared much about, except the more intrinsically valuable gems of art. It had been all done between Messrs. Wakefield, Gould, and Richards, who had sent up far more than Mrs. Brownlow had marked, assuring her that she need not scruple to keep it.

So by the time twilight came on the second evening, when the whole family were feeling exceedingly bruised, weary, and dusty, such a transformation had been effected that each of the four, on returning from the much needed toilet, stood at the door exclaiming—"This is something like;" and when John arrived, a little later, he looked round with—
"This is almost as nice as the Folly. How does Mother Carey manage to make things like herself and nobody else?"

Allen's comment a few days later was—

"What's the use of taking so much trouble about a dingy hole which you can't make tolerable even if you were to stay here."

"I mean it to be my home till my M.D. son takes a wife and turns me out."

"Why, mother, you don't suppose that ridiculous will can hold water?"

"You know I don't contest it."

"I know, but they will not look at it for a moment in the Probate Court."

Some chance friend whom he had met abroad had suggested this to Allen, and he had gradually let his wish become hope, and his hope expectation, till he had come home almost secure of a triumph, which would reinstate his mother, and bring Elvira back to him, having learnt the difference between true friends and false.

It was a proportionate blow when no difficulty was made about proving the will. As the trustees acted, Mrs. Brownlow had not to appear, but Allen haunted the Law Courts with his uncle and saw the will accepted as legal. Nothing remained but another amicable action to put Elvira de Menella in possession.

He was in a state of nervous excitement at every
postman's knock, making sure, poor fellow, that Elvira's first use of her victory would be to return to him. But all that was heard of was a grand reception at Belforest, bands, banners, horsemen, triumphal arches, banquet, speeches, toasts, and ball, all, no doubt, in "Gould taste." The penny-a-liner of the Kenminster paper outdid himself in the polysyllables of his description, while Colonel Brownlow briefly wrote that "all was as insolent as might be expected, and he was happy to say that most of the county people and some of the tenants showed their good feeling by their absence."

Over this Mrs. Brownlow would not rejoice. She did not like the poor girl to be left to such society as her aunt would pick up, and she wrote on her behalf to various county neighbours; but the heiress had already come to the house in Hyde Corner, chaperoned by her aunt, who, fortified by the trust that she was "as good as Mrs. Joseph Brownlow," had come to fight the battle of fashion, with Lady Flora Folliott for an ally.

The name of George Gould, Esquire, was used on occasion, but he was usually left in peace at his farm with his daughter Mary, with whom her step-mother had decided that nothing could be done. Kate was made presentable by dress and lessons in deportment, and promoted to be white slave, at least so Armine and Barbara inferred, from her constrained and frightened manner when they met her in a shop,
though she was evidently trying to believe herself very happy.

Allen was convinced at last that he was designedly given up, and so far from trying to meet his faithless lady, dejectedly refused all society where he could fall in with her, and only wandered about the parks to feed his melancholy with distant glimpses of her on horseback, while Armine and Barbara, who held Elvira very cheap, were wicked enough to laugh at him between themselves and term him the forsaken merman.

Jock had likewise given up his old connections with fashionable life. Several times, if anything were going on, or if he met a former brother officer in the street, he would be warmly invited to come and take his share, or to dine with the mess; he might have played in cricket matches and would have been welcome as a frequent guest; but he had made up his mind that this would only lead to waste of time and money, and steadily declined, till the invitations ceased. It would have cost him more had any come from Cecil Evelyn, but all that had been seen of him was a couple of visiting-cards. The rest of the family had not come to town for the season, and though the two mothers corresponded as warmly as ever, and Fordham and Armine exchanged letters, there was a sort of check and chill upon the friendship between the two young girls, of which each understood only her own half.
Jock said nothing, but he seemed to have grown mother-sick, spent all his leisure moments in haunting his mother's steps, helping her in whatever she was about, and telling her everything about his studies and companions, as if she were the great solace of the life that had become so much less bright to him.

In general he showed himself as droll as ever, but there were days when, as John said, "all the skip was gone out of the Jack." The good Monk was puzzled by the change, which he did not think quite worthy of his cousin, having—though the son of a military man—a contempt for the pomp and circumstance of war. He marvelled to see Jock affectionately hook up his sword over the photograph of Engelberg above his mantelshelf; and he hesitated to join the volunteers, as his aunt wished, by way of compelling variety and exercise. Jock, however, decided on so doing, that Sydney might own at least that he was ready for a call to arms for his country. He did not like to think that she was reading a report of Sir Philip Cameron's campaign, in which the aide-de-camp happened to receive honourable mention for a dashing and hazardous ride.

"Why, old fellow, what makes you so down in the mouth?" said John, on that very day as the two cousins were walking home from a lecture. They had had to get into a door-way to avoid the rush of rabble escorting a regiment of household troops on their way to the station, and Lucas had afterwards
walked the length of two streets without a word. "You don't mean that you are hankering after all this style of thing—row and all the rest of it."

"There's a good deal more going to it than row," said Jock, rather heavily.

"What, that donkey, Evelyn, having cut you? I should not trouble myself much on that score, though I did think better of him at Eton."

"He hasn't cut me," Jock made sharp return.

"One pasteboard among all the family," grunted the Friar. "I reserve to myself the satisfaction of cutting him dead the next opportunity," he added magniloquently.

Jock laughed, as he was of course intended to do, but there was such a painful ring in the laugh that John paused and said—

"That's not all, old fellow! Come, make a clean breast of it, my fair son. Thou dost weary of thy vocation."

"No such thing," exclaimed Jock, with an inaudible growl between his teeth. "Trust Kencroft for boring on!" and aloud, with some impatience, "It is just what I would have chosen for its own sake."

"Then," said John, still keeping up the grand philosophical air and demeanour, though with real kindness and desire to show sympathy, "thou art either entangled by worldly scruples, leading thee to disdain the wholesome art of healing, or thou art, like thy brother, the victim of the fickle sex."
"Shut up!" said Jock, pushed beyond endurance; "can't you understand that some things can't be talked of?"

"Whew!" John whistled, and surveyed him rather curiously from head to foot. "It is another case of deluded souls not knowing what an escape they've had. What! she thought you a catch in the old days."

"That's all you know about it!" said Jock. "She is not that sort. The poverty is nothing, but there's a fitness in things. Women, the best of them, think much of what I suppose you call the row. It fits in with all their chivalry and romance."

"Then she's a fool," said John, shortly.

"I can't stand any more of this, Monk, I tell you. You know just nothing at all about it, and I've no right to complain, nor any one to bait me with questions."

The Monk took the hint, and when they reached their own street Jock said—

"You meant it all kindly, Reverend Friar, but there are things that won't stand probing, as you'll know some day."

"Poor old chap," said John, with his hand on his shoulder, "I'll not bother you any more. The veil shall be sacred. If this has been going on all the time, I wonder you have carried it off so well!"

"Ali is a caution," said Jock, who had shaken himself into his ordinary manner. "What would VOL. III. I
become of Babie with two blighted beings on her hands? Besides, he has some excuse, and I have not."

After this, at every carriage to which Lucas bowed, John frowned, and scanned the inmates in search of the fair deceiver, never making a guess in the right direction.

John had enough of the Kencroft character not to be original. Set him to work, and he had plenty of intelligence and energy, perhaps more absolute force and power than his cousin Lucas; but he would never devise things for himself, and was not discursive, pausing at novelties, because his nature was so thorough that he could not take up anything without spending his very utmost force upon it.

His University training made him an excellent aid to Armine, who went up for his examination at King's College and acquitted himself so well as to be admitted to begin his terms after the long vacation.

Indeed he and Barbara had drawn together again more. She had her home tasks and her classes at King's College, and did not fret as at S. Cradocke's for want of work; she enjoyed the full tide of life, and had plenty of sympathy for whatever did not come before her in a "goody" aspect, and, though there might be little depth of serious reflection in her, she was a very charming member of the household. Then her enjoyment of society was gratified, for society of
her own kind had by no means forgotten one so agreeable as Mrs. Brownlow, and whereas, in her prosperity, she had never dropped old friends, they welcomed her back as one of themselves, resuming the homely inexpensive gatherings where the brains were more consulted than the palate, æsthetics more than fashion. She was glad of it for the young people's sake as well as her own, and returned to her old habit of keeping open house one evening in the week between eight and ten, with cups of coffee and varieties of cheap foreign drinks, and slight but dainty cates made by herself and Babie according to lessons taken together at the school of cookery.

As Allen declared these evenings a grievance, and often thought himself unable to bear family chatter, she had made the old consulting room as like his luxurious apartment at home as furniture and fittings could do, and he was always free to retire thither. Indeed the toleration and tenderness with which his mother treated him were a continual wonder and annoyance to Barbara, the active little busy bee, who not unjustly considered him the drone of the family, and longed to sting him, not to death but to exertion.

It was provoking that when all the other youths had long finished breakfast and gone forth, Mother Carey should wait lingering in the dining-room to cherish some delicate hot morceau and cup of coffee, till the tardy, soft-falling feet came down the stairs, and then sit patiently as long as he chose to daily
with his meal, telling how little he had slept. Babie had tried her tongue on both, but Allen, when she shouted at his door that breakfast was ready, came forth no sooner, and when he did so, told his mother that he could not have children screaming at his door at all hours of the morning. Mother Carey replied to her impatient champion that while waiting for Allen was her time for writing letters and reading amusing books, and that the day was only too long for him already, poor fellow, without urging him to make it longer.

"More shame for him," muttered pitiless sixteen.

After breakfast Allen generally strolled out to see the papers or to bestow his time somewhere—in the picture galleries or in the British Museum, where he had a reading order; but it was always uncertain whether he would disappear for the whole day, shut himself up in his own room, or hang about the drawing-room, very much injured if his mother could not devote herself to him. Indeed she always did so, except when she was bound to take Barbara to some of her classes (including cookery), or when she had promised herself to Dr. and Mrs. Lucas, who were now both very infirm, and knew not how to be thankful enough for the return of one who became like a daughter to them; while Jock, their godson, at once made himself like the best of grandsons, and never failed to give them a brightening, cheering hour every Sunday.
The science of cookery was by no means a needless task, for the cook was very plain, and Allen’s appetite was dainty, and comfort at dinner could only be hoped for by much thought and contrivance. Allen was never discourteous to his mother herself, but he would look at her in piteous reproach, and affect to charge all failures on the cook, or on “children being allowed to meddle,” the most cutting thing to Babie he could say. Then the two Johns always took up the cudgels, and praised the food with all their might. Indeed the Friar was often sensible of a strong desire to flog the dawdling melancholy out of his cousin, and force him no longer to hang a dead weight on his mother; and even Jock began to be annoyed at her unfailing patience and pity, though he understood her compassion better than did those who had never felt a wound.

She did in truth blame herself for having given him no profession, and having acquiesced in the indolent dilettante habits which made all harder to him now; and she was not certain how far it was only his fancy that his health and nerves were perilously affected, though Dr. Medlicott, whom she secretly consulted, assured her that the only remedies needed were good sense and something to do.

At last, at Midsummer, the crisis came in a heavy discharge of bills, the consequence of Allen’s incredulity as to their poverty and incapability of economising. He said “the rascals could wait,” and
“his mother need not trouble herself.” She said they must be paid, and she found it could be done at the cost of giving up spending August at S. Cradocke’s, as well as of breaking into her small reserve for emergencies.

But she told Allen that she insisted on his making some exertion for his own maintenance.

“Yes,” said Allen in languid assent.

“I know it is harder at your age to find occupation.”

“That is not the point. I can easily find something to do. There’s literature. Or I could take up art. And last year there was a Hungarian Count who would have given anything to get me for a tutor.”

“Then why didn’t you go?”

“Mother, you ask me why!”

“I know you had not made up your mind to the worst, but it is a pity you missed the opportunity.”

“There will be more,” said Allen loftily. “I never meant to be a burden, but ladies are so impatient. I suppose you do not wish to turn me out instantly to seek my fortune. No, mother, I do not mean to blame you. You have been sadly harassed, and no woman can ever enter into what I have suffered. Put aside those bills. Long before Christmas, I shall be able to discharge them myself.”

So Allen wrote to Bobus’s friend at Oxford, but he of course did not keep a pocketful of Hungarian Counts. He answered one or two advertisements
for a travelling tutor, and had one personal interview, the result of which was that he could have nothing to do with such insufferable snobs. He also concocted an advertisement beginning with "M.A., Oxford, accustomed to the best society and familiar with European languages," but though the newspapers charged highly for it, he only received one answer, except those from agents, and that, he said with illimitable disgust, was from a Yankee.

Meantime he turned over his poems, and made Barbara copy out a ballad he had written for the "Traveller's Joy" on some local tradition in the Tyrol. He offered this to a magazine, whose editor, a lady, was an occasional frequenter of Mrs. Brownlow's evenings. The next time she came, she showed herself so much interested in the legend that Allen said he should like to show her another story, which he had written for the same domestic periodical.

"Would it serve for our Christmas number?"

"I will have it copied out and send it for you to look at," said Allen.

"If it is at hand, I had better cast my eye over it, to judge whether it be worth while to copy it. I shall set forth on my holiday journey the day after to-morrow, and I should like to have my mind at rest about my Christmas number."

So she carried off with her the Algerine number of the "Joy," and in a couple of days returned it with a hasty note—
"A capital little story, just young and sentimental enough to make it taking, and not overdone. Please let me have it, with a few verbal corrections, ready for the press when I come home at the end of September. It will bring you in about 15/.

Allen was modestly elated, and only wished he had gone to one of the periodicals more widely circulated. It was plain that literature was his vocation, and he was going to write a novel to be published in a serial, the instalments paying his expenses for the trial. The only doubt was what it should be about, whether a sporting tale of modern life, or a historical story in which his familiarity with Italian art and scenery would be available. Jock advised the former, Armine inclined to the latter, for each had tried his hand in his own particular line in the "Traveller's Joy," and wanted to see his germ developed.

To write in the heat and glare of London was, however, manifestly impossible in Allen's eyes, and he must recruit himself by a yachting expedition to which an old acquaintance had invited him half compassionately. Jock shrugged his shoulders on hearing of it, and observed that a tuft always expected to be paid in service, if in no other way, and he doubted Allen's liking it, but that was his affair. Jock himself with his usual facility of making friends, had picked up a big north-country student, twice as large as himself, with whom he meant to
walk through the scenery of Derbyshire and York-
shire, as far as the modest sum they allowed them-
selves would permit, after which he was to make a
brief stay in his friend's paternal Cumberland farm.
He had succeeded in gaining a scholarship at the
Medical School of his father's former hospital,
and this, with the remains of the price of his
commission, still made him the rich man of the
family. John was of course going home, and Mrs.
Brownlow and the two younger ones had a warm
invitation from their friends at Fordham.

"I should like Armie to go," said the mother in
conference with Babie, her cabinet councillor.

"O yes, Armie must go," said Babie, "but——"

"Then it will not disappoint you to stay at home,
my dear?"

"I had much rather not go, if Sydney will not
mind very much."

"Well, Babie, I had resolved to stay here this
summer, and I thought you would not wish to go
without me."

"O no, no, NO, NO, mother," and her face and
neck burnt with blushes.

"Then my Infant and I will be thoroughly cosy
together, and get some surprises ready for the others."

"Hurrah! We'll do the painting of the doors.
What fun it will be to see London empty."

The male population were horribly scandalised at
the decision. Jock and Armine wanted to give up
their journey, and John implored his aunt to come to Kencroft; but she only promised to send Babie there if she saw signs of flagging, and the Infanta laughed at the notion, and said she had had an overdose of country enough to last her for years. Allen said ladies overdid everything, and that Mother Carey could not help being one of the sex, and then he asked her for 10%, and said Babie would have plenty of time to copy out "The Single Eye." She pouted "I thought you were going to put the finishing touches."

"I've marked them for you. Why, Barbara, I am surprised," he added in an elder brotherly tone; "you ought to be thankful to be able to be useful."

"Useful! I've lots of things to do! And you?"

"As if I could lug that great MS. of yours about with me on board Apthorpe's yacht."

"Never mind, Allen," said his mother, who had not been intended to hear all this. "I will do it for you; but Miss Editor must not laugh at my peaked governessy hand."

"I did not mean that, mother, only Babie ought not to be disobliging."

"Babie has a good deal to do. She has an essay to write for her professor, you know, and her hands are pretty full."

Babie too said, "Mother, I never meant you to undertake it. Please let me have it now. Only
Allen will never do anything for himself that he can get any one else to do."

"He could not well do it on board the yacht, my dear. And I don't want you to have so much writing on your hands."

"And so you punish me," sighed Barbara, more annoyed than penitent.

However, nothing could be more snug and merry than the mother and daughter when left together, for they were like two sisters and suited one another perfectly. Babie was disappointed that London would not look emptier even in the fashionable squares, which she insisted on exploring in search of solitude. They made little gay outings in a joyous spirit of adventure, getting up early and going by train to some little station, with an adjacent expanse of wood or heather, whence they came home with their luncheon basket full of flowers, wherewith to gladden Mrs. Lucas's eyes, and those of Mother Carey's district. They prepared their surprises too. Several hopelessly dingy panels were painted black and adorned with stately lilies and irises, with proud reed-maces, and twining honeysuckle, and bryony, fluttered over by dragon-flies and butterflies, from the brush of mother and daughter. The stores from Belforest further supplied hangings for brackets, and coverings for cushions, under the dainty fingers of the Infanta, who had far more of the household fairy about her than had her mother, perhaps from having
grown up in a home instead of a school, and besides, from being bent on having the old house a delightful place.

Indeed her mother was really happier than for many years, for the sense of failing in her husband's charge had left her since she had seen Jock by his own free will on the road to the quest, and likely also to fulfil the moral, as well as the scientific, conditions attached to it. She did feel as if her dream was being realised and the golden statues becoming warmed into life, and though her heart ached for Janet, she still hoped for her. So, with a mother's unfailing faith, she believed in Allen's dawning future even while another sense within her marvelled, as she copied, at the acceptance of "The Single Eye." But then, was it not well-known that loving eyes see the most faults, and was not an editor the best judge of popularity?

She had her scheme too. She had taken lessons some years ago at Rome in her old art of modelling, and knew her eye and taste had improved in the galleries. She had once or twice amused the household by figures executed by her dexterous fingers in pastry or in butter; and in the empty house, in her old studio, amid remnants of Bobus's museum, she set to work on a design that had long been in her mind asking her to bring it into being.

Thus the tête-à-tête was so successful that people's pity was highly diverting, and the vacation was
almost too brief, though when the young men began to return, it was a wonder how existence could have been so agreeable without them.

Jock was first, having come home ten days sooner than his friends were willing to part with him, determined if he found his ladies looking pale to drag them out of town, if only to Ramsgate.

They met him in a glow of animation, and Babie hardly gave him time to lay down his basket of ferns from the dale, and flowers from the garden, before she threw open the folding doors to the back drawing-room.

"Why, mother, who sent you that group? Why do you laugh? Did Grinstead lend it to Babie to copy? Young Astyanax, isn't it? And, I say! Andromache is just like Jessie. I say! Mother Carey didn't do it. Well! She is an astonishing little mother and no mistake. The moulding of it! Our anatomical professor might lecture on Hector's arm."

"Ah! I haven't been a surgeon's wife for nothing. Your father put me through a course of arms and legs."

"And we borrowed a baby," said Babie. "Mrs. Jones, our old groom's wife, who lives in the Mews, was only too happy to bring it, and when it was shy, it clung beautifully."

"Then the helmet."

"That was out of the British Museum."
"Has Grinstead seen it?"
"No, I kept it for my own public first."
"What will you do with it? Put it into the Royal Academy?"
"No, it is not big enough. I thought of offering it to the Works that used to take my things in the old Folly days. They might do it in terra cotta, or Parian."

"Too good for a toy material like that," said Jock.
"Get some good opinion before you part with it, mother. I wish we could keep it. I'm proud of my Mother Carey."

Allen, who came home next, only sighed at the cruel necessity of selling such a work. He was in deplorable spirits, for Gilbert Gould was superintending the refitting of a beautiful steam yacht, in which Miss Menella meant to sail to the West Indies, with her uncle and aunt.

"I knew she would! I knew she would," softly said Babie.

That did not console Allen, and his silence and cynicism about his hosts gave the impression that he had outstayed his welcome, since he had neither wealth, nor the social brilliance or subservience that might have supplied its place. He had scarcely energy to thank his mother for her faultless transcription of "The Single Eye," and only just exerted himself to direct the neat roll of MS. to the Editor.
The next day a note came for him.
"Mother what have you done?" he exclaimed.
"What did you send to the 'Weathercock'?"
"'The Single Eye.' What? Not rejected?"
"See there!"

"DEAR MR. BROWNLOW,—I am afraid there has been some mistake. The story I wished for is not this one, but another in the same MS. Magazine; a charming little history of a boy's capture by, and escape from, the Moorish corsairs. Can you let me have it by Tuesday? I am very sorry to have given so much trouble, but 'The Single Eye' will not suit my purpose at all."

"What does she mean?" demanded Allen.
"I see! It is a story of the children's! 'Marco's Felucca.' I looked at it while I was copying, and thought how pretty it was. And now I remember there were some pencil-marks!"

"Well, it will please the children," graciously said Allen. "I am not sorry; I did not wish to make my début in a second-rate serial like that, and now I am quit of it. She is quite right. It is not her style of thing."

But Allen did not remember that he had spent the 15/. beforehand, so as to make it 25/, and this made it fortunate that his mother's group had been purchased by the porcelain works, and another pair ordered.
Thus she could freely leave their gains to Armine and Babie, for the latter declared the sum was alike due to both, since if she had the readiest wit, her brother had the most discrimination, and the best choice of language. The story was only signed A. B., and their mother made a point of the authorship being kept a secret; but little notices of the story in the papers highly gratified the young authors.

Armine, who had returned from a round of visits to S. Cradocke's, Fordham, Kenminster, and Woodside, confirmed the report of Elvira's intended voyage; but till the yacht was ready, the party had gone abroad, leaving the management of the farm, and agency of the estate, to a very worthy man named Whiteside, who had long been a suitor to Mary Gould, and whom she was at last allowed to marry. He had at once made the Kencroft party free of the park and gardens, and indeed John and Armine came laden with gifts in poultry, fruit, and flowers from the dependants on the estate to Mrs. Brownlow.

Armine really looked quite healthy, nothing remaining of his former ethereal air, but a certain expansiveness of brow and dreaminess of eye.

He greatly scrupled at halving the 15l. when it was paid, but Barbara insisted that he must take his share, and he then said—

"After all it does not signify, for we can do things together with it, as we have always done."

"What things?"
"Well, I am afraid I do want a few books."
"So do I, terribly."
"And there are some Christmas gifts I want to send to Woodside."
"Woodside! oh!"
"And wouldn't it be pleasant to put the choir at the iron Church into surplices and cassocks for Christmas?"
"Oh, Armie, I do think we might have a little fun out of our own money."
"What fun do you mean?" said Armine.
"I want to subscribe to Rolandi's, and to take in the 'Contemporary,' and to have one real good Christmas party with tableaux vivants, and charades. Mother says we can't make it a mere surprise party, for people must have real food, and I think it would be more pleasure to all of us than presents and knicknacks."

"Of course you can do it," said Armine, rather disappointed. "And if we had in Percy Stagg, and the pupil teachers, and the mission people——"

"It would be awfully edifying and good-booky! Oh yes, to be sure, nearly as good as hiding your little sooty shoe-blacks in surplices! But, my dear Armie, I am so tired of edifying! Why should I never have any fun? Come, don't look so dismal. I'll spare five shillings for a gown for old Betty Grey, and if there's anything left out after the party, you shall have it for the surplices, and you'll be Roland Graeme in my tableau?"
The next day Mother Carey found Armine with an elbow on each side of his book and his hands in his hair, looking so dreamily mournful that she apprehended a fresh attack of Petronella, but made her approaches warily.

“What have you there?” she asked.

“Dean Church’s lectures,” he said.

“Ah! I want to make time to read them! But why have they sent you into doleful dumps?”

“Not they,” said Armine; “but I wanted to read Babie a passage just now, and she said she had no notion of making Sundays of week days, and ran away. It is not only that, mother, but what is the matter with Babie? She is quite different.”

“Have you only just seen it?”

“No, I have felt something indefinable between us, though I never could bear to speak of it, ever since Bobus went. Do you think he did her any harm?”

“A little, but not much. Shall I tell you the truth, Armine; can you bear it?”

“What! did I disgust her when I was so selfish and discontented?”

“Not so much you, my boy, as the overdoing at Woodside! I can venture to speak of it now, for I fancy you have got over the trance.”

“Well, mother,” said Armine, smiling back to her in spite of himself, “I have not liked to say so, it seemed a shame; but staying at the Vicarage made me wonder at my being such an egregious ass last
year! Do you know, I couldn't help it; but that good lady would seem to me quite mawkish in her flattery! And how she does domineer over that poor brother of hers! Then the fuss she makes about details, never seeming to know which are accessories and which are principles. I don't wonder that I was an absurdity in the eyes of all beholders. But it is very sad if it has really alienated my dear Infanta from all deeper and higher things!"

"Not so bad as that, my dear; my Babie is a good little girl."

"Oh yes, mother, I did not mean——"

"But it did break that unity between you, and prevent your leading her insensibly. I fancy your two characters would have grown apart anyhow, but this was the moving cause. Now I fancy, so far as I can see, that she is more afraid of being wearied and restrained than of anything else. It is just what I felt for many years of my life."

"No, mother?"

"Yes, my boy; till the time of your illness, serious thought, religion and all the rest, seemed to me a tedious tax; and though I always, I believe, made it a rule to my conscience in practical matters, it has only very, very lately been anything like the real joy I believe it has always been to you. Believe that, and be patient with your little sister, for indeed she is an unselfish, true, faithful little being, and some day she will go deeper."
Armine looked up to his mother, and his eyes were full of tears, as she kissed him, and said—

"You will do her much more good if you sympathise with her in her innocent pleasures than if you insist on dragging her into what she feels like privations."

"Very well, mother," he said. "It is due to her."

And so, though the choir did have at least half Armine's share of the price of "Marco's Felucca," he threw himself most heartily into the Christmas party, was the poet of the versified charade, acted the strong-minded woman who was the chief character in "Blue Bell;" and he and Jock gained universal applause.

Allen hardly appeared at the party. He had a fresh attack of sleepless headache and palpitation, brought on by the departure of Miss Menella for the Continent, and perhaps by the failure of "A Single Eye" with some of the magazines. He dabbled a little with his mother's clay, and produced a nymph, who, as he persuaded her and himself, was a much nobler performance than Andromache, but unfortunately she did not prove equally marketable. And he said it was quite plain that he could not succeed in anything imaginative till his health and spirits had recovered from the blow; but he was ready to do anything.

So Dr. Medlicott brought in one day a medical lecture that he wanted to have translated from the German, and told Allen that it would be well paid for. He began, but it made his head ache; it was not a
subject that he could well turn over to Babie; and when Jock brought a message to say the translation must be ready the next day, only a quarter had been attempted. Jock sat up till three o'clock in the morning and finished it, but he could not pain his mother by letting her know that her son had again failed, so Allen had the money, and really believed, as he said, that all Jock had done was to put the extreme end to it, and correct the medical lingo of which he could not be expected to know anything. Allen was always so gentle, courteous, and melancholy, that every one was getting out of the habit of expecting him to do anything but bring home news, discover anything worth going to see, sit at the foot of the table, and give his verdict on the cookery. Babie indeed was sometimes provoked into snapping at him, but he bore it with the amiable magnanimity of one who could forgive a petulant child, ignorant of what he suffered.

Jock was borne up by a great pleasure that winter. One day at dinner, his mother watched his eyes dancing, and heard the old boyish ring of mirth in his laugh, and as she went up stairs at night, he came after and said—

"Fancy, I met Evelyn on the ice to-day. He wants to know if he may call."

"What prevents him?"

"Well, I believe the poor old chap is heartily ashamed of his airs. Indeed he as good as said so.
He has been longing to make a fresh start, only he didn’t know how.”

“I think he used you very ill, Jock; but if you wish to be on the old terms, I will do as you like.”

“Well,” said Jock, in an odd apologetic voice, “you see the old beggar had got into a pig-headed sort of pet last year. He said he would cut me if I left the service, and so he felt bound to be as good as his word; but he seems to have felt lost without us, and to have been looking out for a chance of meeting. He was horribly humiliated by the Friar looking over his head last week.”

“Very well. If he chooses to call, here we are.”

“Yes, and don’t put on your cold shell, mother mine. After all, Evelyn is Evelyn. There are wiser fellows, but I shall never warm to any one again like him. Why, he was the first fellow who came into my room at Eton! I am to meet him to-morrow after the lecture. May I bring him home?”

“If he likes. His mother’s son must have a welcome.”

She could not feel cordial, and she so much expected that the young gentleman might be seized with a fresh fit of exclusive disdain, that she would not mention the possibility, and it was an amazement to all save herself when Jock appeared with the familiar figure in his wake. Guardsman as he was, Cecil had the grace to look bashful, not to say shamefaced, and more so at Mrs. Brownlow’s kindly reception,
than at Barbara’s freezing dignity. The young lady was hotly resentful on Jock’s behalf, and showed it by a stiff courtesy, elevated eyebrows, and the merest tips of her fingers.

Allen took it easily. He had been too much occupied with his own troubles to have entered into all the complications with the Evelyn family; and though he had never greatly cared for them, and had viewed Cecil chiefly as an obnoxious boy, he was, in his mournful way, gratified by any reminder of his former surroundings. So without malice prepense he stung poor Cecil by observing that it was long since they had met; but no one could be expected to find the way to the other end of nowhere. Cecil blushed and stammered something about Hounslow, but Allen, who prided himself on being the conversational man of the world, carried off the talk into safe channels.

As Cecil was handing Mrs. Brownlow down to the dining-room, wicked Barbara whispered to her cousin John—

"We’ve such a nice vulgar dinner. It couldn’t have been better if I’d known it!"

John, whose wrath had evaporated in his "cut," shook his head at her, but partook of her diversion at her brother’s resignation at sight of a large dish of boiled beef, with a suet pudding opposite to it. Allen was too well bred to apologise, but he carved in the dainty and delicate style befitting the single slice
of meat interspersed between countless *entremets*. Barbara began to relent as soon as Cecil, after making four mouthfuls of Allen's help, sent his plate with a request for something more substantial. And before the meal was over, his evident sense of *bien-être* and happiness had won back her kindness; she remembered that he was Sydney's brother, and took no more trouble to show her indignation.

Thenceforth, Cecil was as much as ever Jock's friend, and a frequenter of the family, finding that the loss of their wealth and place in the great world made wonderfully little difference to them, and rather enhanced the pleasant freedom and life of their house. The rest of the family were seen once or twice, when passing through London, but only in calls, which, as Babie said, were as good as nothing, except, as she forgot to add, that they broke through the constraint on her correspondence with Sydney.
CHAPTER XXXV.

THE PHANTOM BLACKCOCK OF KILNAUGHT.

And we alike must shun regard
From painter, player, sportsman, bard,
Wasp, blue-bottle, or butterfly,
Insects that swim in fashion's sky.

Scott.

"At home? Then take these. There's a lot more. I'll run up," said Cecil Evelyn one October evening nearly two years later, as he thrust into the arms of the parlour-maid a whole bouquet of game, while his servant extracted a hamper from his cab, and he himself dashed up stairs with a great basket of hot-house flowers.

But in the drawing-room he stood aghast, glancing round in the firelit dusk to ascertain that he had not mistaken the number, for though the maid at the door had a well-known face, and though tables, chairs, and pictures were familiar, the two occupants of the room were utter strangers, and at least as much startled as himself.

A little pale child was hurriedly put down from the lap of a tall maiden who rose from a low chair by the fire, and stood uncertain.
"I beg your pardon," he said; "I came to see Mrs. Brownlow."

"My aunt. She will be here in a moment. Will you run and call her, Lina?"

"You may tell her Cecil Evelyn is here," said he; "but there is no hurry," he added, seeing that the child clung to her protector, too shy even to move. "You are John Brownlow's little sister, eh?" he added, bending towards her; but as she crept round in terror, still clinging, he addressed the elder one: "I am so glad; I thought I had rushed into a strange house, and should have to beat a retreat."

The young lady gave a little shy laugh which made her sweet oval glowing face and soft brown eyes light up charmingly, and there was a fresh graceful roundness of outline about her tall slender figure, as she stood holding the shy child, which made her a wondrously pleasant sight. "Are you staying here?" he asked.

"Yes; we came for advice for my little sister, who is not strong."

"I'm so glad. I mean I hope there is only enough amiss to make you stay a long time. Were you ever in town before?"

"Only for a few hours on our way to school."

Here a voice reached them—

"Fee, fa, fum,
I smell the breath of geranium."

And through the back drawing-room door came Babie, in walking attire, declaiming—
"'Tis Cecil, by the jingling steel,
'Tis Cecil, by the pawing bay,
'Tis Cecil, by the tall two-wheel,
'Tis Cecil, by the fragrant spray."

"O Cecil, how lovely! Oh, the maiden-hair. You've been making acquaintance with Essie and Lina?"

"I did not know you were out, Babie," said Essie. "Was my aunt with you?"

"Yes. We just ran over to see Mrs. Lucas, and as we were coming home, a poor woman besought us to buy two toasting-forks and a mouse-trap, by way of ornament to brandish in the streets. She looked so frightfully wretched, that mother let her follow, and is having it out with her at the door. So you are from Fordham, Cecil; I see and I smell. How are they?"

"Duke is rather brisk. I actually got him out shooting yesterday, but he didn't half like it, and was thankful when I let him go home again. See, Sydney said I was to tell you that passion-flower came from the plant she brought from Algiers."

"The beauty! It must go into Mrs. Evelyn's Venice glass," said Babie, bustling about to collect her vases.

Lina, with a cry of delight, clutched at a spray of butterfly-like mauve and white orchids, in spite of her sister's gentle "No, no, Lina, you must not touch."

Babie offered some China asters in its stead, Cecil muttered "Let her have it;" but Esther was firm in
making her relinquish it, and when she began to cry, led her away with pretty tender gestures of mingled comfort and reproof.

"Poor little thing," said Babie, "she is sadly fretful. Nobody but Essie can manage her."

"I should think not!" said Cecil, looking after the vision, as if he did not know what he was saying. "You never told me you had any one like that in the family?"

"O yes; there are two of them, as much alike as two peas."

"What! the Monk's sisters?"

"To be sure. They are a comely family; all but poor little Lina."

"Will they be long here?"

"That depends. That poor little mite is the youngest but one, and the nurse likes boys best. So she peaked and pined, and was bullied by Edmund above and Harry below, and was always in trouble. Nobody but Johnny and Essie ever had a good word for her. This autumn it came to a crisis. You know we had a great meeting of the two families at Walmer, and there, the shock of bathing nearly took out of her all the little life there was. I believe she would have gone into fits if mother had not heard her screams, and dashed on the nurse like a vindictive mermaid, and then made uncle Robert believe her. My aunt trusts the nurse, you must know, and lets her ride rough-shod over every one in the nursery. The poor
little thing was always whining and fretting whenever she was not in Essie's arms or the Monk's, till the Monk declared she had a spine, and he and mother gave uncle and aunt no peace till they brought her here for advice, and sure enough her poor little spine is all wrong, and will never be good for anything without a regular course of watching and treatment. So we have her here with Essie to look after her for as long as Sir Edward Fane wants to keep her under him, and you can't think what a nice little mortal she turns out to be now she is rescued from nurse and those little ruffians of brothers."


"The eucharis and maiden-hair, is it not? I must keep some sprays for our hairs to-night."

"Is any one coming to-night?"

"The promiscuous herd. Oh, didn't you know? Our Johns told mother it would be no end of kindness to let them bring in a sprinkling of their fellow-students—poor lads that live poked up in lodgings, and never see a lady or any civilisation all through the term. So she took to having them on Thursday once a fortnight, and Dr. Medlicott was perfectly delighted, and said she could not do a better work; and it is such fun! We don't have them unmitigated, we get other people to enliven them. The Actons are coming, and I hope Mr. Esdale is coming to-night to show us his photographs of the lost cities in Central America. You'll stay, wont you?"
“If Mrs. Brownlow will let me. I hope your toasting-fork woman has not spirited her away?”

“Under the eyes of your horse and man.”

“Are you all at home? And has Allen finished his novel?”

Babie laughed, and said—

“Poor Ali! You see there comes a fresh blight whenever it begins to bud.”

“What has that wretched girl been doing now?”

“Oh, don't you know? The yacht had to be overhauled, so they went to Florence instead, and have been wandering about in all the resorts of rather shady people, where Lisette can cut a figure. Mr. Wakefield is terribly afraid that even poor Mr. Gould himself is taking to gambling for want of something to do. There are always reports coming of Elfie taking up with some count or baron. It was a Russian prince last time, and then Ali goes down into the very lowest depths, and can't do anything but smoke. You know that's good for blighted beings. I cure my plants by putting them into his room surreptitiously.”

“You are a hard-hearted little mortal, Babie. Ah, there's the bell!”

Mrs. Brownlow came in with the two Johns, who had joined her just as she had finished talking to the poor woman; Jock carried off his friend to dress, and Babie, after finishing her arrangements and making the most of every fragment of flower or leaf, repaired,
with a selection of delicate sprays, to the room where Esther, having put her little sister to bed, was dressing for dinner. She was eager to tell of her alarm at the invasion, and of Captain Evelyn's good-nature when she had expected him to be proud and disagreeable.

"He wanted to be," said Babie, "but honest nature was too strong for him."

"Johnny was so angry at the way he treated Jock."

"O, we quite forget all that. Poor fellow! it was a mistaken reading of noblesse oblige, and he is very much ashamed of it. There, let me put this fern and fuchsia into your hair. I'll try to do it as well as Ellie would."

She did so, and better, being more dainty-fingered, and having more taste. It really was an artistic pleasure to deal with such beautiful hair, and such a lovely lay figure as Esther's. With all her queenly beauty and grace, the girl had that simplicity and sedateness which often goes with regularity of feature, and was hardly conscious of the admiration she excited. Her good looks were those of the family, and Kenminster was used to them. This was her first evening of company, for on the only previous occasion her little sister had been unwell, sleepless and miserable in the strange house, and she had begged off. She was very shy now, and could not go
down without Barbara's protection, so, at the last moment before dinner, the little brown fairy led in the tall, stately maiden, all in white, with the bright fuchsias and delicate fern in her dark hair, and a creamy rose, set off by a few more in her bosom.

Babie exulted in her work, and as her mother beheld Cecil's raptured glance and the incarnadine glow it called up, she guessed all that would follow in one rapid prevision, accompanied by a sharp pang for her son in Japan. It was not in her maternal heart not to hope almost against her will that some fibre had been touched by Bobus that would be irresponsive to others, but duty and loyalty alike forbade the slightest attempt to revive the thought of the poor absentee, and she must steel herself to see things take their course, and own it for the best.

Esther was a silent damsel. The clash of keen wits and exchange of family repartee were quite beyond her. She had often wondered whether her cousins were quarrelling, and had been only reassured by seeing them so merry and friendly, and her own brother bearing his part as naturally as the rest. She was more scandalised than ever to-day, for it absolutely seemed to her that they were all treating Captain Evelyn, long moustache and all, like a mere family butt, certainly worse than they would have treated one of her own brothers, for Rob would have sulked, and Joe, or any of the younger ones, might
have been dangerous, whereas this distinguished-looking personage bore all as angelically as befitted one called by such a charming appellation as the Honourable Cecil Evelyn.

"How about the shooting, Cecil? Sydney said you had not very good sport."

"Why—no, not till I joined Rainsforth's party."

"Where was your moor?"

"In Lanarkshire," rather unwillingly.

"Eh," said Allen, in a peculiar soft languid tone, that meant diversion. "Near L——?"

"Yes."

Then Jock burst out into laughter inexplicable at first, but Allen made his voice gentler and graver, as he said, "You don't mean Kilnaught?" and then he too joined Jock in laughter, as the latter cried—

"Another victim to M'Nab of Kilnaught! He certainly is the canniest of Scots."

"He revenges the wrongs of Scotland on innocent young Guardsmen."

"Well, I'm sure there could not be a more promising advertisement."

"That's just it!" said Jock. "Moor, and moss. How many acres of heather?"

"How was I to expect a man of family to be a regular swindler?"

"Hush! hush, my dear fellow! Roderick Dhu was a man of family. It is the modern form."

"But I saw his keeper."
"Oh!" cried Allen. "I know! Old Rory! Tells you a long story in broad Scotch, of which you understand one word here and there about his Grace the Deuke, and how many miles—miles Scots—he walked."

"I can see Evelyn listening, and saying 'yes,' at polite intervals!"

"How many birds did you actually see?"

"Well, I killed two brace and a half the first day."

"Hatched under a hen, and let out for a foretaste."

"And there was one old blackcock."

"That blackcock! There are serious doubts whether it is a phantom bird, or whether Rory keeps it tame as a decoy. You didn't kill it?"

"No."

"If you had, you might have boasted of an achievement," said Allen.

"The spell would have been destroyed," added Jock. "But you did not let him finish. Did you say you saw the blackcock?"

"I am not sure; I think I heard it rise once, but the keeper was always seeing it."

Everybody but Essie was in fits of laughing at Cecil's frank air of good-humoured, self-defensive simplicity, and Armine observed—

"There's a fine subject for a ballad for the 'Traveller's Joy,' Babie. 'The Phantom Blackcock of Kilnaught!'"
Babie extemporised at once, amid great applause—

"The hills are high, the laird's purse dry,
   Come out in the morning early;
M'Nabs are keen, the Guards are green,
   The blackcock's tail is curly.

"The Southron's spoil 'tis worthy toil,
   Come out in the morning early;
Come take my house and kill my grouse,
   The blackcock's tail is curly.

"Come out, come out, quoth Rory stout,
   Come out in the morning early,
Sir Captain mark, he rises! hark,
   The blackcock's tail is curly."

"Repetition, Babie," said her mother; "too like the Montjoie S. Denis poem."
"It saves so much trouble, mother."
"And a recall to the freshness and innocence of childhood is so pleasing," added Jock.
"How much did the man of family let his moor for?" asked Allen.

There Cecil saw the pitiful and indignant face opposite to him, would have sulked, and began looking at her for sympathy, exclaiming at last—
"Haven't you a word to say for me, Miss Brownlow?"
"I don't like it at all. I don't think it is fair," broke from Essie, as she coloured crimson at the laugh.
"He likes it, my dear," said Babie.
"It is a gentle titillation," said Allen.
"He can't get on without it," said the Friar.
"And comes for it like the cattle to the scrubbing-stones," said the Skipjack.
"Yes," said Armine; "but he tries to get pitied, like Chico walking on three legs when some one is looking at him."
"You deal in most elegant comparisons," said the mother.
"Only to get him a little more pitied," said Jock. "He is as grateful as possible for being made so interesting."
"Hark, there's a knock!" cried Allen. "Can't you instruct your cubs not to punish the door so severely, Jock? I believe they think that the more row they make, the more they proclaim their nobility!"
"The obvious derivation of the word stunning," said Mother Carey, as she rose to meet her guests in the drawing-room, and Cecil to hold the door for her.
"Stay, Evelyn," said Allen. "This is the night when unlicked cubs do disport themselves in our precincts. A mistaken sense of philanthropy has led my mother to make this house the fortnightly salon bleu of St. Thomas's. But there's a pipe at your service in my room."
"Dr. Medlicott is coming," said Babie, who had tarried behind the Johns, "and perhaps Mr. Grinstead, and we are sure to have Mr. Esdale's photographs. It is never all students, medical or otherwise. Much better than Allen's smoke, Cecil."
"I am coming of course," he said. "I was only waiting for the Infanta."

It may be doubted whether the photographs, Dr. Medlicott, or even Jock were the attraction. He was much more fond of using his privilege of dropping in when the family were alone, than of finding himself in the midst of what an American guest had called Mrs. Brownlow's surprise parties. They were on regular evenings, but no one knew who was coming, from scientific peers to daily governesses, from royal academicians to medical students, from a philanthropic countess to a city missionary. To listen to an exposition of the microphone, to share in a Shakespeare reading, or worse still, in a paper game, was, in the Captain's eyes, such a bore that he generally had only haunted Collingwood Street on home days and on Sundays, when, for his mother's sake and his own, an exception was made in his favour.

He followed Babie with unusual alacrity, and found Mrs. Brownlow shaking hands with a youth whom Jock upheld as a genius, but who laboured under the double misfortune of always coming too soon, and never knowing what to do with his arms and legs. He at once perceived Captain Evelyn to be an "awful swell," and became trebly wretched—in contrast to Jock's open-hearted, genial young dalesman, who stood towering over every one with his broad shoulders and hearty face, perfectly at
his ease (as he would have been in Buckingham Palace), and only wondering a little that Brownlow could stand an empty-headed military fop like that; while Cecil himself, after gazing about vaguely, muttered to Babie something about her cousin.

"She is gone to see whether Lina is asleep, and will be too shy to come down again if I don't drag her."

So away flew Babie, and more eyes than Cecil Evelyn's were struck when in ten minutes' time she again led in her cousin.

Mr. Acton, who was talking to Mrs. Brownlow, said in an undertone—

"Your model? Another niece?"

"Yes; you remember Jessie?"

"This is a more ideal face."

It was true. Esther had lived much less than her elder sister in the Coffinkey atmosphere, and there was nothing to mar the peculiar dignified innocence and perfect unconsciousness of her sweet maidenly bloom. She never guessed that every man, and every woman too, was admiring her, except the strong-minded one who saw in her the true inane Raffaelesque Madonna on whom George Eliot is so severe.

Nor did the lady alter her opinion when, at the end of a very curious speculation about primeval American civilisation, Captain Evelyn and Miss Brownlow were discovered studying family photographs in a corner, apparently much more interested
whether a hideous half-faded brown shadow had resembled John at fourteen, than to what century and what nation those odd curly-whirleys on stone belonged, and what they were meant to express.

Babie was scandalised.

"You didn't listen! It was most wonderful! Why Armie went down and fetched up Allen to hear about those wonderful walled towns!"

"I don't go in for improving my mind," said Cecil.

"Then you should not hinder Essie from improving hers! Think of letting her go home having seen nothing but all the repeated photographs of her brothers and sisters!"

"Well, what should she like to see?" cried Cecil. "I'm good for anything you want to go to before the others are free."

"The Ethiopian serenaders, or, may be, Punch," said Jock. "Madame Tussaud would be too intellectual."

"When Lina is strong enough she is to see Madame Tussaud," said Essie gravely. "Georgie once went, and she has wished for it ever since."

"Oh, we'll get up Madame Tussaud for her at home, free gratis, for nothing at all!" cried Armine, whose hard work inspired him to fun and frolic.

So in the twilight hour two days later there was a grand exhibition of human waxworks, in which Babie explained tableaux represented by the two Johns. Armine, and Cecil, supposed to be adapted to Lina's
capacity. With the timid child it was not a success, the disguises frightened her, and gave her an uncanny feeling that her friends were transformed; she sat most of the time on her aunt's lap, with her face hidden, and barely hindered from crying by the false assurance that it was all for her pleasure.

But there was no doubt that Esther was a pleased spectator of the show, and her gratitude far more than sufficient to cover the little one's ingratitude.

Those two drifted together. In every gathering, when strangers had departed they were found tête-à-tête. Cecil's horses knew the way to Collingwood Street better than anywhere else, and he took to appearing there at times when he was fully aware Jock would be at the night-school or Mutual Improvement Society.

Though strongly wishing, on poor Bobus's account, that it should not go much farther under her own auspices; day after day it was more borne in upon Mrs. Brownlow that her house held an irresistible attraction to the young officer, and she wondered over her duty to the parents who had trusted her. Acting on impulse at last, she took council with John, securing him as her companion in the gaslit walk from a concert.

"Do you see what is going on there?" she asked, indicating the pair before them.

"What do you mean? Oh, I never thought of that!"

"I don't think! I have seen. Ever since the night
of the Phantom Blackcock of Kilnaught. He did his work on Essie."

"Essie rather thinks he is after the Infanta."

"It looks like it! What could have put it into her head? It did not originate there!"

"Something my mother said about Babie being a viscountess."

"You know better, Friar!"

"I thought so; but I only told her it was no such thing, and I believe the child thought I meant to rebuke her for mentioning such frivolities, for she turned scarlet and held her peace."

"Perhaps the delusion has kept her unconscious, and made her the sweeter. But the question is, whether this ought to go on without letting your people know?"

"I suppose they would have no objection?" said John. "There's no harm in Evelyn, and he shows his sense by running after Jock. He hasn't got the family health either. I'd rather have him than an old stick like Jessie's General."

"Yes, if all were settled, I believe your mother would be very well pleased. The question is, whether it is using her fairly not to let her know in the meantime?"

"Well, what is the code among you parents and guardians?"

"I don't know that there is any, but I think that though the crisis might be pleasing enough, yet if
your mother found out what was going on, she might be vexed at not having been informed."

John considered a moment, and then proposed that if things looked "like it" at the end of the week, he should go down on Saturday and give a hint of preparation to his father, letting him understand the merits of the case. However, in the existing state of affairs, a week was a long time, and that very Sunday brought the crisis.

The recollection of former London Sundays, of Mary Ogilvie's quiet protests, and of the effect on her two eldest children, had strengthened Mrs. Brownlow's resolution to make it impossible to fill the afternoon with aimless visiting and gossiping; and plenty of other occupations had sprung up.

Thus on this particular afternoon she and Barbara were with their Girls' Friendly Society Classes, of which Babie took the clever one, and she the stupid. Armine was reading with Percy Stagg, and a party of School Board pupil-teachers, whom that youth had brought him, as very anxious for the religious instruction they knew not how to obtain. Jock had taken the Friar's Bible Class of young men, and Allen had, as a great favour, undertaken to sit with Dr. and Mrs. Lucas till he could look in on them. So that Esther and Lina were the sole occupants of the drawing-room when Captain Evelyn rang at the door, knowing very well that he was only permitted up stairs an hour later in time for a cup of tea before
evensong. He did look into Allen's sitting-room as a matter of form, but finding it empty, and hearing a buzz of voices elsewhere, he took licence to go up stairs, and there he found Esther telling her little sister such histories of Arundel Society engravings as she could comprehend.

Lina sprang to him at once; Esther coloured, and began to account for the rest of the family. "I hear," said Cecil, as low tones came through the closed doors of the back drawing-room, "they work as hard here as my sister does!"

"I think my aunt has almost done," said Essie, with a shy doubt whether she ought to stay. "Come, Lina, I must get you ready for tea."

"No, no," said Cecil, "don't go! You need not be as much afraid of me as that first time I walked in, and thought I had got into a strange house."

Essie laughed a little, and said, "A month ago! Sometimes it seems a very long time, and sometimes a very short one."

"I hope it seems a very long time that you have known me."

"Well, Johnny and all the rest had known you ever so long," answered she, with a confusion of manner that expressed a good deal more than the words. "I really must go——"

"Not till you have told me more than that," cried Cecil, seizing his opportunity with a sudden rush of audacity. "If you know me, can you——can you like
me? Can't you? Oh, Essie, stay! Could you ever love me, you peerless, sweetest, loveliest—"

By this time Mrs. Brownlow, who had heard Cecil's boots on the stairs, and particularly wished to stave matters off till after the Friar's mission, had made a hasty conclusion of her lesson, and letting her girls depart, opened the door. She saw at once that she was too late; but there was no retreat, for Esther flew past her in shy terror, and Cecil advanced with the earnest, innocent entreaty, "Oh, Mrs. Brownlow, make her hear me! I must have it out, or I can't bear it."

"Oh," said she, "it has come to this, has it?" speaking half-quaintly, half-sadly, and holding Lina kindly back.

"I could not help it!" he went on. "She did look so lovely, and she is so dear! Do get her down, that I may see her again. I shall not have a happy moment till she answers me."

"Are you sure you will have a happy moment then?"

"I don't know. That's the thing! Won't you help a fellow a bit, Mrs. Brownlow? I'm quite done for. There never was any one so nice, or so sweet, or so lovely, or so unlike all the horrid girls in society! Oh, make her say a kind word to me!"

"I'll make her," said little Lina, looking up from her aunt's side. "I like you very much, Captain Evelyn, and I'll run and make Essie tell you she does."
"Not quite so fast, my dear," said her aunt, as both laughed, and Cecil, solacing himself with a caress, and holding the little one very close to him on his knee, where her intentions were deferred by his watch and appendages.

"I suppose you don't know what your mother would say?" began Mrs. Brownlow.

"I have not told her, but you know yourself she would be all right. Now, aren't you sure, Mrs. Brownlow? She isn't up to any nonsense?"

"No, Cecil, I don't think she would oppose it. Indeed, my dear boy, I wish you happiness, but Esther is a shy, startled little being, and away from her mother; and perhaps you will have to be patient."

"But will you fetch her—or at least speak to her?" said he, in a tone not very like patience; and she had to yield, and be the messenger.

She found Esther fluttering up and down her room like a newly-caught bird. "Oh, Aunt Carey, I must go home! Please let me!" she said.

"Nay, my dear, can't I help you for once?" and Esther sprang into her arms for comfort; but even then it was plain to a motherly eye that this was not the distress that poor Bobus had caused, but rather the agitation of a newly-awakened heart, terrified at its own sensations. "He wants you to come and hear him out," she said, when she had kissed and petted the girl into more composure.

"Oh, must I? I don't want. Oh, if I could go
home! They were so angry before. And I only said 'if,' and never meant——"

"That was the very thing, my dear," said her aunt with a great throb of pain. "You were quite right not to encourage my poor Bobus; but this is a very different case, and I am sure they would wish you to act according as you feel."

Esther drew a great gasp; "You are sure they would not think me wrong?"

"Quite sure," was the reply, in full security that her mother would be rapturous at the nearly certain prospect of a coronet. "Indeed, my dear, no one can find any fault with you. You need not be afraid. He is good and worthy, and they will be glad if you wish it."

Wish was far too strong a word for poor frightened Esther; she could only cling and quiver.

"Shall I tell him to go and see them at Kencroft?"

"Oh, do, do, dear Aunt Carey! Please tell him to go to papa, and not want to see me till——"

"Very well, my dear child; that will be the best way. Now I will send you up some tea, and then you shall put Lina to bed; and you and I will slip off quietly together, and go to S. Andrew's in peace, quite in a different direction from the others, before they set out."

Meantime Cecil had been found by Babie tumbling about the music and newspapers on the ottoman, and on her observation——
"Too soon, sir! And pray what mischief still have your idle hands found to do?"
"Don't!" he burst out; "I'm on the verge of distraction already! I can't bear it!"
"Is there anything the matter? You're not in a scrape? You don't want Jock?" she said.
"No, no—only I've done it. Babie, I shall go mad, if I don't get an answer soon."

Babie was much too sharp not to see what he meant. She knew in a kind of intuitive, undeveloped way how things stood with Bobus, and this gave a certain seriousness to her manner of saying—

"Essie?"

"Of course, the darling! If your mother would only come and tell me,—but she was frightened, and won't say anything. If she won't, I'm the most miserable fellow in the world."

"How stupid you must have been!" said Babie. "That comes of you, neither of you, ever reading. You couldn't have done it right, Cecil."

"Do you really think so?" he asked, in such piteous, earnest tones that he touched her heart.

"Dear Cecil," she said, "it will be all right. I know Essie likes you better than any one else."

She had almost added "though she is an ungrateful little puss for doing so," but before the words had time to come out of her mouth, Cecil had flown at her in a transport, thrown his arms round her and kissed her, just as her mother opened the door, and uttered an odd incoherent cry of amazement.
“Oh, Mother Carey,” cried Cecil, colouring all over, “I didn’t know what I was doing! She gave me hope!”

“I give you hope too,” said Caroline, “though I don’t know how it might have been if she had come down just now!”

“Don’t!” entreated Cecil. “Babie is as good as my sister. Why, where is she?”

“Fled, and no wonder!”

“And won’t she, Esther, come?”

“She is far too much frightened and overcome. She says you may go to her father, and I think that is all you can expect her to say.”

“Is it? Won’t she see me? I don’t want it to be obedience.”

“I don’t think you need have any fears on that score.”

“You don’t? Really now? You think she likes me just a little? How soon can I get down? Have you a train-bill?”

Then during the quest into trains came a fit of humility. “Do you think they will listen to me? You are not the sort who would think me a catch, and I know I am a very poor stick compared with any of you, and should have gone to the dogs long ago but for Jock, ungrateful ass as I was to him last year. But if I had such a creature as that to take care of, why it would be like having an angel about one. I would—indeed I would—reverence, yes, and worship her all my life long.”
“I am sure you would. I think it would be a very happy and blessed thing for you both, and I have no doubt that her father will think so too. Now, here are the others coming home, and you must behave like a rational being, even though you don’t see Essie at tea.”

Mother Carey managed to catch Jock, give a hint of the situation, and bid him take care of his friend. He looked grave. “I thought it was coming,” he said. “I wish they would have done it out of our way.”

“So do I, but I didn’t take measures in time.”

“Well, it is all right as regards them both, but poor Bobus will hardly get over it.”

“We must do our best to soften the shock, and, as it can’t be helped, we must put our feelings in our pocket.”

“As one has to do most times,” said Jock. “Well, I suppose it is better for one in the end than having it all one’s own way. And Evelyn is a generous fellow, who deserves anything!”

“So, Jock, as we can do Bobus no good, and know besides that nothing could make it right for his hopes to be fulfilled, we must throw ourselves into this present affair as Cecil and Essie deserve.”

“All right, mother,” he said. “There’s not stuff in her to be of much use to Bobus if he had her, besides the other objection. It is the hope that he will sorely miss, poor old fellow!”

VOL. III.
"Ah! if he had a better hope lighted as his guiding star! But we must not stand talking now, Jock; I must take her to Church quietly with me."

To Cecil's consternation, his military duties would detain him all the forenoon of the next day; and before he could have started, the train that brought John back also brought his father and mother, the latter far more eager and effusive than her sister-in-law had ever seen her. "My dear Caroline, I thought you'd excuse my coming, I was so anxious to see about my little girl, and we'll go to an hotel."

"I'll leave you with her," said Caroline, rushing off in haste, to let Esther utter her own story as best she might, poor child! Allen was fortunately in his room, and his mother sprang down to him to warn him to telegraph to Cecil that Colonel Brownlow was in Collingwood Street; the fates being evidently determined to spare her nothing.

Allen's feelings were far less keen as to Bobus than were Jock's, and he liked the connection; so he let himself be infected with the excitement, and roused himself not only to telegraph, but go himself to Cecil's quarters to make sure of him. It was well that he did so, for just as he got into Oxford Street, he beheld the well-known bay fortunately caught in a block of omnibuses and carts round a tumble-down cab-horse, and some gas-fitting. Such was the impatience of the driver of the hansom, that Allen absolutely had to
rush desperately across the noses of half-a-dozen horses, making wild gestures, before he was seen and taken up by Cecil's side.

"The most wonderful thing of all," said Cecil afterwards, "was to see Allen going on like that!"

In consequence of his speed, Colonel and Mrs. Brownlow had hardly arrived at Esther's faltered story, and come to a perception which way her heart lay, when she started and cried, "Oh, that's his hansom!" for she perfectly well knew the wheels.

So did her aunt and Babie, who had taken refuge in the studio, but came out at Allen's call to hear his adventures, and thenceforth had to remain easily accessible, Babie to take charge of Lina, who was much aggrieved at her banishment, and Mother Carey to be the recipient of all kinds of effusions from the different persons concerned. There was the mother:

"Such a nice young man! So superior! Everything we could have wished! And so much attached! Speaks so nicely! You are sure there will be no trouble with his mother?"

"I see no danger of it. I am sure she must love dear little Esther, and that she would like to see Cecil married."

"Well, you know her! but you know she might look much higher for him, though the Brownlows are a good old family. Oh, my dear Caroline, I shall never forget what you have done for us all."

Her Serenity in a flutter was an amusing sight.
She was so full of exultation, and yet had too much propriety to utter the main point of her hopes, fears, doubts, and gratitude; and she durst not so much as hazard an inquiry after poor Lord Fordham, lest she should be suspected of the thought that came uppermost.

However, the Colonel, with whom that possibility was a very secondary matter, could speak out: "I like the lad; he is a good, simple, honest fellow, well-principled, and all one could wish. I don't mind trusting little Essie with him, and he says his brother is sure to give him quite enough to marry upon, so they'll do very well, even, if—— How about that affair which was hinted of at Belforest, Caroline? Will it ever come off?"

"Probably not. Poor Lord Fordham's health does not improve, and so I am very thankful that he does not fulfil Babie's ideal."

"Poor young man!" said Ellen, with sincere compassion but great relief.

"That's the worst of it," said the father, gravely. "I am afraid it is a consumptive family, though this young fellow looks hearty and strong."

"He has always been so," said Caroline. "He and his sister are quite different in looks and constitution from poor Fordham, and I believe from the elder ones. They are shorter and sturdier, and take after their mother's family."

"I told you so, papa," said Ellen. "I was sure
nothing could be amiss with him. You can't expect everybody to look like our boys. Well, Caroline, you have always been a good sister; and to think of your having done this for little Essie! Tell me how it was? Had you suspected it?"

It was all very commonplace and happy. Colonel and Mrs. Brownlow were squeezed into the house to await Mrs. Evelyn's reply, and Cecil and Esther sat hand-in-hand all the evening, looking, as Allen and Babie agreed, like such a couple of idiots, that the intimate connection between *selig* and silly was explained.

Mrs. Robert Brownlow whiled away the next day by a grand shopping expedition, followed by the lovers, who seemed to find pillars of floor-cloth and tracery of iron-work as blissful as ever could be pleached alley. Nay, one shopman flattered Cecil and shocked Esther by directing his exhibition of wares to them, and the former was thus excited to think how soon they might be actually shopping on their own account, and to fix his affections on an utterly impracticable fender as his domestic hearth. Meanwhile Caroline had only just come in from amusing Mrs. Lucas with the story, when a cab drove up, and Mrs. Evelyn was with her, with an eager, "Where are they?"

"Somewhere in the depths of the city, with her mother, shopping. Ought I to have told you?"

"Of course I trust you. She must be nice—your
Friar's sister; but I could not stay at home, and Duke wished me to come—"

"How is he?"

"So very happy about this—the connection especially. I don't think he could have borne it if it had been the Infanta. How is that dear Babie?"

"Quite well. I left her walking with Lina in the Square gardens."

"As simple and untouched as ever?"

"As much as ever a light-hearted baby."

"Ah! well, so much the better. And let me say, once for all, that you need not fear any closer intercourse with us. My poor Duke has made up his mind that such things are not for him, and wishes all to be arranged for Cecil as his heir. Not that he is any worse. With care he may survive us all, the doctors say; but he has made up his mind, and will never ask Babie again. He says it would be cruel; but he does long for a sight of her bright face!"

"Well, we shall be brought into meeting in a simple natural way."

"And Babie? How does she look? I am ashamed of it; but I can't help thinking more about seeing her than this new cousin. I can fancy her—handsome, composed, and serene."

"That may be so ten or twenty years hence! but now she is the tenderest little clinging thing you ever saw."
"And my ideal would have been that Cecil should have chosen some one superior; but after all, I believe he is really more likely to be raised by being looked up to. He has been our boy too long."

"Quite true; I have watched him content with the level my impertinent children assign him here, but now trying to be manly for Essie's sake. You have not told me of Sydney."

"So angry at the folly of passing over Babie, that I was forced to give her a hint to be silent before Duke. She collapsed, much impressed. Forgive me, if it was a betrayal; but she is two years older now, and would not have been a safe companion unless warned. Hark! Is that the doorbell?"

Therewith the private interview period set in, and Babie made such use of her share of it, that when Lina was produced in the drawing-room before dinner, she sat on Cecil's knee, and gravely observed that she had a verse to repeat to him—

"The phantom blackcock of Kilnaught
Is a marvellous bird yet uncaught;
Go out in all weather,
You see not a feather,
Yet a marvellous work it has wrought,
That phantom blackcock of Kilnaught."

"What is that verse you are saying, Lina?" said her mother.

Lina trotted across and repeated it, while Cecil shook his head at wicked Babie.
"I hope you don't learn nursery rhymes, about phantoms and ghosts, Lina?" said Mrs. Robert Brownlow.

"This is an original poem, Aunt Ellen," replied Babie, gravely.

"More original than practical," said John. "You haven't accounted for the pronoun?"

"Oh, never mind that. Great poets are above rules. I want Essie to promise us bridesmaids black-cock tails in our hats."

"My dear!" said her aunt, in serious reproof, shocked at the rapidity of the young lady's ideas.

"Or, at least," added Babie, "if she won't, you'll give us blackcock lockets, Cecil. They would be lovely—you know—enamelled!"

"That I will!" he cried. "And, Mother Carey, will you model me a group of the birds? That would be a jolly present!"

"Better than Esther's head, eh? I have done that three times, and you shall choose one, Cecil."

Nothing would serve Cecil but an immediate expedition to the studio, to choose as well as they could by lamp-light.

And during the examination, Mrs. Evelyn managed to say to Caroline, "I'm quite satisfied. She is as bright and childish as you told me."

"Essie?"

"No, the Infanta."

"If she is not a little too much so."
"Oh no, don't wish any difference in those high spirits!"

"She makes it a cheerful house, dear child; and even Allen has brightened lately."

"And, Jock? He looks hard-worked, but brisk as ever."

"He does work very hard in all ways; but he thoroughly enjoys his work, and is as much my sunshine as Babie. There are golden opinions of him in the Medical School; indeed there are of both my Johns."

"They are quite the foremost of the young men of their year, and carry off most of the distinctions, besides being leaders in influence. So Dr. Medlicott told us," said Mrs. Evelyn; "and yet he said it was delightful to see how they avoided direct rivalry, or else were perfectly friendly over it."

"Yes, they avoid, when it is possible, going in for the same things, and indeed I think Jock has more turn for the scientific side of the study, and the Friar for the practical. There is room for them both!"

"And what a contrast they are! What a very handsome fellow John has grown! So tall, and broad, and strong; with that fine colour, and dark eyes as beautiful as his sister's!"

"More beautiful, I should say," returned Caroline; "there is so much more intellect in them—raising them out of the regular Kencroft comeliness. True, the
great charm of the stalwart Friar, as we call him, is—what his father has in some degree—that quiet composed way that gives one a sense of protection. I think his patients will feel entire trust in his hands. They say at the hospital the poor people always are happy when they see one of the Mr. Brownlows coming, whether it be the big or the little one."

"Not so very little, except by comparison; and I am glad Jock keeps his soldierly bearing."

"He is a Volunteer, you know, and very valuable there."

"But he has not an ounce of superfluous flesh. He puts me in mind of a perfectly polished, finished instrument!"

"That is just what used to be said of his father. Colonel Brownlow says he is the most like my poor young father of all the children."

"He is the most like you."

"But he puts me most of all in mind of my husband, in all his ways, and manner; and our old friends tell me that he sets about things exactly like his father, as if it were by imitation. I like to know it is so."
CHAPTER XXXVI.

OF NO CONSEQUENCE.

Fell not, but dangled in mid air,
For from a fissure in the stone
Which lined its sides, a bush had grown,
To this he clung with all his might.

Archbishop Trench.

Lord Fordham made it his most especial and urgent desire that his brother's wedding, which was to take place before Lent, should be at his home instead of at the lady's. Otherwise he could not be present, for Kenminster had a character for bleakness, and he was never allowed to travel in an English winter. Besides, he had set his heart on giving one grand festal day to his tenantry, who had never had a day of rejoicing since his great-uncle came of age, forty years ago.

Mrs. Robert Brownlow did not like it at all, either as an anomaly or as a disappointment to the Kenminster world, but her husband was won over, and she was obliged to consent. Mother Carey, with her brood, were of course to be guests, but her difficulty was the leaving Dr. and Mrs. Lucas. The good old physician was failing fast, and they had no kindred near at
hand, or capable of being of much comfort to them, and she was considering how to steer between the two calls, when Jock settled it for her, by saying that he did not mean to go to Fordham, and if Mrs. Lucas liked, would sleep in the house. There was much amazement and vexation. He had of course been the first best man thought of, but he fought off, declaring that he could not afford to miss a single lecture or demonstration. Friar John's University studies had given him such a start that he had to work less hard than his cousin, and could afford himself the week for which he was invited; but Jock declared that he could not even lose the thirty-six hours that Armine was to take for the journey to Fordham and back. Everyone declared this nonsense, and even Mrs. Lucas could not bear that he should remain, as she thought, on her account; but his mother did not join in the public outcry, and therefore was admitted to fuller insight, as he was walking back with her, after listening to the old lady's persuasions.

"I think she would really be better pleased to spare you for that one day," said Caroline.

"May be, good old soul," said Jock; "but as you know, mother, that's not all."

"I guessed not. It may be wiser."

"Well! There's no use in stirring it all up again, after having settled down after a fashion," said Jock.

"I see clearer than ever how hopeless it is to have anything fit to offer a girl in her position for the next
ten years, and I must not get myself betrayed into
drawing her in to wait for me. I am such an
impulsive fool, I don't know what I might be saying
to her, and it would not be a right return for all they
have been to me."

"You will have to meet her in town?"

"Perhaps; but not as if I were in the house and at
the wedding. It would just bring back the time when
she bade me never give up my sword."

"Perhaps she is wiser now."

"That would make it even more likely that I
should say what would be better left alone. No,
mother! Ten years hence, if——"

She thought of Magnum Bonum, and said, "Sooner,
perhaps!"

"No," he said, laughing. "It is only in the
'Traveller's Joy' that all the bigwigs are out of sight,
and the apothecary's boy saved the Lord Mayor's life."

With that laugh, rather a sad one, he inserted the
latch-key and ended the discussion.

Whether Barbara were really unwilling to go was
not clear, for she had no such excuse as her brother;
but she grumbled almost as much as her aunt at the
solecism of a wedding in the gentleman's home; and
for the only time in her life showed ill-humour. She
was vexed with Esther for her taste in bridesmaid's
attire (hers was given by her uncle); sarcastic to Cecil
for his choice of gifts; cross to her mother about
every little arrangement as to dress; satirical on
Allen's revival of spirits in prospect of a visit to a great house; annoyed at whatever was done or not done; and so much less tolerant of having little Lina left on her hands, that Aunt Carey became the child's best reliance.

Some of this temper might be put to the score of that pity for Bobus, which Babie in her caprice had begun to dwell on, most inconsistently with her former gaiety; but her mother attributed it to an unconfessed reluctance to meet Lord Fordham again, and a sense that the light thoughtlessness to which she had clung so long might perforce be at an end.

So sharp-edged was her tongue, even to the moment of embarkation in the train, that her mother began to fear how she might behave, and dreaded lest she should wound Fordham; but she grew more silent all the way down, and when the carriage came to the station, and they drove past banks starred by primroses, and with the blue eyes of periwinkles looking out among the evergreen trailers, she spoke no word. Even Allen brightened to enjoy that lamb-like March day; and John, with his little sister on his knee, was most joyously felicitous. Indeed, the tall, athletic, handsome fellow looked as if it were indeed spring with him, all the more from the contrast with Allen's languid, sallow looks, savouring of the fumes in which he lived.

Out on the steps were Fordham, wrapped up to the cars; Sydney ready to devour Babie, who passively
submitted; and Mrs. Evelyn, as usual, giving her friend a sense of rest and reliance.

The last visit, though only five years previous to this one, had seemed in past ages, till the familiar polished oak floor was under foot, and the low tea-table in the wainscoted hall, before the great wood fire, looked so homelike and natural, that the new comers felt as if they had only left it yesterday. Fordham, having thrown off his wraps, waited on his guests, looking exceedingly happy in his quiet way, but more fragile than ever. He had a good deal of fair beard, but it could not conceal the hollowness of his cheeks, and there were great caves round his eyes, which were very bright and blue. Yet he was called well, waited assiduously on little Lina, and talked with animation.

"We have nailed the weathercock," he said, "and telegraphed to the clerk of the weather-office not to let the wind change for a week."

"Meantime we have three delicious days to ourselves," said Sydney, "before any of the nonsense and preparation begins."

"Indeed! As if Sydney were not continually drilling her unfortunate children!"

"If you call the Psalms and hymns nonsense, Duke——"

"No! no! But isn't there a course of instruction going on, how to strew the flowers gracefully before the bride?"
"Well, I don't want them thrown at her head, as the children did at the last wedding, when a great cowslip ball hit the bride in the eye. So I told the mistress to show them how, and the other day we found them in two lines, singing—

"'This is the way the flowers we strew!'"

"I suppose Cecil is keeping his residence?"

"No. Did you not know that this little Church of ours is not licensed for weddings? The parish Church is three miles off and a temple of the winds. This is only a chapelry, there is a special licence, and Cecil is hunting with the Hamptons, and comes with them on Monday."

"Special licence! Happy Mrs. Coffinkey!" ejaculated Babie.

"Everybody comes then," said Sydney; "not that it is a very large everybody after all, and we have not asked more neighbours than we can help, because it is to be a feast for all the chief tenants—here in this hall—then the poor people dine in the great barn, and the children drink tea later in the school. Come, little Caroline, you've done tea, and I have my old baby-house to show you. Come, Babie! Oh! isn't it delicious to have you?"

When Sydney had carried off Babie, and the two mothers stood over the fire in the bedroom, Mrs. Evelyn said—
"So Lucas stays with his good old godfather. I honour him more than I can show."

"We did not like to leave the old people alone. They were my kindest friends in my day of trouble."

"You will not let me press him to run down for the one day, if he cannot leave them for more? Would he, do you think?"

"I believe he would, if you did it," said Caroline, slowly; "but I ought not let you do so, without knowing his full reason for staying away."

They both coloured as if they had been their own daughters, and Mrs. Evelyn smiled as she said—

"We have outgrown some of our folly about choice of profession."

"But does that make it safer? My poor boy has talked it over with me. He says he is afraid of his own impulses, leading him to say what would not be an honourable requital for all your kindness to him."

"He is very good. I think he is right—quite right," said Mrs. Evelyn. "I am afraid I must say so. For anything to begin afresh between them might lead to suspense that my child's constitution might not stand, and I am very grateful to him for sparing her."

"Afresh? Do you think there ever was anything?"

"Never anything avowed, but a good deal of sympathy. Indeed, so far as I can guess, my foolish girl was first much offended and disquieted with Jock for not listening to her persuasions, and then equally
so with herself for having made them, and now I confess I think shame and confusion are predominant with her when she hears of him."

"So that she is relieved at his absence."

"Just so, and it is better so to leave it; I should be only too happy to keep her with me waiting for him, only I had rather she did not know it."

"My dear friend!" And again Caroline thought of Magnum Bonum. All the evening she said to herself that Sydney showed no objection to medical students, when she was looking over the Engelberg photographs with John, who had been far more her companion in the mountain rambles they recalled than had Jock in his half-recovered state.

The mother could not help feeling a little pang of jealousy as she owned to herself that the Friar was a very fine-looking youth, with the air of a university man, and of one used to good society, and that he did look most perilously happy. He was the next thing to her own son, but not quite the same, and she half repented of her candour to Mrs. Evelyn, and wished that the keen, sensitive face and soldierly figure could be there to reassert their influence.

There ensued a cheerful, pleasant Saturday, which did much to restore the ordinary tone between the old friends and to take off the sense of strangeness. It was evident, that Lord Fordham had insensibly become much more the real head and master of the house than at the time when the Brownlow party
had last been there, and that he had taken on him much more of the duties of his position than he had then seemed capable of fulfilling. It might cost much effort, but he had ceased to be the mere invalid, and had come to take his part thoroughly and effectively, and to win trust and confidence. It was strange to think how Babie could ever have called him a muff merely to be pitied.

The Sundays at Fordham were always delightful. The little Church was as near perfection as might be. It was satisfactory to see that Fordham's gentleness and courtesy had dispelled all the clouds, and Barbara had returned to her ordinary manner; perhaps a little more sedate and gentle than usual, and towards him she was curiously submissive, as if she had a certain awe of the tenderness she had rejected.

After the short afternoon service, Sydney waited to exercise her choir once more in their musical duties; but Babie, hearing there was to be no rehearsal of the flower-strewing, declared she had enough of classes at home, and should take Lina for a stroll on the sunny terrace among the crocuses, where Fordham joined them till warned that the sun was getting low.

One there was who would have been glad of an invitation to join in the practice, but who did not receive one. John lingered with Allen about the gardens till the latter disposed of himself on a seat with a cigar beyond the public gaze. Then saying something
about seeing whether the stream promised well for fishing, John betook himself to the bank of the river, one of the many Avons, probably with a notion that by the merest accident he might be within distance at the break-up of the choir practice.

He was sauntering with would-be indifference towards the foot-bridge that shortened the walk to the Church, but he was still more than one hundred yards from it, when on the opposite side he beheld Sydney herself. She was on the very verge of the stream, below the steep, slippery clay bank, clinging hard with one hand to the bared root of a willow stump, and with the other striving to uphold the head and shoulder of a child, the rest of whose person was in the water.

One cry, one shout passed, then John had torn off coat, boots, and waistcoat, and plunged in to swim across, perceiving to his horror that not only was there imminent danger of the boy's weight overpowering her, but that the bank, undermined by recent floods, was crumbling under her feet, and the willow-stump fast yielding to the strain on its roots. And while each moment was life or death to her, he found the current unexpectedly strong, and he had to use his utmost efforts to avoid being carried down far below where she stood watching with cramped, strained failing limbs, and eyes of appealing, agonising hope.

One shout of encouragement as he was carried
past her, but stemming the current all the time, and at last he paddled back towards her, and came close enough to lay hold of the boy.

"Let go," he said, "I have him."

But just as Sydney relaxed her hold on the boy the willow stump gave way and toppled over with an avalanche of clay and stones. Happily Sydney had already unfastened her grasp, and so fell, or threw herself backwards on the bank, scratched, battered, bruised, and feeling half buried for an instant, but struggling up immediately, and shrieking with horror as she missed John and the boy, who had both been swept in by the tree. The next moment she heard a call, and scrambling up the bank, saw John among the reedy pools a little way down, dragging the boy after him.

She dashed and splashed to the spot and helped to drag the child to a drier place, where they all three sank on the grass, the boy, a sturdy fellow of seven years old, lying unconscious, and the other two sitting not a little exhausted, Sydney scarcely less drenched than the child. She was the first to gasp—

"The boy?"

"He'll soon be all right," said John, bending over him. "How came——"

"I came suddenly on them—him and his brother—birds'-nesting. In his fright he slipped in. I just caught him, but the other ran away, and I could not pull him up. Oh! if you had not come."
John hid his face in his hands with a murmur of intense thanksgiving.

"You should get home," he said. "Can you? I'll see to the boy."

At this moment the keeper came up full of wrath and consternation, as soon as he understood what had happened. He was barely withheld from shaking the truant violently back to life, and averred that he would teach him to come birds'-nesting in the park on Sunday.

And when, after he had fetched John's coat and boots, Sydney bade him take the child, now crying and shivering, back to his mother, and tell her to put him to bed and give him something hot he replied—

"Ay, ma'am, I warrant a good warming would do him no harm. Come on, then, you young rascal; you won't always find a young lady to pull you out, nor a gentleman to swim across that there Avon. Upon my honour, sir, there ain't many could have done that when it is in flood."

He would gladly have escorted them home, but as the boy could not yet stand, he was forced to carry him.

"You should walk fast," said John, as he and Sydney addressed themselves to the ascent of the steep sloping ground above the river.

She assented, but she was a good deal strained, bruised, and spent, and her heavy winter dress,
muddied and soaked, clung to her and held her back, and both laboured breathlessly without making much speed.

"I never guessed that a river was so strong," she said. "It was like a live thing fighting to tear him away."

"How long had you stood there?"

"I can't guess. It felt endless! The boy could not help himself, and I was getting so cramped that I must have let go if your call had not given me just strength enough! And the tree would have come down upon us!"

"I believe it would," muttered John.

"Mamma must thank you," whispered Sydney, holding out her hand.

He clasped it, saying almost inwardly—

"God and His Angels were with you."

"I hope so," said Sydney softly.

They still held one another's hands, seeming to need the support in the steep, grassy ascent, and there came a catch in John's breath that made Sydney cry,

"You are not hurt?"

"That snag gave me a dig in the side, but it is nothing."

As they gained the level ground, Sydney said—

"We will go in by the servants' entrance, it will make less fuss."

"Thank you;" and with a final pressure she loosed
his hand, and led the way through the long, flagged, bell-hung passage, and pointed to a stair.

"That leads to the end of the gallery; you will see a red baize door, and then you know your way."

Sydney knew that at this hour on Sunday, servants were not plentiful, but she looked into the housekeeper's room were the select grandees were at tea, and was received with an astounded "Miss Evelyn!" from the housekeeper.

"Yes, Saunders; I should have been drowned, and little Peter Hollis too, if it hadn't been for Mr. Friar Brownlow. He swam across Avon, and has been knocked by a tree; and Reeves, would you be so very kind as to go and see about him?"

Reeves, who had approved of Mr. Friar Brownlow ever since his race at Schwarenbach, did not need twice bidding, but snatched up the kettle and one of Mrs. Saunders's flasks, while that good lady administered the like potion to Sydney and carried her off to be undressed. Mrs. Evelyn was met upon the way, and while she was hearing her daughter's story, in the midst of the difficulties of unfastening soaked garments, there was a knock at the door. Mrs. Saunders went to it, and a young housemaid said—

"Oh, if you please, ma'am, Mr. Friar Brownlow says its of no consequence, but he has broken two of his ribs, and Mr. Reeves thinks Mrs. Evelyn ought to be informed."
She spoke so exactly as if he had broken a window, that at first the sense hardly reached the two ladies.

"Broken what?"

"His ribs, ma'am."

"Oh! I was sure he was hurt!" cried Sydney.

"Oh, mamma! go and see."

Mrs. Evelyn went, but finding that Reeves and Fordham were with John, and that the village doctor, who lived close by the park gates, had been sent for, she went no farther than the door of the patient's room, and there exchanged a few words with her son. Sydney thought her very hard-hearted, and having been deposited in bed, lay there starting, trembling, and listening, till her brother, according to promise, came down.

"Well, Sydney, what a brave little woman you have shown yourself! John has no words to tell how well you behaved."

"Oh, never mind that! Tell me about him? Is he not dreadfully hurt?"

"He declares these particular ribs are nothing," said Fordham, indicating their situation on himself, "and says they laugh at them at the hospital. He wanted Reeves to have sent for Oswald privately, and then meant to have come down to dinner as if nothing had happened."

"Mr. Oswald does not mean to allow that," said Miss Evelyn.

"Certainly not; I told him that if he did anything
so foolish I should certainly never call him in. Now let me hear about it, Sydney, for he was in rather too much pain to be questioned, and I only heard that you had shown courage and presence of mind."

The mother and brother might well shudder as they heard how nearly their joy had been turned into mourning. The river was a dangerous one, and to stem the current in full flood had been no slight exploit; still more the recovery of the boy after receiving such a blow from the tree.

"Very nobly done by both," said Fordham, bending to kiss his sister as she finished.

"Most thankworthy," said Mrs. Evelyn.

There was a brief space spent silently by both Mrs. Evelyn and her son on their knees, and then the former went up to the little bachelor-room where in the throng of guests John had been bestowed, and where she found him lying, rather pale, but very content, and her eyes filled with tears as she took his hand, saying—

"You know what I have come for?

"How is she?" he said, looking eagerly in her face.

"Well, I think, but rather strained and very much tired, so I shall keep her in her room for precaution's sake, as to-morrow will be a bustling day. I trust you will be equally wise."

"I have submitted, but I did not think it requisite. Pray don't trouble about me."

"What, when I think how it would have been without you? No, I will not tease you by talking about
it, but you know how we shall always feel for you. Are you in much pain now?"

"Nothing to signify, now it has been bandaged, thank you. I shall soon be all right. Did she make you understand her wonderful courage and resolution in holding up that heavy boy all that time?"

Mrs. Evelyn let John expatiate on her daughter's heroism till steps were heard approaching, and his aunt knocked at the door. Perhaps she was the person most tried when she looked into his bright, dark eyes, and understood the thrill in his voice as he told of Sydney's bravery and resolution. She guessed what emotion gave sweetness to his thankfulness, and feared if he did not yet understand it he soon would, and then what pain would be in store for one or other of the cousins. When Mrs. Evelyn asked him if he had really sent the message that his fractured ribs were of no consequence, his aunt's foreboding spirit feared they might prove of only too much consequence; but at least, if he were a supplanter, it would be quite unconsciously.

As Barbara said, when she came up from the diminished dinner-party to spend the evening with her friend—

"Those delightful things always do happen to other people!"

"It wasn't very delightful!" said Sydney.

"Not at the time, but you dear old thing, you have really saved a life! That was always our dream!"
"The boy is not at all like our dream!" said Sydney. "He is a horrid little fellow."

"Oh, he will come right now!"

"If you knew the family, you would very much doubt it."

"Sydney, why will you go on disenchanting me? I thought the real thing had happened to you at last as a reward for having been truer to our old woman than I."

"I don't think you would have thought hanging on that bank much reward," said Sydney.

"Adventures aren't nice when they are going on. It is only meminisse juvat, you know. You must have felt like the man in Rückert's Apologue, with the dragon below, and the mice gnawing the root above."

"My dear, that story kept running in my head, and whenever I looked at the river it seemed to be carrying me away, bank, and stump, and all. I'm afraid it will do so all night. It did, when some hot wine and water they made me have with my dinner sent me to sleep. Then I thought of—

"Time, with its ever rolling stream,
Is bearing them away,"

and I didn't know which was Time and which was Avon."

"In your sleep, or by the river?"

"Both, I think! I seem to have thought of thousands of things, and yet my whole soul was one scream of despairing prayer, though I don't believe I
said anything except to bid the boy hold still, till I heard that welcome shout."

"Ah, the excellent Monk! He is the family hero. I wonder if he enjoys it more than you? Did he really never let you guess how much he was hurt?"

"I asked him once; but he said it was only a dig in the side, and would go off."

"Ah, well! Allen says it is accident that makes the hero. Now the Monk has been as good as the hyena knight of the Jotapata, who was a mixture of Tyr, with his hand in the wolf’s mouth, and of Kunimund, when he persuaded Amala that his blood running into the river was only the sunset."

"Don’t" said Sydney. "I won’t have it made nonsense of!"

"Indeed," said Babie, almost piteously, "I meant it for the most glorious possible praise; but somehow people always seem to take me for a little hard bit of spar, a barbarian or a baby; I wish I had a more sensible name!"

"Infanta, his princess, is what Duke always call you," said Sydney, drawing her fondly to nestle close to her on the bed in her fire-lit room. "Do you know one of the thoughts I had time for in that dreadful eternity by the river, was how I wished it were you that were going to be a daughter to poor mamma."

"Esther will make a very kind, gentle, tender one."

"Oh, yes; but she won’t be quite what you are.
We have all been children together, and you have fitted in with us ever since that journey when we talked incessantly about Jotapata.” Then, as Babie made no answer, Sydney gave her a squeeze, and whispered, “I know!”

“Who told you?” asked Babie, with eyes on the fire.

“Mamma, when I was crazy with Cecil for caring for a pretty face instead of real stuff. She thought it would hurt Duke if I went on.”

“Does he care still?” said Babie, in a low voice.

“Oh, Babie, don’t you feel how much?”

“Do you know, Sydney, sometimes I can’t believe it. I’m sure I have no right to complain of being thought a childish, unfeeling little wretch, when I recollect how hard, and cold, and impertinent I was to him three years ago.”

“It was three years ago, and we were very foolish then,” consolingly murmured the wisdom of twenty, not without recollections of her own.

“I hope it was only foolishness,” said Barbara; “but I have only now begun to understand the rights of it, only I could not bear the thoughts of seeing him again. And now he is so kind!”

“Do you wish you had?”

“Not that. I don’t think anything but fuss and worry would have come of it then. I was only fifteen, and my mother could never have let it go on, and even if——; but what I am so grieved and ashamed
at is my fancying him not enough of a man for such a self-sufficient ape as I was. And now I have seen more of the world, and know what men are, I see his generosity, and that his patient fight with ill-health to do his best and his duty, is really very great and good."

"I wish you could tell him so. No, I know you can't; but you might let him feel it, for you need not be afraid of his ever asking you again. They have had a great examination of his lungs, and there's only part of one in any sort of order. They say he may go on with great care unless he catches cold, or sets the disease off again, and upon that he made up his mind that it was a very good thing he had not disturbed your peace."

"As if I should not be just as sorry!" said Babie. "Oh, Sydney, what a sad world it is! And there is he going about as manful, and pleased, and merry about this wedding as if it were his own. And the worst of it is, though I do admire him so, it can't be real, proper, lover's love, for I felt quite glad when you said he would never ask me, so it is all wasted."

The mothers would hardly have liked the subject of the maidens' talk in their bower, and Barbara bade good-night, feeling as if she should never look at Fordham with the same eyes again; but the light of day restored commonplace thoughts of the busy Monday.
Reeves, having been sent up by his lord with inquiries, found the patient's toilet so far advanced, that under protest he could only assist in the remainder. So the hero and heroine met on the stairs, and clasped hands in haste to the sound of the bell for morning prayers in the household chapel, to which they carried their thankful hearts.

The Fordham household was not on such a scale that the heads of the family could sit still in dignified ease on the eve of such a spectacle. Every one was busy adorning the hall or the tables, and John would not be denied his share, though as he could neither stoop, lift, nor use his right arm, he was reduced to making up wreaths and bouquets, with Lina to supply him with flowers, since he was the one person with whom she never failed to be happy or good. Fordham was entreated to sit still and share the employment, but his long, thin hands proved utterly wanting in the dexterity that the Monk displayed. He was, moreover, the man in authority constantly called to give orders, and in his leisure moments much more inclined to haunt his Infanta's winged steps, and erect his tall person where she could not reach. Artistic taste rendered her, her mother, and Allen most valuable decorators, and it might be doubted whether Allen had ever toiled so hard in his life. In pity to the busy servants, luncheon was served up cold on a side table, when Barbara, who had rallied her spirits to nonsense pitch, declared that
metaphorically, Fordham and the agent carved the meal with gloves of steel, and that the workers drank the red wine through the helmet barred. In the midst, however, in marched Reeves, with a tray and a napkin, and a regular basin of invalid soup, which he set down before John in his easy chair. There was something so exceedingly ludicrous in the poor Friar's endeavour to be gratified, and his look of dismay and disgust, that the public fairly shrieked with laughter, in which he would fain have joined, but had to beg pardon for only looking solemn; laughter was a painful matter.

However, later in the afternoon, when he was looking white and tired, his host came and said—

"Your object is to be about, and not make a sensation when people arrive. Come and rest then;" then landed him on his own sofa in his sitting-room, which was kept sacred from all confusion.

About half an hour later Mrs. Evelyn said—

"Sydney, my dear, Willis is come for the tickets. Are they ready?"

"Oh, mother, I meant to have done them yesterday evening!"

"You had better take them to Duke's room, it is the only quiet place. He is not there, I wish he were. Willis can wait while you fill them up," said Mrs. Evelyn, not at all sorry to pin her daughter down for an hour's quiet, and unaware that the room was occupied.
So Sydney, with a list of names and packet of cards, betook herself to her brother's writing-table, never perceiving that there was anybody under the Algerine rug, till there was a movement, suddenly checked, and a voice said—

"Can I help?"

"Oh! don't move. I'm so sorry, I hope——"

"Oh, no! I beg your pardon," he said, with equal incoherency, and raising himself more deliberately. "Your brother put me here to rest, and I fell asleep, and did not hear you come in."

"Oh, don't! Pray, don't! I am so sorry I disturbed you. I did not know any one was here——"

"Pray, don't go! Can't I help you?"

Sydney recollected that in the general disorganisation pen, ink, and table were not easy to secure, and replied—

"It is the people in the village who are to dine here to-morrow. They must have tickets, or we shall have all manner of strangers. The stupid printer only sent the tickets yesterday, and the keeper is waiting for them. It would save time if you would read out the names while I mark the cards; but, please, lie still, or I shall go." And she came and arranged the cushions, which his movements had displaced, till he pronounced himself quite comfortable.

Hardly a word passed but "Smith James, two; Bennet Widow, one; Hacklebury Nicholas, three;"
OR, MOTHER CAREY'S BROOD.

with a "yes" after each, till they came to "Hollis Richard."

"That's the boy's father," then said Sydney.

"Have you heard anything of him?" asked John.

"Oh, yes! his mother dragged him up to beg pardon, and return thanks, but mamma thought you would rather be spared the infliction."

"Besides that, they were not my due," said John.

"I never thought of the boy."

"If you did not, you saved him twice!"

"A Newfoundland-dog instinct. But I am glad the little scamp is not the worse. I suppose he is to appear to-morrow?"

"Oh, yes! and the vicar begs no notice may be taken of him. He is really a very naughty little fellow, and if he is made a hero for getting himself and us so nearly drowned by birds'-nesting on a Sunday in the park, it will be perfectly demoralising!"

"You are as bad as your keeper!"

"I am only repeating the general voice," said Sydney, with a gleam upon her face, half-droll, half-tender. "Poor little man! I got him alone this morning, while his mother was pouring forth to mine, and I think he has a little more notion where thanks are due."

"I should like to see him," said John. "I'll try not to demoralise him; but he has given me some happy moments."

The voice was low, and Sydney blushed as she laughed and said—
"That's like Babie, saying it was delightful."

"She is quite right as far as I am concerned."

The hue on Sydney's cheek deepened excessively, as she said—

"Is George Hollis next?"

They went on steadily after that, and Willis was not kept long waiting. Then came the whirl of arrivals, Cecil with his Hampton cousins, Sir James Evelyn and Armine, Jessie and her General, and the Kenminster party. Caroline found herself in great request as general confidante, adviser, and medium as being familiar with all parties, and it was evidently a great comfort to her sister-in-law to find some one there to answer questions and give her the carte-du-pays. Outwardly, she was all the Serene Highness, a majestic matron, overshadowing everybody, not talkative, but doing her part with dignity, in great part the outcome of shyness, but rather formidable to simple-minded Mrs. Evelyn.

She heard of John's accident with equanimity amazing to her hostess, but befitting the parent of six sons who were always knocking themselves about. Indeed, John was too well launched ever to occupy much of her thoughts. Her pride was in her big Robert, and her joy in her little Harry, and her care for whichever intermediate one needed it most. This one at the moment was of course pretty, frightened, blushing Esther, who was moving about in one maze and dazzle of shyness and strangeness, hardly daring to
raise her eyes, but fortunately graceful enough to look her part well in the midst of her terrors. Such con-
tinual mistakes between her and Eleanor were made, that Cecil was advised to take care that he had the right bride; but Ellie, though so like her sister outwardly, was of a very different nature, neither shy nor timid, but of the sturdy Friar texture.

She was very unhappy at the loss of her sister, and had an odd little conversation with Babie, who showed her to her room, while the rest of the world made much of the bride.

"Ellie, the finery and flummery is to be done in Aunt Ellen's dressing-room," explained Babie; "but Essie is to sleep here with you to-night."

Poor Ellie! her lip quivered at the thought that it was for the last time, and she said, bluntly—

"I didn't want to have come! I hate it all!"

"It can't be helped," said Barbara.

"I can't think how you and Aunt Carey could give in to it!"

"It was the real article, and no mistake," said Babie.

"Yes; she is as silly about him as possible. A mere fine gentleman! Poor Bobus has more stuff in him than a dozen of him!"

"He is a real, honest, good fellow," said Babie. "I'm sorry for Bobus, but I've known Cecil almost all my life, and I can't have him abused. I do really believe that Essie will be happier with a simple-hearted fellow like him, than with a clever man like Bobus,
who has places in his mind she could never reach up to, and lucky for her too," half whispered Babie at the end.

"I thought you would have cared more for your own brother."

"Remember, they all said it would have been wrong. Besides, Cecil has been always like my brother. You will like him when you know him."

"I can't bear fine folks."

"They are anything but fine!" cried Babie indignantly.

"They can't help it. That way of Lord Fordham's, high-breeding I suppose you call it, just makes me wild. I hate it!"

"Poor Ellie. You'll have to get over it, for Essie's sake."

"No, I sha'n't. It is really losing her, as much as Jessie——"

"Jessie looks worn."

"No wonder. Jessie was a goose. Mamma told her to marry that old man, and she just did it because she was told, and now he is always ordering her about, and worries and fidgets about everything in the house. I wish one's sisters would have more sense and not marry."

Which sentiment poor Ellie uttered just as Sydney was entering by an unexpected open door into the next room, and she observed, "Exactly! It is the only consolation for not having a sister that she
can't go and marry! O Ellie, I am so sorry for you."

This somewhat softened Ellie, and she was restored to a pitch of endurance by the time Essie was escorted into the room by both the mothers.

That polished courtesy of Fordham's which Ellie so much disliked had quite won the heart of her mother, who, having viewed him from a distance as an obstacle in Esther's way, now underwent a revulsion of feeling, and when he treated her with marked distinction, and her daughter with brotherly kindness, was filled with mingled gratitude, admiration and compunction.

When, after dinner, Fordham had succeeded in rousing his uncle and the other two old soldiers out of a discussion on promotion in the army, and getting them into the drawing-room, the Colonel came and sat down by his "good little sister" to confide to her, under cover of Sydney's music, that he was very glad his pretty Essie had chosen a younger man than her elder sister's husband.

"Very opinionated is Hood!" he said, shaking his head. "Stuck out against Sir James and me in a perfectly preposterous way."

Caroline was not prepossessed in favour of General Hood, either by his conversation with herself at dinner, or by the startled way in which Jessie sat upright and put on her gloves as soon as he came in; but she did not wish to discuss him with
the Colonel, and asked whether John had gone to bed.

"Is he not here? I thought he had come in with the young ones? No? then he must have gone to bed. Could Armine or any of them show me the way to his room?—for I should like to know how the boy really is."

"I doubt if Armine knows which is his room. I had better show you, for he is not unlikely to be lying down in Fordham's sitting-room. Otherwise you must prepare for many stairs. I suppose you know how gallantly he behaved," she added, as they left the room.

"Yes, Mrs. Evelyn told me. I am glad he has not lost his athletics in his London life. I always tell his mother that John is the flower of the flock."

"A dear good brave fellow he is."

"Yes, you have been the making of him, Caroline. If we don't say much about it, we are none the less sensible of all you have been to our children. Most generous and disinterested!"

This was a speech to make Caroline tingle all over, and be glad both that she was a little in advance, and at the door of Fordham's room, where John was not. Indeed, he proved to be lying on his bed, waiting for some one to help him off with his coat, and he was gratified and surprised to the utmost by his father's visit, for in truth John was the one of all the sons who most loved and honoured his father.
If that evening were a whirl, what was the ensuing day, when all who stood in the position of hosts or their assistants were constantly on the stretch, receiving, entertaining, arranging, presiding over toilettes, getting people into their right places, saving one another trouble. If Mrs. Joseph Brownlow was an invaluable aid to Mrs. Evelyn, Allen was an admirable one to Lord Fordham, for his real talent was for society, and he had shaken himself up enough to exert it. There might have been an element of tuft-hunting in it, but there was no doubt that he was doing a useful part. For Robert was of no use at all, Armine was too much of a mere boy to take the same part, and John was feeling his injury a good deal more, could only manage to do his part as bridegroom's man, and then had to go away and lie down, while the wedding-breakfast went on. In consequence he was spared the many repetitions of hearing how he had saved Miss Evelyn from a watery grave, and Allen made a much longer speech than he would have done for himself when undertaking, on Rob's strenuous refusal, to return thanks for the bridesmaids.

That which made this unlike other such banquets, was that no one could help perceiving how much less the bridegroom was the hero of the day to the tenants than was the hectic young man who presided over the feast, and how all the speeches, however they began in honour of Captain Evelyn, always turned into wistful good auguries for the elder brother.
There was no worship of the rising sun there, for when Lord Fordham, in proposing the health of the bride and bridegroom, spoke of them as future possessors, in the tone of a father speaking of his heir apparent, there was a sub-audible "No, no," and poor Cecil fairly and flagrantly broke down in returning thanks.

Fordham's own health had been coupled with his mother's, and committed to a gentleman who knew it was to be treated briefly; but this did not satisfy the farmers, and the chief tenant rose, saying he knew it was out of course to second a toast, but he must take the opportunity on this occasion. And there followed some of that genuine native heartfelt eloquence that goes so deep, as the praise of the young landlord was spoken, the strong attachment to him found expression, and there were most earnest wishes for his long life, and happiness like his brother's.

Poor Fordham, it was very trying for him, and he could only command himself with difficulty and speak briefly. He thanked his friends with all his heart for their kindness and good wishes. Whatever might be the will of God concerning himself, they had given him one of the most precious recollections of his life, and he trusted that when sooner or later he should leave them, they would convey the same warm and friendly feelings to his successor.

There were so many tears by that time, and Mrs. Evelyn felt so much shaken, that she made the signal
for breaking up. No one was more relieved than Barbara. She must go to her room to compose herself before she could bear a word from any one, and as soon as she could gain the back stair, she gathered up her heavy white silk and dashed up, rushing along the gallery so blinded by tears under her veil that she would have had a collision if a hand had not been put out as some one drew aside to let her fly past if she wished; but as the mechanical "beg pardon" was exchanged, she knew Fordham's voice and paused. "I was going to look after the wounded Friar," he said, and then he saw her tearful eyes, and she exclaimed, "I could not help it! I could not stay. You would say such things. O, Duke! Duke!"

It was the first time she had used the familiar old name, but she did not know what she said. He put her into a great carved chair, and knelt on one knee by her, saying, "Poor Rogers, I wish he had let it alone. It was hard for my mother and Cecil."

"Then how could you go on and break all our hearts!" sobbed Babie.

"It will make a better beginning for Cecil. I want them to learn to look to him. I thought every one knew that each month I am here is like an extra time granted after notice, and that it was no shock to any one to look forward to that fine young couple."

"Oh, don't! I can't bear it," she exclaimed, weeping bitterly.
“Don’t grieve, dearest. I have tried hard, but I find I cannot do my work as it ought to be done. People are very kind, but I am content, when the time comes, to leave it to one to whom it will not be such effort and weariness. This is really one of the most gladsome days of my life. Won’t you believe it?”

“I know unselfish people are happy.”

“And do you know that you are giving me the sweetest drop of all, to-day?” said Fordham, giving one shy, fervent kiss to the hand that clasped the arm of the chair just as sounds of ascending steps caused them to start asunder and go their separate ways.
CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE TRAVELLER'S JOY.

'Tis true bright hours together told,
And blissful dreams in secret shared,
Serene or solemn, gay or bold,
Still last in fancy unimpaired.

Keble.

To his mother's surprise, Lucas did not betray any
discomfiture at Sydney's adventure, nor even at
John's having, of necessity, been left behind for a
week at Fordham after all the other guests were gone.
All he said was that the Friar was in luck.

He himself was much annoyed at the despatch he
had received from Japan. Of course there had been
much anxiety as to the way in which Bobus would
receive the tidings of Esther's engagement; and his
mother had written it to him with much tenderness
and sympathy. But instead of replying to her letter,
he had written only to Lucas, so entirely ignoring the
whole matter that except for some casual allusion to
some other subject, it would have been supposed that
he had not received it. He desired his brother to
send him out the rest of his books and other posses-
sions which he had left provisionally in England; and
he likewise sent a manuscript with orders to him to
get it published and revise the proofs. It proved to be a dissertation on Buddhism, containing such a bitter attack upon Christianity that Jock was strongly tempted to put it in the fire at once, and had written to Bobus to refuse all assistance in its publication, and to entreat him to reconsider it. He would not telegraph, in order that there might be more time to cool down, for he felt convinced that this demonstration was a species of revenge, at least so far that there was a certain satisfaction in showing what lengths the baffled lover might go to, when no longer withheld by the hope of Esther or by consideration for his mother.

Jock would have kept back the knowledge from her, but she was too uneasy about Bobus for him not to tell her. She saw it in the same light, feared that her son would never entirely forgive her, but went on writing affectionate letters to him all the same, whether he answered them or not. Oh, what a pang it was that she had never tried to make the boy religious in his childhood.

Then she looked at Jock, and wondered whether he would harbour any such resentment against her when he came to perceive what she had seen beginning at Fordham.

John came back most ominously radiant. It had been very bad weather, and he and Sydney seemed to have been doing a great quantity of fretwork together, and to have had much music, only chaperoned by old Sir James, for Fordham had been paying for his
exertions at the wedding by being confined to his room.

He had sent Babie a book, namely, Vaughan's beautiful "Silex Scintillans," full of marked passages, which went to her heart. She asked leave to write and thank him, and in return his mother wrote to hers, "Duke is much gratified by the dear Infanta's note. He would like to write to her unless he knows you would not object."

To which Caroline replied, "Let him write whatever he pleases to Barbara. I am sure it will only be what is good for her." Indeed Babie had been by many degrees quieter since her return.

So a correspondence began, and was carried on till after Easter, when the whole party came to London for the season. Mrs. Evelyn wished Fordham to be under Dr. Medlicott's eye; also to give Sydney another sight of the world, and to superintend Mrs. Cecil Evelyn's very inexperienced début.

The young people had made a most exquisitely felicitous tour in the South of France and North of Spain, and had come back to a pleasant little house, which had been taken for them near the Park. There Cecil was bent on giving a great house-warming, a full family party. He would have everybody, for he had prevailed to have Fordham sleeping there while his room in his own house received its final arrangements; and Caroline had added to Ellen's load of obligation by asking her and the Colonel to come for
a couple of nights to behold their daughter dressed for the Drawing-room.

That would no doubt be a pretty sight, but to others her young matronly dignity was a prettier sight still, as she stood in her soft dainty white, receiving her guests, the rosy colour a little deepened, though she knew and loved them all, and Cecil by her side, already having made a step out of his boyhood by force of adoration and protection.

But their lot was fixed, and they could not be half so interesting to Caroline as the far less beautiful young sister, who could only lay claim to an honest, pleasant, fresh-coloured intelligent face, only prevented by an air of high-breeding from being milkmaid-like. It was one of those parties when the ingenuity of piercing a puzzle is required to hinder more brothers and sisters from sitting together than could be helped.

So fate or contrivance placed Sydney between the two Johns at the dinner-table, and Mother Carey, on the other side, felt that some indication must surely follow. Yet Sydney was apparently quite unconscious, and she was like the description in "Rokeby:"—

"Two lovers by the maiden sate
Without a glance of jealous hate;
The maid her lovers sat between
With open brow and equal mien;
It is a sight but rarely spied,
Thanks to man's wrath and woman's pride."

Were these to awaken? They seemed to be all
three talking together in the most eager and amiable manner, quite like old times, and Jock's bright face was full of animation. She had plenty of time for observation, for the Colonel liked a good London dinner, and knew he need not disturb his enjoyment to make talk for "his good little sister." Presently, however, he began to tell her that the Goulds and Elvira had really set out for America, and when her attention was free again, she found that Jock had been called in by Fordham to explain to Essie whether she had, or had not, seen Roncesvalles, while Sydney and John were as much engrossed as ever.

So it continued all the rest of the dinner-time. Jock was talked to by Fordham, but John never once turned to his other neighbour. In the evening, the party divided, for it was very warm, and rather than inconvenience the lovers of fresh air, Fordham retreated into the inner drawing-room, where there was a fire. He had asked Babie to bring the old numbers of the "Traveller's Joy," as he had a fancy for making a selection of the more memorable portions, and having them privately printed as a memorial of those bright days. Babie and Armine were there looking them over with him, and the former would fain have referred to Sydney, but on looking for her, saw she was out among the flowers in the glass-covered balcony, too much absorbed even to notice her summons. Only Jock came back with her, and sat turning over the numbers in rather a dreamy way.
The ladies and the Colonel were sent home in Mrs. Evelyn's carriage, where Ellen purred about Esther's happiness and good fortune all the way back. Caroline lingered, somewhat purposely, writing a note that she might see the young men when they came back.

They wished her good-night in their several fashions. "Good-night, mother. Well, some people are born with silver spoons!"

"Good-night, mother dear. Don't you think Fordham looks dreadful?"

"Oh, no, Armie; much better than when I came up to town."

"Good-night, Mother Carey. If those young folks make all their parties so jolly, it will be the pleasantest house in London! Good-night!"

"Mother," said Jock, as the cousin, softly humming a tune, sprang up the stairs, "does the wind sit in that quarter?"

"I am grievously afraid that it does," she said.

"It is no wonder," he said, doctoring the wick of his candle with her knitting-needle. "Did you know it before?"

"I began to suspect it after the accident, but I was not sure; nor am I now."

"I am," said Jock, quietly.

"She is a stupid girl!" burst out his mother.

"No! there's no blame to either of them. That's one comfort. She gave me full warning, and he knew nothing about it, nor ever shall."
"He is just as much a medical student as you! That vexes me."
"Yes, but he did not give up the service for it, when she implored him."
"A silly girl! O Jock, if you had but come down to Fordham."
"It might have made no odds. Friar was so aggressively jolly after his Christmas visit, that I fancy it was done then. Besides, just look at us together!"
"He will never get your air of the Guards."
"Which is preposterously ridiculous in the hospital," said Jock, endeavouring to smile. "Never mind, mother. It was all up with me two years ago, as I very well knew. Good-night. You've only got me the more whole and undivided, for the extinction of my will-of-the-wisp."

She saw he had rather say no more, and only returned his fervent embrace with interest; but Babie knew she was restless and unhappy all night, and would not ask why, being afraid to hear that it was about Fordham, who coughed more, and looked frailer.

He never went out in the evening now, and only twice to the House, when his vote was more than usually important; but Mrs. Evelyn was taking Sydney into society, and the shrinking Esther needed a chaperon much more, being so little aware of her own beauty, that she was wont to think something
amiss with her hair or her dress when she saw people looking at her.

Sydney had no love for the gaieties, and especially tried to avoid their own county member, who showed signs of pursuing her. Her real delight and enthusiasm were for the surprise parties, to which she always inveigled her mother when it was possible. Mrs. Evelyn was not by any means unwilling, but Cecil and Esther loved them not, and much preferred seeing the Collingwood Street cousins without the throng of clever people, who were formidable to Esther, and wearisome to Cecil.

Jock seldom appeared on these evenings. He was working harder than ever. He was studying a new branch of his profession, which he had meant to delay for another year, and had an appointment at the hospital which occupied him a great deal. He had offered himself for another night-school class, and spent his remaining leisure on Dr. and Mrs. Lucas, who needed his attention greatly, though Mrs. Lucas had her scruples, feared that he was overdoing himself, and begged his mother to prohibit some of his exertions. Dr. Medlicott himself said something of the same kind to Mrs. Brownlow. "Young men will get into a rush, and suffer for it afterwards," he said, "and Jock is looking ill and overstrained. I want him to remember that such an illness as he had in Switzerland does not leave a man's heart quite as sound as before, and he must not overwork himself."
"And yet I don't know how to interfere," said his mother. "There are hearts and hearts, you know," she added.

"Ah! Work may sometimes be the least of two evils," and the doctor said no more.

"So Jock will not come," said Mrs. Evelyn, opening a note declining a dinner in Cavendish Square.

"His time is very much taken up," said his mother. "It is one of his class-nights."

"So he says. It is a strange question to ask, but I cannot help it. Do you think he fully enters into the situation?"

"I say in return, Do you remember my telling you that the two cousins always avoided rivalry?"

"Then he acts deliberately. Forgive me; I felt that unless I was certain of this virtual resignation of the unspoken hope, I was not acting fairly in allowing—I cannot say encouraging—what I cannot help seeing."

"Dear Mrs. Evelyn! you understand that it is no slight to Sydney, but you know why he held back; and now he sees that his absence has made room for John, he felt that there was no chance for him, and that the more he can keep out of the way the better it is for all parties. Honest John has never had the least notion that he has come between Jock and his hopes, and it is our great desire that he should not guess it."

"Well! what can I say? You are generous people,
you and your son; but young folks' hearts will go their own way. I had made up my mind to a struggle with the prejudices of all the family, and I had rather it had been for Jock; but it can't be helped, and there is not a shadow of objection to the other John."

"No, indeed! He is only not Jock——"

"And I do not think my Sydney was knowingly fickle, but she thought she had utterly disgusted and offended Jock by her folly about the selling out, and that it was a failure of influence. Poor child! it was all a cloud of shame and grief to her. I think he would have dispelled it if he had come to the wedding, but as he did not——"

"The Adriatic was free," said Caroline, trying to smile. "I see it all, dear Mrs. Evelyn. I neither blame you nor Sydney; and I trust all will turn out right for my poor boy."

"He deserves it!" said Mrs. Evelyn with a sigh.

There was a good deal more intercourse between Cavendish Square and Collingwood Street than Mother Carey had expected. Mrs. Evelyn and her son and daughter fell into the habit of coming, when they went out for a drive, to see whether Mrs. Brownlow or Barbara would come with them; and as it was almost avowed that Babie was the object, she almost always went, and kept Fordham company in the carriage, whilst his mother and sister were shopping or making calls. He had certainly lost
much ground in these few weeks; he had ceased to ride, and never went out in the evening; but the doctors still said he might live for months or years if he avoided another English winter. His mother was taking Sydney into society, and Esther was always happier when under their wing, being rather frightened by the admiration of which Cecil was so proud. When they went out much before Fordham's bed time, he was thankful for the companionship of Allen or Armine, generally the former, for Armine was reading hard, and working after lectures for a tutor; while Allen, unfortunately, had nothing to prevent him from looking in whenever Mrs. Evelyn was out, to play chess, read aloud, or assist in that re-editing of the cream of the "Traveller's Joy," which seemed the invalid's great amusement. Fordham had a few scruples at first, and when Allen had undertaken to come to him for the whole afternoon of a garden-party, he consulted Barbara whether it was not permitting too great a sacrifice of valuable time.

"You don't mean that for irony?" said Babie. "It is only so much time subtracted from tobacco."

"Will you let me say something to you, Infanta?" returned Fordham, with all his gentleness. "It seems to me that you are not always quite kind in your way of speaking of Allen."

"If you knew how provoking he is!"

"I have a great fellow-feeling for him, having
grown up the same sort of helpless being as he has been. I should be much worse in his place."

"Never!" cried Babie. "You would never hang about the house, worrying mother about eating and fiddle-faddles, instead of doing any one useful thing!"

"But if one can't?"

"I don't believe in can't."

"Happy person!"

"Oh, Duke, you know I never meant health; you know I did not," and then a pang shot across her as she remembered her past contempt of him whom she now reverenced.

"There are other incapacities," he said.

"But," said Babie, half-pleading, half-meditating, "Allen is not stupid. He used to be considered just as clever as Bobus; and he is so now to talk to. Can there be any reason but laziness, and want of application, that makes him never succeed in anything, except in answering riddles and acrostics in the papers? He generally just begins things, and makes mother or Armie finish them for him. He really did set to work and finish up an article on Count Ugolino since we came home from Fordham, and he has tried all the periodicals round, and they won't have it, not even the editors that know mother!"

"Poor fellow! And you have no pity!"

"Don't you think it is his own fault?"
"It is quite possible that he would have done much better if he had always had to work for his livelihood. I grant you that even as a rich man he ought to have avoided the desultory ways, which, as you say, are more likely to have caused his failures than want of native ability. But I don't like to see you hard upon him. You hardly realise how cruelly he has been treated in return for a very deep and generous attachment, or how such a grief must make it more difficult for him to exert his powers."

"I don't like you to think me hard and unkind," said Babie, sadly.

"Only a little over just," said Fordham. "I am sure you could do a great deal to help and brighten Allen; and," he added, smiling, "in the name of spoilt and shiftless heirs, I hope you will try."

"Indeed I will," said Babie earnestly, as the footman at the shop door signalled to the coachman that his ladies were ready.

She found it the less difficult to remember what he had said, because Allen himself was much less provoking to her. Something was due to the influence and example of the strenuous endeavour that Fordham made to keep up to such duties as he had undertaken, not indeed onerous in themselves, but a severe labour to a man in his state. It had been intimated to him also that his saturation with tobacco was distressing to his friend, and he was fond enough of him to abstain from his solace, except when walking home at night.
Perhaps this had cleared his senses to perceive habits of consideration for the family, which he had never thought incumbent on himself, whatever they might be in his brothers; and his eyes were open, as they had never yet been, to his mother's straits. It was chiefly indeed through his fastidiousness. His mother and Babie had existed most of this time upon their Belforest wardrobe; indeed, the former, always wearing black, was still fairly provided; but Babie, who had not in those days been out, was less extensively or permanently provided; and Allen objected to the style in which she appeared in the enamelled carriage, "like a nursery governess out for an airing."

"Or not so smart," said Babie, merrily putting on her little black hat with the heron's plume, and running down stairs.

"She does not care," said Allen; "but mother, how can you let her?"

"I can't help it, Allen. We turned out all the old feathers and flowers, to see if I could find anything more respectable; but things don't last in Bloomsbury, and they only looked fit to point a moral, and not at all to adorn a tail or a head."

"I should think not. But can't the poor child have something fresh, and like other people?"

No; her uncle had given her bridesmaid's dress, but there had been expenses enough connected with the journey to Fordham to drain the dress purse, and the sealskin cap that had been then available could
not be worn in the sun of June. There had been sundry incidental calls for money. Mother Carey had been disappointed in the sale of a somewhat ambitious set of groups from Fouqué's "Seasons," which were declared abstruse and uninteresting to the public. She had accepted an order for some very humble work, not much better than chimney ornaments, for which she rose early, and toiled while Babie was out driving with her friends. When she had the money for this she would be more at ease, and if it came to a little more than she durst reckon upon, she could venture on some extras.

"Babie might earn it for herself; she is full of inventions."

"There is nothing more strongly impressed on me than that those children are not to begin being made literary hacks before they are come to maturity. One Christmas tale a year is the utmost I ought to allow."

"I wish I could be a literary hack, or anything else," sighed poor Allen.

It was the first time he really let himself understand what a burden he was, and as Fordham was one of those people who involuntarily almost draw out confidence, he talked it over with him. Allen himself was convinced, by having really tried, that he was not as availably clever as others of his family. Whether nature or dawdling was to blame, he had neither originality nor fire. He could not get
his plots or his characters to work, even when his mother or Babie jogged them on by remarks: his essays were heavy and unreadable, his jokes hung fire, and he had so exhausted every one's patience, that the translations and small reviewing work which he could have done were now unattainable. He was now ready to do anything, and he actually meant it, but there seemed nothing for him to do. Mrs. Evelyn succeeded in getting him two pupils, little pickles whom their sister's governess could not manage, and whom he was to teach for two hours every morning in preparation for their going to school.

He attended faithfully, but he was not the man to deal with pickles. The mutual aversion with which the connection began, increased upon further acquaintance. The boys found out his weak points, and played tricks, learnt nothing, and made his life a burden to him; and though the lady mother liked him extremely, and could not think why her sons were so naughty with him, it would not be easy to say which of the parties concerned looked with the strongest sense of relief to the close of the engagement.

The time spent with Fordham was, however, the compensation. There was sincere liking on both sides, and such helpfulness that Fordham more than once wished he had some excuse for making Allen his secretary; and perhaps would have done so
if he had really believed such a post would be permanent.

Armine's term likewise ended, and his examination being over with much credit, he wished for nothing better than to resume the pursuits he had long shared with Fordham. He had not Jock's facility in forming intimacies with youths of his own age. His development was too exclusively on the spiritual and intellectual side to attract ordinary lads, and his home gave him sufficient interests outside his studies; and thus Fordham was still his sole, as well as his earliest, friend outside the family. Their intercourse had never received the check that circumstances had interposed between others of the two families, Armine had spent part of almost all his vacations with the Evelyns, the correspondence had been a great solace to the invalid, and the friendship grew yearly more equal.

Armine was to join the Evelyn party when they went to the seaside, as they intended to do on leaving London. It was the fashion to say he looked pale and overworked, but he had really attained to very fair health, and was venturing at last to look forward in earnest to a clerical life; a thought that began to colour and deepen all his more intimate conversations with his friend, who could share with him many of the reflections matured in the seclusion of ill-health. For they were truly congenial spirits, and poor Fordham was more experienced in the lore of
suffering and resignation than his twenty-seven years seemed to imply.

Meantime, the work of editing the "Traveller's Joy" was carried on. Some five-and-twenty copies were printed, containing all the favourite papers—a specimen from each contributor, from a shocking bad riddle of Cecil's to Dr. Medlicott's commentary upon the myths of the nursery; from Armine's original acrostic on the "Rhine and Rhone," down to the "Phantom Blackcock of Kilnaught;" the best illustrations from Mrs. Brownlow's sketches, and Dr. Medlicott's clever pen-and-ink outlines were reproduced; and, with much pains and expense, Fordham had procured photographs of all the marked spots, from Schwarenbach even to Fordham Church, so that Cecil and Esther considered it a graceful memorial of their courtship.

"So very kind of Duke," they said.

Esther had quite forgotten all her dread of him, and never was happier than when he was listening to all that had amused her in the gaieties which she liked much better in the past than in the present.

The whole was finished at last, after many a pleasant discussion and reunion scene, and the books were sent to the binder. Fordham was eager for them to come home, and rather annoyed at some delays which made it doubtful whether they would be received before he, with his mother and sister, were to leave town. It was late, and June had come
in, and the weight of London air was oppressing him and making him weaker, and his mother, anxious to get him into sea air, had made no fresh engagements. It was a surprise to meet him at All Saints on St. Peter's day.

"Come with us, Infanta," he said, pausing at the door of the carriage. "I am to have my drive early to-day, as the ladies are going to this great garden-party."

Sydney said she would walk home with Mrs. Brownelow, and be taken up when Babie was set down.

Fordham gave the word to go to the binder's.

"I should have thought you had better have gone into some clearer air," said his mother, for he looked very languid.

"There will be time for a turn in the park afterwards," he said; "and the books were to be ready yesterday, if there is any faith in binders."

The books were ready, and Fordham insisted on having them deposited on the seat beside him, in spite of all offers of sending them; and a smiling—

"Oh, Duke, your name should have been Babie," from his mother.

They then drove to Cecil's house, where Mrs. Evelyn went in to let Esther know her hour of starting; but where Cecil came running down, and putting his head into the carriage, said—

"Come in, mamma; here's the housemaid been bullying Essie, and she wants you to help her.
These two can go round the park by themselves, can’t they?”

“Those are the most comical pair of children,” said Fordham, laughing, as the carriage moved on. “Will Esther ever make a serene highness?”

“It is not in her,” said Babie. “It might have been in Jessie, if her General was not such a horrid old martinet as to hinder the development; but Essie is much nicer as she is.”

Meantime, Fordham’s fingers were on the knot of the string of his parcel.

“Oh, you are going to peep in? I am so glad.”

“Since mamma is not here to laugh at me.”

“You’ll tell her you did it to please the Babie!”

“There, it is you that are doing it now,” as her vigorous little fingers plucked far more effectively at the cord than his thin weak ones.

Out came at last one of the choice dark green books, with a clematis wreath stamped on the cover, and it was put into Barbara’s lap.

“How pretty! This is mother’s own design for the title-page! And oh—how capital! Dr. Medlicott’s sketch of the mud baths, with Jock shrinking into a corner out of the way of the fat Gräfin! You have everything. Here is Armine’s Easter hymn!”

“I wished to commemorate the whole range of feeling,” said Fordham.

“I see; you have even picked out the least ridiculous chapter of Jotapata. I wish some one had
sketched you patiently listening to the nineteen copy-books. It would have been a monument of good nature. And here is actually Sydney's poem about wishing to have been born in the twelfth century:—

"Would that I lived in time of faith,
When parable was life,
When the red cross in Holy Land
Led on the glorious strife.
Oh! for the days of golden spurs,
Of tournament and tilt,
Of pilgrim vow, and prowess high,
When minsters fair were built;
When holy priest the tonsure wore,
The friar had his cord,
And honour, truth, and loyalty
Edged each bold warrior's sword."

"The solitary poetical composition of our family," said Fordham, "chiefly memorable, I fear, for the continuation it elicited."

"Would that I lived in days of yore,
When outlaws bold were rife,
The days of dagger and of bowl,
Of dungeon and of strife.
Oh! for the days when forks were not,
On skewers came the meat;
When from one trencher ate three foes:
Oh! but those times were sweet!
When hooded hawks sat overhead,
And underfoot was straw
Where hounds and beggars fought for bones
Alternately to gnaw."

"That was Jock's, I believe. How furious it did make us. Good old Sydney, she has lived in her romance ever since."

VOL. III.
"Wisely or unwisely."
"Can it be unwisely, when it is so pure and bright as hers, and gives such a zest to common things?"
"Glamour sometimes is perplexing."
"Do you know, Duke, I would sometimes give worlds to think of things as I used in those old times."
"You a world-wearied veteran!"
"Don't laugh at me. It was when Bobus was at home. His common sense made all we used to care for seem so silly, that I have never been able to get back my old way of looking at things?"
"I am afraid glamour once dispelled does not return. Yet, after all, truth is the greater. And I am sure that poor Bobus never loosened my Infanta's hold on the real truth."
"I don't know," she said, looking down; "he or his books made me afraid to think about it, and like to laugh at some things—no, I never did before you. You hushed me on the very borders of that kind of flippancy, and so you don't guess how horrid I am, or have been, for you have made things true and real to me again."
"'Fancy may die, but Faith is there,'" said Fordham. "I think you will never shut your eyes to those realities again," he added, gently. "It is there that we shall still meet. And my Infanta will make me one promise."
"I would promise you any thing."

"Never knowingly to read those sneering books," he said, laying his hand on hers. "Current literature is so full of poisoned shafts that it may not be possible entirely to avoid them; and there may sometimes be need to face out a serious argument, but you will promise me never to take up that scoffing style of literature for mere amusement?"

"Never, Duke, I promise," she said. "I shall always see your face, and feel your hand forbidding me."

Then as he leant back, half in thankfulness, half in weariness, she went on looking over the book, and read a preface, new to her.

"I have put these selections together, thinking that to the original 'Travellers' it may be a joy to have a memorial of happy days full of much innocent pleasure and wholesome intercourse. Let me here express my warm gratitude for all the refreshments afforded by the friendships it commemorates, and which makes the name most truly appropriate. As a stranger and pilgrim whose journey may be near its close, let me be allowed thus to weave a parting garland of some of the brightest flowers that have bloomed on the wayside, and in dedicating the collection to my dear companions and fellow-wanderers in the scenes it records, let me wish that on the highway of life that stretches before them,
they may meet with many a 'Traveller's Joy,' as true as they have been to the Editor.

"F—.

Babie, with eyes full of tears, was looking up to speak, when the carriage, having completed the round, again stopped, and Mrs. Evelyn came down, escorted by Cecil, with hearty thanks.

"Essie's nice clean, fresh, country notions were scouted by the London housemaid," she said. "I am happy to say the child held her own, though the woman presumed outrageously on her gentleness, and neither of the two had any notion how to get rid of her."

"Arcadia had no housemaids," said Fordham, rallying.

"If not, it must have been nearly as bad as Jock's twelfth century," said Babie, in the same tone.

"Ah! I see!" said Mrs. Evelyn, laughing.

And there was a little playful banter as to which had been the impatient one to open the parcel, each pretending to persuade her that it had been a mere yielding to the other. Thus they came to Collingwood Street, where Babie would have taken out her book.

"No, no, wait," said Fordham. "I want to write your name in it first. I'll send it this evening. Ali and Armie are coming to me while these good people are at their Duchess's."
"Our last gaiety, I am thankful to say," returned his mother, as Barbara felt a fervent squeeze of the hand, which she knew was meant to remind her of the deeper tone of their conversation.

It was a very hot day, and in the cool of the evening the two Johns beguiled Mrs. Brownlow and Babie into a walk. They had only just come home when there was a hurried peal at the bell, and Armine, quite pale, dashed up stairs after them.

"Mother, come directly! I've got a hansom."

"Fordham?" asked John.

Armine sighed an affirmative.

"Allen sent me for mother. He said one of you had better come. It's a blood-vessel. We have sent for Medlicott, and telegraphed for the others. But oh! they are so far off!"

Mrs. Brownlow gave Barbara one kiss, and put her into Jock's arms, then sprang into the cab, followed by John, and was driven off. The other three walked in the same direction, almost unconsciously, as Armine explained more fully.

Fordham had seemed tired at first, but as it became cooler, had roused himself, seated himself at his writing-table, and made one by one the inscriptions in the volumes, including all their party of travellers, even Janet and Bobus; Reeves, who had been their binder, Mrs. Evelyn's maid, and one or two intimate friends—such as Mr. Ogilvie and his sister—and almost all had some kind little motto or
special allusion written below the name, and the date. It had thus taken a long time, and Fordham leant back so weary that Allen wanted him to leave the addressing of the books, when wrapped up, to him and Armine; but he said there were some he wished to direct himself, and he was in the act of asking Bobus' right address, when a cough seized him, and Allen instantly saw cause to ring for Reeves. The last thing that Armine had seen was a wave of the hand to hasten his own departure, as Allen despatched him for his mother, and gave orders for the summoning of others more needed, but who might not be fetched so promptly.

Then Jock had time to question whether Barbara ought to go on with him and Armine to the door, but there was a sound in her "Let me! I must!" that they could not withstand; and they walked on in absolute silence, except that Jock said Reeves knew exactly what to do.

Dr. Medlicott's carriage was at the door, and on their ringing, they were silently beckoned into the dining-room, where their mother came to them. She could not speak at first, but the way in which she kissed Barbara told them how it was. All had been over before she reached the house. Dr. Medlicott had come, but could do nothing more than direct Allen how to support the sufferer as he sank, with but little struggle, while a sudden beam of joy and gladness lit up his face at the last. There had been
no word from the first. By the time the flow of blood ceased, the power of speech was gone, and there was thus less reason to regret the absence of the nearest and dearest.

Mrs. Brownlow said she must await their return with Allen, who was terribly shocked and overcome by this his first and sudden contact with death. John, too, had better remain for his sister's sake, but the others had better go home.

"Yes, my child, you must go," she said, laying her hand on the cold ones of Barbara, who stood white, silent, and stunned by the shock.

"Oh, don't make me," said a dull, dreamy, pitcous voice.

"Indeed you must, my dear. It would only add to the pain and confusion to have you here now. They may like to have you to-morrow. Remember, he is not here. Take her, Jock. Take care of her."

The coming of Sir James Evelyn at that moment gave Babie the impulse of movement, and Dr. Medlicott hurrying out to offer the use of his carriage, made her cling to Jock, and then to sign rather than speak her desire to walk with her brothers.

Swiftly and silently they went along the streets on that June night in the throng of carriages carrying people to places of amusement, the wheels surging in their ears with the tramp and scuffle of feet on the pavement like echoes from some far-off world. Now
and then there was a muffled sound from Armine, but no word was spoken till they were within their own door.

Then Jock saw for one moment Armine’s face perfectly writhe with suppressed grief; but the boy gave no time for a word, hurrying up the stairs as rapidly as possible to his own room.

“Will not you go to bed? Mother will come to you there,” said Jock to his sister, who was still quite white and tearless.

“Please not,” was her entreaty. “Suppose they sent for me!”

He did not think they would, but he let her sit in the dark by the open window, listening; and he put his arm round her, and said, gently—

“You are much honoured, Babie. It is a great thing to have held so pure and true a heart, not for time, but eternity.”

“Don’t, Jock. Not yet! I can’t bear it,” she moaned; but she laid her head on his shoulder, and so rested till he said—

“If you can spare me, Babie, I think I must see to Arminie. He seemed to me terribly overcome.”

“Arminie has lost his very best and dearest friend,” she said, pressing her hands together. “Oh yes, go to him! Arminie can feel, and I can’t! I can only choke!”

Jock apprehended a hysterical struggle, but there only came one long sob like strangulation, and he
thought the pent up feeling might better find its course if she were left alone, and he was really anxious about Armine, remembering what the loss was to him, that it was his first real grief, and that he had had a considerable share of the first shock of the alarm.

His soft knock was unheard, and as he gently pushed open the door, he saw Armine kneeling in the dark with his head bowed over his prayer-desk, and would have retreated, but he had been heard, and Armine rose and came forward.

The light on the stairs showed a pale, tear-stained face, but calm and composed; and it was in a steady, though hushed, voice that he said—

"Can I be of any use?"

"I am sorry to have disturbed you. I only came to see after you. This is a sore stroke on you, Armie."

"I can stand it better, now. I have given him up to God as he bade me," said Armine. "It had been a weary, disappointed, struggling life, and he never wished it to last."

The tears were choking him, but they were gentle ones. "He thought it might be like this—and soon—only he hoped to get home first. And I can give thanks for him, what he has been to me, and what he will be to me all my life."

"That is right, Armie. John did great things for us all when he caught the carriage."

"And how is Babie?"
"Poor child, she seems as if she could neither speak nor cry. It is half hysterical, and I was going to get something for her to take. Perhaps seeing you may be good for her."

"Poor little thing, she is almost his widow, though she scarcely knows it," said Armine, coming down with his brother.

They found Babie still in the same intent, transfixed, watching state; but she let Armine draw her close to him, and listened as he told her, in a low tender voice of the talks he had had with Fordham, who had expressed to his young friend, as to no one else, his own feelings as to his state, and said much that he had spared others, who could not listen with that unrealising calmness that comes when sorrow, never yet experienced, is almost like a mere vision. And as Babie listened, the large soft tears began to fall, drop by drop, and the elder brother's anxiety was lessened. He made them eat and drink for one another's sake, and watched over them with a care that was almost parental, till at nearly half-past twelve o'clock the other three came home.

They said Mrs. Evelyn had come fully prepared by the telegram, and under an inexplicable certitude which made it needless to speak the word to her. She was thankful that Marmaduke had been spared the protracted weeks of struggle in which his elder brothers' lives had closed, and she said—

"We knew each other too well to need last words."
Indeed she was in the exalted state that often makes the earlier hours and days of bereavement the least distressing, and Sydney was absorbed in the care of her. Neither had been nearly so much overcome as Cecil and Esther, who had been hunted up with difficulty. He seemed to be as much shocked and horrified as if his brother had been in the strongest possible health; and poor Esther felt it wicked and unfeeling to have been dancing, and cried so bitterly that the united efforts of her aunt and brother could not persuade her that what was done in simple duty and obedience need give no pang, and that Mrs. Evelyn never thought of the incongruity.

It was only her husband's prostration with grief and desolation that drew her off, to do her best with her pretty childish caresses and soothes; and when the two had been sent to their own home, Mrs. Evelyn was so calm that her friend felt she might be left with her daughter for the night, and returned, bringing her tender love to "Our Babie," as she called the girl.

She clung very much to Barbara in the ensuing days. The presence of every one seemed to oppress her except that of her own children, and the two youngest Brownlows, for had not Armine been the depository of all Fordham's last messages? What she really seemed to return to as a refreshment after each needful consultation with Sir James on the dreary tasks of the mourners, was to finish the
packing of those "Traveller's Joys" which lay strewn about Fordham's sitting-room, open at the fly leaves, that the ink might dry.

Esther was very gentle and sweet, taking it quite naturally that Babie should be a greater comfort to her mother-in-law than herself; and content to be a very valuable assistant herself, for the stimulus made her far more capable than she had been thought to be. She managed almost all the feminine details, while Sir James attended to the rest. She answered all the notes, and wrote all the letters that did not necessarily fall on her husband and his mother; and her unobtrusive helpfulness made her a daughter indeed.

All the young men went to the funeral; but Mrs. Brownlow felt that it was a time for friends to hold back till they were needed, when relations had retreated; so she only sent Babie, whom Mrs. Evelyn and Sydney could not spare, and she followed after three weeks, when Allen was released from his unwelcome work.

She found Mrs. Evelyn feeling it much more difficult to keep up than it had been at first, now that she sorely missed the occupation of her life. For full twenty years she had had an invalid on her mind, and Cecil's marriage had made further changes in her life. It was not the fault of the young couple. They did not love their new honours at all. Apart from their affection, Cecil hated trouble and responsibility, and could not bear to shake himself out of his groove,
and Esther was frightened at the charge of a large household. Their little home was still a small paradise to them, and they implored their mother to allow things to go on as they were, and Cecil continue in the Guards, while she reigned as before at Fordham; letting the Cavendish Square house, which Essie viewed with a certain nervous horror.

Mrs. Evelyn had so far consented that the change need not be made for at least a year. Her dower house was let, and she would remain as mistress of Fordham till the term was over, by which time the young Lady Fordham might have risen to her position, and her Lord be less unwilling to face his new cares.

"And they will be always wanting me to take the chair," said he, in a deplorable voice that made the others laugh in spite of themselves; and he was so grateful to his mother for staying in his house, and letting him remain in his regiment, that he seemed to have quite forgotten that the power was in his own hands.
CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE TRUST FULFILLED.

You know, my father left me some prescriptions
Of rare and prov'd effects, such as his reading,
And manifest experience, had collected
For general sovereignty; and that he will'd me
In heedfullest reservation to bestow them,
As notes, whose faculties inclusive were,
More than they were in note.

All's Well that Ends Well.

Another year had come and gone, with its various changes, and the mother of the Collingwood Street household felt each day that the short life of Marmaduke Viscount Fordham had not been an unimportant one to her children.

It had of course told the most on Barbara. Her first great grief seemed to have smoothed out the harsher lines of her character, and made her gentle and tolerant as she had never been; or more truly, she had learnt charity at a deeper source. That last summer had lifted her into a different atmosphere. What she had shared with Fordham she loved. She had felt the reality of the invisible world to him, and knew he trusted to her meeting his spirit
there even in this life, and the strong faith of his mother had strengthened the impression.

Heavenly things had seemed more true,
And came down closer to her view

now that his presence was among them. She had by no means lost her vivacity. There would always be a certain crispness, drollery, and keenness about her, and she had too much of her mother's elasticity to be long depressed; but instead of looking on with impatient criticism at good works, she had learnt to be ardent in the cause, and she was a most effective helper. To Armine, it was as if Fordham had given him back the sister of his childhood to be as thoroughly one in aims and sympathies as ever, but with a certain clearness of eye, brisk alacrity of execution, and quickness of judgment that made her a valuable assistant, the complement, as it were, of his more contemplative nature.

He had just finished his course at King's College, and taken a fair degree, and he was examining advertisements, with a view to obtaining some employment in teaching that would put a sufficient sum in his hands to enable him to spend a year at one of the theological colleges, in preparation for Ordination. His mother was not happy about it, she never would be quite easy as to Armine's roughing it at any chance school, and she had much rather he had spent
the intervening year in working as a lay assistant to Mr. Ogilvie, who had promised to give him a title for Orders, and would direct his reading.

Armine, however, said he could neither make himself Mr. Ogilvie's guest for a year, nor let his mother pay his expenses; also that he wished to do something for himself, and that he felt the need of definite training. All he would do, was to promise that if he should find himself likely to break down in his intended employment of tuition, he would give up in time and submit to her plan of boarding him at S. Cradocke's.

"But," as he said to Babie, "I don't think it is self-will to feel bound to try to exert myself for the one great purpose of my life. I am too old to live upon mother any longer."

"How I do wish I could do anything to help you to the year at C——. Mother has always said that she will let me try to publish 'Hart's-tongue Well' when I am twenty-one!"

"Living on you instead of mother?"

"Oh no, Armie, you know we are one. Though perhaps a mere story like that is not worthy to do such work. Yet I think there must be something in it, as Duke cared for it."

"That would be proof positive but for the author," said Armine, smiling; "but poor Allen's attempts have rather daunted my literary hopes."
"I really believe Allen would write better sense now, if he tried," said Babie. "I believe Lady Grose is making something of him!"

"Without intending it," said Armine, laughing.

"No; but you see snubbing is wholesome diet, if it is taken with a few grains of resolution, and he has come to that now!"

For Allen had continued not only to profess to be, but to be willing to do anything to relieve his mother, and Dr. Medlicott had, with much hesitation and doubt, recommended him for what was called a secretaryship to a paralytic old gentleman, who had been, in his own estimation, eminent both in the scientific and charitable worlds, and still carried on his old habits, though quite incapable. It really was, as the Doctor honestly told Allen, very little better than being a male humble companion, for though old Sir Samuel Grose was fussy and exacting from infirmity, he was a gentleman; but he had married late in life a vulgar, overbearing woman, who was sure to show insolent want of consideration to any one she considered her inferior. To his surprise, Allen accepted the situation, and to his still greater surprise, endured it, walking to Kensington every day by eleven o'clock, and coming home whenever he was released, at an hour varying from three to eleven, according to my Lady's will. He became attached to the old man, pitied him, and did his best to satisfy his many caprices and to deal with his infirmities of
brain and memory; but my Lady certainly was his \textit{b\^ete noire}, though she behaved a good deal better to him after she had seen him picked up in the park by Lady Fordham's carriage. However, he made light of all he underwent from her, and did not break down even when it was known that though poor George Gould had died at New York, his widow showed no intention of coming home, and wrote confidently to her step-daughters of Elvira marrying her brother Gilbert. She was of age now, there was nothing to prevent her, and they seemed to be only waiting for a decent interval after her uncle's death. Allen, a couple of years ago, would have made his mother and all the family as wretched as he could, and would have dropped all semblance of occupation but smoking. Now Lady Grose would not let him smoke, and Sir Samuel required him to be entertaining; but the continual worry he was bearing was making him look so ill that his mother was very anxious about him. She had other troubles. It was eighteen months since Janet Hermann had drawn her allowance. Her husband once had written in her name, saying that she was ill, but Mr. Wakefield had sent an order payable only on her signature, and it had never been acknowledged or presented! Could Janet be living? Or could she be in some such fitful state of prosperity as to be able to disregard 25\text{}

Her mother spent many anxious thoughts and
prayers on her, though the younger ones seemed to have almost forgotten her, so long it was since she had been a part of their family life. Nor did Bobus answer his mother's letters, though he continued to write fully and warmly to Jock. As to the MS., he said he had improved upon it, and had sent a fresh one to a friend who would have none of the scruples of which physical science ought to have cured Jock. It came out in a review, but without his name, and though it was painful enough to all who cared for him, it had been shorn of several of the worst and most virulent passages; so that Jock's remonstrance had done some good.

Jock himself had come into possession of 200l., and the like sum had been left to his mother by their good old friends the Lucases, who had died, as it is given to some happy old couples to leave this world, within three days of one another.

The other John, in the last autumn, had taken both his degrees at Oxford and in London with high credit, and had immediately after obtained one of those annual appointments in his hospital which are bestowed upon the most distinguished of the students, to enable them to gain more experience; but as it did not involve residence, he continued to be one of the family in Collingwood Street. However, in the early spring, a slight hurt to his hand festered so as to make the doctors uneasy, and his sister set her heart on taking him to Fordham for Easter, for a more
thorough rest than could be had at Kencroft, while the younger ones were having measles.

John, however, had by this time learnt enough of his own feelings to delay consent till he had written to ask Mrs. Evelyn whether she absolutely objected to his entertaining any future hopes of Sydney, when he should have worked his way upward, as his recent success gave him hopes of doing in time.

Sydney's fortune was not overpowering. 10,000l. was settled on each of the younger children, and it had only been Fordham's liberality in treating Cecil as his eldest son, that had brought about his early marriage. Thus she was no such heiress that her husband would be obliged to feel as if he were living on her means, or that exertion could be dispensed with, and thus, though he must make his way before he could marry, there was no utter inequality for one who brought a high amount of trained ability and industry.

Mrs. Evelyn could only answer as she would once have answered Jock, and on these terms he went. In the meantime Sydney had rejected the honourable young rector of the next parish, and was in the course of administering rebuffs to the county member, who was so persuaded that he and Miss Evelyn were the only fit match for one another, that no implied negative was accepted by him. Her brother, whom he was coaching in his county duties,
was far too much inclined to bring him home to luncheon; and in the clash and crisis, without any one's quite knowing how it happened, it turned out that Mrs. Evelyn had been so imprudent as to sanction an attachment between her daughter and that great lout of a young doctor, Lady Fordham's brother! Not only the M.P., but all the family shook the head and bemoaned the connection, for though it was to be a long engagement and a great secret, everybody found it out: Lucas had long made up his mind that so it would end, and told his mother that it was a relief the crisis had come. He put a good face on it, wrung his cousin's hand with the grasp of a Hercules, observed "Well done, old Monk," and then made the work for his final examination a plea for being so incessantly occupied as to avoid all private outpourings. And if he had very little flesh on his bones, it was hard work and anxiety about his examination.

That final ordeal was gone through at last; John Lucas Brownlow was, like his cousin, possessor of a certificate of honour and a medal, and had won both his degrees most brilliantly. He had worked the hardest and had the most talent, and his achievement was perhaps the most esteemed because of his lack of the previous training that Friar had brought from Oxford. Professors and physicians wrote his mother notes to express their satisfaction at the career of their old friend's son, and Dr. Medlicott came to
bring her a whole bouquet of gratifying praise and admiration from all concerned with him, ranging from the ability of his prize essay to the firm delicacy of his hand; and backed up by the doctor's own opinion of the blameless conduct and excellent influence of both the cousins. And now Dr. Medlicott declared he must have a good rest and holiday, after the long strain of hard toil and study.

It came like a dream to Caroline that the conditions imposed by her husband fifteen years before, when Lucas was a mischievous imp of a Skipjack, had been thus completely worked out, not only the intellectual, but the moral and religious terms being thus fulfilled.

The two cousins had come home to dinner in high spirits at the various kind things that had been said to, and of, Jock, and discussing the various suggestions for the future that had been made to them. They thought Mother Carey strangely silent, but when they rose she called her son into the consulting room, as she still termed it.

"My dear," she said, "this slate will tell you why this is the moment I have looked forward to from the time your dear father was taken from us with his work half done. He had been working out a discovery. He was sure of it himself, but none of the faculty would believe in it or take it up. Even Dr. Lucas thought it was a craze, and I believe it can
only be tested by risky experiments. All that he had made out is in this book. You know he could not speak for that dreadful throat. This is what he wrote. I copied it again, putting in my answers lest it should fade, but these are his very words, and that is my pledge. Magnum Bonum was our playful pet name for it between ourselves.

"'I promise to keep the Magnum Bonum a secret, till the boys are grown up, and then only to confide it to the one that seems fittest, when he has taken his degree, and is a good, religious, wise, able man, with brains and balance, fit to be trusted to work out and apply such an invention, and not make it serve his own advancement, but be a real good and blessing to all.' And oh, Jock," she added, "am I not thankful that after all it should have come about that you should fulfil those conditions."

"Did you not once mean it for John?" said Jock, hastily looking up.

"Yes, when I thought that hateful money had turned you all aside."

"Then I think he ought to share this knowledge."

"I thought you would say so, but it is your first right."

"Perhaps," said Jock. "But he is superior in his own line to me. He gave himself up to this line of his own free will, not like me, as a resource. And moreover, if it should bring any personal benefit, as an accident, it would be more important to him than
to me. And these other conditions he fulfils to the letter. Mother, let me fetch him."

She kissed his brow by way of answer, and a call brought John into the room. The explanation was made, and John said, "If you think it right, Aunt Caroline. No one can quite fulfil the conditions, but two may be better than one."

"Then I will leave you to read it together," she said, after pointing them to the solemn words in the first page. "Oh, you cannot think how glad I am to give up my trust."

She went upstairs to the drawing-room, and about half an hour had passed in this way, when Jock came to the door, and said, "Mother, would you please to come down."

It was a strange, grave voice in which he spoke, and when she reached the room, they set Allen's most luxurious chair for her, but she stood trembling, reading in their faces that there was something they hesitated to tell her. They looked at one another as if to ask which should do it, and a certain indignation and alarm seized on her. "You believe in it!" she cried, as if she suspected them of disloyalty.

"Most entirely!" they both exclaimed.

"It is a great discovery," added Jock, "but—"

"But," said John, as he hesitated, "it has been worked out within the last two years."

"Not Dr. Hermann!" she cried.
"No, indeed!" said Jock. "Why?"

"Because poor Janet overheard our conversation, and obtained a sight of the book. It was her ambition. I believe it was fatal to her. She may have caught up enough of the outline to betray it. Jock, you remember that scene at Belforest?"

"I do," said Jock; "but this is not that scoundrel. It is Ruthven, who has worked it out in a full and regular way. It is making a considerable sensation, though it has scarcely yet come into use as a mode of treatment. Mother, do not be disappointed. It will be the blessing that my father intended, all the sooner for not being in the hands of two lads like us, whom all the bigwigs would scout!"

"And what I never thought of before," said John. "You know we are so often asked whether we belong to Joseph Brownlow, that one forgets to mention it every time; but that day, when Dr. Medlicott took me to the Westminster hospital, we fell in with Dr. Ruthven, and after the usual disappointment on finding I was only the nephew and not the son, he said, 'Joseph Brownlow would have been a great man if he had lived. I owe a great deal to a hint he once gave me.'"

"He ought to see these notes," said Jock. "It strikes me that there is a clue here to that difficulty he mentions in that published paper of his."

"You ought to show it to him," said John.
"You ought," said Jock.
"Do you know much about him?" asked Mother Carey. "I don't think I ever saw him, though I know his name. A fashionable physician, is he not?"

"A very good man," said John. "A great West-end swell just come to be the acknowledged head in his own line. I suppose it is just what my uncle would have been ten years ago, if he had been spared."

"May we show it to him, mother?" said Jock. "I should think he was quite to be trusted with it. I see! I was reading an account of this method of his to Dr. Lucas one day, and he was much interested and tried to tell me something about my father; but it was after his speech grew so imperfect, and he was so much excited and distressed that I had to lead him away from the subject."

"Yes, Dr. Lucas's incredulity made all the difference. How old is Dr. Ruthven, John?"

"A little over forty, I should say. He may have been a pupil of my uncle's."

After a little more consultation, it was decided that John should write to Dr. Ruthven that his cousin had some papers of his father's which he thought the Doctor might like to see, and that they would bring them if he would make an appointment.

And so the Magnum Bonum was no longer a secret, a burden, and a charge!

It was not easy to tell whether she who had so long been its depositary felt the more lightened or disappointed. She had reckoned more than she knew
upon the honour of the discovery being connected with the name of Brownlow, and she could not quite surmount the feeling that Dr. Ruthven had somehow robbed her husband, though her better sense accepted and admired the young men's argument that such discoveries were common property, and that the benefit to the world was the same.

Allen was a good deal struck when he understood the matter. He said it explained a good deal to him which the others had been too young to observe or remember both in the old home and afterwards.

"One wonderful part of it is how you kept the secret, and Janet too!" he said. "And you must often have been sorely tempted. I remember being amused at your disappointment and her indignation when I said I didn't see why a man was bound to be a doctor because his father was before him; and I suppose if Bobus or I had taken to it, this Ruthven need not have been beforehand with us!"

"It would have been transgressing the conditions to hold it out to you."

"I don't imagine I could have done it any way," said Allen, sighing. "I never can enter into the taste the others have for that style of thing; but Bobus might have succeeded. You must have expected it of him, at the time when he and I used to laugh at what we thought was a monomania on your part for our taking up medical science as a tribute to our father, when we did not need it as a provision."
"You see, if any of you had taken up the study from pure philanthropy, as some people do—well, at any rate in George Macdonald's novels—it would have been the very qualification. But I had little hope from the time that the fortune came. I dreamt the first night that Midas had turned the whole of you to gold statues, and that I was wandering about like the Princess Paribanou to find the Magnum Bonum to disenchant you."

"It has come pretty true," said Allen thoughtfully, "that inheritance did us all a great deal of mischief."

"And it took a greater magnum bonum, a maximum bonum, to disenchant us," said Armine.

"Which I fear did not come from me," said his mother, "and I am most grateful to the dear people who applied it to you. I wish I saw my way to the disenchantment of the other two!"

"I suppose you quite despaired till John took his turn in that direction," said Allen. "Bobus could really have done better than any of us, I fancy, but he would not have fulfilled the religious condition, as sine quâ non."

"Bobus is not really cleverer than Jock," said Armine.

"Yet the Skipjack seemed the most improbable one of all," said his mother. "I wish he were not deprived of it, after all!"

"Perhaps he is not," said Armine. "He told me he
had been comparing the MS. notes with Dr. Ruthven's published paper, and he thought my father saw farther into the capabilities."

"Well, he will do right with it. I am thankful to leave it in such hands as his and the Monk's."

"Then it was this," continued Allen, "that was the key to poor Janet's history. I suppose she hoped to qualify herself when she was madly set on going to Zurich."

"Though I told her I could never commit it to her; but she knew just enough to make that wretched man fancy it a sort of quack secret, and he managed to persuade her that he had real ability to pursue the discovery for her. Poor Janet! it has been no magnum bonum to her, I fear. If I could only know where she is."

A civil, but not a very eager note came in reply to John from Dr. Ruthven, making the appointment, but so dispassionately that he might fairly be supposed to expect little from the interview.

However, they came home more than satisfied. Perhaps in the interim Dr. Ruthven had learnt what manner of young men they were, and the honours they had won, for he had received them very kindly, and had told them how a conversation with Joseph Brownlow had put him on the scent of what he had since gradually and experimentally worked out, and so fully proved to himself, that he had begun treatment on that basis, and with success, though he
had only as yet brought a portion of his fellow physicians to accept his system.

Lucas had then explained as much as was needful, and shown him the notes. He read with increasing eagerness, and presently they saw his face light up, and with his finger on the passage they had expected, he said, "This is just what I wanted. Why did I not think of it before?" and asked permission to copy the passage.

Then he urged the publication of the notes in some medical journal, showing true and generous anxiety that honour should be given where honour was due, and that his system should have the support of a name not yet forgotten. Further, he told his visitors that they would hear from him soon, and altogether they came home so much gratified that the mother began to lose her sense of being forestalled. She was hard at work in her own way on a set of models for dinner-table ornaments which had been ordered. "Pot-boilers" had unfortunately much more success than the imaginary groups she enjoyed.

Therefore she stayed at home and only sent her young people on a commission to bring her as many varieties of foliage and seed-vessels as they could, when Jock and Armine spent this first holiday of waiting in setting forth with Babie to get a regular good country walk, grumbling horribly that she would not accompany them.

She was deep in the moulding of a branch of
chestnut, which carried her back to the first time she saw those prickly clusters, on that day of opening Paradise at Richmond, with Joe by her side, then still Mr. Brownlow to her, Joe, who had seemed so much closer to her side in these last few days. The Colonel might call Armine the most like Joe, and say that Jock almost absurdly recalled her own soldier-father, Captain Allen, but to her, Jock always the most brought back her husband's words and ways, in a hundred little gestures and predilections, and she had still to struggle with her sense of injury that he should not be the foremost.

The maid came up with two cards: Dr. and Mrs. Ruthven. This was speedy, and Caroline had to take off her brown holland apron, and wash her hands, while Emma composed her cap, in haste and not very good will, for she could not but think them her natural enemies, though she was ready to beat herself for being so small and nasty "when they could not help it, poor things."

However, Mrs. Ruthven turned out to be a pleasant lively table d'hote acquaintance of six or seven years ago in her maiden days, and her doctor an agreeable Scotsman, who told Mrs. Brownlow that he had been here on several evenings in former days, and did not seem at all hurt that she did not remember him. He seemed disappointed that neither of the young men was at home, and inquired whether they had anything in view. "Not definitely," she said, and she
spoke of some of the various counsels Dr. Medlicott and others had given them.

In the midst she heard that peculiar dash with which the Fordham carriage always announced itself. Little Esther might be ever so much a Viscountess, but could she ever cease to be shy? In spite of her increasing beauty and grace, she was not a success in society, for the ladies said she was slow; she had no conversation, and no dash or rattle to make up for it, and nothing would ever teach her to like strangers. They were only so many disturbances in the way of her enjoyment of her husband and her baby; and when she could not have the former to go out driving with her, she always came and besought for the company of Aunt Caroline and Babie; above all, when she had any shopping to do. She knew it was very foolish, but she could never be happy in encountering shop people, and she wanted strong support and protection to prevent herself from being made a lay figure by urgent dressmakers. Her home only gave her help and company on great occasions, for Eleanor persisted in objecting to fine people, was determined against attracting another guardsman, and privately desired her sister to abstain from inviting her. Essie was aware that this was all for the sake of a certain curate at St. Kenelm's, and left Ellie to carry out her plan of passive resistance, becoming thus the more dependent on her aunt's family.
In she came, too graceful and courteous for strangers to detect the shock their presence gave her, but much relieved to see them depart. Her husband was on guard, and she had a whole list of commissions for mamma, which would be much better executed without him. Moreover, baby must have a new pelisse and hat for the country, and might not she have little stockings and shoes, in case she should want to walk before the return to London?

As little Alice was but four months old, and her father's leave was only for three months, this did not seem a very probable contingency, but Mother Carey was always ready for shopping. She had never quite outgrown the delight of the change from being a penniless school girl, casting wistful fleeting glances at the windows where happier maidens might enter and purchase.

Then there was to be a great review in two days' time, Cecil would be with his regiment, and Esther wanted the whole family to go with her, lunch with the officers, and have a thorough holiday. Cecil had sent a message that Jock must come to have the cobwebs swept out of his brain, and see his old friends before he got into harness again. It was a well-earned holiday, as Mother Carey felt, accepting it with eager pleasure, for all who could come, though John's power of so doing must be doubtful, and there was little chance of a day being granted to Allen.

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In going out with her niece, Caroline's eye had fallen on an envelope among the cards on the hall table, ambiguously addressed to "J. Brownlow, Esq., M.B.," and on her return home she was met at the door by Jock with a letter in his hand.

"So Dr. Ruthven has been here," he said, drawing her into the consulting-room.

"Yes. I like him rather. He seems to wish to make any amends in his power."

"Amends! you dear old ridiculous mother! Do you call this amends?" holding up the letter. "He says now this discovery is getting known and he has a name for the sort of case, his practice is outgrowing him, and he wants some one to work with him who may be up to this particular matter, and all he has heard of us convinces him that he cannot do better than propose it to whichever of us has no other designs."

"Very right and proper of him. It is the only thing he can do. I suppose it would be the making of one of you. Ah!" as she glanced over the letter.

"He gives the preference to you."

"He was bound to do that, but I think he would prefer the Monk. I wonder whether you care very much about my accepting the offer."

"Would this house be too far off?"

"I don't know his plans enough to tell. That was not what I was thinking of, but of what it would save her. Essie said she was not looking well; and no
doubt waiting is telling on her, just as her mother always feared it would."

"John has just not had the forbearance you have shown!"

"That is all circumstance. There was the saving her life, and afterwards the being on the spot when she was tormented about the other affair. He has no notion of having cut me out, and I trust he never will."

"No, I do him that justice."

"Then he has the advantage of me every way, out and out in looks and University training; and it was to him that Ruthven first took a fancy."

"You surpassed him in your essay, and in ——."

"Oh, yes, yes," interrupted Jock hastily, "but you see work was my refuge. I had nothing to call me off. Besides, I have my share of your brains, instead of her Serenity's; but that's all the more reason, if you would listen to me. Depend upon it, Ruthven, if he knew all, would much prefer the connection John would have, and she would bring means to set up directly."

"I suppose you will have it so," replied she, looking up to him affectionately.

"I should like it," he said. "It is the one thing for them, and waiting might do her infinite harm; the dear old Monk deserves it every way. Remember how it all turned on his desperate race. If your comfort depended on my taking it, that would come first."
“Oh, no.”

“But there is sure to turn up plenty of other work without leaving you,” he continued. “I don’t fancy getting involved in West-end practice among swells, and not being independent. I had rather see whether I can’t work out this principle further, devoting myself to reading up for it, and getting more hospital experience to go upon.”

“I dare say that is quite right. I know it is like your father, and indeed I shall be quite content however you decide. Only might it not be well to see how it strikes John, before you absolutely make it over to him?”

“You are trying to be prudent against the grain, Mother Carey.”

“Trying to see it like your uncle. Yes, exactly as if I were trying to forestall his calling me his good little sister.”

“I don’t know what he would call me,” said Jock, “for at the bottom is a feeling that, after reading my father’s words, I had rather not, if I can help it, begin immediately to make all that material advantage out of ‘Magnum Bonum’ as you call it.”

“Well, my dear, do as you think right; I trust it all to you. It is sure to turn out the right sort of ‘Magnum Bonum’ to you—”

The Monk’s characteristic ring at the bell was heard, and the letter was, without loss of time, com-
mitted to him, while both mother and son watched him as he gathered up the sense.

"Well, this is jolly!" was his first observation. "Downright handsome of Ruthven!" and then as the colour rose a little in his face, "Just the thing for you, Jock, home work, which is exactly what you want."

"I'm not sure about that," said Jock; "I don't want to get into that kind of practice just yet. It is fitter for a family man."

"And who is a family man if you are not?" said John. "Wasn't it the very cause of your taking this line?"

"There's a popular prejudice in favour of wives, rather than mothers," said Jock. "I should have said you were more likely to fulfil the conditions."

"Oh!" and there was a sound in that exclamation that belied the sequel, "that's just nonsense! The offer is to you primarily, and it is your duty to take it."

"I had much rather you did, and so had Dr. Ruthven. I want more time for study and experience, and have set my heart on some scientific appointment—"

"Come now, my good fellow—why, what are you laughing at?"

"Because you are such a good imitation of your father, my dear Johnny," said his aunt.

"It is just what my father would say," returned
John, taking this as a high compliment; "it would be very foolish of Lucas to give up a certainty for this just because of his Skipjack element, which doesn't want to get into routine harness. Now, don't you think so, Mother Carey?"

"If I thought it was the Skipjack element," she said, smiling.

"If it is not," he said, the colour now spreading all over his face, "I am all the more bound not to let him give up all his prospects in life."

"All my prospects! My dear Monk, do you think they don't go beyond a brougham, and unlimited staircases?"

"I only know," cried John, nettled into being a little off his guard, "that what you despise would be all the world to me!"

The admission was hailed triumphantly, but the Kencroft nature was too resolute, and the individual conscience too generous, to be brought round to accept the sacrifice, which John estimated at the value of the importance it was to himself, viewing what was real in Lucas's distaste, as mere erratic folly, which ought to be argued down. Finally, when the argument had gone round into at least its fiftieth circle, Mother Carey declared that she would have no more of it. Lucas should write a note to Dr. Ruthven, accepting his proposal for one or other of them, and promising that he should know which, in the course of a few days; so that John, if he chose, could write
to his father or anyone else. Meantime there was to be no allusion to "the raid of Ruthven" till the day of the review was over. It was to be put entirely off the tongue, if not out of the head!

And the two young doctors were weary enough of the subject to rejoice in obedience to her.

The day was perfect except that poor Allen was pinned fast by his tyrant, all the others gave themselves up to the enjoyment of the moment. They understood the sham fight, and recognised all the corps, with Jock as their cicerone, they had a good place at the marching past, and Esther had the crowning delight of an excellent view of Captain Viscount Fordham with his company, and at the luncheon, Jock received an absolutely affectionate welcome from his old friends, who made as much of his mother and sister for his sake, as they did of the lovely Lady Fordham for her husband's, finding them, moreover, much more easy to get on with.
CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE TRUANT.

The bird was sitting in his cage  
And heard what he did say;  
He jumped upon the window sill,  
"‘Tis time I was away."

Ballad.

"There is a young lady in the drawing-room, ma’am," said the maid, looking rather puzzled and uncertain, on the return of the party from the review.  
"A stranger? How could you let her in?" said John.

At that moment a face appeared at the top of the stairs, a face set in the rich golden auburn that all knew so well, and half way up, Mrs. Brownlow was clasped by a pair of arms, and there was a cry,  
"Mother Carey, Mother Carey, I’m come home!"

"Elvira! my dear child! When—how did you come?"

"From the station, in a cab. I made her let me in, but I thought you were never coming back. Where's Allen?"

"Allen will come in by-and-by," said the astonished Mother Carey, who had been dragged into the
drawing-room, where Elvira embraced Babie, and grasped the hands of the others.

"Oh, it is so nice," she cried, then nestling back to Mother Carey.

"But where did you come from? Are you alone?"

"Yes, quite alone. Janet would not come with me after all."

"Janet, my dear! Where is she?"

"Oh, not here—at Saratoga, or at New York. I thought she was coming with me, but when the steamer sailed she was not there, only there was a note pinned to my berth. I meant to have brought it, but it got lost somehow."

"Where did you see her?"

"At the photographer's at Saratoga. I should never have come if she had not helped me, but she said she knew you would take me home, and she wrote and took my passage and all. She said if I did not find you, Mr. Wakefield would know where you were, but I did so want to get home to you! Please, may I take off my things; I don't want to be such a fright when Allen comes in."

It was all very mysterious, but Elvira must be much altered indeed if her narrative did not come out in an utterly complicated and detached manner. She was altered certainly, for she clung most affectionately to Mother Carey and Barbara, when they took her upstairs. She had a little travelling-bag with her; the rest of her luggage would be sent from
the station, she supposed, for she had taken no heed to it. She did so want to get home.

"I did feel so hungry for you, Mother Carey. Mother, Janet said you would forgive me, and I thought if you were ever so angry, it would be true, and that would be nicer than Lisette, and, indeed, it was not so much my doing as Lisette's."

Whatever "it" was, Mother Carey had no hesitation in replying that she had no doubt it was Lisette's fault.

"You see," continued Elvira, "I never meant anything but to plague Allen a little at first. You know he had always been so tiresome and jealous, and always teased me when I wanted any fun—at least I thought so, and I did want to have my swing before he called me engaged to him again. I told Jock so, but then Lisette and Lady Flora, and old Lady Clanmacnalty went on telling me that you knew the money was mine all the time, and that it was only an accident that it came out before I was married."

"Oh, Elvira, you could not have thought anything so wicked," cried Babie.

"They all went on so, and made so sure," said Elvira, hanging her head, "and I never did know the real way the will was found till Janet told me. Babie, if you had heard Lady Clanmacnalty clear her throat when people talked about the will being found, you would have believed she knew better than anyone."

So it was. The girl, weak in character, and far
from sensible, full of self-importance, and puffed up with her inheritance, had been easily blinded and involved in the web that the artful Lisette had managed to draw round her. She had been totally alienated from her old friends, and by force of reiteration had been brought to think them guilty of defrauding her. In truth, she was kept in a whirl of gaiety and amusement, with little power of realizing her situation, till the breach had grown too wide for the feeble will of a helpless being like her to cross it. Though she had flirted extensively, she had never felt capable of accepting any one of her suitors, and in these refusals she had been assisted by Lisette, who wanted to secure her for her brother, but thanks to warnings from Mr. Wakefield, and her husband's sense of duty, durst not do so before she was of age.

Elvira's one wish had been to visit San Ildefonso again. She had a strong yearning towards the lovely island home which she gilded in recollection with all the trails of glory that shine round the objects of our childish affections. Lisette always promised to take her, but found excuses for delay in the refitting of the yacht, while she kept the party wandering over Europe in the resorts of second-rate English residents. No doubt she wished to make the most of the enjoyments she could obtain, as Elvira's chaperon and guardian, before resigning her even to her brother. At last the gambling habits into which her husband
fell, for lack, poor man, of any other employment, had alarmed her, and she permitted her party to embark in the yacht where Gilbert Gould acted as captain.

They reached the island. It had become a coaling station. The bay where she remembered exquisite groves coming down to the white beach, was a wharf, ringing with the discordant shouts of negroes and cries of sailors. The old nurse was dead, and fictitious foster brothers and sisters were constantly turning up with extravagant claims.

"Oh, I longed never to have come," said Elvira; "and then I began to get homesick, but they would not let me come!"

No doubt Lisette had feared the revival of the Brownlow influence if her charge were once in England, for she had raised every obstacle to a return. Poor Gould and his niece had both looked forward to Elvira's coming of age as necessarily bringing them to England, but her uncle's health had suffered from the dissipation he had found his only resource. Liquor had become his consolation in the life to which he was condemned, and in the hotel life of America was only too easily attainable.

His death deprived Elvira of the last barrier to the attempts of an unscrupulous woman, who was determined not to let her escape. Elvira's longing to return home made her spread her toils closer. She kept her moving from one fashionable resort to
another, still attended by Gilbert, who was beginning to grow impatient to secure his prize.

"How I hated it," said Elvira. "I knew she was false and cruel by that time, but it was just like being in a trap between them. I loathed them more and more, but I couldn't get away."

Nurtured as she had been, she was helpless and ignorant about the commonest affairs of life, and the sight of American independence never inspired her with the idea of breaking the bondage in which she was spellbound. Still, she shrank back with instinctive horror from every advance of Gilbert's, and at last, to pique her, Lisette brought forward the intelligence that Allen Brownlow was married.

The effect must have surprised them, for Elvira turned on her aunt in one of those fits of passion which sometimes seized her, accused her vehemently of having poisoned the happiness of her life, and taken her from the only man she could ever love. She said and threatened all sorts of desperate things; and then the poor child, exhausted by her own violence, collapsed, and let herself be cowed and terrified in her turn by her aunt's vulgar sneers and cold determination.

Yet still she held out against the marriage. "I told them it would be wicked," she said. "And when I went to Church, all the Psalms and everything said it would be wicked. Then Lisette said it was wicked to love a married man, and I said I didn't know, I
couldn't help it, but it would be more wicked to vow I would love a man whom I hated, and should hate more every day of my life. Then they said I might have a civil marriage, and not vow anything at all, and I told them that would seem to me no better than not being married at all. Oh! I was very very miserable!"

"Had you no one to consult or help you, my poor child?"

"They watched me so, and whenever I was making friends with any nice American girl, they always rattled me off somewhere else. I never did understand before what people meant when they talked about God being their only Friend, but I knew it then, for I had none at all, none else. And I did not think He would help me, for now I knew I had been hard, and horrid and nasty, and cruel to you and Allen, the only people who ever cared for me for myself, and not for my horrid, horrid money, though I was the nastiest little wretch. Oh! Mother Carey, I did know it then, and I got quite sick with longing for one honest kiss—or even one honest scolding of yours. I used to cry all Church-time, and they used to try not to let me go—and I felt just like the children of Israel in Egypt, as if I had got into heavy bondage, and the land of captivity. O do speak, and let me hear your voice once more! Your arm is so comfortable."

Still it seemed that Elvira had resisted till another
attempt was made. While she was at a boarding-house on the Hudson a large picnic party was arranged, in which, after American fashion, gentlemen took ladies "to ride" in their traps to and from the place of rendezvous. In returning, of course it had been as easy as possible for her chaperon to contrive that she should be left alone with no cavalier but Gilbert Gould, and he of course pretended to lose his way, drove on till night-fall, and then judg-
matically met with an accident, which hurt nobody; but which he declared made the carriage incapable of proceeding.

After walking what Elvira fancied half the night, shelter was found in a hospitable farmhouse, where the people were wakened with difficulty. They took care of the benighted wanderers, and the farmer drove them back to the hotel the next morning in his own waggon. They were received by Mrs. Gould with great demonstrations both of affection, pity and dismay, and she declared that the affair had been so shocking and compromising that it was impossible to stay where they were. She made Elvira take her meals in her room rather than face the boarding-house company, paid the bills (all of course with Elvira’s money) and carried her off to the Saratoga Springs, having taken good care not to allow her a minute’s conversation with anyone who would have told her that the freedom of American manners
would make an adventure like hers be thought of no consequence at all.

The poor girl herself was assured by Mrs. Gould that this "unhappy escapade" left her no alternative but a marriage with Gilbert. She would otherwise never be able to show her face again, for even if the affair were hushed up, reports would fly, and Mrs. Lisette took care they should fly, by ominous shakes of the head, and whispered confidences such as made the steadier portion of the Saratoga community avoid her, and brought her insolent attention from fast young men. It was this, and a cold "What can you expect?" from Lisette that finally broke down her defences, and made her permit the Goulds to make known that she was engaged to Gilbert.

Had they seized their prey at that moment of shame and despair, they would have secured it, but their vanity or their self-esteem made them wish to wash off the mire they had cast, or to conceal it by such magnificence at the wedding as should outdo Fifth Avenue. The English heiress must have a wedding-dress that would figure in the papers, and, even in the States, be fabulously splendid. It must come from Paris, and it must be waited for. All the bridesmaids were to have splendid pearl lockets containing coloured miniature photograph portraits of the beautiful bride, who for her part was utterly broken-hearted. "I thought God had forgotten me,
because I deserved it; and I only hoped I might die, for I knew what the sailors said of Gilbert.

Listless and indifferent, she let her tyrants do what they would with her, and it was in Gilbert's company that she first saw Janet at the photographer's. Fortunately he had never seen Miss Brownlow, and Elvira had grown much too cautious to betray recognition; but the vigilance had been relaxed since the avowal of the engagement, and the colouring of the photographs from the life, was a process so wearisome, that no one cared to attend the sitter, and Elvira could go and come, alone and unquestioned.

So it was that she threw herself upon Janet. Whatever had been their relations in their girlhood, each was to the other the remnant of the old home and of better days, and in their stolen interviews they met like sisters. Janet knew as little as Elvira did of her own family, rather less indeed, but she declared Mrs. Gould's horror about the expedition with Gilbert to have been pure dissimulation, and soon enabled Elvira to prove to herself that it had been a concerted trick. In America it would go for nothing. Even in England, so mere an accident (even if it had really been an accident) would not tell against her. But then, Elvira hopelessly said Allen was married!

Again Janet was incredulous, and when she found that Elvira had never seen the letter in which Kate Gould was supposed to have sent the information,
and knew it only upon Lisette's assertion, she declared it to be probably a fabrication. Why not telegraph? So in Elvira's name and at her expense, but with the address given to Janet's abode, the telegram was sent to Mr. Wakefield's office, and in a few hours the reply had come back: "Allen Brownlow not married, nor likely to be."

There was no doubt now of the web of falsehood that had entangled the poor girl; but she would probably have been too inert and helpless to break through it, save for her energetic cousin, who nerved her to escape from the life of utter misery that lay before her. What was to hinder her from setting off by the train, and going at once home to England by the steamer? There was no doubt that Mrs. Brownlow would forgive and welcome her, or even if that hope failed her, Mr. Wakefield was bound to take care of her. She had a house of her own standing empty for her, and the owner of £40,000 a year need never be at a loss.

Had she enough money accessible to pay for a first-class passage? Yes, amply even for two. She had always been so passive and incapable of all matters of arrangement, that Mrs. Gould had never thought it worth while to keep watch over her possession of "the nerves and sinews of war," being indeed unwilling to rouse her attention to the fact that she was paying the by no means moderate expenses of both her tyrants.
Janet found out all about the hours, secured—as Elvira thought—two first-class berths, met her when she crept like a guilty thing out of the hotel at New York, took her to the station, went with her to an outfitter to be supplied with necessaries for the voyage, for she had been obliged to abandon everything but a few valuables in her hand-bag, and saw her safely on board, introduced her to some kind friendly English people, then on some excuse of seeing the steward, left her, as Elvira found, to make the voyage alone!

It turned out that Janet had spoken to the gentleman of this party, and explained that her young cousin was going home alone, asking him to protect her on landing; and that she had come to London with them and been there put into a cab, giving the old address to Collingwood Street, where with much difficulty she had prevailed on the maid to let her in to await the return of the family.

Nothing so connected as this history came to the ears of Mrs. Brownlow or her children. That evening they only heard fragments, much more that was utterly irrelevant, and much that was inexplicable, all interspersed with inquiries and caresses and intent listening for Allen. Elvira might not have acquired brains, but she had gained in sweetness and affection. The face had lost its soulless, painted-doll expression, and she was evidently happy beyond all measure to be among those she could love and trust, sitting
on a footstool by Mrs. Brownlow's knee, leaning against her, and now and then murmuring: "O Mother Carey, how I have longed for you!"

She was not free from the fear that Lisette and Gilbert could still "do something to her," but the Johns made large assurances of defence, and Mr. Wakefield was to be called in the next day. It must be confessed that everybody rather enjoyed the notion of the pair left at Saratoga with all their hotel bills to pay, and the wedding-dress on their hands, but Elvira knew they had enough to clear them for the week, and only hoped it was not enough to enable them to follow her.

Fragments of all this came out in the course of the evening. Allen did not come home to dinner, and the other young men left the coast clear for confidences, which were uttered in the intervals of listening, till after all her excitement, her landing and her journey, Elvira was so tired out that she had actually dropped asleep, with her head on Mother Carey's knee, when his soft weary step came up the stairs, and perceiving, as he entered, that there was a hush over the room, he did not speak. Babie looked up from her work with an amused smile of infinite congratulation. There was a glance from his mother. Then, as Babie put it, the Prince saw the Sleeping Beauty, and, with a strange long half-strangled gasp and clasped hands, went down on one knee. At that very moment Elvira stirred, opened her eyes, put
her hand over them, bewildered, as if thinking herself dreaming, then with a sort of shriek of joy, flung herself towards him, as he held out his arms with "My darling!"

"O Allen, can you forgive me? And oh! do marry me before they can come after me!"

So much Mother Carey and Babie heard before they could remove themselves from the scene, which they felt ought to be a tête-à-tête. They shut the lovers in. Babie said, "Undine has found a heart, at least," and then they began to piece out the story by conjecture, and they then discovered how little they had really learnt about Janet. They supposed that the Hermanns must be living and practising at Saratoga, and in that case it was no wonder she could not come home, the only strange thing was Elvira's expecting it. Besides, why had not Mrs. Gould taken alarm at the name, and why was her husband never mentioned? Was there no message from her? Most likely there was, in the note that was lost, and moreover, Elvira might be improved, but she was Elvira still, and had room for very little besides herself in her mind's eye.

They must wait to examine her till these first raptures had subsided, and in the mean time Caroline wrote a telegram to go as early as possible to Mr. Wakefield. It showed a guilty conscience that Mrs. Gould should not have telegraphed to him Elvira's flight.
When at last Mrs. Brownlow held that the interview must come to an end, and with preliminary warning opened the door, there they were, with clasped hands, such as Elvira had never endured since she was a mere child! Allen looking almost too blissful for this world, and Elvira with eyes glistening with tears as she cried, "O Mother Carey, you never told me how altered he was, I never knew how horrible I had been till I saw how ill he looks! What can we do for him?"

"You are doing everything, my darling," said Allen.

"He of course thinks her as irresponsible as if she had been hanging up by the hair all this time in a giant's larder," whispered Babie to Armine.

But Elvira was really unhappy about the worn, faded air that made Allen look much older than his twenty-nine years warranted. The poor girl's nerves proved to have been much disturbed; she besought Barbara to sleep with her, and was haunted by fears of pursuit and capture, and Gilbert claiming her after all. She kept on starting, clutching at Babie, and requiring to be soothed till far on into the night, and then she slept so soundly that no one had the heart to wake her. Indeed it was her first real peaceful repose since her flight had been planned, nor did she come down till half-past ten, just when Mr. Wakefield drove up to the door, and Jock had taken pity on Allen, and set forth to undertake Sir Samuel for the
day. Mr. Wakefield was the less surprised at the sight of the young lady, having been somewhat prepared by her telegraphic inquiry about Allen, which he had not communicated to the Brownlows for fear of raising false expectations.

There was a great consultation. Elvira was not in the least shy, and and only wanted to be safely Mrs. Allen Brownlow before the Goulds should arrive, as she expected, in the next steamer to pursue her *vi et armis*. If it had depended on her, she would have sent Allen for a special licence, and been married in her travelling dress that very day. Mr. Wakefield, solicitor as he was, was quite ready for speed. He had always viewed the marriage with Allen Brownlow as a simple act of restitution, and the trust made settlements needless. Still he did not apprehend any danger from the Goulds, when he found that Elvira had never written a note to Gilbert in her life. Nay, he thought that if they even threatened any annoyance, they had given cause enough to have a prosecution for conspiracy held over them in wholesome terror.

And considering all the circumstances, Mrs. Brownlow and Allen were alike determined against undignified haste. Miss Menella ought to be married from among her own kindred, and from her own house; but this was not easy to manage; for poor Mary Whiteside and her husband, though very worthy, were not exactly the people to enact parents in such
a house as Belforest; and Mrs. Brownlow could see why she herself should not, though Elvira could not think why she objected. At last the idea was started that the fittest persons were Mr. and Mrs. Wakefield. The latter was a thorough lady, pleasant and sensible. The only doubt was whether so very quiet a person could be asked to undertake such an affair, and her husband took leave, that he might consult her and see whether she could bring herself to be mother for the nonce to the wild heiress, of whom his family were wont to talk with horrified compassion.

When he was gone, it was possible to come to the examination upon Janet for which Mother Carey had been so anxious. How was she looking?

"Oh! so old, and worn and thin. I never should have guessed it was Janet, if I had not caught her eye, and then I knew her eyebrows and nose, because they are just like Allen's,—and her voice sounded so like home that I was ready to cry, only I did not dare, as Gilbert was there."

"I wonder they did not take alarm at her name."

"I don't imagine they ever heard it?"

"Not when she was living there? Was not her husband practising?"

"Her husband! Oh no, I never heard any thing about him. I thought you knew I found her at the photographer's?"

"Met her as a sitter?"
"Oh dear, no! I thought you understood. It was she that was doing my picture. She finishes up all his miniature photographs."

"My dear Elvira, do you really mean that my poor Janet is supporting herself in that way?"

"Yes, indeed I do; that was why I made sure she would have come home with me. I was so dreadfully disappointed when I found only her note."

"And are you sure you have quite lost it?"

"Yes, I turned out every corner of my bag this morning to look for it. I am so sorry, but I was so ill and so wretched, that I could not take care of anything. I just wonder how I lived through the voyage, all alone."

"Was there no message? Nothing for me."

"Yes, I have recollected it now, or some of it. She said she durst not go home, or ask anything of you, after the way she had offended. Oh! I wonder how she could send me, for I know I was worse."

"But what did she say?" said Caroline, too anxious to listen to Elvira's own confessions. "Was there nothing for me?"

"Yes. She said, "Tell her that I have learnt by the bitterest of all experience the pain I have given her, and the wrong I have done!" Then there was something about being so utterly past forgiveness that she could not come to ask it. Oh, don't cry so, Mother Carey, we can write and get her back, and I will send her the passage money."
"Ah! yes, write!" cried out the mother, starting up. "'When he was yet a great way off.' Ah! why could she not remember that?" But as she sat down to her table, "You know her address?"

"Yes, certainly, I went to her lodgings once or twice; such a little bit of a room up so many stairs."

"And you did not hear how that man, her husband, died?"

"I don't know whether he is dead," said this most unsatisfactory informant. "She does not wear black, nor a cap, and I am almost sure that he has run away from her, and that is the reason she cannot use her own name."

"Elfie!"

"O, I thought you knew! She calls herself Mrs. Harte. She took my passage in that name, and that must be why my things have never come. Yes, I asked her why she did not set up for a lady doctor, and she said it was impossible that she could venture on showing her certificates or using her name—either his or hers."

That was in the main all that could be extracted from Elvira, though it was brought out again and again in all sorts of forms. It was plain that Janet had been very reticent in all that regarded herself, and Elvira had only had stolen interviews, very full of her own affairs, and, besides, had supposed Janet to intend to return with her. Both wrote; Elfie, to announce her safety, and Caroline, an incoherent,
imploring, forgiving letter, such as only a mother could write, before they went out to supply Elvira's lack of garments, and to procure the order for the sum needed for her passage. Caroline was glad they had gone independently, for, on their return, Babie reported to her that her little Ladyship was so wroth with Elfie as to wonder at them for receiving her so affectionately. It was very forgiving of them, but she should never forget the way in which poor Allen had been treated.

"I told her," said Babie, "that was the way she talked about Cecil, and you should have seen her face! She wonders that Allen has not more spirit, and indeed, mother, I do rather wish Elfie could have come back with nothing but her little bag, so that he could have shown it would have been all the same."

"A comfortable life they would have had, poor things, in that case," laughed her mother, "though I agree that it would have been prettier. But I don't trouble myself about that, my dear. You know, in all equity, Allen ought to have a share in that property. It was only the old man's caprice that made it all or none; and Elvira is only doing what is right and just."

"And Allen's love was a real thing, when he was the rich one. So I told Essie; and besides, Allen would never make any hand of poverty, poor fellow."

"I think and hope he will make a much better
hand of riches than he would have done without all he has gone through," said her mother.

Allen showed the same feeling when he could talk his prospects over quietly with his mother. These four years had altered him at least as much for the better as Elfie. He would not now begin in thoughtless self-indulgence, refined indeed and never vicious, but selfish, extravagant, and heedless of all but ease, pleasure, and culture. Some of the enervation of his youth had really worn off, though it had so long made him morbid, and he had learnt humility by his failures. Above all, however, his intercourse with Fordham had opened his eyes to a sense of the duties of wealth and position, such as he had never before acquired, and the religious habits that had insensibly grown upon him were tincturing his views of life and responsibility.

It was painful to him to realise that he was returning to wealth and luxury, indeed, monopolising it,—he the helpless, undeserving, indolent son, while all the others, and especially his mother, were left to poverty.

Elfie wanted Mother Carey and all to make their home at Belforest, and still be one family as of old. Indeed, she hung on Mother Carey even more than upon Allen, after her long famine from the motherly tenderness that she had once so little appreciated.

Of such an amalgamation, however, Mrs. Brownlow
would not hear, nor would she listen to a proposal of settling on her a yearly income, such as would dispense with economy, and with the manufacture of "pot-boilers."

No, she said, she was a perverse woman, and she had never been so happy as when living on her husband's earnings. The period of education being over, she had a full sufficiency, and should only meddle with clay again for her own pleasure. She was beginning already a set of dining-table ornaments for a wedding-present, representing the early part of the story of Undine. Babie knew why, if nobody else did. Perhaps she should one of these days mould a similar set for Sydney of the crusaders of Jotapata! Then Allen bethought him of putting into Elvira's head to beg, at least, to undertake Armine's expenses at the theological college for a year, and to this she consented thankfully. Armine had been thinking of offering himself as Allen's successor for a year with Sir Samuel; but two days' experience as substitute convinced him that Allen was right in declaring that my Lady would be the death of him. Lucas could manage her, and kept her well-behaved and even polite, but Armine was so young and so deferential that she treated him even worse than she did her first victim! She had begun by insisting on a quarter's notice or the forfeiture of the salary, as long as she thought 25£ was of vital importance to Allen, but as soon as she discovered
that the young lady was a great heiress, she became most unedifyingly civil, called in great state in Collingwood Street, and went about boasting of having patronised a sort of prince in disguise.

Meantime Dr. Ruthven's offer seemed left in abeyance. Colonel Brownlow had all his son's scruples, and more than his indignation at Lucas's folly in hesitating; and John was so sure that he ought not to accept the proposal, that he would not stir in the matter, nor mention it to Sydney. At last Lucas acted on his own responsibility, and had an interview with Dr. Ruthven, in which he declined the offer for himself, but made it known that his cousin was not only brother to the beautiful Lady Fordham who had been met in Collingwood Street, but was engaged to Lord Fordham's sister. At which connection the fashionable physician rubbed his hands with so much glee, that Jock was the more glad not to have to hunt in couples with him.

The magnificent wedding-dress had been stopped by telegram, just as it was packed for New York, and was despatched to Belforest. Mrs. Wakefield undertook the task imposed upon her, and the wedding was to be grand enough to challenge attention, and not be liable to the accusation of being done in a corner. It might be called hasty, for only a month would have passed since Elvira's arrival, before her wedding-day; but this was by her own earnest wish. She made it no secret that she should
never cease to be nervous till she was Allen Brownlow's wife, even though a letter to her cousins at River Hollow had removed all fear of pursuit by Mrs. Gould; she seemed bent on remaining at New York, and complained loudly of "the ungrateful girl," whose personal belongings she retained by way of compensation.

It would have been too much to expect that Elvira should be a wise and clever woman, but she had really learnt to be an affectionate one, and in the school of adversity had parted with much of her selfish petulance and arrogance. Allen, whose love had always been blindly tender, more like a woman's or a parent's love than that of an ordinary lover, was rapturous at the response he at last received. At the same time, he knew her too well to expect from her intellectual companionship, and would be quite content with what she could give.

They were both of them chastened and elevated in tone by their five years' discipline.

The night before the party went down to Belforest, where they were to meet the Evelyns, Allen lingered with his mother after all the rest had gone upstairs.

"Mother," he said, "I have thought a great deal of that dream of yours. I hope that the touch of Midas may not be baneful this time."

"I trust not, my dear; you have had a taste of the stern, rugged nurse."

"And, mother, I know I failed egregiously where the others rose."
"But you were rising."

"Then you will let me do nothing for you, and I feel myself sneaking into your inheritance, to the exclusion of all the rest, in a back-door sort of way."

"My dear Allen, it can't be helped, you have honestly loved your Elf from her infancy, when she had nothing, and she really loved you at the very worst. Love is so much more than gold, that it really signifies very little which of you has the money. You and she have both gone through a good deal, and it depends upon you now whether the possession becomes a blessing to yourselves and others. Don't vex about our not having a share, you know yourself how much happier we all are without the load, and there will never be any anxiety now. I shall always fall back on you, if I want anything."

"That is right," said Allen, clearing up a good deal as she looked up brightly in his face. "You promise me."

"Of course I do," she said smiling. "I'm not proud."

"And you did make Armine consent to our paying those expenses of his. That was good of you, but the boy only does it out of obedience."

"Yes, he would like a little bit of self-willed penance, but it is much better for him to submit, bodily and mentally."

"Elvira has asked me whether we can't, after all, build the Church and all the rest which he wanted so much, and give it to him."
Caroline smiled, she would not vex Allen by saying how this was merely in the spirit of the story book, endowing everybody with what they wanted, but she said, "Build by all means, and endow, when you have had time to see what is needed, and what is good for the people, but not for Armine's sake, you know. He had much better serve his apprenticeship and learn his work somewhere else. He would tell you so himself."

"I daresay. He would talk of the touch of Midas again. Elvira will be sadly disappointed. She had some fancy of presenting him to it as soon as he was ordained!"

"Getting the fairies meantime to build the whole concern in secret? Dear Elfie, her plans are generous and kind. Tell her, with my love, that her Church must not be a shrine for Armine, but that perhaps he and it will be fit for each other in some five years' time. Meantime, if she wants to make somebody happy, there's that excellent hardworking curate of Eleanor's, who has done more good in Kenminster than I ever saw done there before."

"I don't see why Kencroft should get all the advantages!"

"Ah! You ungrateful boy! Now if Rob had carried off Elfie, you might complain!"

At which Allen could not but laugh.

"And now, good night, Mr. Bridegroom; you want your beauty sleep, though I must say you look VOL. III. U
considerably younger than you did two months ago.

The wedding was a bright one, involving no partings, only joy and gladness, and the sole drawback to the general rejoicings seemed to be that it was not Mrs. Brownlow herself who was returning to take possession.

But on that very afternoon came a chill on her heart. Her own letter and Elvira's to Janet were returned from America! It was quite probable that the right address might have been in Elvira's lost note, and that Janet might be easily found through the photographer. "But," said her mother, "I do not believe she will ever come home unless I go to fetch her."

"The very thing I was thinking of doing," said Jock. "Letters will hardly find her now, and I have not settled to anything. The dear old Doctor's legacy will find the means."

"And I am sure you want the rest of the voyage. I don't like the looks of you, my Jockey."

"I shall be all right when this is over," said Jock, with an endeavour at laughing; "but I find I am a greater fool than I thought I was, and I had much better be out of the way of it all till it is a fait accompli."

"It" was of course John's marriage. This was the first time Jock had seen the lovers together. In spite of vehement talking and laughing, warm greetings
to everyone, and playing at every interval with the little cousins, Jock could not hide from either of the mothers that the sight cost him a good deal, all the more because the showing the Belforest haunts to Sydney had always been a favourite scheme, hitherto unfulfilled; nor was there any avoiding family consultations, which resulted in the fixing of the wedding for the middle of September, so that there might be time for a short tour before they settled down to John's work in London.

Mrs. Evelyn begged that Barbara would come to her whilst her mother and brother were away; Armine would be at his theological college, and there was nothing to detain Mrs. Brownlow and her son from the journey, to which both looked forward with absolute pleasure, not only in the hope of the meeting, but in the being together, and throwing off for a time the cares of home and gratifying the spirit of enterprise.

Jock had one secret. He had reason to think that Bobus would have a kind of vacation at the time, and he telegraphed to Japan what their intended voyage was to be, with a hope he durst not tell, that his favourite brother would not throw away the opportunity of meeting them in America.
CHAPTER XL.

EVIL OUT OF GOOD.

And all too little to atone
For knowing what should ne'er be known.

Scott.

The season at Saratoga was not yet over, the travellers were told at New York, though people were fast thronging back into "the city." Should they go on thither at once, or try to find the photographer nearer at hand? It was on a Friday that they landed, and they resolved to wait till Monday, Jock thinking that a rest would be better for his mother.

The early autumn sun glowed on the broad streets as they walked slowly through them, halting to examine narrowly every display of portraits at a photographer's door.

It was a right course; they came upon some exquisitely-finished ones, among which they detected unmistakably the coloured likeness of Elvira de Menella. They went into the studio and asked to look at it. "Ah, many ask that," they were told, "though the sensation was a little gone by."
"What sensation?" Jock asked, while his mother trembled so much that she had to sit down on one of the velvet chairs.

"I guess you are a stranger, sir, from England? Then no doubt you have not heard of the great event of the season at Saratoga, the sudden elopement of this young lady, a beautiful English heiress, on the eve of marriage, these very portraits ordered for the bridesmaids' lockets."

"Whom did she elope with?" asked Jock.

"That's the remarkable part of it, sir. Some say that she was claimed in secret by a lover to whom she had been long much attached; but we are better informed. I can state to a certainty that she only fled to escape the tyranny of an aunt. She need only have appealed to the institutions of the country."

"Very true," said Jock. "Let me ask if your informant was not the lady who coloured this photograph, Mrs. Harte?" "Yes." "And is she here?"

"No, sir," with some hesitation.

"Can you give me her address? I am her brother. This lady is her mother, and we are very anxious to find her."

The photographer was gained by the frank address and manner. "I am sorry," he said, "but the truth is that there was a monster excitement about the disappearance of the girl, and as Mrs. Harte was said to have been concerned, there was constant resort to the studio to interview her; and I cannot but think
She treated me ill, sir, for she quitted me at an hour's notice."

"And left no address?" exclaimed her mother, grievously disappointed.

"Not with me, madam; but she was intimate with a young lady employed in our establishment, and she may know where to find her."

And, through a tube, the photographer issued a summons, which resulted in the appearance of a pleasant-looking girl, who, on hearing that Mrs. Harte's mother and brother were in search of her, readily responded that Mrs. Harte had written to her a month ago from Philadelphia, asking her to forward to her any letters that might come to the room she usually occupied at New York. She had found employment, and there could be no doubt that she would be heard of there.

It was very near now. There was something very soothing in the services of that Sunday of waiting, when the Church seemed a home on the other side the sea, and on the Monday they were on their way, hearing, but scarcely heeding, the talk in the cars of the terrible yellow-fever visitation then beginning at New Orleans.

They arrived too late to do anything, but in early morning they were on foot, breakfasting with the first relay of guests at the hotel, and inquiring their way along the broad tree-planted streets of the old Quaker city.
It was again at a photograph shop that they paused, but as they were looking for the number, the private door opened, and there issued from it a grey figure, with a black hat, and a bag in her hand. She stood on the step, they on the side-walk. She had a thin, worn, haggard face, a strange, grey look about it, but when the eyes met on either side there was not a moment’s doubt.

There was not much demonstration. Caroline held out her hand, and Janet let hers be locked tight into it. Jock took her bag from her, and they went two or three paces together as in a dream, till Jock spoke first.

“Where are we going? Can we come back with you, Janet, or will you come to the hotel with us?”

“I was just leaving my rooms,” she said. “I was on my way to the station.”

“You will come with me,” said Caroline under her, breath; and Janet passively let herself be led along, her mother unconsciously holding her painfully fast.

So they reached the hotel, and then Jock said, “I shall go and read the papers; send a message for me if you want me. You had rather be left to yourselves.”

The mother knew not how she reached her bedroom, but once there, and with the door locked, she turned with open arms. “Oh! Janet, one kiss!” and Janet slid down on the floor before her, hiding her
face in her dress and sobbing, "Oh! mother, mother, I am not worthy of this!"

Then Caroline flung herself down by her, and gathered her into her arms, and Janet rested her head on her shoulder for some seconds, each sensible of little save absolute content.

"And you have come all this way for me?" whispered Janet, at last raising her head to gaze at the face.

"I did so long after you! My poor, poor child, how you have suffered," said Caroline, drawing through her fingers the thin, worn, bony, hard-worked hand.

"I deserved a thousand times more," said Janet. "But it seems all gone since I see you, mother. And if you forgive, I can hope God forgives too."

"My child, my child," and as the strong embrace, and the kiss was on her brow, Janet lay still once more in the strange rest and relief. "It is very strange," she said. "I thought the sight of you would wither me with shame, but somehow there's no room for anything but happiness."

Renewed caresses, for her mother was past speaking.

"And Lucas is with you? Not Babie?"

"No, Babie is left with Mrs. Evelyn."

"So poor little Elvira came safe home?"

"Yes, and is Mrs. Allen Brownlow. Poor child, you rescued her from a sad fate. She believed to
the last you were coming with her, and she lost your note, or you would have heard from us sooner.”

Janet went on asking questions about the others. Her mother dreaded to put any, and only replied. Janet asked where they had been living, and she answered:

“In the old house, while the two Johns have been studying medicine.”

“Not Lucas?” cried Janet, sitting upright in her surprise.

“Yes, Lucas. The dear fellow gave up all his prospects in the army, because he thought it would be more helpful to me for him to take this line, and he has passed so well, Janet. He has got the silver medal, and his essay was the prize one.”

“And——” Janet stood up and walked to the window, as she said “and you have told him——”

“Yes. But, Janet, it was too late. Some hints of your father’s had been followed up, and the main discovery worked out, though not perfected.”

Janet’s eyes glistened for a moment as they used to do in angry excitement, and she asked, “Could he bear it?”

“He was chiefly concerned lest I should be disappointed. Then he reminded me that the benefit to mankind had come all the sooner.”

“Ah!” said Janet with a gasp, “there’s the difference!” She did not explain further, but said, “It has not poisoned his life!”
Then seeking in her bag, she took out a packet.

"I wish you to know all about it, mother," she said.

"I wrote this to send home by Elvira, but then my heart failed me. It was well, since she lost my note. I kept it, and when I did not hear from you, I thought I would leave it to be posted when all was over with me. I should like you to read it, and I will tell you anything else you like to know."

There came the interruption of the hotel luncheon, after which a room was engaged for Janet, and the use of a private parlour secured for the afternoon and evening. Jock came and went. He was very much excited about the frightful reports he heard of the ravages of yellow fever in the south, and went in search of medical papers and reports. Janet directed him where to seek them. "I was just starting to offer myself as an attendant," she said. "I shall still go, to-morrow."

"You? Oh, Janet, not now!" was her mother's first exclamation.

"You will understand when you have read," quietly said Janet.

All that afternoon, according to her manifest wish, her mother was reading that confession of hers, while she sat by replying to each question or comment, in the repose of a confidence such as had not existed for fifteen years.

"Magnum Bonum," wrote Janet. "So my father named it. Alas! it has been Magnum Malum to me."
I have thought over how the evil began. I think it must have been when I brooded over the words I caught at my father's death-bed, instead of confessing to my mother that I had overheard them. It might be reserve and dread of her grief, but it was not wholly so. I did not respect her as I ought in my childish conceit. I was an old-fashioned girl. Grandmamma treated her like a petted eldest child, and I had not learnt to look up to her with any loyalty. My uncle and aunt too, even while seeming to uphold her authority, betrayed how cheaply they held her."

"No wonder," said Caroline. "I was a very foolish creature then."

"I saw you differently too late," said Janet.

"Thus unchecked by any sober word, my imagination went on dwelling on those words, which represented to me an arcanum as wonderful as any elixir of life that alchemists dream of, and I was always figuring to myself the honour and glory of the discovery, and fretting that it was destined to one of my brothers rather than myself. Even then, I had some notion of excelling them, and fretted at our residence at Kenminster because I was cut off from classes and lectures. Then came the fortune, and I saw at the first glance that wealth would hinder all the others, even Robert, from attempting to fulfil the conditions, and I imagined myself persevering and winning the day. As to the concealment of the will, I can honestly say that, to my inexperienced fancy,
it appeared utterly unlike my father's and grandmother's, and at the moment I hid it, I only thought of the disturbance and discomfort, which scruples of my mother's would create, and the unpleasantness it would make with Elvira, with whom I had just been quarrelling. When as I grew older, and found the validity of wills did not depend on the paper they were written upon, I had qualms which I lulled by thinking that when my education was safe, and Elvira safely married to Allen, I would look again and then bring it to light, if needful. My mother's refusal to commit the secret to me on any terms entirely alienated me, I am grieved to say. I have learnt since that she was quite right, and that she could not help it. It was only my ignorance that rebelled; but I was enraged enough to have produced the will, and perhaps should have done so, if I had not been afraid both of losing my own medical training, and of causing Robert to take up that line, in which I knew he could succeed better than anyone."

"Janet, this must be fancy!"

"No, mother. There's no poison like a blessing turned into a curse. This is the secret history of what made me such a disagreeable, morose girl."

"Then came the opportunity that enabled me to glance at the book of my father's notes. Barbara's eyes made me lock the desk in haste and confusion. It was really and truly accident that I locked the
book out instead of in. As you know, Barbara hid away the davenport, and I could not restore the book, when I had pored over it half the night, and found myself quite incompetent to understand the details, though I perceived the main drift. I durst not take the book out of the house, and the loss of my keys cut me off from access to it. Meantime I studied, and came to the perception that a woman alone could never carry out the needful experiments, I must have a man to help me, but I was too much warped by this time to see how my mother was thus justified. I still looked on her as insanely depriving me of my glory, the world of the benefit for a mere narrow scruple. Then I fell in with Demetrius Hermann. How can I tell the story? How he seemed to me the wisest and acutest of human beings, the very man to assist in the discovery, and how I betrayed to him enough by my questions to make him think me a prize, both for my secret and my fortune. He says I deceived him. Perhaps I did. Any way, we are quits. No, not quite, for I loved him as I should not have thought it in me to love anyone, and the very joy and gladness of the sensation made me see with his eyes, or else be preposterously blind. I think his southern imagination made his expectations of the secret unreasonable, and I followed his bidding blindly and implicitly in my two attempts to bring off Magnum Bonum, which I had come to believe my right, unjustly withheld
from me. The second attempt, as you know, ended in the general crash.

"Afterwards, all the overtures were made by my husband. I would not share in them. I was too proud and would not come as a beggar, or see him threaten and cringe as unhappily I knew he could do, nor would I be seen by my mother or brothers. I knew they would begin to pity me, and I could not brook that. My mother's assurance of exposure, if he made any use of the stolen secret, made Demetrius choose to go to America.

"He said it all came out before my military brother. Did that change Lucas's destination?" said Janet, looking up.

"Ask him?"

"No, indeed," said Jock, when he understood. "I turned doctor as the readiest way of looking after mother."

"Did you understand nothing?"

"Only that she had some memoranda of my father's, that the sc—that Hermann wanted. I never thought of them again till she told me."

Mrs. Brownlow started at the next few words.

"My child was born only two days after we landed at New York."

But a quick interrogative glance kept her silent. "She was very small and delicate, and her father was impatient both of her weakness and mine. I think that was when I began to long for my mother.
He made me call her Glykera, after his mother. I had taught him to be bitter against mine."

"O mother, if you could have seen her," suddenly exclaimed Janet, "she was the dearest little thing," and she drew from her bosom a locket with a baby face on one side, and some soft hair on the other, put it into her mother's hand and hid her face on her shoulder.

"Oh! my poor Janet, you have suffered indeed! How long did you keep the little darling?"

"Two years. You will hear! I was not quite wretched while I had her. Go on, mother. There's no talking of it."

"We tried both practising and lecturing, feeling our way meantime towards the Magnum Bonum. We found, however, in the larger cities that people were quite as careful about qualifications as at home, and that we wanted recommendations. I could have got some practice among women if Demetrius would have rested long enough anywhere, but he liked lecturing best. I had been obliged to perceive that he had very little real science, and indeed I had to give him the facts and he put them in his flowery language. While as to Magnum Bonum, he had gained enough to use it in a kind of haphazard way, for everything. I trembled at what he began doing with it, when in the course of our wanderings we got out of the more established regions into the south-west. In Texas we found a new township, called
Burkeville, without a resident medical man, and the fame of his lectures had gone far enough for him to be accepted. There we set up our staff, and Demetrius—it makes me sick to say so—tried to establish himself as the possessor of a new and certain cure. I was persuaded that he did not know how to manage it, I tried to make him understand that under certain conditions it might be fatal, but he thought I was jealous. He had had one or two remarkable successes, his fame was spreading, he was getting reckless, and I could not watch as carefully as I sometimes did, for my child was ill, and needed all my care. The favourite of all the parish was the minister's daughter, a beautiful, lively, delicate girl, loved and followed like a sort of queen by the young men, of whom there were many, while there were hardly any other young women, none to compare with her. Demetrius had lost some patients, it was a sickly season, and I fancy there was some mistrust and exasperation against him already, for he was incompetent, and grew more averse to consulting me when his knowledge was at fault. I need not blame him. Everyone at home knows that I do not always make myself agreeable, and I had enough to exacerbate me, with my child pining in the unhealthy climate, and my father's precious secret used with the rough ignorance of an empiric. I knew enough of the case of this Annie Field to be sure that there were features in it which would make that
form of treatment dangerous. I tried to make him understand. He thought me jealous of his being called in rather than myself. Well—she died, and such a storm of vengeance arose as is possible in those lawless parts. I knew and heeded nothing of it, for my little Glykera was worse every day, and I thought of nothing else, but it seems that reports unfavourable to us had come from some one of the cities where we had tried to settle, and thus grief and rage had almost maddened one of Annie's lovers, a young man of Irish blood, a leader among the rest. On the day of her funeral all the ruffianism in the place was up in arms against us. My husband had warning, I suppose, for I never saw or heard of him since he went out that morning, leaving me with my little one moaning on my lap. She was growing worse every hour, and I knew nothing else, till my door was burst open by a little boy of eight or ten years old, crying out, 'Mrs. Hermann, Mrs. Hermann, quick, they are coming to lynch you! come away, bring the baby. If father can't stop them, there's no place safe but our house.'

"And indeed upon the air came the sound of a great, horrible, yelling roar unspeakably dreadful. It seems never to have been out of my ears since. I do not know whether an American mob would have proceeded to extremities with a lonely woman and a dying child, but there was an Irish and Spanish element of ferocity at Burkeville, and the cold, hard English-
woman was unpopular, besides that, I was supposed to share in the irregular practice that had had such fatal effects. But with that horrible sound, one did not stop to weigh probabilities. I gathered up my child in her bed-clothes, and followed the boy out at the back door, blindly. And where do you think I found myself? where but in the minister's house? His wife, whose daughter had just been carried out to her grave, rose up from weeping and praying, to take me into the innermost chamber, where none could see me, and when she saw my darling's state, to give me all the help and sympathy a good woman could. Oh! that was my first true knowledge of Christian charity.

"Mr. Field himself was striving at the very grave itself to turn away the rage of these men against those whom they held his daughter's murderers, but he was as nothing against some fifty or sixty gathered, I suppose, some by real or fancied wrongs, some from mere love of violence. Any way, when he found himself powerless against the infuriated speeches of the young Irish lover, he put his little boy over the graveyard wall, and sent him off to take me to the last place where the mob would look for me, the very room where Annie died. Those howls and yells round the empty house, perhaps, too, the shaking of my rapid run, hastened the end with my precious child. I do not believe she could have lived many hours, but the fright brought on
shudderings and convulsions, and she was gone from me by nine that evening. They might have torn me to pieces then, and I would have thanked them! I cannot tell you the goodness of the Fields. It could not comfort me then, but I have wondered over it often since." (There were blistered, blotted tear marks here.) "They knew it was not safe for me to remain, for there had been wild talk of a warrant out against us for manslaughter. They would have had me leave my little darling's form to their care, but they saw I dreaded (unreasonably I now think) some insult from those ruffians for her father's sake. Mr. Field said I should lay my little one to her rest myself. They found a long basket like a cradle. We laid her there in her own night-dress, looking so sweet and lovely. Mr. Field himself went out and dug the little grave, close to Annie's, and there by moonlight we laid her, and the good man put one of the many wreaths from Annie's grave upon hers, and there we knelt and he prayed. I don't know what denomination his may be, but a Christian I know he is. Cruel as the very sight of me must have been, they kept me in bed all the next day; and the minister went to see what he could save for me. Finding no one, the mob had wreaked their vengeance on our medicine bottles and glasses, smashed everything, and made terrible havoc of all our books, clothes and furniture. Almost the only thing Mr. Field had found unhurt was mother's little Greek
Testament, which I had carried about, but utterly neglected till then. Mr. Field saw my name in it, brought it to me, and kindly said he was glad to restore it; none could be utterly desolate whose study lay there. I was obliged to tell him how you had sent it after me with that entreaty, which I had utterly neglected, and you can guess how he urged it on me."

"You have gone on now," said her mother, looking up at her.

Janet's reply was to produce the little book from her handbag, showing marks of service, and then to open it at the fly leaf. There Caroline herself had written "Janet Hermann," with the reference to St. Luke xv. 20. She had not dared to write more fully, but the good minister of Burkeville had, at Janet's desire, put his own initials, and likewise written in full:

"Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears, for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border."

"He might have written it for me," said Caroline. "My child—one at least is come to me."

"Or you have gone into her far country to seek her," said Janet.

"Can I write to this good man?" asked Caroline. "I do long to thank him."
"O yes. I wrote to him only the day before yesterday."

There was but little more of the narrative.

"At night he borrowed a waggon, and drove me to a station in time to take the early train for the north-east, supplying me with means for the journey, and giving me a letter to a family relation of his, in New York State. I was most kindly sheltered there for a few days while I looked out for advertisements. I found, however, that I must change my name, for the history of the Burkeville affair was copied into all the papers, and there were warnings against the two impostors, giving my maiden name likewise, as that in which my Zurich diploma had been made out. This cut me off from all medical employment, and I had to think what else I could do, not that I cared much what became of me. Seeing a notice that an assistant was wanted to colour and finish photographs, I thought my drawing, though only school-room work, might serve. I applied, showed specimens, and was thought satisfactory. I sent my address to Mr. Field, who had promised to let me know in case my husband made any attempt to trace me, or if I could find my way back to him, but up to this time I have heard absolutely nothing. The few white days in my life are, however, when I get a cheering, comforting letter from him. How I should once have laughed their phraseology to scorn, but then I did not know what reality meant, and they are the only
balm of my life now, except mother's little book, and what they have led me to.

"But you see why I cannot come with Elvira. Not only do I not dare to meet my mother, but it might bring down upon her one whom she could not welcome. Besides, it is clearly fit that I should strive to meet him again; I would try to be less provoking to him now."

"I see, my dear," said Caroline. "But why did you never draw on Mr. Wakefield all this time?"

"I never thought we ought to take that money," said Janet. "I could maintain myself, and that was all I wanted. Besides I was ashamed to bid him use a false name, and I durst not receive a letter under my own, nor did I know whether Demetrius might go on applying."

"He did once, saying that you were unwell, but Mr. Wakefield declined to let him be supplied without your signature."

Janet eagerly asked the when and the where.

"I am glad," said her mother, "to find that your change of name was not in order to elude him, as I feared at first."

"No," said Janet, "he never knew he was cruel, but he had made a mistake altogether in me. I was a disappointment to begin with, owing to my own bad management, you see, for if I had brought off the book, and destroyed the will, his speculation would have succeeded. And then, for his comfort, he should
have married a passive, ignorant, senseless, obedient oriental, and he did not know what to do with a cold, proud thing, who looked most hard when most wretched, who had understanding enough to see his blunders, and remains of conscience enough to make her sour. Poor Demetrius! He had the worst of the bargain! And now—"

She turned the leaf of the manuscript, and showed, with a date three days back:

"Mr. Field has written to me, sending a cutting of an advertisement of a month back of a spiritualist from Abville, which he thinks may be my husband's. I am sure it is, I know the Greek idiom put into English. It decides me on what I had thought of before. I shall offer my services as nurse or physician, or whatever they will let me be in that stress of need. I may find him, or if he have fled, I may, if I live, trace him. At any rate, by God's grace, I may thus endeavour to make a better use of what has never yet been used for His service.

"And in case I should add no further words to this, let me conclude by telling my dear, dear mother that my whole soul and spirit are asking her forgiveness, and by sending my love to my brothers, and sister, whom I love far better now than ever I did when I was with them. And to Elvira too—perhaps she is my sister by this time.

"Let them try henceforth to think not unkindly of

"Janet Hermann."
This had been enclosed in an envelope addressed to Mrs. Joseph Brownlow, to the care of Wakefield and Co., solicitors.

"You see I cannot go back with you, mother dear," she said, "though you have come to seek me."

"Not yet," said Caroline, handing the last page to Jock, who had come back again from one of his excursions.

"Look here, Janet," said Jock, "mother will not forbid it, I know. If you will wait another day for me to arrange for her, I will go with you. This is a place specially mentioned as in frightful need of medical attendance, and I already doubted whether I ought not to volunteer, but if you have an absolute call of duty there, that settles it. Mother, do you remember that American clergyman who dined with us? I met him just now. He begged me with all his heart to persuade you to come and stay with his family. I believe he is going to bring his wife to call. I am sure they would take care of you."

"I don't want care. Jock, Jock, why should I not go and help? Do you think I can send my children into the furnace without me?"

Jock came and sat down by her with his specially consoling caress. "Mother dear, I don't think you ought. We are trained to it, you see, and it is part of our vocation, besides, Janet has a call. But your nursing would not make much difference, and besides, you don't belong only to us—Armine and Babie need
their home. And suppose poor Bobus came back. No, I am accountable to them all. They didn't send me out in charge of my Mother Carey that I should run her into the jaws of Yellow Jack. I can't do it, mother. I should mind my own business far less if I were thinking about you. It would be just like your coming after me into a general engagement."

"Lucas is quite right," said Janet. "You know, mother, this is a special kind of nursing, that one does not understand by the light of nature, and you are not strong enough or tough enough for it."

"I flattered myself I was pretty tough," said her mother, with trembling lip. "What sort of a place is it? Could not I—even if you won't let me nurse—be near enough to rest you, and feed you, and disinfect you? That is my trade, Jock will allow, as a doctor's wife and mother. And I could collect things and send them to the sick. Would not that be possible, my dears?"

Jock said he would find out. And then he told them he had found a Church with a daily service, to which they went.

And then those three had a wonderfully happy evening together.
CHAPTER XLI.

GOOD OUT OF EVIL.

How the field of combat lay
By the tomb's self; how he sprang from ambuscade—
Captured Death, caught him in that pair of hands.

Browning.

"John," said Sydney, as they were taking their last walk together as engaged people on the banks of their Avon, "There's something I think I ought to tell you."

"Well, my dearest."

"Don't they say that there ought not to be any shadow of concealment of the least little liking for any one else, when one is going to be married," quoth Sydney, not over lucidly.

"I'm sure I can safely acquit myself of any such shadow," said John, laughing. "I never had the least little liking for anybody but Mother Carey, and that wasn't a least little one at all!"

"Well, John, I'm very much ashamed of it, because he didn't care for me, as it turned out; but if he had, as I once thought, I should have liked him," said Sydney, looking down, and speaking with great
confusion out of the depths of her conscience, stirred up by much 'Advice to Brides,' and Sunday novels, all turning on the lady's error in hiding her first love; and then perhaps because the effect on John was less startling than she had expected, she added with another effort, "It was Lucas Brownlow."

"Jock!" cried John. "The dear fellow!"

"Yes—I did think it, when he was in the Guards, and always about with Cecil. It was very silly of me, for he did not care one fraction."

"Why do you think so?" said John hoarsely.

"Well, I know better now, but when he made up his mind to leave the army, I fancied it was no better than being a recreant knight, and I begged and prayed him to go out with Sir Philip Cameron, and as near as I dared told him it was for my sake. But he went on all the same, and then I was quite sure he did not care, and saw what a goose I had made of myself. Oh! Johnny, it has been very hard to tell you, but I thought I ought, and I hope you'll never think of it more, for Lucas just despised my foolish forwardness, and you know you have every bit of my heart and soul. What is the matter, John? Oh! have I done harm, when I meant to do right?"

"No, no, my darling, don't be startled. But do you mean that you really thought Jock's disregard of your entreaties came from indifference?"

"It was all one mixture of pain and anger," said
Sydney. "I can't define it. I thought it was one's duty to lead a man to be courageous and defend his country, and of course he thought me such a fool. Why, he has never really talked to me since!"

"And you thought it was indifference," again repeated John, with an iteration worthy of his father.

"O John, you frighten me. Wasn't it? Did you know this before?"

"No, most certainly not. I did know thus much, that in giving up the army Jock had given up his dearest hopes; but I thought it was some fine fashionable lady, whom he was well rid of, though he didn't know it. And he never said a word to betray it, even when I came home brimful and overflowing with happiness. And you know it was his doing that my way has been smoothed. Oh! Sydney, I don't know how to look at it!"

"But indeed, John dear, I couldn't help loving you best. You saved me, you know, and I feel to fit in, and understand you best. I can't be sorry as it has turned out."

"That's very well," said John, trying to laugh, "for you couldn't be transferred back to him, like a bale of goods. And I could not have helped loving you; but that I should have been a robber, Jock's worst enemy!"

"I can't be sorry you did not guess it," said
Sydney. "Then I never should have had you, and somehow—"

"And you thought him wanting in courage," recurred John.

"Only when I was wild and silly, talking out of the 'Traveller's Joy.' It was hearing about his going into that dreadful place that stirred it all up in my mind, because I saw what a hero he is."

"God grant he may come safe out of it!" said John. "I'll tell you what, Sydney, though, it is a shame, when I am the gainer: I think your romance went astray; more faith and patience would have waited to see the real hero come out, and so you have missed him and got the ordinary, jog-trot, commonplace fellow instead."

"Ah! but love must be at the bottom of faith and patience," said Sydney, "and that was scared away by shame at my own forwardness and foolishness. And now it is all gone to the jog-trot! I want no better hero!"

"What a confession for the maiden of the twelfth century!"

"I'm very glad you don't feel moved to start off to the yellow fever."

"Do you know, Sydney, I do not know what I don't feel moved to sometimes, I cannot understand this silence!"

"But you said the telegram that he was mending was almost better than if he had never been ill at all."
"So I thought then; but why do we not hear, if all is well with them?"

Three weeks since, a telegram had been received by Allen, containing the words, "Janet died at 2.30 A.M. Lucas mending."

It had been resolved not to put off the wedding, as much inconvenience would have been caused, and poor Janet was only cousin to John, and had been removed from all family interests so long, even Mrs. Robert Brownlow saw no impropriety, since Barbara went to Belforest for a fortnight, returning to Mrs. Evelyn on the afternoon of the wedding-day itself to assist in her move to the Dower House. Esther, who had never professed to wish for a hero, had been so much disturbed by the recent alarms of war, that she was only anxious that her guardsman should safely sell out in the interval of peace; and he had begun to care enough about the occupations at Fordham to wish to be free to make it his chief dwelling-place.

The wedding was as quiet as possible. Sydney was disappointed of the only bridesmaid she cared much about, and Barbara felt a kind of relief in not having a second time to assist at the destruction of a brother's hopes. She was very glad to get back to Fordham, reporting that Allen and Elvira were so devotedly in love that a third person was very much de trop; though they had been very kind, and Elvira had mourned poor Janet with real gratitude and
affection. Still they did not take half so much alarm at the silence as she did, and she was relieved to be with the Evelyns, who were becoming very anxious. The bridegroom and bride could not bear to go out of reach of intelligence, and had limited their tour to the nearest place on the coast, where they could hear by half a day’s post.

No news had come except that seven American papers had been forwarded to Barbara, giving brief accounts of the pestilence in the southern cities. The numbers of deaths in Abville were sensibly decreased, one of these papers said. The arrival of an English physician, Dr. Lucas Brownlow, and his sister had been noticed, and also that the sister had succumbed to the disease, but that he was recovering. These were all, however, only up to the date of the telegram, and the sole shadow of encouragement was in the assurances that any really fatal news would have been telegraphed. Mrs. Evelyn and Barbara were very loving companions during this time. Together they looked over those personal properties of Duke’s which rather belonged to his mother than his heir. Mrs. Evelyn gave Barbara several which had special associations for her, and together they read over his papers and letters, laughing tenderly over those that awoke droll remembrances, and perfectly entering into one another’s sympathies.

"Yet, my dear," said Mrs. Evelyn, "I do not know whether I ought to let you dwell on this: you
are too young to be looking back on a grave when all life is before you."

"Nay," said Babie, "it was he that showed me how to look right on through life! You cannot tell how delightful it is to me to be brought near to him again, now I can understand him so much better than ever I did when he was here."

"Yet it was always his fear that he might sadden your life."

"Sadden? oh no! It was he who put life into my hands, as something worth using," said Babie. "Don't you know it is the great glory and quiet secret treasure of my heart, that, as Jock said that first night, I have that love not for time but eternity."

And their thoughts could not but go back to the travellers in America, and all the possibilities, for were not whole families swept off by the disease, without power of communication?

However, at last, four days after the wedding, Barbara received a letter.

"Ashton Vineyard, Virginia.

"September 30th.

"My dearest Babie,—I have left you too long without tidings, but I have had little time, and no heart to write, and I could not bear to send such news without details. Of the ten terrible days at Abville I may, if I can, tell you when we meet. I was in a sort of country house a little above the
valley of the shadow of death, preparing supplies, and keeping beds ready for any of the exhausted workers who could snatch a rest in the air of the hill. I scarcely saw my poor Janet. She had made out that her husband had been one of the first victims, before she even guessed at his being there. She only came once to tell me this, and they would not even allow me to come down to the Church, where all the clergy, doctors and sisters who could, used to meet, every morning and evening.

"On the tenth day she brought home Jock, smitten down after incessant exertion. Everyone allows that he saved more cases than anyone, though he says it was the abatement of the disease. Janet declares that his was a slight attack. If that was slight! She attended to him for two days, then told me the crisis was past and that he would live, and almost at the same time her strength failed her. The last thing she said consciously to me was, 'Don't waste time on me. I know these symptoms. Attend to Jock. That is of use. Only forgive and pray for me.' Very soon she was insensible, and was gone before twenty-four hours were over. The sister whom they spared to help me, said she was too much worn out to struggle and suffer like most, indeed as Jock had done.

"That Sister Dorothea, a true divine gift, a sweet and fair vision of peace, is a Miss Ashton, a Virginian. She broke down, not with the disease,
only fatigue, and I gave her such care as I could spare from my dear boy. When her father, General Ashton, came to take her home, he kindly insisted on likewise carrying us off to his beautiful home, on a lovely hillside, where we trusted Jock's strength would be restored quickly. But perhaps we were too impatient, for the journey was far too much for him. He fainted several times, and the last miles were passed in an unconscious state. There has come back on him the intermittent fever which often succeeds the disease; and what is more alarming is the faintness, oppression, and difficulty of breathing, which he believes to be connected with the slight affection of heart remaining from his rheumatic fever at Schwarenbach. Then it is very difficult to give him nourishment except disguised with ice, and he is altogether fearfully ill. I send such an account of the case as I can get for John or Dr. Medlicott to see. How I long for our kind home friends. This place is unhappily very far from everywhere, a lone village in the hills; the nearest doctor twelve miles off. The Ashtons think highly of him; but he is old, and I can't say that I have any confidence in his treatment. Jock allows that he should do otherwise, but he says he has no vigour or connection of ideas to be fit to treat himself consistently, and that he should only do harm by interfering with Dr. Vanbro; indeed I fear he thinks that it does not make much difference. If patience and calmness can bring him
through, he would live, but my dear Babie, I greatly dread that I shall not bring him back to the home he made so bright. He seldom rouses into talking much, but lies passive and half dozing when the feverish restlessness is not on him. He told me just now to send his love to you all, especially to the Monk and Sydney, with all dear good wishes to them both. No one can be kinder than the Ashtons; they are always trying to help in the nursing, and sending for everything that can be thought of for Jock. Sister Dorothea and Primrose are as good and loving as Sydney herself could be, and there is an excellent clergyman who comes in every day, and prays for my boy in Church. Ask them to do the same at Fordham, and at our own Churches. As long as I do not telegraph, remember that while there is life there is hope.

"Your loving Mother C."

This letter was sent on to John. Two days later a fly drove up to the Dower House, and Sydney walked into the drawing-room alone?

Where did she come from?

From Liverpool. John was gone to America.

"I wanted to go too," she said, tears coming into her eyes; "but he said he could go faster without me, and he could not take me to these Ashtons, or leave me alone in New York."
"It was very noble and good in you to let him go, Sydney," cried Babie.

"It would have broken his heart for ever," said Sydney, "if he had not tried to do his utmost for Jock. He says Jock has been more than a brother to him, and that he owes all that he is, and all that he has, to him and Mother Carey, and that even—if—if he were too late, he should save her from coming home alone. You think he was right, mamma?"

"Right indeed, and I am thankful that my Sydney was unselfish, and did not try to keep him back."

"O mamma, I could never have looked him in the face again if I had hindered him! And so we went up to London, and luckily Dr. Medlicott was at home, and he was very eager that John should go. He says he does not think it will be too late, and they talked it over, and got some medicines, and then John let me come down to Liverpool with him and see him on board, and we telegraphed the last thing to Mrs. Brownlow, so that it might be too late for her to stop him." While that message was rushing on its way beneath the Atlantic it was the early morning of the ebb tide of the fever, and the patient was resting almost doubled over with his head on pillows before him, either slumber or exhaustion, so still, that his mother had yielded to urgent persuasion, and lain down in the next room
to sleep in the dreamless repose of the overworn watcher.

For over him leant a sturdy, dark-browed, dark-bearded figure, to whom she had ventured to entrust him. Some fourteen hours before, Robert had with some difficulty found them out at Ashton Vineyard, having been irresistibly drawn by Jock's telegram to spend in the States an interval of leisure in his work, caused by his appointment as principal to another Japanese college. He had gone to the bank where Jock had given an address, and his consternation had been great on hearing the state of things. All this, however, he had left unexplained, and his mother had hardly even thought of asking where he had dropped from. For Jock was in the midst of one of his cruellest attacks of the fever, and all she had been conscious of was a knock and summons to the door, where Primrose Ashton gently whispered, "Here is some one you will be glad to see?" and Robert's low deep voice, almost inaudible with emotion, asked, "May I see him!"

"He will not know you," she said, with the sad composure of one who has no time to grieve. But even in the midst of the babbling moan of fevered weakness, there was half a smile as of pleased surprise, and an evident craving for the strong support of his brother's arm, and by-and-by Jock looked up with meaning and recognition in his eyes, though quite unable to speak, in that faint and exhausted
state indeed that verged nearer to death after every attack.

This had passed enough for her to know there would be a respite for perhaps a good many hours, and she had yielded to the entreaty or command of Bobus, that she would lie down and sleep, trusting to him to call her at any moment.

Presently, as morning light stole in, Jock's eyes were open, gazing at him fondly, and he whispered, "Dear old Bob," then presently, "Open the window."

The sun was rising, and the wooded hillside opposite was all one gorgeous mass of autumn colouring, of every shade from purple to golden yellow, so glorious that it arrested Bobus's attention even at that instant.

"Beautiful, isn't it?" asked the feeble voice.

"Wonderful, as we always heard."

"Lift me a little. I like to see it. Not fast—or high—so."

Bobus raised the white wasted form, and rested the head against his square firm shoulder. "Dear old Bob! This is jolly! I'm not cramping you?"

"O no, but should not you have something?"

"What time is it?"

"6.30."

"Too soon yet for that misery;" then, after some silence, "I'm so glad you are come. Can you take mother home?"

"I would; but you will."
"I don't think so."

"Now, Jock, you are not getting into Armine's state of mind, giving yourself up and wishing to die?"

"Not at all. There are hosts of things I want to do first. There's that discovery of father's. With what poor Janet told me of Hermann's doings, and what I saw at Abville, if I could only get an hour of my proper wits, I could put the others up to a wrinkle that would make the whole thing comparatively plain."

"Should not you be better if you dictated it, and got it off your mind?"

"So I thought and tried, but presently I saw mother looking queer, and she said I was tired, and had gone on enough. I made her read it to me afterwards, and I had gone off into a muddle, and said something that would have been sheer murder. So I had better leave it alone. Old Vanbro mistrusts every word I say because of the Hermann connection, and indeed I may not always have talked sense to him. Those things work out in God's own time, and the Monk is on the track. I'd like to have seen him, but I've got you."

This had been said in faint slow utterances, so low that Bobus could hardly have heard a couple of feet further off, and with intervals between, and there was a gesture of tender perfect content in the contact with him that went to his heart, and, before he was aware,
a great hot tear came dropping down on Jock's forehead and caused an exclamation.

"I beg your pardon," said Bobus. "Oh! Jock, you don't know what it is to find you like this. I came with so much to ask and talk of to you."

Jock looked up inquiringly.

"You were right to suppress that paper of mine," continued Bobus, "I wouldn't have written it now. I have seen better what a people are without Christianity, be the code what it may, and the civilisation, it can't produce such women as my mother, no, nor such men as you, Jockey, my boy," he muttered much lower.

"Are you coming back, dear old man?" said Jock, with eyes fixed on him.

"I don't know. Tell me one thing, old man: I always thought, when you took to using your brains and getting up physical science, that you must get beyond what satisfied you as a soldier. Now, have the two, science and religion, never clashed, or have you kept them apart?"

"They've worked in together," said Jock.

"You don't say so because you ought, and think it good for me?"

"As if I could, lying here. 'All Thy works praise Thee, O God, and Thy saints do magnify Thee.'"

Bobus was not sure whether this were a conscious reply, or only wandering, and his mother here came in, wakened by the murmur of voices.
The brothers could not bear to lose sight of one another, though Jock was too much exhausted by this conversation, and, by the sickness that followed any endeavour to take food, to speak much again. Thus, when the Rector came, Bobus asked whether he must be sent out of the room, Jock made an earnest sign to the contrary, and he stayed.

There was of course nothing to concern him, especially in the brief reading and prayer; but his mother, looking up, saw that he was finding out the passage in the little Greek Testament.

Janet’s lay on a little table close by the bedside. The two copies had met again. The work of one was done. Was the work of the other doing at last?

However that might be, nothing could be gentler, tenderer, or more considerate towards his mother than was Bobus, and her kind friends felt much relieved of their fears for her, since she had such a son to take care of her.

Towards the evening, the negro servant knocked at the door, and Bobus took from him a telegram envelope. His mother opened it and read:

“Friar Brownlow to Mrs. Brownlow. I embark to-day.”

A smile shone out on Jock’s white weary face, and he said, “Good old Monk! If I can but hold out till he comes, I shall get home again yet. I should like to do him credit.”
"Ashton Vineyard, October 12th.

"My dearest Child,—You know the main fact by telegram, and now I can write, I must tell you all in more order. We thought our darkest hour was over when the dear John's telegram came, and the hope helped us up a little while. To Jock himself it was like a drowning man clinging to a rope with the more exertion because he knew that a boat was putting off. At least so it was at first, but as his strength faded, his brain could not grasp the notion any longer, and he generally seemed to be fancying himself on the snow with Armine, still however looking for John to come and save them, and sometimes, too, talking about Cecil, and being a true brother in arms, a faithful servant and soldier. The long severe strain of study, work, and all the rest which he has gone through, body and mind, coming on a heart already not quite sound, throughout the past year, was, John thinks, the real reason of his being unable to rally when the fever had brought him down, after the dreadful exertion at Abville. Dear fellow, he never let us guess how much his patience cost him. I think we had looked to John's arrival as if it would act like magic, and it was very sore disappointment when his treatment was producing no change for the better, but the prostration went on day after day. Poor Bobus was in utter despair, and went raging about, declaring that he had been a fool ever to expect anything from Kencroft, and at last he had to
be turned out of the sick-room. For I should tell you that the one thing that kept me up was the entire calm grave composure that John preserved throughout, and which gave him the entire command. He never showed any consternation or dismay, nor uttered an augury, but he went quietly and vigilantly on, in a manner that all along gave me a strange sense of confidence and trust, that all that could be done was being done, and the issue was in higher hands. He would not let anyone really help him but Sister Dorothea, with her trained skill as a nurse. I don't think even I should have been suffered in the room, if he had not thought Jock might be more conscious than was apparent, for he had not himself received one token of recognition all those three days. Poor Bobus! the little gleam of light that Jock had let in on him seemed all gone. I do not know what would have become of him but for the good Ashtons. He had been persuaded for a time that what was so real to Jock must be true; but when Jock was no longer conscious, he had nothing to help him, and I am afraid he spoke terrible words when Primrose talked of prayer and faith. I believe he declared that to see one like his brother snatched away when just come to the perfection of his early manhood, with all his capacity and all his knowledge in vain, convinced him either that this universe was one grim, pitiless machine, grinding down humanity by mere law of necessity, or if they would have it that there
was supernatural power, it could only be malevolent; and then Primrose, so strong in faith as to venture what I should have shrunk from as dangerous presumption, dared him to go on in his disbelief, if his brother were given back to prayer.

"She pitied him so much, the sweet bright girl, she had so pitied him all along, that I believe she prayed as much for him as for Jock.

"Of course I did not know all this till afterwards, for all was stillness in that room, except when at times the clergyman came in and prayed.

"The next thing I am sure of, was John's leaning over me, and his low steady voice saying, 'The pulse is better, the symptoms are mitigating.' Sister Dorothea says they had both seen it for some hours, but he made her a sign not to agitate me till he was secure that the improvement was real. Indeed there was something in that equable firm gentleness of John's that sustained me, and prevented my breaking down. Even then it was another whole day before my darling smiled at me again, and said, 'Thanks' to John, but oh! with such a look.

"When Bobus heard his brother was better, he gave a sob, such as I shall never forget, and rushed away into the pine-wood on the hillside, all alone. The next time I saw him he was walking in the garden with Primrose, and with such a quieted, subdued, gentle look upon his face, it put me in mind of the fields when a great storm has swept
over them, and they are lying still in the sunshine afterwards.

"Since that day, when John said we might send off that thankworthy telegram, there has been daily progress. I have had one of my headaches. That monarch John found it out, and turned me out. I could bear to go, for I knew my boy was safe with him. He made me over to Primrose, who nursed me as tenderly as my Babie could have done, and indeed, I begin to think she will soon be as near and dear to me as my Sydney or Elvira. She has a power over Bobus that no one else ever had, and she is very lovely in expression as well as features, but how will so ardent a Christian as she is receive one still so far off as my poor Robert, though indeed I think he has at least come so far as the cry, 'Help Thou mine unbelief.'

"So now they have let me come back to my Jock, and I see visibly his improvement. He holds out his hand, and he smiles, and he speaks now and then, the dreadful oppression is gone, and all the dangerous symptoms are abating, and I cannot tell how happy and thankful we are. 'Send my love, and tell Sydney she has a blessed Monk,' he says, as he wakes, and sees me writing.

"That dear Monk says he will not go home till he can carry home his patient. When that will be I cannot tell, for he cannot sit up in bed yet. Dear Sydney, how I thank her! John says it was not his
treatment, but, under Divine Providence, youthful nature that had had her rest, and begun to rally her strength. But under that blessing, it was John’s steady, faithful strength and care that enabled the restoration to take place.

"My dear child’s loving

"MOTHER CAREY."
CHAPTER XLII.

DISENCHANTED.

Whatever page we turn,
However much we learn,
Let there be something left to dream of still.

Longfellow.

It was on a very cold day of the cold spring of 1879 that three ladies descended at the Liverpool station, escorted by a military-looking gentleman. He left them standing while he made inquiries, but his servant had anticipated him. "The steamer has been signalled, my Lord. It will be in about four o'clock."

"There will be time to go to the hotel and secure rooms," said one lady.

"Oh, Reeves can do that. Pray let us come down to the docks and see them come in."

No answer till all four were seated in a fly, rattling through the street, but on the repetition of "Are we going to the docks?" his Lordship, with a resolute twirl of his long, light moustache, replied, "No, Sydney. If you think I am going to have you making a scene on deck, falling on your husband's breast, and all that sort of thing, you are much
mistaken! I shall lodge you all quietly in the hotel, and you may wait there, while I go down with Reeves, and receive them like a rational being."

"Really, Cecil, that's too bad. He let me come on board!"

"Do you think I should have brought you here if I had thought you meant to make yourself ridiculous?"

"It is of no use, Sydney," said Babie; "there's no dealing with the stern and staid père de famille. I wonder what he would have liked Essie to do, if he had had to go and leave her for nearly two months when he had only been married a week?"

"Essie is quite a different thing—I mean she has sense and self-possession."

"Mamma, won't you speak for us?" implored Sydney. "I did behave so well when he went! Nobody would have guessed we hadn't been married fifty years."

"Still I think Cecil is quite right, and that it may be better for them all to manage the landing quietly."

"Without a pack of women," said Cecil. "Here we are! I hope you will find a tolerable room for him and no stairs."

As if poor Mrs. Evelyn were not well enough used to choosing rooms for invalids!

Twilight had come, the gas had been turned on, and the three anxious ladies stood in the window gazing
vainly at endless vehicles, when the door opened and they beheld sundry figures entering.

Sydney and Barbara flew, the one to her husband, the other to her mother, and presently all stood round the fire looking at one another. Mrs. Evelyn made a gesture to a very slender and somewhat pale figure to sit down in a large easy chair.

“Thank you, I’m not tired,” he briskly said, standing with a caressing hand on his friend’s shoulder. “Here’s Cecil can’t quite believe yet that I have the use of my limbs.”

“Yes,” said John, “no sooner did he come on board, than he made a rush at the poor sailor who had broken his leg, and was going to be carried ashore on a hammock. He was on the point of embracing him, red beard and all, when he was forcibly dragged off by Jock himself whom he nearly knocked down.”

“Well,” said Cecil, as Sydney fairly danced round him in revengeful glee, “there was the Monk solicitously lifting him on one side, and Mother Carey assisting with a smelling-bottle on the other, so what could I suppose?”

“All for want of us,” said Sydney.

“And think of the cunning of him,” added Babie; “shutting us up here that he might give way to his feelings undisturbed!”

“I promised to go and speak about that poor
fellow at the hospital," cried John, with sudden recollection.

"You had better let me," said Jock.
"You will stay where you are."
"I consider him my patient."

"If that's the way you two fought over your solitary case all the way home," said Babie, "I wonder there's a fragment left of him."

"It was only three days ago," said John, "and Jock has been a new man ever since he picked the poor fellow up on deck, but I'm not going to let him stir to-night."

"Let me come with you, Johnny," entreated Sydney; "it will be so nice! Oh, no, I don't mind the cold!"

"Here," added her brother, "take the poor fellow a sovereign."

"In compensation for the sudden cooling of your affection," said Jock. "Well, if it is an excuse for an excursion with Sydney I'll not interfere, but ask him for his sister's address in London, for I promised to tell her about him."

"Oh," cried Babie, at the word "London," "then you have heard from Dr. Medlicott?"

"I did once," said John, "with some very useful suggestions, but that was a month ago or more."

"I meant," said Babie, "a letter he wrote for the chance of Jock's getting it before he sailed. There's the assistant lectureship vacant, and the Professor
would not like anyone so much. It is his own appointment, not an election matter, and he meant to keep it open till he could get an answer from Jock."

"When was this?" asked Jock, flushing with eagerness.

"The 20th, Dr. Medlicott came down to Fordham for Sunday, to ask if it was worth while to telegraph, or if I thought you would be well enough. It is not much of a salary, but it is a step, and Dr. Medlicott knows they would put you on the staff of the hospital, and then you are open to anything."

Jock drew a long breath and looked at his mother.

"The very thing I've wished," he said.

"Exactly. Must he answer at once?"

"The Professor would like a telegram, yes or no, at once."

"Then, you wedded Monk, will you add to your favours by telegraphing for me?"

"Yes. Of course it is 'Yes'? How soon should you have to begin, I wonder?"

"Oh, I'm quite cheeky enough for that sort of work. If you'll telegraph, I'll write by to-night's post."

"I'll go and do the telegraphing," said Cecil; "I don't trust those two."

"As if John ever made mistakes," cried Sydney.

"In fact, I want to send a telegram home."

"To frighten Essie. She will get a yellow envelope
saying you accept a lectureship, and the Professor urgent inquiries after his baby.”

“Sydney is getting too obstreperous, Monk,” said Cecil. “You had better carry her off. I shall come back by the time you have written your letters, Jock.”

“Those two are too happy to do anything but tease one another,” said Mrs. Evelyn, as the door shut on the three. “My rival grandmother, as Babie calls her, was really quite glad to get rid of Cecil; she declared he would excite Esther into a fever.”

“He did alarm Her Serenity herself,” said Babie, laughing. “When she would go on about grand sponsors and ancestral names, he told her that he should carry the baby off to Church and have him christened Jock out of hand, and what a dreadful thing that would be for the peerage. I believe she thought he meant it.”

“The name is to be John,” said Mrs. Evelyn—“John Marmaduke. He has secured his godmother”—laying a hand affectionately on Babie—“but I must not forestall his request to his two earliest and best friends.”

“Dear old fellow!” murmured Jock.

“Everybody is somewhat frantic,” said Barbara. “Jock's varieties of classes were almost distracted and besieged the door, till Susan was fain to stick the last bulletins in the window to save answering the bell; then no sooner did they hear he was better than they began getting up a testimonial. Percy
Stagg wrote to me, to ask for his crest for some piece of plate, and I wrote back that I was sure Dr. Lucas Brownlow would like it best to go in something for the Mission Church; and if they wanted to give him something for his very own, suppose they got him a brass plate for the door?"

"Bravo, Infanta; that was an inspiration!"

"So they are to give an alms-dish, and Ali and Elfie give the rest of the plate. Dr. Medlicott says he never saw anything like the feeling at the hospital, or does not know what the nurses don't mean to get up by way of welcome."

"My dear Babie, you must let Jock write his letters," interposed her mother, who had tears in her eyes and saw him struggling with emotion. "In spite of your magnificent demonstrations, Jock, you must repair your charms by lying down."

She followed him into his room, which opened from the sitting-room, and he turned to her, speaking from a full heart. "Oh, mother! It seems all given to me, the old home, the very post I wished for, and all this kindness, just when I thought I had taken leave of it all." He sobbed once or twice for very joy.

"You are sure it suits you?"

"If I only can suit it equally well! Oh, I see what you mean. That is over now. I suppose the fever burnt it out of me, for it does not hurt me now to see the dear old Monk beaming on her. I am glad she came, for I can feel sure of myself now. So
there's nothing at present to come between me and my Mother Carey. Thanks, mother, I'll just fire off my two notes; and establish myself luxuriously before Cecil comes back! I say, this is the best inn's best room. Poor Mrs. Evelyn must have thought herself providing for Fordham. Oh yes, I shall gladly lie down when these notes are done, but this is not a chance to be neglected. Now, Deo gratias, it will be my own fault if Magnum Bonum is not worked out to the utmost; yes, much better than if we had never gone to America. Even Bobus owns that all things have worked together for good!"

His mother, with another look at the face, so joyous though still so wasted and white, went back to the other room, with an equally happy though scarcely less worn countenance.

"I hope he is resting," said Mrs. Evelyn. "Are you quite satisfied about him?"

"Fully. He may not be strong for a year or two, and must be careful not to overtask himself, but John made him see one of the greatest physicians in New York, to whom Dr. Medlicott had sent letters of introduction—as if they were needed, he said, after Jock's work at Abville. He said, as John did, there was no lasting damage to the heart, and that the attack was the consequence of having been brought so low; but he will be as strong and healthy as ever, if he will only be careful as to exertion for a year or so. This appointment is the very thing to
save him. I know his friends will look after him and keep him from doing too much. Dr. —— was quite grieved that he had no notion how ill Jock had been, or he would have come to Ashton. Any of the faculty would, he said, for one of the "true chivalry of 1878." And he was so excited about the Magnum Bonum.

"Do you think you and he can bear to crown our great thanksgiving feast?"

"My dear, my heart is all one thanksgiving!"

"Cecil's rejoicing is quite as much for Jock's sake as over his boy. He told me how they had been pledged as brothers in arms, and traces all that is best in himself to those days at Engelberg."

"Yes, that night on the mountain was the great starting-point, thanks to dear little Armine."

"I am writing to him and to Allen," said Barbara from a corner.

"My love a thousand times, and we will meet at home!"

"Then our joy will not feel incongruous to you?" said Mrs. Evelyn.

"No, I am too thankful for what I know of my poor Janet. She is mine now as she never was since she was a baby in my arms. I scarcely grieve, for happiness was over for her, and hers was a noble death. They have placed her name in the memorial tablet in Abville Church, to those who laid down their lives for their brethren there. I begged it might be,
“Janet Hermann, daughter of Joseph Brownlow”—for I thank God she died worthy of her father. In all ways I can say of this journey, my children were dead and are alive again, were lost and are found.”

“Ah! I was sure it must be so, if such a girl as Miss Ashton could accept Robert.”

“I am happier about him than I ever thought to be. I do not say that his faith is like John’s or Armine’s, but he is striving back through the mists, and wishing to believe, rather than being proud of disbelieving, and Primrose knows what she is doing, and is aiding him with all her power.”

“As our Esther never could have done,” said Mrs. Evelyn, “except by her gentle innocence.”

“No. She could only have been to him a pretty white idol of his own setting up,” said Babie.

“Now,” added her mother, “Primrose is fairly on equal grounds as to force and intellect. She has been all over Europe, read and thought much, and can discuss deep matters, while the depth of her religious principle impresses him. They fought themselves into love, and then she was sorry for him, and so touched by his wretchedness and longing to take hold of the comfort his reason could not accept. I wish you could have seen her. This photograph shows you her fine head; but not the beautiful clear complexion, and the sweetness of those dark grey eyes!”
"I liked her letter," said Babie, "and I am glad she was such a daughter to you, mother. Allen says he is thankful she is not a Japanese with black teeth."

"He wrote very nicely to her, and so did Elfie," said her mother. "And Armine wrote a charming little note, which pleased Primrose best of all."

"Poor Armine has felt all most deeply," said Babie. "Do you remember when he thought it his mission to die and do good to Bobus? Well, he was sure that, though, as he said, his own life then was too shallow and unreal for his death to have done any good, Jock was meant to produce the effect."

"And he has——"

"Yes, but by life, not death! Armie could hardly believe it. You know he was with us at Christmas; and when he found that Bobus was to be led not by sorrow, but by this Primrose path, it was quite funny to see how surprised he was."

"Yes," said Mrs. Evelyn, "he went about moralising on the various remedies that are applied to the needs of human nature."

"It made into a poem at last, such a pretty one," said Babie. "And he says he will be wiser all his life for finding things turn out so unlike all his expectations."

"I have a strange feeling of peace about all my children," said Caroline. "I do feel as if my dream had come true, and life, true life, had wakened them all."
"Yes," said Mrs. Evelyn, "I think they all, in their degree, may be said to have learnt or be learning the way to true Magnum Bonum."

"And oh! how precious it has been to me," said the mother. "How the guarding of that secret aided me through the worst of times!"

THE END.
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