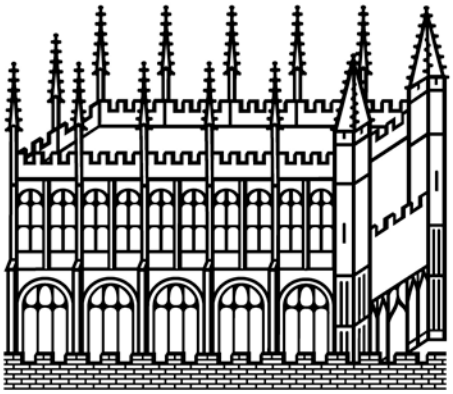

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THE TENANT

OF

WILDFELL HALL.

BY

ACTON BELL.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE TENANT

OF

WILDFELL HALL.

CHAPTER I.

PERSISTENCE.

SEPTEMBER 24th.—In the morning I rose, light and cheerful, nay, intensely happy. The hovering cloud cast over me by my aunt's views, and by the fear of not obtaining her consent, was lost in the bright effulgence of my own hopes, and the too delightful consciousness of requited love. It was a splendid

morning; and I went out to enjoy it, in a quiet ramble in company with my own blissful thoughts. The dew was on the grass, and ten thousand gossamers were waving in the breeze; the happy red-breast was pouring out its little soul in song, and my heart overflowed with silent hymns of gratitude and praise to Heaven.

But I had not wandered far before my solitude was interrupted by the only person that could have disturbed my musings, at that moment, without being looked upon as an unwelcome intruder: Mr. Huntingdon came suddenly upon me. So unexpected was the apparition, that I might have thought it the creation of an over-excited imagination, had the sense of sight alone borne witness to his presence; but immediately I felt his strong arm round my waist and his warm kiss on my cheek, while his keen and gleeful salutation, "My own Helen!" was ringing in my ear.

"Nor yours yet," said I, hastily swerving

aside from this too presumptuous greeting—"remember my guardians. You will not easily attain my aunt's consent. Don't you see she is prejudiced against you?"

"I do, dearest; and you must tell me why, that I may best know how to combat her objections. I suppose she thinks I am a prodigal," pursued he, observing that I was unwilling to reply, "and concludes that I shall have but little worldly goods wherewith to endow my better half? If so, you must tell her that my property is mostly entailed, and I cannot get rid of it. There may be a few mortgages on the rest — a few trifling debts and encumbrances here and there, but nothing to speak of; and though I acknowledge I am not so rich as I might be—or have been—still, I think, we could manage pretty comfortably on what's left. My father, you know, was something of a miser, and in his latter days especially, saw no pleasure in life but to amass riches; and so it is no wonder that his son should make it his

chief delight to spend them, which was accordingly the case, until my acquaintance with you, dear Helen, taught me other views and nobler aims. And the very idea of having you to care for under my roof, would force me to moderate my expenses and live like a christian —not to speak of all the prudence and virtue you would instil into my mind by your wise counsels and sweet, attractive goodness."

"But it is not that," said I, "it is not money my aunt thinks about. She knows better than to value worldly wealth above its price."

"What is it then?"

"She wishes me to—to marry none but a really good man."

"What, a man of 'decided piety?'—ahem! —Well, come, I'll manage that too! It's Sunday to-day, isn't it? I'll go to church morning, afternoon, and evening, and comport myself in such a godly sort that she shall regard me with admiration and sisterly love, as

a brand plucked from the burning. I'll come home sighing like a furnace, and full of the savour and unction of dear Mr. Blatant's discourse—"

"Mr. Leighton," said I, dryly.

"Is Mr. Leighton a 'sweet preacher,' Helen —a 'dear, delightful, heavenly-minded man?'"

"He is a *good* man, Mr. Huntingdon. I wish I could say half as much for you."

"Oh, I forgot, you are a saint, too. I crave your pardon, dearest—but don't call me Mr. Huntingdon, my name is Arthur."

"I'll call you nothing—for I'll have nothing at all to do with you, if you talk in that way any more. If you really mean to deceive my aunt as you say, you are very wicked; and if not, you are very wrong to jest on such a subject."

"I stand corrected," said he, concluding his laugh with a sorrowful sigh. "Now," resumed he, after a momentary pause, "let us talk about something else. And come nearer to me,

Helen, and take my arm; and then I'll let you alone. I can't be quiet while I see you walking there."

I complied; but said we must soon return to the house.

"No one will be down to breakfast yet, for long enough," he answered. "You spoke of your guardians just now, Helen, but is not your father still living?"

"Yes, but I always look upon my uncle and aunt as my guardians, for they are so, in deed, though not in name. My father has entirely given me up to their care. I have never seen him since dear mamma died when I was a very little girl, and my aunt, at her request, offered to take charge of me, and took me away to Staningley, where I have remained ever since; and I don't think he would object to anything for me, that she thought proper to sanction."

"But would he sanction anything to which she thought proper to object?"

"No, I don't think he cares enough about me."

"He is very much to blame—but he doesn't know what an angel he has for his daughter—which is all the better for me, as, if he did, he would not be willing to part with such a treasure."

"And Mr. Huntingdon," said I. "I suppose you *know* I am not an heiress?"

He protested he had never given it a thought, and begged I would not disturb his present enjoyment by the mention of such uninteresting subjects. I was glad of this proof of disinterested affection; for Annabella Wilmot is the probable heiress to all her uncle's wealth, in addition to her late father's property, which she has already in possession.

I now insisted upon retracing our steps to the house; but we walked slowly, and went on talking as we proceeded. I need not repeat all we said: let me rather refer to what passed between my aunt and me, after breakfast, when Mr. Huntingdon called my uncle aside, no doubt to make his proposals, and she beckoned

me into another room, where she once more commenced a solemn remonstrance which, however, entirely failed to convince me that her view of the case was preferable to my own.

"You judge him uncharitably, aunt, I know," said I. "His very friends are not half so bad as you represent them. There is Walter Hargrave, Milicent's brother, for one: he is but a little lower than the angels, if half she says of him is true. She is continually talking to me about him, and lauding his many virtues to the skies."

"You will form a very inadequate estimate of a man's character," replied she, "if you judge by what a fond sister says of him. The worst of them generally know how to hide their misdeeds from their sister's eyes, and their mother's too."

"And there is Lord Lowborough," continued I, "quite a decent man."

"Who told you so? Lord Lowborough is a *desperate* man. He has dissipated his fortune

in gambling and other things, and is now seeking an heiress to retrieve it. I told Miss Wilmot so; but you're all alike: she haughtily answered she was very much obliged to me, but she believed *she* knew when a man was seeking her for her fortune, and when for herself; she flattered herself she had had experience enough in those matters, to be justified in trusting to her own judgment--and as for his lordship's lack of fortune, she cared nothing about that, as she hoped her own would suffice for both; and as for his wildness, she supposed he was no worse than others—besides he was reformed now.—Yes, they can all play the hypocrite when they want to take in a fond, misguided woman!"

"Well, I think he's about as good as she is," said I. "But when Mr. Huntingdon is married, he won't have many opportunities of consorting with his bachelor friends;—and the worse they are, the more I long to deliver him from them."

"To be sure, my dear; and the worse *he* is, I suppose, the more you long to deliver him from himself."

"Yes, provided he is not incorrigible—that is, the more I long to deliver him from his faults—to give him an opportunity of shaking off the adventitious evil got from contact with others worse than himself, and shining out in the unclouded light of his own genuine goodness—to do my utmost to help his better self against his worse, and make him what he would have been if he had not, from the beginning, had a bad, selfish, miserly father, who to gratify his own sordid passions, restricted him in the most innocent enjoyments of childhood and youth, and so disgusted him with every kind of restraint;—and a foolish mother who indulged him to the top of his bent, deceiving her husband for him, and doing her utmost to encourage those germs of folly and vice it was her duty to suppress,—and then, such a set of companions as you represent his friends to be—"

"Poor man!" said she, sarcastically, "his kind have greatly wronged him!"

"They have!" cried I — "and they shall wrong him no more—his wife shall undo what his mother did!"

"Well!" said she, after a short pause. "I must say, Helen, I thought better of your judgment than this—and your taste too. How you can love such a man I cannot tell, or what pleasure you can find in his company; for 'What fellowship hath light with darkness; or he that believeth with an infidel?'"

"He is not an infidel;—and I am not light, and he is not darkness, his worst and only vice is thoughtlessness."

"And thoughtlessness," pursued my aunt, "may lead to every crime, and will but poorly excuse our errors in the sight of God. Mr. Huntingdon, I suppose, is not without the common faculties of men: he is not so light-headed as to be irresponsible: his maker has endowed him with reason and conscience as well as the

rest of us; the scriptures are open to him as well as to others;—and 'If he hear not them, neither will he hear though one rose from the dead.' And, remember, Helen," continued she solemnly, "'The wicked shall be turned into hell, and they that *forget* God!' And suppose, even, that he should continue to love you, and you him, and that you should pass through life together with tolerable comfort,—how will it be in the end, when you see yourselves parted for ever; you, perhaps, taken into eternal bliss, and he cast into the lake that burneth with unquenchable fire—there for ever to—"

"Not for ever," I exclaimed, "'only till he has paid the uttermost farthing;' for 'If any man's work abide not the fire, he shall suffer loss, yet himself shall be saved, but so as by fire,' and he that 'is able to subdue all things to himself, will have all men to be saved,' and 'will in the fulness of time, gather together in one all things in Christ Jesus, who tasted death for every man, and in whom God will reconcile all things to

himself, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven.' ''

"Oh, Helen! where did you learn all this?"

"In the bible, aunt. I have searched it through, and found nearly thirty passages, all tending to support the same theory."

"And is *that* the use you make of your bible? And did you find no passages tending to prove the danger and the falsity of such a belief?"

"No: I found, indeed some passages that taken by themselves, might seem to contradict that opinion; but they will all bear a different construction to that which is commonly given, and in most the only difficulty is in the word which we translate 'everlasting' or 'eternal:' I don't know the greek, but I believe it strictly means for ages, and might signify either endless or long-enduring. And as for the danger of the belief, I would not publish it abroad, if I thought any poor wretch would be likely to presume upon it to his own destruction, but it is a glorious thought to cherish in one's own heart, and I

would not part with it for all the world can give!"

Here our conference ended, for it was now high time to prepare for church. Every one attended the morning service, except my uncle, who hardly ever goes, and Mr. Wilmot, who stayed at home with him to enjoy a quiet game of cribbage. In the afternoon Miss Wilmot and Lord Lowborough likewise excused themselves from attending; but Mr. Huntingdon vouchsafed to accompany us again. Whether it was to ingratiate himself with my aunt I cannot tell, but, if so, he certainly should have behaved better. I must confess, I did not like his conduct during service at all. Holding his prayer-book upside down, or open at any place but the right, he did nothing but stare about him, unless he happened to catch my aunt's eye or mine, and then he would drop his own on his book, with a puritanical air of mock solemnity that would have been ludicrous, if it had not been too provoking. Once, during the sermon, after

attentively regarding Mr. Leighton for a few minutes, he suddenly produced his gold pencil case and snatched up a bible. Perceiving that I observed the movement, he whispered he was going to make a note of the sermon; but instead of that—as I sat next him I could not help seeing that he was making a caricature of the preacher, giving to the respectable, pious, elderly gentleman, the air and aspect of a most absurd old hypocrite. And yet, upon his return, he talked to my aunt about the sermon with a degree of modest, serious discrimination that tempted me to believe he had really attended and profited by the discourse.

Just before dinner my uncle called me into the library for the discussion of a very important matter, which was dismissed in few words.

"Now Nel," said he, "This young Huntingdon has been asking for you: what must I say about it? Your aunt would answer 'No'—but what say you?"

"I say yes, uncle," replied I, without a

moment's hesitation ; for I had thoroughly made up my mind on the subject.

" Very good !" cried he. " Now that's a good honest answer—wonderful for a girl !— Well, I'll write to your father to-morrow. He's sure to give his consent ; so you may look on the matter as settled. You'd have done a deal better if you'd taken Wilmot, I can tell you ; but that you won't believe. At your time of life, it's love that rules the roast : at mine, it's solid, serviceable gold. I suppose now, you'd never dream of looking into the state of your husband's finances, or troubling your head about settlements, or anything of that sort ?"

" I don't think I should."

" Well, be thankful, then, that you've wiser heads to think for you. I haven't had time, yet, to examine thoroughly into this young rascal's affairs, but I see that a great part of his father's fine property has been squandered away ;—but still, I think there's a pretty fair share of it left, and a little careful nursing may make a hand-

some thing of it yet; and then we must persuade your father to give you a decent fortune, as he has only one besides yourself to care for; —and, if you behave well, who knows but what I may be induced to remember you in my will?" continued he, putting his finger to his nose, with a knowing wink.

"Thanks uncle, for that and all your kindness," replied I.

"Well, and I questioned this young spark on the matter of settlements," continued he; "and he seemed disposed to be generous enough on that point—"

"I knew he would!" said I. "But pray don't trouble your head—or his, or mine about that; for all I have will be his, and all he has will be mine; and what more could either of us require?" And I was about to make my exit, but he called me back.

"Stop, stop!" cried he—"We haven't mentioned the time yet. When must it be? Your aunt would put it off till the Lord knows when,

but he is anxious to be bound as soon as may be: he won't hear of waiting beyond next month; and you, I guess, will be of the same mind, so—"

"Not at all, uncle; on the contrary, I should like to wait till after Christmas, at least."

"Oh! pooh, pooh! never tell me that tale—I know better," cried he; and he persisted in his incredulity. Nevertheless, it is quite true. I am in no hurry at all. How can I be, when I think of the momentous change that awaits me, and of all I have to leave? It is happiness enough, to know that we *are* to be united; and that he really loves me, and I may love *him* as devotedly, and think of him as often as I please. However, I insisted upon consulting my aunt about the *time* of the wedding, for I determined her counsels should not be utterly disregarded; and no conclusions on that particular are come to yet.

CHAPTER II.

OPINIONS.

October 1st—All is settled now. My father has given his consent, and the time is fixed for Christmas, by a sort of compromise between the respective advocates for hurry and delay. Milicent Hargrave is to be one bridesmaid, and Annabella Wilmot the other—not that I am particularly fond of the latter, but she is an intimate of the family, and I have not another friend.

When I told Milicent of my engagement, she rather provoked me by her manner of taking

it. After staring a moment in mute surprise, she said—

"Well Helen, I suppose I ought to congratulate you—and I *am* glad to see you so happy; but I did not think you would take him; and I can't help feeling surprised that you should like him so much."

"Why so?"

"Because you are so superior to him in every way, and there's something so bold—and reckless about him—so, I don't know how—but I always feel a wish to get out of his way, when I see him approach."

"You are timid, Milicent, but that's no fault of his."

"And then his look," continued she. "People say he's handsome, and of course he is, but *I* don't *like* that kind of beauty; and I wonder that you should."

"Why so, pray?"

"Well, you know, I think there's nothing noble or lofty in his appearance."

"In fact, you wonder that I can like any one so unlike the stilted heroes of romance? Well! give me my flesh and blood lover, and I'll leave all the Sir Herberts and Valentines to you—if you can find them."

"I don't want them," said she. "I'll be satisfied with flesh and blood too — only the spirit must shine through and predominate. But don't you think Mr. Huntingdon's face is too red?"

"No!" cried I, indignantly. "It is not red at all. There is just a pleasant glow—a healthy freshness in his complexion, the warm, pinky tint of the whole harmonizing with the deeper colour of the cheeks, exactly as it ought to do. I hate a man to be red and white, like a painted doll—or all sickly white, or smoky black, or cadaverous yellow!"

"Well, tastes differ — but *I* like pale or dark," replied she. "But, to tell you the truth Helen, I had been deluding myself with the hope that you would one day be my sister. I

expected Walter would be introduced to you next season; and I thought you would like him, and was certain he would like you; and I flattered myself I should thus have the felicity of seeing the two persons I like best in the world — except mamma — united in one. He mayn't be, exactly what you would call handsome, but he's far more distinguished-looking, and nicer and better than Mr. Huntingdon;— and I'm sure you would say so, if you knew him."

"Impossible, Milicent! You think so, because you're his sister; and, on that account, I'll forgive you; but nobody else should so disparage Arthur Huntingdon to me, with impunity."

Miss Wilmot expressed her feelings on the subject, almost as openly.

"And so, Helen," said she, coming up to me with a smile of no amiable import, "you are to be Mrs. Huntingdon, I suppose?"

"Yes," replied I. "Don't you envy me?"

"Oh, *dear*, no!" she exclaimed. "I shall probably be Lady Lowborough some day, and then you know, dear, I shall be in a capacity to enquire, 'Don't you envy *me?*"

"Henceforth, I shall envy no one," returned I.

"Indeed! Are you so happy then?" said she thoughtfully; and something very like a cloud of disappointment shadowed her face. "And does he love you—I mean, does he idolize you as much as you do him?" she added, fixing her eyes upon me with ill-disguised anxiety for the reply.

"I don't want to be idolized," I answered, "but I am well assured that he *loves* me more than anybody else in the world—as I do him."

"Exactly," said she with a nod. "I wish--" she paused.

"What do you wish?" asked I, annoyed at the vindictive expression of her countenance.

"I wish," returned she, with a short laugh, "that all the attractive points and desirable

qualifications of the two gentlemen were united in one—that Lord Lowborough had Huntingdon's handsome face and good temper, and all his wit, and mirth and charm, or else that Huntingdon had Lowborough's pedigree, and title, and delightful old family seat, and I had him; and you might have the other and welcome."

"Thank you, dear Annabella, I am better satisfied with things as they are, for my own part; and for you, I wish you were as well content with your intended, as I am with mine," said I; and it was true enough; for, though vexed at first at her unamiable spirit, her frankness touched me, and the contrast between our situations was such, that I could well afford to pity her and wish her well.

Mr. Huntingdon's acquaintances appear to be no better pleased with our approaching union than mine. This morning's post brought him letters from several of his friends, during the perusal of which, at the breakfast-table, he excited the attention of the company, by the

singular variety of his grimaces. But he crushed them all into his pocket, with a private laugh, and said nothing till the meal was concluded. Then, while the company were hanging over the fire or loitering through the room, previous to settling to their various morning's avocations, he came and leant over the back of my chair, with his face in contact with my curls, and commencing with a quiet little kiss, poured forth the following complaints into my ear—

"Helen, you witch, do you know that you've entailed upon me the curses of all my friends? I wrote to them the other day, to tell them of my happy prospects, and now, instead of a bundle of congratulations, I've got a pocket-full of bitter execrations and reproaches. There's not one kind wish for me, or one good word for you among them all. They say there'll be no more fun now, no more merry days and glorious nights—and all my fault—I am the first to break up the jovial band, and others in pure despair, will follow my example. I was the very life and

prop of the community, they do me the honour to say, and I have shamefully betrayed my trust—"

"You may join them again, if you like," said I, somewhat piqued at the sorrowful tone of his discourse. "I should be sorry to stand between any man — or body of men and so much happiness; and perhaps I can manage to do without you, as well as your poor deserted friends."

"Bless you! no," murmured he. "It's 'all for love or the world well lost,' with me. Let them go to—where they belong, to speak politely. But if you saw how they abuse me, Helen, you would love me all the more, for having ventured so much for your sake."

He pulled out his crumpled letters. I thought he was going to shew them to me, and told him I did not wish to see them.

"I'm not going to shew them to you, love," said he. "They're hardly fit for a lady's eyes —the most part of them. But look here. This

is Grimsby's scrawl—only three lines, the sulky dog! He doesn't say much, to be sure, but his very silence implies more than all the other's words, and the less he says, the more he thinks —G— d—n him!—I beg your pardon, dearest —and this is Hargrave's missive. He is particularly grieved at me, because, forsooth, he had fallen in love with you from his sister's reports, and meant to have married you himself, as soon as he had sown his wild oats."

"I'm vastly obliged to him," observed I.

"And so am I," said he. "And look at this. This is Hattersley's—every page stuffed full of railing accusations, bitter curses, and lamentable complaints, ending up with swearing that he'll get married himself in revenge: he'll throw himself away on the first old maid that chooses to set her cap at him,—as if *I* cared what he did with himself."

"Well," said I, "if you do give up your intimacy with these men, I don't think you will have much cause to regret the loss of their

society; for it's my belief they never did you much good."

"May be not; but we'd a merry time of it, too, though mingled with sorrow and pain, as Lowborough knows to his cost—Ha, ha!" and while he was laughing at the recollection of Lowborough's troubles, my uncle came and clapped him on the shoulder.

"Come my lad!" said he. "Are you too busy making love to my niece, to make war with the pheasants?—First of October remember!—Sun shines out—rain ceased—even Boarham's not afraid to venture in his waterproof boots; and Wilmot and I are going to beat you all. I declare, we old 'uns are the keenest sportsmen of the lot!"

"I'll shew you what I can do to-day, however," said my companion. "I'll murder your birds by wholesale, just for keeping me away from better company than either you or them."

And so saying he departed; and I saw no more of him till dinner. It seemed a weary time: I wonder what I shall do without him."

It is very true that the three elder gentlemen have proved themselves much keener sportsmen than the two younger ones; for both Lord Lowborough and Arthur Huntingdon have of late, almost daily neglected the shooting excursions to accompany us in our various rides and rambles. But these merry times are fast drawing to a close. In less than a fortnight the party break up, much to my sorrow, for every day I enjoy it more and more—now that Messrs. Boarham and Wilmot have ceased to teaze me, and my aunt has ceased to lecture me, and I have ceased to be jealous of Annabella—and even to dislike her—and now that Mr. Huntingdon is become *my* Arthur, and I may enjoy his society without restraint—What *shall* I do without him, I repeat?

CHAPTER III.

TRAITS OF FRIENDSHIP.

October 5th. — My cup of sweets is not unmingled: it is dashed with a bitterness that I cannot hide from myself, disguise it as I will. I may try to persuade myself that the sweetness overpowers it; I may call it a pleasant aromatic flavour; but, say what I will, it is still there, and I cannot but taste it. I cannot shut my eyes to Arthur's faults; and the more I love him the more they trouble me. His very heart, that I trusted so, is, I fear, less warm and generous than I thought it. At least, he gave

me a specimen of his character to-day, that seemed to merit a harder name than thoughtlessness. He and Lord Lowborough were accompanying Annabella and me in a long, delightful ride; he was riding by my side, as usual, and Annabella and Lord Lowborough were a little before us, the latter bending towards his companion as if in tender and confidential discourse.

"Those two will get the start of us, Helen, if we don't look sharp," observed Huntingdon. "They'll make a match of it, as sure as can be. That Lowborough's fairly besotted. But he'll find himself in a fix when he's got her, I doubt."

"And she'll find *her*self in a fix when she's got *him*," said I, "if what I have heard of him is true."

"Not a bit of it. She knows what she's about; but he, poor fool, deludes himself with the notion that she'll make him a good wife, and because she has amused him with some

rodomontade about despising rank and wealth in matters of love and marriage, he flatters himself that she's devotedly attached to him; that she will not refuse him for his poverty, and does not court him for his rank, but loves him for himself alone."

"But is not *he* courting *her* for her fortune?"

"No, not he. That was the first attraction, certainly; but now, he has quite lost sight of it: it never enters his calculations, except merely as an essential without which, for the lady's own sake, he could not think of marrying her; No; he's fairly in love. He thought he never could be again, but he's in for it once more. He was to have been married before, some two or three years ago; but he lost his bride by losing his fortune. He got into a bad way among us in London: he had an unfortunate taste for gambling; and surely the fellow was born under an unlucky star, for he always lost thrice were he gained once. That's a mode of self-torment I never was much addicted to,

when I spend my money I like to enjoy the full value of it: I see no fun in wasting it on thieves and black-legs; and as for *gaining* money, hitherto I have always had sufficient; it's time enough to be clutching for more, I think, when you begin to see the end of what you have. But I have sometimes frequented the gaming-houses just to watch the on-goings of those mad votaries of chance—a very interesting study, I assure you, Helen, and sometimes very diverting: I've had many a laugh at the boobies and bedlamites. Lowborough was quite infatuated—not willingly, but of necessity,—he was always resolving to give it up, and always breaking his resolutions. Every venture was the 'just once more:' if he gained a little, he hoped to gain a little more next time, and if he lost, it would not do to leave off at that juncture; he must go on till he had retrieved that last misfortune, at least: bad luck could not last for ever; and every lucky hit was looked upon as the dawn of better

times, till experience proved the contrary. At length he grew desperate, and we were daily on the look out for a case of felo-de-se—no great matter, some of us whispered, as his existence had ceased to be an acquisition to our club. At last, however, he came to a check. He made a large stake which he determined should be the last, whether he lost or won. He had often so determined before, to be sure, and as often broken his determination; and so it was this time. He lost; and while his antagonist smilingly swept away the stakes, he, turning chalky white, drew back in silence and wiped his forehead. I was present at the time; and while he stood with folded arms and eyes fixed on the ground, I knew well enough what was passing in his mind.

"'Is it to be the last, Lowborough?' said I, stepping up to him.

"'The last but ONE,' he answered, with a grim smile; and then, rushing back to the table, he struck his hand upon it, and raising

his voice high above all the confusion of jingling coins and muttered oaths and curses in the room, he swore a deep and solemn oath that, come what would, THIS trial *should* be the last, and imprecated unspeakable curses on his head, if ever he should shuffle a card or rattle a dice-box again. He then doubled his former stake, and challenged any one present to play against him. Grimsby instantly presented himself. Lowborough glared fiercely at him, for Grimsby was almost as celebrated for his luck as *he* was for his ill-fortune. However, they fell to work. But Grimsby had much skill and little scruple, and whether he took advantage of the other's trembling, blinded eagerness to deal unfairly by him, I cannot undertake to say; but Lowborough lost again, and fell dead sick.

"'You'd better try once more,' said Grimsby, leaning across the table. And then he winked at me.

"'I've nothing to try with,' said the poor devil, with a ghastly smile.

"'Oh, Huntingdon will lend you what you want,' said the other.

"'No; you heard my oath,' answered Lowborough, turning away in quiet despair. And I took him by the arm and led him out.

"'Is it to be the last, Lowborough?' I asked, when I got him into the street.

"'The last,' he answered, somewhat against my expectation. And I took him home—that is, to our club—for he was as submissive as a child, and plied him with brandy and water till he began to look rather brighter—rather more alive, at least.

"'Huntingdon, I'm ruined!' said he, taking the third glass from my hand—he had drunk the other in dead silence.

"'Not you!' said I. 'You'll find a man can live without his money as merrily as a tortoise without its head, or a wasp without its body.'

"'But I'm in debt,' said he—'deep in debt! And I can never, *never* get out of it!'

"'Well, what of that? many a better man than you, has lived and died in debt, and they can't put you in prison, you know, because you're a peer.' And I handed him his fourth tumbler.

"'But I hate to be in debt!' he shouted. 'I wasn't born for it, and I cannot *bear* it!'

"'What can't be cured must be endured,' said I, beginning to mix the fifth.

"'And then, I've lost my Caroline.' And he began to snivel then, for the brandy had softened his heart.

"'No matter,' I answered, 'there are more Carolines in the world than one.'

"'There's only one for me,' he replied, with a dolorous sigh. 'And if there were fifty more, whose to get them, I wonder, without money?'

"'Oh, somebody will take you for your title; and then you've your family estate yet; that's entailed, you know.'

"'I wish to God I could sell it to pay my debts,' he muttered.

"'And then,' said Grimsby, who had just come in, 'you can *try again*, you know. I *would* have one more chance if I were you. I'd never stop here.'

"'I *won't*, I tell you!' shouted he. And he started up and left the room—walking rather unsteadily, for the liquor had got into his head. He was not so much used to it then, but after that, he took to it kindly to solace his cares.

"He kept his oath about gambling (not a little to the surprise of us all), though Grimsby did his utmost to tempt him to break it; but now he had got hold of another habit that bothered him nearly as much, for he soon discovered that the demon of drink was as black as the demon of play, and nearly as hard to get rid of—especially as his kind friends did all they could to second the promptings of his own insatiable cravings."

"Then, they were demons themselves," cried I, unable to contain my indignation. "And you,

Mr. Huntingdon, it seems, were the first to tempt him."

"Well, what could we do?" replied he, deprecatingly—"We meant it in kindness—we couldn't bear to see the poor fellow so miserable:—and besides, he was such a damper upon us, sitting there, silent and glum, when he was under the threefold influence of the loss of his sweetheart, the loss of his fortune, and the reaction of the last night's debauch; whereas, when he had something in him, if he was not merry himself, he was an unfailing source of merriment to us. Even Grimsby could chuckle over his odd sayings: they delighted him far more than my merry jests or Hattersley's riotous mirth. But one evening, when we were sitting over our wine, after one of our club dinners, and had all been hearty together,—Lowborough giving us mad toasts, and hearing our wild songs and bearing a hand in the applause, if he did not help us to sing them himself,—he suddenly relapsed into

silence, sinking his head on his hand, and never lifting his glass to his lips;—but this was nothing new; so we let him alone, and went on with our jollification, till, suddenly raising his head, he interrupted us in the middle of a roar of laughter, by exclaiming,—

"'Gentlemen, where is all this to end?—Will you just tell me *that* now?—Where is it all to end?'

"'In hell fire,' growled Grimsby.

"'You've hit it—I thought so!' cried he. 'Well then, I'll tell you what'—he rose.

"'A speech, a speech!' shouted we. 'Hear, hear! Lowborough's going to give us a speech!'

"He waited calmly till the thunders of applause and gingling of glasses had ceased, and then proceeded,—

"'It's only this, gentlemen,—that I think we'd better go no farther. We'd better stop while we can.'

"'Just so!' cried Hattersley—

"Stop poor sinner, stop and think
Before you farther go,
No longer sport upon the brink
Of everlasting woe."

"'Exactly!' replied his lordship, with the utmost gravity. 'And if *you* choose to visit the bottomless pit, I won't go with you—we must part company, for I swear I'll not move another step towards it!—What's this?' he said, taking up his glass of wine.

"'Taste it,' suggested I.

"'This is hell broth!' he exclaimed. 'I renounce it for ever!' And he threw it out into the middle of the table.

"'Fill again!' said I, handing him the bottle—'and let us drink to your renunciation.'

"'It's rank poison,' said he, grasping the bottle by the neck, 'and I forswear it! I've given up gambling, and I'll give up this too.' He was on the point of deliberately pouring the whole contents of the bottle on to the table, but Hargrave wrested it from him. 'On

you be the curse, then!' said he. And backing from the room, he shouted, 'Farewell, ye tempters!' and vanished amid shouts of laughter and applause.

"We expected him back among us the next day; but to our surprise, the place remained vacant: we saw nothing of him for a whole week; and we really began to think he was going to keep his word. At last, one evening, when we were most of us assembled together again, he entered, silent and grim as a ghost, and would have quietly slipped into his usual seat at my elbow, but we all rose to welcome him, and several voices were raised to ask what he would have, and several hands were busy with bottle and glass to serve him; but I knew a smoking tumbler of brandy and water would comfort him best, and had nearly prepared it, when he peevishly pushed it away, saying,

"'Do let me alone, Huntingdon! Do be quiet, all of you! I'm not come to join you: I'm only come to be with you awhile, because

I can't bear my own thoughts.' And he folded his arms and leant back in his chair; so we let him be. But I left the glass by him; and after a while, Grimsby directed my attention towards it, by a significant wink; and, on turning my head, I saw it was drained to the bottom. He made me a sign to replenish, and quietly pushed up the bottle. I willingly complied; but Lowborough detected the pantomime, and, nettled at the intelligent grins that were passing between us, snatched the glass from my hand, dashed the contents of it in Grimsby's face, threw the empty tumbler at me, and then bolted from the room."

"I hope he broke your head," said I.

"No, love," replied he, laughing immoderately at the recollection of the whole affair, "he would have done so,—and perhaps spoilt my face, too, but providentially, this forest of curls," (taking off his hat and shewing his luxuriant chestnut locks,) "saved my skull, and prevented the glass from breaking till it reached the table."

"After that," he continued, "Lowborough kept aloof from us a week or two longer. I used to meet him occasionally in the town; and then, as I was too good natured to resent his unmannerly conduct, and he bore no malice against me,—he was never unwilling to talk to me; on the contrary, he would cling to me and follow me anywhere,—but to the club, and the gaming-houses, and such like dangerous places of resort—he was so weary of his own moping, melancholy mind. At last, I got him to come in with me to the club, on condition that I would not tempt him to drink; and for some time, he continued to look in upon us pretty regularly of an evening,—still abstaining, with wonderful perseverance, from the 'rank poison' he had so bravely forsworn. But some of our members protested against this conduct. They did not like to have him sitting there like a skeleton at a feast, instead of contributing his quota to the general amusement, casting a cloud over all, and watching, with

greedy eyes, every drop they carried to their lips, they vowed it was not fair; and some of them maintained that he should either be compelled to do as others did or expelled from the society, and swore that, next time he shewed himself, they would tell him as much, and, if he did not take the warning, proceed to active measures. However, I befriended him on this occasion, and recommended them to let him be for a while, intimating that, with a little patience on our parts, he would soon come round again—But, to be sure, it *was* rather provoking; for though he refused to drink like an honest christian, it was well known to me, that he kept a private bottle of laudanum about him, which he was continually soaking at—or rather, holding off and on with, abstaining one day and exceeding the next, just like the spirits.

"One night, however, during one of our orgies—one of our high festivals, I mean—he glided in, like the ghost in Macbeth, and seated himself, as usual, a little back from the table, in

the chair we always placed for 'the spectre,' whether it chose to fill it or not. I saw by his face that he was suffering from the effects of an overdose of his insidious comforter; but nobody spoke to him, and he spoke to nobody. A few sidelong glances, and a whispered observation that 'the ghost was come,' was all the notice he drew by his appearance, and we went on with our merry carousals as before, till he startled us all by suddenly drawing in his chair and leaning forward with his elbows on the table, and exclaiming with portentous solemnity,—

"'Well! it puzzles me what you can find to be so merry about. What *you* see in life I don't know—*I* see only the blackness of darkness and a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation!'

"All the company simultaneously pushed up their glasses to him, and I set them before him in a semicircle, and, tenderly patting him on the back, bid him drink and he would soon see as bright a prospect as any of us; but he pushed them back, muttering,—

"'Take them away! I won't taste it, I tell you—I won't—I won't!' So I handed them down again to the owners; but I saw that he followed them with a glare of hungry regret as they departed. Then, he clasped his hands before his eyes to shut out the sight, and two minutes after, lifted his head again, and said, in a hoarse but vehement whisper,—

"'And yet I must! Huntingdon, get me a glass!'

"'Take the bottle, man!' said I, thrusting the brandy-bottle into his hand—but stop, I'm telling too much," muttered the narrator, startled at the look I turned upon him. "But no matter," he recklessly added, and thus continued his relation—"In his desperate eagerness, he seized the bottle and sucked away, till he suddenly dropped from his chair, disappearing under the table amid a tempest of applause. The consequence of this imprudence was something like an apoplectic fit, followed by a rather severe brain fever—"

"And what did you think of *yourself*, sir?" said I, quickly.

"Of course, I was very penitent," he replied. "I went to see him once or twice—nay, twice or thrice—or, by'r lady, some four times,—and when he got better, I tenderly brought him back to the fold."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, I restored him to the bosom of the club, and compassionating the feebleness of his health and extreme lowness of his spirits, I recommended him to 'take a little wine for his stomach's sake,' and, when he was sufficiently re-established, to embrace the media-via, ni-jamais-ni-toujours plan—not to kill himself like a fool, and not to abstain like a ninny—in a word, to enjoy himself like a rational creature, and do as I did;—for don't think, Helen, that I'm a tippler; I'm nothing at all of the kind, and never was, and never shall be. I value my comfort far too much. I see that a man cannot give himself up to drinking without being

miserable one half his days and mad the other; —besides, I like to enjoy my life at all sides and ends, which cannot be done by one that suffers himself to be the slave of a single propensity—and moreover, drinking spoils one's good looks," he concluded, with a most conceited smile that ought to have provoked me more than it did.

"And did Lord Lowborough profit by your advice?" I asked.

"Why, yes, in a manner. For a while, he managed very well; indeed, he was a model of moderation and prudence—something too much so for the tastes of our wild community;—but, somehow, Lowborough had not the gift of moderation: if he stumbled a little to one side, he must go down before he could right himself: if he overshot the mark one night, the effects of it rendered him so miserable the next day that he must repeat the offence to mend it; and so on from day to day, till his clamorous conscience brought him to a stand.—And then, in his sober moments, he so bothered his friends with his

remorse, and his terrors and woes, that they were obliged, in self-defence, to get him to drown his sorrows in wine, or any more potent beverage that came to hand; and when his first scruples of conscience were overcome, he would need no more persuading, he would often grow desperate, and be as great a blackguard as any of them could desire—but only to lament his own unutterable wickedness and degradation the more when the fit was over.

"At last, one day when he and I were alone together, after pondering awhile in one of his gloomy, abstracted moods, with his arms folded and his head sunk on his breast,—he suddenly woke up, and vehemently grasping my arm, said,—

"'Huntingdon, this won't do! I'm resolved to have done with it.'

"'What, are you going to shoot yourself?' said I.

"'No; I'm going to reform.'

"'Oh, *that's* nothing new! You've been going to reform these twelve months and more.'

"'Yes, but you wouldn't let me; and I was such a fool I couldn't live without you. But now I see what it is that keeps me back, and what's wanted to save me; and I'd compass sea and land to get it—only I'm afraid there's no chance.' And he sighed as if his heart would break.

"'What is it Lowborough?' said I, thinking he was fairly cracked at last.

"'A wife,' he answered; 'for I can't live alone, because my own mind distracts me, and I can't live with you, because you take the devil's part against me.'

"'Who—I?'

"'Yes—all of you do,—and you more than any of them, you know. But if I could get a wife, with fortune enough to pay off my debts and set me straight in the world—'

"'To be sure,' said I.

"'And sweetness and goodness enough,' he continued, 'to make home tolerable, and to reconcile me to myself,—I think I should do, yet.

I shall never be in love again that's certain; but perhaps that would be no great matter, it would enable me to choose with my eyes open,—and I should make a good husband in spite of it; but could any one be in love with *me?*—that's the question—With *your* good looks and powers of fascination,' (he was pleased to say) 'I might hope; but as it is, Huntingdon, do you think *any* body would take me—ruined and wretched as I am?'

"'Yes, certainly.'

"'Who?'

"'Why, any neglected old maid, fast sinking in despair, would be delighted to—'

"'No, no,' said he—it must be somebody that I can love.'

"'Why, you just said you never could be in love again?'

"'Well, love is not the word,—but somebody that I can like—I'll search all England through, at all events!' he cried, with a sudden burst of hope, or desperation. 'Succeed or fail, it will be better than rushing headlong to destruction

at that d——d club: so farewell to it and you. Whenever I meet you on honest ground or under a christian roof, I shall be glad to see you; but never more shall you entice me to that *devil's den!*'

"This was shameful language, but I shook hands with him, and we parted. He kept his word; and from that time forward, he has been a pattern of propriety, as far as I can tell; but, till lately, I have not had very much to do with him. He occasionally sought my company but as frequently shrunk from it, fearing lest I should wile him back to destruction, and I found his not very entertaining, especially, as he sometimes attempted to awaken my conscience and draw me from the perdition he considered himself to have escaped; but when I did happen to meet him, I seldom failed to ask after the progress of his matrimonial efforts and researches, and, in general he could give me but a poor account. The mothers were repelled by his empty coffers and his reputation for gambling,

and the daughters by his cloudy brow and melancholy temper,—besides, he didn't understand them; he wanted the spirit and assurance to carry his point.

I left him at it when I went to the continent; and on my return, at the year's end, I found him still a disconsolate bachelor—though, certainly, looking somewhat less like an unblest exile from the tomb than before. The young ladies had ceased to be afraid of him, and were beginning to think him quite interesting; but the mammas were still unrelenting. It was about this time, Helen, that my good angel brought me into conjunction with you; and then I had eyes and ears for nobody else. But meantime, Lowborough became acquainted with our charming friend, Miss Wilmot—through the intervention of *his* good angel, no doubt he would tell you, though he did not dare to fix his hopes on one so courted and admired, till after they were brought into closer contact here at Staningley; and she, in the absence of her other

admirers, indubitably courted his notice and held out every encouragement to his timid advances. Then indeed, he began to hope for a dawn of brighter days; and if for a while, I darkened his prospects by standing between him and his sun—and so, nearly plunged him again into the abyss of despair—it only intensified his ardour and strengthened his hopes when I chose to abandon the field in the pursuit of a brighter treasure. In a word, as I told you, he is fairly besotted. At first, he could dimly perceive her faults, and they gave him considerable uneasiness; but now his passion and her art together, have blinded him to everything but her perfections and his amazing good fortune. Last night, he came to me brimfull of his new-found felicity:

"'Huntingdon, I am not a cast-away!' said he, seizing my hand and squeezing it like a vice. 'There is happiness in store for me, yet—even in this life—she loves me!'

"'Indeed!' said I. 'Has she told you so?'

" 'No, but I can no longer doubt it. Do you not see how pointedly kind and affectionate she is? And she knows the utmost extent of my poverty, and cares nothing about it! She knows all the folly and all the wickedness of my former life, and is not afraid to trust me—and my rank and title are no allurements to her; for them, she utterly disregards. She is the most generous, high-minded being that can be conceived of. She will save me, body and soul, from destruction. Already, she has ennobled me in my own estimation, and made me three times better, wiser, greater than I was. Oh! if I had but known her before, how much degradation and misery I should have been spared! But what have I done to deserve so magnificent a creature?'

" And the cream of the jest," continued Mr. Huntingdon, laughing, " is that the artful minx loves nothing about him, but his title and pedigree, and 'that delightful old family seat.' "

" How do you know?" said I.

"She told me so herself; she said, 'as for the man himself, I thoroughly despise him; but then, I suppose, it is time to be making my choice, and if I waited for some one capable of eliciting my esteem and affection, I should have to pass my life in single blessedness, for I detest you all!' Ha, ha! I suspect she was wrong there;—but however, it is evident she has no love for *him*, poor fellow."

"Then you ought to tell him so."

"What, and spoil all her plans and prospects, poor girl? No, no: that would be a breach of confidence, wouldn't it Helen? Ha, ha! Besides, it would break his heart." And he laughed again.

"Well, Mr. Huntingdon, I don't know what you see so amazingly diverting in the matter; *I* see nothing to laugh at."

"I'm laughing at *you*, just now love," said he, redoubling his cachinnations.

And leaving him to enjoy his merriment alone, I touched Ruby with the whip, and can-

tered on to rejoin our companions; for we had been walking our horses all this time, and were consequently a long way behind. Arthur was soon at my side again; but not disposed to talk to him, I broke into a gallop. He did the same; and we did not slacken our pace till we came up with Miss Wilmot and Lord Lowborough, which was within half a mile of the park gates. I avoided all further conversation with him, till we came to the end of our ride, when I meant to jump off my horse and vanish into the house, before he could offer his assistance; but while I was disengaging my habit from the crutch, he lifted me off, and held me by both hands, asserting that he would not let me go till I had forgiven him.

"I have nothing to forgive," said I. "You have not injured *me*."

"No, darling—God forbid that I should!—but you are angry, because it was to me that Annabella confessed her lack of esteem for her lover."

"No, Arthur, it is not *that* that displeases me: it is the whole system of your conduct towards your friend; and if you wish me to forget it, go, now, and tell him what sort of a woman it is, that he adores so madly, and on whom he has hung his hopes of future happiness."

"I tell you, Helen, it would break his heart —it would be the death of him,—besides being a scandalous trick to poor Annabella. There is no help for him now; he is past praying for. Besides, she may keep up the deception to the end of the chapter; and then he will be just as happy in the illusion as if it were reality; or perhaps, he will only discover his mistake when he has ceased to love her;—and if not, it is much better that the truth should dawn gradually upon him. So now, my angel, I hope I have made out a clear case, and fully convinced you that I cannot make the atonement you require. What other requisition

have you to make? Speak, and I will gladly obey."

"I have none but this," said I, as gravely as before; "that, in future, you will never make a jest of the sufferings of others, and always use your influence with your friends for their own advantage against their evil propensities, instead of seconding their evil propensities against themselves."

"I will do my utmost," said he, "to remember and perform the injunctions of my angel monitress," and after kissing both my gloved hands, he let me go.

When I entered my room, I was surprised to see Annabella Wilmot standing before my toilet-table, composedly surveying her features in the glass, with one hand flirting her gold-mounted whip, and the other holding up her long habit.

"She certainly *is* a magnificent creature!" thought I, as I beheld that tall, finely developed figure, and the reflection of the handsome face

in the mirror before me, with the glossy dark hair, slightly and not ungracefully disordered by the breezy ride, the rich brown complexion glowing with exercise, and the black eyes sparkling with unwonted brilliance. On perceiving me, she turned round exclaiming, with a laugh that savoured more of malice than of mirth,—

"Why Helen! what *have* you been doing so long?—I came to tell you my good fortune," she continued, regardless of Rachel's presence. "Lord Lowborough has proposed, and I have been graciously pleased to accept him. Don't you envy me, dear?"

"No, love," said I—"or him either," I mentally added. "And do you like him Annabella?"

"Like him! yes, to be sure—over head and ears in love!"

"Well, I hope you'll make him a good wife."

"Thank you, my dear! And what besides do you hope?"

"I hope you will both love each other, and both be happy."

"Thanks;—and I hope you will make a *very* good wife to Mr. Huntingdon!" said she, with a queenly bow, and retired.

"Oh, Miss! how could you say so to her?" cried Rachel.

"Say what?" replied I.

"Why, that you hoped she would make him a good wife—I never heard such a thing!"

"Because, I do hope it—or rather, I wish it —she's almost past hope."

"Well!" said she, "I'm sure I hope he'll make *her* a good husband. They tell queer things about him down stairs. They were saying—"

"I know Rachel—I've heard all about him; but he's reformed now. And they have no business to tell tales about their masters."

"No mum — or else, they *have* said some things about Mr. Huntingdon too."

"I won't hear them, Rachel; they tell lies."

"Yes mum," said she, quietly, as she went on arranging my hair.

"Do *you* believe them, Rachel?" I asked, after a short pause.

"No, Miss, not all. You know when a lot of servants gets together, they like to talk about their betters; and some, for a bit of swagger, likes to make it appear as though they knew more than they do, and to throw out hints and things, just to astonish the others. But I think, if I was you, Miss Helen, I'd look *very* well before I leaped. I do believe a young lady can't be too careful who she marries."

"Of course not," said I — "but be quick, will you, Rachel? I wan't to be dressed."

And indeed, I was anxious to be rid of the good woman, for I was in such a melancholy frame I could hardly keep the tears out of my eyes while she dressed me. It was not for Lord Lowborough—it was not for Annabella—

it was not for myself—it was for Arthur Huntingdon that they rose.

* * * * *

13th. They are gone—and he is gone. We are to be parted for more than two months—above ten weeks! a long, long time to live and not to see him. But he has promised to write often, and made me promise to write still oftener, because he will be busy settling his affairs, and I shall have nothing better to do. Well, I think I shall always have plenty to say—But O! for the time when we shall be always together, and can exchange our thoughts without the intervention of these cold go-betweens, pen, ink, and paper!

* * * * *

22nd. I have had several letters from Arthur, already. They are not long, but passing sweet, and just like himself—full of ardent affection, and playful, lively humour; but—there is always a *but* in this imperfect world—and I do wish he would *sometimes* be serious.

I cannot get him to write or speak in real, solid earnest. I don't much mind it *now*; but if it be always so, what shall I do with the serious part of myself?

CHAPTER IV.

FIRST WEEKS OF MATRIMONY.

FEB. 18th, 1822. Early this morning, Arthur mounted his hunter and set off in high glee to meet the —— hounds. He will be away all day; and so I will amuse myself with my neglected diary—if I can give that name to such an irregular composition. It is exactly four months since I opened it last.

I am married now, and settled down as Mrs. Huntingdon of Grassdale Manor. I have had eight weeks experience of matrimony. And do I regret the step I have taken?—No—

though I must confess, in my secret heart, that Arthur is not what I thought him at first, and if I had known him in the beginning, as thoroughly as I do now, I probably never should have loved him, and if I had loved him first, and then made the discovery, I fear I should have thought it my duty not to have married him. To be sure, I might have known him, for every one was willing enough to tell me about him, and he himself was no accomplished hypocrite, but I was wilfully blind, and now, instead of regretting that I did not discern his full character before I was indissolubly bound to him, I am *glad;* for it has saved me a great deal of battling with my conscience, and a great deal of consequent trouble and pain; and, whatever I *ought* to have done, my duty, now, is plainly to love him and to cleave to him; and this just tallies with my inclination.

He is very fond of me—almost *too* fond. I could do with less caressing and more rationality: I should like to be less of a pet and

more of a friend, if I might choose—but I won't complain of that: I am only afraid his affection loses in depth where it gains in ardour. I sometimes liken it to a fire of dry twigs and branches compared with one of solid coal,—very bright and hot, but if it should burn itself out and leave nothing but ashes behind, what shall I do? But it won't—it *shan't*, I am determined—and surely I have power to keep it alive. So let me dismiss *that* thought at once. But Arthur is selfish — I am constrained to acknowledge that; and, indeed, the admission gives me less pain than might be expected; for, since *I* love him so much, I can easily forgive him for loving himself: he likes to be pleased, and it is my delight to please him,—and when I regret this tendency of his, it is for his own sake, not for mine.

The first instance he gave was on the occasion of our bridal tour. He wanted to hurry it over, for all the continental scenes were already familiar to him: many had lost their

interest in his eyes, and others had never had anything to lose. The consequence was, that, after a flying transit through part of France and part of Italy, I came back nearly as ignorant as I went, having made no acquaintance with persons and manners, and very little with things,—my head swarming with a motley confusion of objects and scenes—some, it is true, leaving a deeper and more pleasing impression than others, but these embittered by the recollection that my emotions had not been shared by my companion, but that, on the contrary, when I had expressed a particular interest in anything that I saw or desired to see, it had been displeasing to him in as much as it proved that I could take delight in anything disconnected with himself.

As for Paris, we only just touched at that, and he would not give me time to see one tenth of the beauties and interesting objects of Rome. He wanted to get me home, he said, to have me all to himself, and to see me safely

installed as the mistress of Grassdale Manor, just as single-minded, as naive, and piquante as I was; and, as if I had been some frail butterfly, he expressed himself fearful of rubbing the silver off my wings by bringing me into contact with society, especially that of Paris and Rome; and, moreover, he did not scruple to tell me that there were ladies in both places that would tear his eyes out if they happened to meet him with me.

Of course I was vexed at all this; but, still, it was less the disappointment to myself that annoyed me, than the disappointment *in him*, and the trouble I was at to frame excuses to my friends for having seen and observed so little, without imputing one particle of blame to my companion. But when we got home—to my new, delightful home—I was so happy and he was so kind that I freely forgave him all;—and I was beginning to think my lot *too* happy, and my husband actually too good for me, if not too good for this world, when, on

the second Sunday after our arrival, he shocked and horrified me by another instance of his unreasonable exaction. We were walking home from the morning service—for it was a fine frosty day, and, as we are so near the church, I had requested the carriage should not be used :—

"Helen," said he, with unusual gravity, "I am not quite satisfied with you."

I desired to know what was wrong.

"But will you promise to reform, if I tell you?"

"Yes, if I can — and without offending a higher authority."

"Ah! there it is, you see—you don't love me with all your heart."

"I don't understand you, Arthur (at least, I hope I don't): pray tell me what I have done or said amiss?"

"It is nothing you have done or said; it is something that you *are:* you are too religious. Now I like a woman to be religious, and I think your piety one of your greatest charms,

but then, like all other good things, it may be carried too far. To my thinking, a woman's religion ought not to lessen her devotion to her earthly lord. She should have enough to purify and etherialize her soul, but not enough to refine away her heart, and raise her above all human sympathies."

"And am *I* above all human sympathies?" said I.

"No, darling; but you are making more progress towards that saintly condition than I like; for, all these two hours, I have been thinking of you and wanting to catch your eye, and you were so absorbed in your devotions that you had not even a glance to spare for me—I declare, it is enough to make one jealous of one's Maker—which is very wrong, you know; so don't excite such wicked passions again, for my soul's sake."

"I will give my whole heart and soul to my Maker if I can," I answered, "and not one atom more of it to you than he allows. What

are *you*, sir, that you should set yourself up as a god, and presume to dispute possession of my heart with Him to whom I owe all I have and all I am, every blessing I ever did or ever can enjoy—and yourself among the rest—if you *are* a blessing, which I am half inclined to doubt."

"Don't be so hard upon me, Helen; and don't pinch my arm so, you're squeezing your fingers into the bone."

"Arthur," continued I, relaxing my hold of his arm, "you don't love me half as much as I do you; and yet, if you loved me far less than you do, I would not complain, provided you loved your Maker more. I should *rejoice* to see you at any time, so deeply absorbed in your devotions that you had not a single thought to spare for me. But, indeed, I should lose nothing by the change, for the more you loved your God the more deep and pure and true would be your love to me."

At this he only laughed, and kissed my hand,

calling me a sweet enthusiast. Then taking off his hat, he added—

"But look here, Helen—what can a man do with such a head as this?"

The head looked right enough, but when he placed my hand on the top of it, it sunk in a bed of curls, rather alarmingly low, especially in the middle.

"You see I was not made to be a saint," said he, laughing. "If God meant me to be religious, why didn't he give me a proper organ of veneration?"

"You are like the servant," I replied, "who instead of employing his one talent in his master's service, restored it to him unimproved, alleging, as an excuse, that he knew him 'to be a hard man, reaping where he had not sown and gathering where he had not strawed.' Of him, to whom less is given, less will be required; but our utmost exertions are required of us all. You are not without the capacity of veneration, and faith and hope, and con-

science and reason, and every other requisite to a christian's character, if you choose to employ them; but all our talents increase in the using, and every faculty, both good and bad, strengthens by exercise; therefore, if you choose to use the bad—or those which tend to evil till they become your masters and neglect the good till they dwindle away, you have only yourself to blame. But you *have* talents, Arthur—natural endowments, both of heart and mind, and temper such as many a better christian would be glad to possess—if you would only employ them in God's service. I should never expect to see you a devotee, but it is quite possible to be a good christian without ceasing to be a happy, merry-hearted man."

"You speak like an oracle, Helen, and all you say is indisputably true; but listen here: I am hungry, and I see before me a good substantial dinner; I am told that, if I abstain from this to-day, I shall have a sumptuous feast to-morrow, consisting of all manner of dainties

and delicacies. Now in the first place, I should be loath to wait till to-morrow, when I have the means of appeasing my hunger already before me; in the second place, the solid viands of to-day are more to my taste than the dainties that are promised me; in the third place, I don't *see* to-morrow's banquet, and how can I tell that it is not all a fable, got up by the greasy-faced fellow that is advising me to abstain, in order that he may have all the good victuals to himself? in the fourth place, this table must be spread for somebody, and, as Solomon says, 'Who can eat, or who else can hasten hereunto more than I?' and finally, with your leave, I'll sit down and satisfy my cravings of to-day, and leave to-morrow to shift for itself—who knows but what I may secure both this and that?"

"But you are not required to abstain from the substantial dinner of to-day; you are only advised to partake of these coarser viands in such moderation as not to incapacitate you from

enjoying the choicer banquet of to-morrow. If, regardless of that counsel, you choose to make a beast of yourself now, and over-eat and over-drink yourself till you turn the good victuals into poison, who is to blame if, hereafter, while you are suffering the torments of yesterday's gluttony and drunkenness, you see more temperate men sitting down to enjoy themselves at that splendid entertainment which you are unable to taste?"

"Most true my patron saint; but again, our friend Solomon says,—'There is nothing better for a man than to eat and to drink, and to be merry."

"And again," returned I, "he says, 'Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou that, for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment.'"

"Well but, Helen, I'm sure I've been very good these last few weeks. What have you seen amiss in me; and what would you have me to do?"

"Nothing—more than you do, Arthur: your actions are all right, so far; but I would have your thoughts changed; I would have you to fortify yourself against temptation, and not to call evil good, and good, evil; I should wish you to think more deeply, to look farther, and aim higher than you do."

We now stood before our own door, and I said no more; but, with an ardent and tearful embrace, I left him, and went into the house, and up-stairs to take off my bonnet and mantle. I wished to say nothing more on that subject at the time, lest I should disgust him with both it and me.

CHAPTER V.

FIRST QUARREL.

MARCH 25th.—Arthur is getting tired—not of me I trust, but of the idle, quiet life he leads —and no wonder, for he has so few sources of amusement; he never reads anything but newspapers and sporting magazines; and when he sees me occupied with a book, he won't let me rest till I close it. In fine weather he generally manages to get through the time pretty well; but on rainy days, of which we have had a good many of late, it is quite painful to witness his ennui. I do all I can to amuse him, but

it is impossible to get him to feel interested in what I most like to talk about; while, on the other hand, he likes to talk about things that cannot interest me—or even that annoy me—and these please him the most of all; for his a vourite amusement is to sit or loll beside me on the sofa and tell me stories of his former amours, always turning upon the ruin of some confiding girl or the cozening of some unsuspecting husband; and when I express my horror and indignation, he lays it all to the charge of jealousy, and laughs till the tears run down his cheeks. I used to fly into passions or melt into tears at first, but seeing that his delight increased in proportion to my anger and agitation, I have since endeavoured to suppress my feelings and receive his revelations in the silence of calm contempt; but still, he reads the inward struggle in my face, and misconstrues my bitterness of soul for his unworthiness into the pangs of wounded jealousy; and when he has sufficiently diverted himself with

that, or fears my displeasure will become too serious for his comfort, he tries to kiss and sooth me into smiles again—never were his caresses so little welcome as then! This is *double* selfishness, displayed to me and to the victims of his former love. There are times when, with a momentary pang—a flash of wild dismay, I ask myself, "Helen, what have you done?" But I rebuke the inward questioner, and repel the obtrusive thoughts that crowd upon me; for, were he ten times as sensual and impenetrable to good and lofty thoughts, I well know I have no right to complain. And I don't and won't complain. I do and will love him still; and I do not and will not regret that I have linked my fate with his.

April 4th.—We have had a downright quarrel. The particulars are as follows:—Arthur had told me, at different intervals, the whole story of his intrigue with Lady F—, which I would not believe before. It was some consolation, however, to find that, in this instance, the lady

had been more to blame than he; for he was very young at the time, and she had decidedly made the first advances, if what he said was true. I hated her for it, for it seemed as if she had chiefly contributed to his corruption, and when he was beginning to talk about her the other day, I begged he would not mention her, for I detested the very sound of her name,

"Not because you loved her, Arthur, mind, but because she injured you, and deceived her husband, and was altogether a very abominable woman, whom you ought to be ashamed to mention."

But he defended her by saying that she had a doting old husband, whom it was impossible to love.

"Then why did she marry him?" said I.

"For his money," was the reply.

"Then that was another crime, and her solemn promise to love and honour him was another, that only increased the enormity of the last."

"You are too severe upon the poor lady," laughed he. "But never mind, Helen, I don't care for her now; and I never loved any of them half as much as I do you; so you needn't fear to be forsaken like them."

"If you had told me these things before, Arthur, I never should have given you the chance."

"*Wouldn't* you, my darling!"

"Most certainly not!"

He laughed incredulously.

"I wish I could convince you of it now!" cried I, starting up from beside him; and for the first time in my life, and I hope the last, I wished I had not married him.

"Helen," said he, more gravely, "do you know that if I believed you now, I should be very angry? — but thank Heaven I don't. Though you stand there with your white face and flashing eyes, looking at me like a very tigress, I know the heart within you, perhaps a trifle better than you know it yourself."

Without another word, I left the room, and locked myself up in my own chamber. In about half an hour, he came to the door; and first he tried the handle, then he knocked.

"Won't you let me in, Helen?" said he.

"No; you have displeased me," I replied, "and I don't want to see your face or hear your voice again till the morning."

He paused a moment, as if dumbfoundered or uncertain how to answer such a speech, and then turned and walked away. This was only an hour after dinner: I knew he would find it very dull to sit alone all the evening; and this considerably softened my resentment, though it did not make me relent. I was determined to shew him that my heart was not his slave, and I could live without him if I chose; and I sat down and wrote a long letter to my aunt —of course telling her nothing of all this. Soon after ten o'clock, I heard him come up again; but he passed my door and went straight to his own dressing-room, where he shut himself in for the night.

I was rather anxious to see how he would meet me in the morning, and not a little disappointed to behold him enter the breakfast-room with a careless smile.

"Are you cross still, Helen?" said he, approaching as if to salute me. I coldly turned to the table, and began to pour out the coffee, observing that he was rather late.

He uttered a low whistle and sauntered away to the window, where he stood for some minutes looking out upon the pleasing prospect of sullen, grey clouds, streaming rain, soaking lawn, and dripping, leafless trees—and muttering execrations on the weather, and then sat down to breakfast. While taking his coffee, he muttered it was "d—d cold."

"You should not have left it so long," said I.

He made no answer, and the meal was concluded in silence. It was a relief to both when the letter-bag was brought in. It contained, upon examination, a newspaper and one or two letters for him, and a couple of letters for me,

which he tossed across the table without a remark. One was from my brother, the other from Milicent Hargrave, who is now in London with her mother. His, I think, were business letters, and apparently not much to his mind, for he crushed them into his pocket with some muttered expletives, that I should have reproved him for at any other time. The paper, he set before him, and pretended to be deeply absorbed in its contents during the remainder of breakfast, and a considerable time after.

The reading and answering of my letters, and the direction of household concerns afforded me ample employment for the morning; after lunch, I got my drawing, and from dinner till bed time, I read. Meanwhile, poor Arthur was sadly at a loss for something to amuse him or to occupy his time. He wanted to appear as busy and as unconcerned as I did: had the weather at all permitted, he would doubtless have ordered his horse and set off to some distant region—no matter where—immediately

after breakfast, and not returned till night; had there been a lady anywhere within reach, of any age between fifteen and forty-five, he would have sought revenge and found employment in getting up—or trying to get up a desperate flirtation with her; but being, to my private satisfaction, entirely cut off from both these sources of diversion, his sufferings were truly deplorable. When he had done yawning over his paper and scribbling short answers to his shorter letters, he spent the remainder of the morning and the whole of the afternoon in fidgeting about from room to room, watching the clouds, cursing the rain, alternately petting, and teazing, and abusing his dogs, sometimes lounging on the sofa with a book that he could not force himself to read, and very often fixedly gazing at me, when he thought I did not perceive it, with the vain hope of detecting some traces of tears, or some tokens of remorseful anguish in my face. But I managed to preserve an undisturbed, though grave serenity

throughout the day. I was not really angry: I felt for him all the time, and longed to be reconciled; but I determined he should make the first advances, or at least shew some signs of an humble and contrite spirit, first; for, if I began, it would only minister to his self-conceit, increase his arrogance, and quite destroy the lesson I wanted to give him.

He made a long stay in the dining-room after dinner, and, I fear, took an unusual quantity of wine, but not enough to loosen his tongue; for when he came in and found me quietly occupied with my book, too busy to lift my head on his entrance, he merely murmured an expression of suppressed disapprobation, and, shutting the door with a bang, went and stretched himself at full length on the sofa, and composed himself to sleep. But his favourite cocker, Dash, that had been lying at my feet, took the liberty of jumping upon him and beginning to lick his face. He struck it off with a smart blow; and the poor dog

squeaked, and ran cowering back to me. When he woke up, about half an hour after, he called it to him again; but Dash only looked sheepish and wagged the tip of his tail. He called again, more sharply, but Dash only clung the closer to me, and licked my hand as if imploring protection. Enraged at this, his master snatched up a heavy book and hurled it at his head. The poor dog set up a piteous outcry and ran to the door. I let him out, and then quietly took up the book.

"Give that book to me," said Arthur, in no very courteous tone. I gave it to him.

"Why did you let the dog out?" he asked. "You knew I wanted him."

"By what token?" I replied; "by your throwing the book at him? but perhaps, it was intended for me?"

"No—but I see you've got a taste of it," said he, looking at my hand, that had also been struck, and was rather severely grazed.

I returned to my reading; and he endea-

voured to occupy himself in the same manner; but, in a little while, after several portentous yawns, he pronounced *his* book to be "cursed trash," and threw it on to the table. Then followed eight or ten minutes of silence, during the greater part of which, I believe, he was staring at me. At last his patience was tired out.

"What *is* that book, Helen?" he exclaimed.

I told him.

"Is it interesting?"

"Yes, very."

"Humph!"

I went on reading—or pretending to read, at least—I cannot say there was much communication between my eyes and my brain; for, while the former ran over the pages, the latter was earnestly wondering when Arthur would speak next, and what he would say, and what I should answer. But he did not speak again till I rose to make the tea, and then it was only to say he should not take any. He continued

lounging on the sofa, and alternately closing his eyes and looking at his watch and at me, till bed-time, when I rose, and took my candle and retired.

"Helen!" cried he, the moment I had left the room. I turned back, and stood awaiting his commands.

"What do you want, Arthur?" I said at length.

"Nothing," replied he. "Go!"

I went, but hearing him mutter something as I was closing the door, I turned again. It sounded very like "confounded slut," but I was quite willing it should be something else.

"Were you speaking Arthur?" I asked.

"No," was the answer; and I shut the door and departed. I saw nothing more of him till the following morning at breakfast, when he came down a full hour after the usual time.

"You're very late," was my morning's salutation.

"You needn't have waited for me," was his;

and he walked up to the window again. It was just such weather as yesterday.

"Oh, this confounded rain!" he muttered. But after studiously regarding it for a minute or two, a bright idea seemed to strike him, for he suddenly exclaimed, "But I know what I'll do!" and then returned and took his seat at the table. The letter-bag was already there, waiting to be opened. He unlocked it and examined the contents, but said nothing about them.

"Is there anything for me?" I asked.

"No."

He opened the newspaper and began to read.

"You'd better take your coffee," suggested I; "it will be cold again."

"You may go," said he, "if you've done. I don't want you."

I rose, and withdrew to the next room, wondering if we were to have another such miserable day as yesterday, and wishing intensely for an end of these mutually inflicted torments.

Shortly after, I heard him ring the bell and give some orders about his wardrobe that sounded as if he meditated a long journey. He then sent for the coachman, and I heard something about the carriage and the horses, and London, and seven o'clock to-morrow morning, that startled and disturbed me not a little.

"I must not let him go to London, whatever comes of it," said I to myself: "he will run into all kinds of mischief, and I shall be the cause of it. But the question is, how am I to alter his purpose?—Well, I will wait awhile, and see if he mentions it."

I waited most anxiously, from hour to hour; but not a word was spoken, on that or any other subject, to me. He whistled, and talked to his dogs, and wandered from room to room, much the same as on the previous day. At last I began to think I must introduce the subject myself, and was pondering how to bring it about, when John unwittingly came to my relief with the following message from the coachman.

"Please sir, Richard says one of the horses has got a very bad cold, and he thinks, sir, if you could make it convenient to go the day after to-morrow, instead of to-morrow, he could physic it to-day so as—"

"Confound his impudence!" interjected the master.

"Please sir, he says it would be a deal better if you could," persisted John, "for he hopes there'll be a change in the weather shortly, and he says it's not *likely*, when a horse is so bad with a cold, and physicked and all—"

"Devil take the horse!" cried the gentleman—"Well, tell him I'll think about it," he added, after a moment's reflection. He cast a searching glance at me, as the servant withdrew, expecting to see some token of deep astonishment and alarm; but, being previously prepared, I preserved an aspect of stoical indifference. His countenance fell as he met my steady gaze, and he turned away in very obvious disappointment, and walked up to the

fire-place, where he stood in an attitude of undisguised dejection, leaning against the chimney-piece with his forehead sunk upon his arm.

"Where do you want to go, Arthur?" said I.

"To London," replied he, gravely.

"What for?" I asked.

"Because I cannot be happy here."

"Why not?"

"Because my wife doesn't love me."

"She would love you with all her heart, if you deserved it."

"What must I do to deserve it?"

This seemed humble and earnest enough; and I was so much affected, between sorrow and joy, that I was obliged to pause a few seconds before I could steady my voice to reply.

"If she gives you her heart," said I, "you must take it thankfully, and use it well, and not pull it in pieces, and laugh in her face, because she cannot snatch it away."

He now turned round and stood facing me, with his back to the fire.

"Come then, Helen, are you going to be a good girl?" said he.

This sounded rather too arrogant, and the smile that accompanied it did not please me. I therefore hesitated to reply. Perhaps, my former answer had implied too much: he had heard my voice falter, and might have seen me brush away a tear.

"Are you going to forgive me, Helen?" he resumed, more humbly.

"Are *you* penitent!" I replied, stepping up to him and smiling in his face.

"Heart-broken!" he answered, with a rueful countenance—yet with a merry smile just lurking within his eyes and about the corners of his mouth; but this could not repulse me, and I flew into his arms. He fervently embraced me and though I shed a torrent of tears, I think I never was happier in my life than at that moment.

"Then you won't go to London, Arthur?" I said, when the first transport of tears and kisses had subsided.

"No, love,—unless you will go with me."

"I will, gladly," I answered, "if you think the change will amuse you, and if you will put off the journey till next week."

He readily consented, but said there was no need of much preparation, as he should not be for staying long, for he did not wish me to be Londonized, and to lose my country freshness and originality by too much intercourse with the ladies of the world. I thought this folly; but I did not wish to contradict him now: I merely said that I was of very domestic habits, as he well knew, and had no particular wish to mingle with the world.

So we are to go to London on Monday, the day after to-morrow. It is now four days since the termination of our quarrel, and I'm sure it has done us both good: it has made me like Arthur a great deal better and made him be-

have a great deal better to me. He has never once attempted to annoy me, since, by the most distant allusion to Lady F—— or any of those disagreeable reminiscences of his former life — I wish I could blot them from my memory, or else get him to regard such matters in the same light as I do. Well! it is something, however, to have made him see that they are not fit subjects for a conjugal jest. He may see farther sometime—I will put no limits to my hopes; and, in spite of my aunt's forebodings and my own unspoken fears, I trust we shall be happy yet.

CHAPTER VI.

FIRST ABSENCE.

On the eighth of April, we went to London; on the eighth of May I returned, in obedience to Arthur's wish: very much against my own, because I left him behind. If he had come with me, I should have been very glad to get home again, for he led me such a round of restless dissipation, while there, that, in that short space of time, I was quite tired out. He seemed bent upon displaying me to his friends and acquaintances in particular, and the public in general, on every possible occasion and

to the greatest possible advantage. It was something to feel that he considered me a worthy object of pride; but I paid dear for the gratification, for in the first place, to please him, I had to violate my cherished predilections—my almost rooted principles in favour of a plain, dark, sober style of dress; I must sparkle in costly jewels and deck myself out like a painted butterfly, just as I had, long since, determined I would never do — and this was no trifling sacrifice;—in the second place, I was continually straining to satisfy his sanguine expectations and do honour to his choice, by my general conduct and deportment, and fearing to disappoint him by some awkward misdemeanour, or some trait of inexperienced ignorance about the customs of society, especially when I acted the part of hostess, which I was not unfrequently called upon to do; and in the third place, as I intimated before, I was wearied of the throng and bustle, the restless hurry and ceaseless change of a life so alien to all my previous habits. At last, he suddenly discovered

that the London air did not agree with me, and I was languishing for my country home and must immediately return to Grass-dale.

I laughingly assured him that the case was not so urgent as he appeared to think it, but I was quite willing to go home if he was. He replied that he should be obliged to remain a week or two longer, as he had business that required his presence.

"Then I will stay with you," said I.

"But I can't do with you, Helen," was his answer: "as long as you stay, I shall attend to you and neglect my business."

"But I won't let you," I returned: "now that I know you have business to attend to, I shall insist upon your attending to it, and letting me alone—and, to tell you the truth, I shall be glad of a little rest. I can take my rides and walks in the park as usual; and your business cannot occupy all your time; I shall see you at mealtimes and in the evenings, at least, and that will be better than being leagues away and never seeing you at all."

"But my love, I cannot let you stay. How can I settle my affairs when I know that you are here, neglected—"

"I shall not feel myself neglected: while you are doing your duty, Arthur, I shall never complain of neglect. If you had told me, before, that you had anything to do, it would have been half done before this; and now you must make up for lost time by redoubled exertions. Tell me what it is; and I will be your taskmaster, instead of being a hindrance."

"No, no," persisted the impracticable creature; "you *must* go home, Helen; I must have the satisfaction of knowing that you are safe and well, though far away. Don't I see that you are looking quite rakish?—Your bright eyes are faded, and that tender, delicate bloom has quite deserted your cheek."

"That is only with too much gaiety and fatigue."

"It is not, I tell you; it is the London air: you are pining for the fresh breezes of your

country home—and you shall feel them, before you are two days older. And remember your situation, dearest Helen; on your health, you know, depends the health, if not the life of our future hope."

"Then you really wish to get rid of me?"

"Positively, I do; and I will take you down myself to Grass-dale, and then return. I shall not be absent above a week—or fortnight at most."

"But if I must go, I will go alone: if you must stay, it is needless to waste your time in the journey there and back."

But he did not like the idea of sending me alone.

"Why, what helpless creature do you take me for," I replied, "that you cannot trust me to go a hundred miles in our own carriage with our own footman and maid to attend me? If you come with me I shall assuredly keep you. But tell me, Arthur, what *is* this tiresome business; and why did you never mention it before?"

"It is only a little business with my lawyer," said he; and he told me something about a

piece of property he wanted to sell in order to pay off a part of the encumbrances on his estate; but either the account was a little confused or I was rather dull of comprehension, for I could not clearly understand how that should keep him in town a fortnight after me. Still less can I now comprehend how it should keep him a month—for it is nearly that time since I left him, and no signs of his return as yet. In every letter he promises to be with me in a few days, and every time deceives me—or deceives himself. His excuses are vague and insufficient. I cannot doubt that he is got among his former companions again—Oh, why did I leave him? I wish—I do intensely wish he would return!

June 29th.—No Arthur yet; and for many days I have been looking and longing in vain for a letter. His letters, when they come, are kind—if fair words and endearing epithets can give them a claim to the title—but very short, and full of trivial excuses and promises that I cannot trust; and yet how anxiously I look

forward to them! how eagerly I open and devour one of those little, hastily scribbled returns for the three or four long letters, hitherto unanswered, he has had from me!

Oh, it is cruel to leave me so long alone! He knows I have no one but Rachel to speak to, for we have no neighbours here, except the Hargraves, whose residence I can dimly descry from these upper windows imbosomed among those low, woody hills beyond the Dale. I was glad when I learnt that Milicent was so near us; and her company would be a soothing solace to me now, but she is still in town with her mother: there is no one at the grove but little Esther and her French governess, for Walter is always away. I saw that paragon of manly perfections in London: he seemed scarcely to merit the eulogiums of his mother and sister, though he certainly appeared more conversable and agreeable than Lord Lowborough, more candid and high-minded than Mr. Grimsby, and more polished and gentlemanly than Mr.

Hattersley, Arthur's only other friend whom he judged fit to introduce to me—O Arthur, why won't you come! why won't you write to me at least! You talked about my health—how can you expect me to gather bloom and vigour here; pining in solitude and restless anxiety from day to day?—It would serve you right to come back and find my good looks entirely wasted away. I would beg my uncle and aunt, or my brother to come and see me, but I do not like to complain of my loneliness to them,—and indeed, loneliness is the least of my sufferings; but what is he doing—what is it that keeps him away? It is this ever-recurring question and the horrible suggestions it raises that distract me.

July 3rd.—My last bitter letter has wrung from him an answer at last,—and a rather longer one than usual; but still, I don't know what to make of it. He playfully abuses me for the gall and vinegar of my latest effusion, tells me I can have no conception of the multitudinous engage-

ments that keep him away, but avers that, in spite of them all, he will assuredly be with me before the close of next week; though it is impossible for a man, so circumstanced as he is, to fix the precise day of his return: meantime, he exhorts me to the exercise of patience, "that first of woman's virtues," and desires me to remember the saying, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder," and comfort myself with the assurance that the longer he stays away, the better he shall love me when he returns; and till he does return, he begs I will continue to write to him constantly, for, though he is sometimes too idle and often too busy to answer my letters as they come, he likes to receive them daily, and if I fulfil my threat of punishing his seeming neglect by ceasing to write, he shall be so angry that he will do his utmost to forget me. He adds this piece of intelligence respecting poor Milicent Hargrave:—

"Your little friend Milicent is likely, before long, to follow your example, and take upon

her the yoke of matrimony in conjunction with a friend of mine. Hattersley, you know, has not yet fulfilled his direful threat of throwing his precious person away on the first old maid that chose to evince a tenderness for him; but he still preserves a resolute determination to see himself a married man before the year is out: 'Only,' said he to me, 'I must have somebody that will let me have my own way in everything—not like *your* wife, Huntingdon, she is a charming creature, but she looks as if she had a will of her own, and could play the vixen upon occasion,' (I thought 'you're right there, man,' but I didn't say so.) 'I must have some good, quiet soul that will let me just do what I like and go where I like, keep at home or stay away, without a word of reproach or complaint; for I can't do with being bothered.' 'Well,' said I. 'I know somebody that will suit you to a tee, if you don't care for money, and that's Hargrave's sister, Milicent.' He desired to be introduced to her forthwith,

for he said he had plenty of the needful himself—or should have, when his old governor chose to quit the stage. So you see, Helen, I have managed pretty well, both for your friend and mine."

Poor Milicent! But I cannot imagine she will ever be led to accept such a suitor—one so repugnant to all her ideas of a man to be honoured and loved.

5th.—Alas! I was mistaken. I have got a long letter from her this morning, telling me she is already engaged, and expects to be married before the close of the month.

"I hardly know what to say about it," she writes, "or what to think. To tell you the truth, Helen, I don't like the thoughts of it at all. If I *am* to be Mr. Hattersley's wife, I must try to love him; and I do try with all my might; but I have made very little progress yet; and the worst symptom of the case is, that the further he is from me the better I like him: he frightens me with his abrupt manners

and strange hectoring ways, and I dread the thoughts of marrying him. 'Then why have you accepted him,' you will ask; and I didn't know I had accepted him; but mamma tells me I have, and he seems to think so too. I certainly didn't mean to do so; but I did not like to give him a flat refusal for fear mamma should be grieved and angry, (for I knew she wished me to marry him,) and I wanted to talk to her first about it, so I gave him what *I* thought was an evasive, half negative answer; but she says it was as good as an acceptance, and he would think me very capricious if I were to attempt to draw back—and indeed, I was so confused and frightened at the moment, I can hardly tell what I said. And next time I saw him, he accosted me in all confidence as his affianced bride, and immediately began to settle matters with mamma. I had not courage to contradict them then, and how can I do it now? I cannot: they would think me mad. Besides, mamma is so delighted with the idea of

the match; she thinks she has managed so well for me; and I cannot bear to disappoint her. I do object sometimes, and tell her what I feel, but you don't know *how* she talks. Mr. Hattersley, you know, is the son of a rich banker, and as Esther and I have no fortunes and Walter very little, our dear mamma is very anxious to see us all well married, that is, united to rich partners—it is not *my* idea of being well married, but she means it all for the best. She says when I am safe off her hands it will be such a relief to her mind; and she assures me it will be a good thing for the family as well as for me. Even Walter is pleased at the prospect, and when I confessed my reluctance to him, he said it was all childish nonsense. Do *you* think it nonsense, Helen? I should not care if I could see any prospect of being able to love and admire him, but I can't. There is nothing about him to hang one's esteem and affection upon: he is so diametrically opposite to what I imagined my husband should be.

Do write to me, and say all you can to encourage me. Don't attempt to dissuade me, for my fate is fixed: preparations for the important event are already going on around me; and don't say a word against Mr. Hattersley, for I want to think well of him; and though I have spoken against him myself, it is for the last time: hereafter, I shall never permit myself to utter a word in his dispraise, however he may seem to deserve it; and whoever ventures to speak slightingly of the man I have promised to love, to honour, and obey, must expect my serious displeasure. After all, I think he is quite as good as Mr. Huntingdon, if not better; and yet, you love *him*, and seem to be happy and contented; and perhaps I may manage as well. You must tell me, if you can, that Mr. Hattersley is better than he seems—that he is upright, honourable, and open-hearted—in fact, a perfect diamond in the rough. He may be all this, but I don't know him—I know only the exterior and what I trust is the worst part of him."

She concludes with "Good bye, dear Helen, I am waiting anxiously for your advice—but mind you let it be all on the right side."

Alas! poor Milicent, what encouragement can I give you?—or what advice—except that it is better to make a bold stand now, though at the expense of disappointing and angering both mother and brother, and lover, than to devote your whole life, hereafter, to misery and vain regret?

Saturday, 13th. The week is over, and he is not come. All the sweet summer is passing away without one breath of pleasure to me or benefit to him. And I had all along been looking forward to this season with the fond, delusive hope that we should enjoy it so sweetly together; and that, with God's help and my exertions, it would be the means of elevating his mind, and refining his taste to a due appreciation of the salutary and pure delights of nature, and peace, and holy love. But now,—at evening, when I see the round, red sun sink

quietly down behind those woody hills, leaving them sleeping in a warm, red, golden haze, I only think another lovely day is lost to him and me; — and at morning, when roused by the flutter and chirp of the sparrows, and the gleeful twitter of the swallows—all intent upon feeding their young, and full of life and joy in their own little frames—I open the window to inhale the balmy, soul-reviving air, and look out upon the lovely landscape, laughing in dew and sunshine,—I too often shame that glorious scene with tears of thankless misery, because *he* cannot feel its freshening influence; — and when I wander in the ancient woods, and meet the little wild-flowers smiling in my path, or sit in the shadow of our noble ash-trees by the water-side, with their branches gently swaying in the light summer breeze that murmurs through their feathery foliage—my ears full of that low music mingled with the dreamy hum of insects, my eyes abstractedly gazing on the glassy surface of the little lake before me,

with the trees that crowd about its bank, some gracefully bending to kiss its waters, some rearing their stately heads high above, but stretching their wide arms over its margin, all faithfully mirrored far, far down in its glassy depth — though sometimes the images are partially broken by the sport of aquatic insects, and sometimes, for a moment, the whole is shivered into trembling fragments by a transient breeze that swept the surface too roughly,—still I have no pleasure; for the greater the happiness that nature sets before me, the more I lament that *he* is not here to taste it: the greater the bliss we might enjoy together, the more I feel our present wretchedness apart (yes, ours; he must be wretched, though he may not know it;) and the more my senses are pleased, the more my heart is oppressed; for he keeps it with him confined amid the dust and smoke of London,—perhaps, shut up within the walls of his own abominable club.

But most of all, at night, when I enter my lonely chamber, and look out upon the summer moon, 'sweet regent of the sky,' floating above me in the 'black blue vault of heaven,' shedding a flood of silver radiance over park, and wood, and water, so pure, so peaceful, so divine, —and think Where is he now?—what is he doing at this moment?—wholly unconscious of this heavenly scene,—perhaps, revelling with his boon companions, perhaps—God help me, it is too—*too* much!

23rd. Thank heaven, he is come at last! But how altered!—flushed and feverish, listless and languid, his beauty strangely diminished, his vigour and vivacity quite departed. I have not upbraided him by word or look; I have not even asked him what he has been doing. I have not the heart to do it, for I think he is ashamed of himself—he must be so indeed,—and such enquiries could not fail to be painful to both. My forbearance pleases him—touches him even, I am inclined to think. He says he

is glad to be home again, and God knows how glad I am to get him back, even as he is. He lies on the sofa nearly all day long; and I play and sing to him for hours together. I write his letters for him, and get him everything he wants; and sometimes I read to him, and sometimes I talk, and sometimes only sit by him and sooth him with silent caresses. I know he does not deserve it; and I fear I am spoiling him; but this once, I will forgive him, freely and entirely—I will shame him into virtue if I can, and I will never let him leave me again.

He is pleased with my attentions—it may be, grateful for them. He likes to have me near him; and though he is peevish and testy with his servants and his dogs, he is gentle and kind to me. What he would be, if I did not so watchfully anticipate his wants, and so carefully avoid, or immediately desist from doing anything that has a tendency to irritate or disturb him, with however little reason, I cannot tell. How intensely I wish he were worthy of all

this care! Last night as I sat beside him, with his head in my lap, passing my fingers through his beautiful curls, this thought made my eyes overflow with sorrowful tears—as it often does, —but this time, a tear fell on his face and made him look up. He smiled, but not insultingly.

"Dear Helen!" he said—"why do you cry? you know that I love you" (and he pressed my hand to his feverish lips,) "and what more could you desire?"

"Only, Arthur, that you would love *yourself*, as truly and as faithfully as you are loved by me."

"That would be hard indeed!" he replied, tenderly squeezing my hand.

I don't know whether he fully understood my meaning, but he smiled—thoughtfully and even sadly—a most unusual thing with him;—and then he closed his eyes and fell asleep, looking as careless and sinless as a child. As I watched that placid slumber, my heart swelled fuller than ever, and my tears flowed unrestrained.

August 24. Arthur is himself again, as lusty and reckless, as light of heart and head as ever, and as restless and hard to amuse as a spoilt child, —and almost as full of mischief too, especially when wet weather keeps him within doors. I wish he had something to do, some useful trade, or profession, or employment — anything to occupy his head or his hands for a few hours a day, and give him something besides his own pleasure to think about. If he would play the country gentleman, and attend to the farm —but that he knows nothing about, and won't give his mind to consider,—or if he would take up with some literary study, or learn to draw or to play—as he is so fond of music, I often try to persuade him to learn the piano, but he is far too idle for such an undertaking: he has no more idea of exerting himself to overcome obstacles than he has of restraining his natural appetites ; and these two things are the ruin of him. I lay them both to the charge of his harsh yet careless father and his madly indul-

gent mother. If ever I am a mother I will zealously strive against this *crime* of over indulgence—I can hardly give it a milder name when I think of the evils it brings.

Happily, it will soon be the shooting season, and then, if the weather permit, he will find occupation enough in the pursuit and destruction of the partridges and pheasants: we have no grouse, or he might have been similarly occupied at this moment, instead of lying under the accacia tree pulling poor Dash's ears. But he says it is dull work shooting alone; he must have a friend or two to help him.

"Let them be tolerably decent then, Arthur," said I—The word "friend," in his mouth makes me shudder: I know it was some of his "friends" that induced him to stay behind me in London, and kept him away so long—indeed, from what he has unguardedly told me, or hinted from time to time, I cannot doubt that he frequently showed them my letters, to let them see how fondly his wife watched over

his interests and how keenly she regretted his absence; and that they induced him to remain week after week, and to plunge into all manner of excesses to avoid being laughed at for a wife-ridden fool, and, perhaps, to show how far he could venture to go without danger of shaking the fond creature's devoted attachment. It is a hateful idea, but I cannot believe it is a false one.

"Well," replied he, "I thought of Lord Lowborough for one; but there is no possibility of getting him without his better half, our mutual friend Annabella; so we must ask them both. You're not afraid of her, are you Helen?" he asked, with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes.

"Of course not," I answered: "why should I?—And who besides?"

"Hargrave for one—he will be glad to come, though his own place is so near, for he has little enough land of his own to shoot over, and we can extend our depredations into it, if we

like;—and he is thoroughly respectable, you know, Helen, quite a lady's man:—and I think, Grimsby for another: he's a decent, quiet fellow enough—you'll not object to Grimsby?"

"I hate him; but however, if you wish it, I'll try to endure his presence for a while."

"All a prejudice Helen—a mere woman's antipathy."

"No; I have solid grounds for my dislike. And is that all?"

"Why, yes, I think so. Hattersley will be too busy billing and cooing with his bride to have much time to spare for guns and dogs, at present," he replied.—"And that reminds me that I have had several letters from Milicent since her marriage, and that she either is or pretends to be quite reconciled to her lot. She professes to have discovered numberless virtues and perfections in her husband, some of which, I fear, less partial eyes would fail to distinguish, though they sought them carefully with tears; and now that she is accustomed to his loud

voice and abrupt, uncourteous manners, she affirms she finds no difficulty in loving him as a wife should do, and begs I will burn that letter wherein she spoke so unadvisedly against him. So that I trust she may yet be happy; but if she is, it will be entirely the reward of her own goodness of heart; for had she chosen to consider herself the victim of fate, or of her mother's worldly wisdom, she might have been thoroughly miserable; and, if, for duty's sake, she had not made every effort to love her husband, she would doubtless have hated him to the end of her days.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GUESTS.

SEPT. 23rd. Our guests arrived about three weeks ago. Lord and Lady Lowborough have now been married above eight months; and I will do the lady the credit to say that her husband is quite an altered man: his looks, his spirits, and his temper are all perceptibly changed for the better since I last saw him. But there is room for improvement still. He is not always cheerful nor always contented, and she often complains of his ill-humour, which, however, of all persons, *she* ought to be the last to ac-

cuse him of, as he never displays it against her, except for such conduct as would provoke a saint. He adores her still, and would go to the world's end to please her. She knows her power, and she uses it too; but well knowing that to wheedle and coax is safer than to command, she judiciously tempers her despotism with flattery and blandishments enough to make him deem himself a favoured and a happy man. And yet, at times, a sombre shadow over-clouds his brow even in her presence, but evidently the result of despondency rather than of ill-humour, and generally occasioned by some display of her ill-regulated temper or misguided mind—some wanton trampling upon his most cherished opinions—some reckless disregard of principle that makes him bitterly regret that she is not as good as she is charming and beloved. I pity him from my heart, for I know the misery of such regrets.

But she has another way of tormenting him, in which I am a fellow sufferer—or might be, if I chose to regard myself as such. This is

by openly but not too glaringly coquetting with Mr. Huntingdon, who is quite willing to be her partner in the game; but I don't care for it, because with him, I know there is nothing but personal vanity and a mischievous desire to excite my jealousy, and perhaps to torment his friend; and she, no doubt, is actuated by much the same motives; only there is more of malice and less of playfulness in *her* manœuvres. It is obviously, therefore, my interest to disappoint them both, as far as I am concerned, by preserving a cheerful, undisturbed serenity throughout; and accordingly I endeavour to show the fullest confidence in my husband and the greatest indifference to the arts of my attractive guest. I have never reproached the former but once, and that was for laughing at Lord Lowborough's depressed and anxious countenance one evening, when they had both been particularly provoking; and then, indeed, I said a good deal on the subject, and rebuked him sternly enough; but he only laughed, and said—

"You can feel for him, Helen—can't you?"

"I can feel for any one that is unjustly treated," I replied, "and I can feel for those that injure them too."

"Why Helen, you are as jealous as he is!" cried he, laughing still more; and I found it impossible to convince him of his mistake. So from that time I have carefully refrained from any notice of the subject whatever, and left Lord Lowborough to take care of himself. He either has not the sense or the power to follow my example, though he does try to conceal his uneasiness as well as he can; but still, it will appear in his face, and his ill-humour will peep out at intervals, though not in the expression of open resentment—they never go far enough for that. But I confess I do feel jealous at times—most painfully, bitterly so—when she sings and plays to him, and he hangs over the instrument and dwells upon her voice with no affected interest; for then, I know he is really delighted, and I have no power to awaken

similar fervour. I can amuse and please him with my simple songs, but not delight him thus.

I might retaliate if I chose, for Mr. Hargrave is disposed to be very polite and attentive to me as his hostess—especially so when Arthur is the most neglectful, whether in mistaken compassion for me, or ambitious to show off his own good breeding by comparison with his friend's remissness, I cannot tell; but in either case, his civilities are highly distasteful to me. If Arthur is a little careless, of course it is unpleasant to have the fault exaggerated by contrast; and to be pitied as a neglected wife when I am not such, is an insult I can ill endure. But for hospitality's sake, I endeavour to suppress my impulse of scarcely reasonable resentment, and behave with decent civility to our guest, who, to give him his due, is by no means a disagreeable companion: he has good conversational powers and considerable information and taste, and talks about things that

Arthur never could be brought to discuss, or to feel any interest in. But Arthur dislikes me to talk to him, and is visibly annoyed by his commonest acts of politeness; not that my husband has any unworthy suspicions of me—or of his friend either, as I believe—but he dislikes me to have any pleasure but in himself, any shadow of homage or kindness but such as he chooses to vouchsafe: he knows he is my sun, but when he chooses to withhold his light, he would have my sky to be all darkness; he cannot bear that I should have a moon to mitigate the deprivation. This is unjust; and I am sometimes tempted to teaze him accordingly; but I won't yield to the temptation: if he should carry his trifling with my feelings too far, I shall find some other means of checking him.

28th.—Yesterday we all went to the Grove, Mr. Hargrave's much neglected home. His mother frequently asks us over that she may have the pleasure of her dear Walter's com-

pany; and this time she had invited us to a dinner party, and got together as many of the country gentry as were within reach to meet us. The entertainment was very well got up; but I could not help thinking about the cost of it all the time. I don't like Mrs. Hargrave; she is a hard, pretensious, worldly-minded woman. She has money enough to live very comfortably, if she only knew how to use it judiciously, and had taught her son to do the same; but she is ever straining to keep up appearances, with that despicable pride that shuns the semblance of poverty as of a shameful crime. She grinds her dependants, pinches her servants, and deprives even her daughters and herself of the real comforts of life, because she will not consent to yield the palm in outward show to those who have three times her wealth, and, above all, because she is determined her cherished son shall be enabled to 'hold up his head with the highest gentleman in the land.' This same son, I imagine, is a

man of expensive habits—no reckless spendthrift, and no abandoned sensualist, but one who likes to have 'everything handsome about him,' and to go to a certain length in youthful indulgences—not so much to gratify his own tastes as to maintain his reputation as a man of fashion in the world, and a respectable fellow among his own lawless companions; while he is too selfish to consider how many comforts might be obtained for his fond mother and sisters with the money he thus wastes upon himself: as long as they can contrive to make a respectable appearance once a year when they come to town, he gives himself little concern about their private stintings and struggles at home. This is a harsh judgment to form of "dear, noble-minded, generous-hearted Walter," but I fear it is too just.

Mrs. Hargrave's anxiety to make good matches for her daughters is partly the cause and partly the result of these errors: by making a figure in the world and shewing them off to

advantage, she hopes to obtain better chances for them ; and by thus living beyond her legitimate means and lavishing so much on their brother, she renders them portionless, and makes them burdens on her hands. Poor Milicent, I fear, has already fallen a sacrifice to the manœuvrings of this mistaken mother, who congratulates herself on having so satisfactorily discharged her maternal duty, and hopes to do as well for Esther. But Esther is a child as yet—a little merry romp of fourteen : as honest-hearted, and as guileless and simple as her sister, but with a fearless spirit of her own, that I fancy, her mother will find some difficulty in bending to her purposes.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MISDEMEANOUR.

October 9th. — While the gentlemen are ranging the woods and Lady Lowborough is busy writing her letters, I will return to my chronicle for the purpose of recording sayings and doings, the last of the kind I hope I shall ever have cause to describe.

It was on the night of the 4th, a little after tea, that Annabella had been singing and playing, with Arthur as usual at her side: she had ended her song, but still she sat at the instrument; and he stood leaning on the back

of her chair, conversing in scarcely audible tones, with his face in very close proximity with hers. I looked at Lord Lowborough. He was at the other end of the room, talking with Messrs. Hargrave and Grimsby; but I saw him dart towards his lady and his host, a quick, impatient glance, expressive of intense disquietude, at which Grimsby smiled. Determined to interrupt the tête-à-tête, I rose, and selecting a piece of music from the music-stand, stepped up to the piano, intending to ask the lady to play it; but I stood transfixed and speechless on seeing her seated there, listening with what seemed an exultant smile on her flushed face, to his soft murmurings, with her hand quietly surrendered to his clasp. The blood rushed first to my heart and then to my head—for there was more than this; almost at the moment of my approach, he cast a hurried glance over his shoulder towards the other occupants of the room, and then ardently pressed the unresisting hand to his lips. On

raising his eyes he beheld me and dropped them again, confounded and dismayed. She saw me too, and confronted me with a look of hard defiance. I laid the music on the piano, and retired. I felt ill; but I did not leave the room: happily, it was getting late and could not be long before the company dispersed. I went to the fire and leant my head against the chimney-piece. In a minute or two, some one asked me if I felt unwell. I did not answer—indeed, at the time I knew not what was said—but I mechanically looked up, and saw Mr. Hargrave standing beside me on the rug.

"Shall I get you a glass of wine?" said he.

"No, thank you," I replied; and turning from him, I looked round. Lady Lowborough was beside her husband, bending over him as he sat, with her hand on his shoulder, softly talking and smiling in his face; and Arthur was at the table turning over a book of engravings. I seated myself in the nearest chair; and Mr.

Hargrave, finding his services were not desired, judiciously withdrew. Shortly after, the company broke up, and as the guests were retiring to their rooms, Arthur approached me, smiling with the utmost assurance.

"Are you *very* angry, Helen?" murmured he.

"This is no jest, Arthur," said I seriously, but as calmly as I could—"unless you think it a jest to lose my affection for ever."

"What! so bitter?" he exclaimed, laughingly clasping my hand between both his; but I snatched it away, in indignation—almost in disgust, for he was obviously affected with wine.

"Then I must go down on my knees," said he; and kneeling before me with clasped hands uplifted in mock humiliation, he continued imploringly—"Forgive me, Helen!—dear Helen forgive me, and I'll *never* do it again!" and burying his face in his handkerchief, he affected to sob aloud.

Leaving him thus employed, I took my

candle, and slipping quietly from the room, hastened up stairs as fast as I could. But he soon discovered that I had left him, and rushing up after me, caught me in his arms, just as I had entered the chamber, and was about to shut the door in his face.

"No, no, by heaven, you shan't escape me so!" he cried. Then, alarmed at my agitation, he begged me not to put myself in such a passion, telling me I was white in the face, and should kill myself if I did so.

"Let me go then," I murmured; and immediately he released me—and it was well he did, for I was really in a passion. I sunk into the easy-chair and endeavoured to compose myself, for I wanted to speak to him calmly. He stood beside me, but did not venture to touch me or to speak, for a few seconds; then approaching a little nearer, he dropped on one knee—not in mock humility, but to bring himself nearer my level, and leaning his hand on the arm of the chair, he began in a low voice—

"It is all nonsense, Helen—a jest, a mere nothing—not worth a thought. Will you *never* learn?" he continued more boldly, "that you have nothing to fear from me? that I love you wholly and entirely?—or if," he added with a lurking smile, "I ever give a thought to another you may well spare it, for those fancies are here and gone like a flash of lightning, while my love for you burns on steadily, and for ever like the sun. You little exorbitant tyrant, will not *that* ——"

"Be quiet a moment, will you Arthur," said I, "and listen to me—and don't think I'm in a jealous fury: I am perfectly calm. Feel my hand." And I gravely extended it towards him—but closed it upon his with an energy that seemed to disprove the assertion, and made him smile. "You needn't smile, sir," said I, still tightening my grasp, and looking steadfastly on him till he almost quailed before me. "You may think it all very fine, Mr. Huntingdon, to amuse yourself with rousing my jealousy; but

take care you don't rouse my hate instead. And when you have once extinguished my love, you will find it no easy matter to kindle it again."

"Well Helen, I won't repeat the offence. But I meant nothing by it, I assure you. I had taken too much wine, and I was scarcely myself, at the time."

"You often take too much;—and that is another practice I detest." He looked up astonished at my warmth. "Yes," I continued. "I never mentioned it before, because I was ashamed to do so; but now I'll tell you that it distresses me, and may disgust me, if you go on and suffer the habit to grow upon you, as it will, if you don't check it in time. But the whole system of your conduct to Lady Lowborough, is not referrible to wine; and this night you knew perfectly well what you were doing."

"Well, I'm sorry for it," replied he, with more of sulkiness than contrition: "what more would you have?"

"You are sorry that I saw you, no doubt," I answered coldly.

"If you had not seen me," he muttered, fixing his eyes on the carpet, "it would have done no harm."

My heart felt ready to burst; but I resolutely swallowed back my emotion, and answered calmly, "You think not?"

"No," replied he, boldly. "After all, what have I done? It's nothing—except as you choose to make it a subject of accusation and distress."

"What would Lord Lowborough, your *friend* think, if he knew all? or what would you yourself think, if he or any other had acted the same part to me, throughout, as you have to Annabella?"

"I would blow his brains out."

"Well then, Arthur, how can you call it nothing—an offence for which you would think yourself justified in blowing another man's brains out? Is it nothing to trifle with your

friend's feelings and mine—to endeavour to steal a woman's affections from her husband—what he values more than his gold, and therefore what it is more dishonest to take? Are the marriage vows a jest; and is it nothing to make it your sport to break them, and to tempt another to do the same? Can I love a man that does such things, and coolly maintains it is nothing?"

"You are breaking your marriage vows yourself," said he, indignantly rising and pacing to and fro. "You promised to honour and obey me, and now you attempt to hector over me, and threaten and accuse me and call me worse than a highwaymen. If it were not for your situation Helen, I would not submit to it so tamely. I won't be dictated to by a woman, though she be my wife."

"What will you do then? Will you go on till I hate you; and then accuse me of breaking my vows?"

He was silent a moment, and then replied,

"You never will hate me." Returning and resuming his former position at my feet, he repeated more vehemently—"You cannot hate me, as long as I love you."

"But how can I believe that you love me, if you continue to act in this way? Just imagine yourself in my place: would *you* think I loved *you*, if *I* did so? Would you believe my protestations, and honour and trust me under such circumstances?"

"The cases are different," he replied. "It is a woman's nature to be constant—to love one and one only, blindly, tenderly, and for ever—bless them, dear creatures! and you above them all—but you must have some commiseration for us, Helen; you must give us a little more licence, for as Shakespere has it—

> 'However we do praise ourselves,
> Our fancies are more giddy and unfirm,
> More longing, wavering, sooner lost and won
> Than women's are.'"

"Do you mean by that, that your fancies are lost to me, and won by Lady Lowborough?"

"No; Heaven is my witness that I think her mere dust and ashes in comparison with you,—and shall continue to think so, unless you drive me from you by too much severity. She is a daughter of earth; you are an angel of heaven; only be not too austere in your divinity, and remember that I am a poor, fallible mortal. Come now, Helen; won't you forgive me?" he said, gently taking my hand, and looking up with an innocent smile.

"If I do, you will repeat the offence."

"I swear by—"

"Don't swear; I'll believe your word as well as your oath. I wish I could have confidence in either."

"Try me then, Helen: only trust and pardon me this once, and you shall see! Come, I am in hell's torments till you speak the word."

I did not speak it, but I put my hand on his shoulder and kissed his forehead, and then burst into tears. He embraced me tenderly; and we have been good friends ever since. He has been

decently temperate at table, and well-conducted towards Lady Lowborough. The first day, he held himself aloof from her, as far as he could without any flagrant breach of hospitality: since that, he has been friendly and civil but nothing more—in my presence, at least, nor, I think, at any other time; for she seems haughty and displeased, and Lord Lowborough is manifestly more cheerful, and more cordial towards his host than before. But I shall be glad when they are gone, for I have so little love for Annabella that it is quite a task to be civil to her, and as she is the only woman here besides myself, we are necessarily thrown so much together. Next time Mrs. Hargrave calls, I shall hail her advent as quite a relief. I have a good mind to ask Arthur's leave to invite the old lady to stay with us till our guests depart. I think I will. She will take it as a kind attention, and, though I have little relish for her society, she will be truly welcome as a third to stand between Lady Lowborough and me.

The first time the latter and I were alone together, after that unhappy evening, was an hour or two after breakfast on the following day, when the gentlemen were gone out after the usual time spent in the writing of letters, the reading of newspapers, and desultory conversation. We sat silent for two or three minutes. She was busy with her work and I was running over the columns of a paper from which I had extracted all the pith some twenty minutes before. It was a moment of painful embarrassment to me, and I thought it must be infinitely more so to her; but it seems I was mistaken. She was the first to speak; and, smiling with the coolest assurance, she began,—

"Your husband was merry last night, Helen: is he often so?"

My blood boiled in my face; but it was better she should seem to attribute his conduct to this than to anything else.

"No," replied I, "and never will be so again I trust."

"You gave him a curtain lecture, did you?"

"No; but I told him I disliked such conduct, and he promised me not to repeat it."

"I *thought* he looked rather subdued this morning," she continued; "and you, Helen; you've been weeping I see—that's our grand resource, you know—but doesn't it make your eyes smart?—and do you always find it to answer?"

"I never cry for effect; nor can I conceive how any one can."

"Well, I don't know: I never had occasion to try it;—but I think if Lowborough were to commit such improprieties, I'd make *him* cry. I don't wonder at your being angry, for I'm sure I'd give my husband a lesson he would not soon forget for a lighter offence than that. But then he never *will* do anything of the kind; for I keep him in too good order for that."

"Are you sure you don't arrogate too much of the credit to yourself? Lord Lowborough was quite as remarkable for his abstemiousness for some time before you married him, as he is now, I have heard."

"Oh, about the *wine* you mean—yes, he's safe enough for that. And as to looking askance to another woman—he's safe enough for that too, while I live, for he worships the very ground I tread on."

"Indeed! and are you sure you deserve it?"

"Why, as to that, I can't say: you know we're all fallible creatures, Helen; we none of us deserve to be worshipped. But are *you* sure your darling Huntingdon deserves all the love you give to *him*?"

I knew not what to answer to this. I was burning with anger; but I suppressed all outward manifestations of it, and only bit my lip and pretended to arrange my work.

"At any rate," resumed she, pursuing her advantage, "you can console yourself with the assurance that *you* are worthy of all the love he gives to you."

"You flatter me," said I; "but at least, I can try to be worthy of it." And then I turned the conversation.

CHAPTER IX.

PARENTAL FEELINGS.

DECEMBER 25th.—Last Christmas I was a bride, with a heart overflowing with present bliss, and full of ardent hopes for the future—though not unmingled with foreboding fears. Now I am a wife: my bliss is sobered, but not destroyed; my hopes diminished, but not departed; my fears increased but not yet thoroughly confirmed;—and, thank Heaven, I am a mother too. God has sent me a soul to educate for heaven, and give me a new and calmer bliss, and stronger hopes to comfort me. But where hope

rises fear *must* lurk behind, and when I clasp my little darling to my breast, or hang over his slumbers with unutterable delight, and a world of hope within my heart, one of two thoughts is ever at hand to check my swelling bliss; the one: He may be taken from me; the other: He may live to curse his own existence. In the first, I have this consolation: that the bud, though plucked, would not be withered, only transplanted to a fitter soil to ripen and blow beneath a brighter sun; and though I might not cherish and watch my child's unfolding intellect, he would be snatched away from all the suffering and sins of earth; and my understanding tells me this would be no great evil; but my heart shrinks from the contemplation of such a possibility, and whispers I could not bear to see him die, and relinquish to the cold and cruel grave this cherished form, now warm with tender life, flesh of my flesh and shrine of that pure spark which it should be my life's sweet labour to keep unsullied from the world,—and ardently

implores that heaven would spare him still, to be my comfort and my joy, and me to be his shield, instructor, friend—to guide him along the perilous path of youth, and train him to be God's servant while on earth, a blessed and honoured saint in heaven. But in the other case, if he should live to disappoint my hopes, and frustrate all my efforts—to be a slave of sin, the victim of vice and misery, a curse to others and himself—Eternal Father, if Thou beholdest such a life before him, tear him from me now in spite of all my anguish, and take him from my bosom to thine own, while he is yet a guileless, unpoluted lamb!

My little Arthur! there you lie in sweet, unconscious slumber, the tiny epitome of your father, but stainless yet as that pure snow, new fallen from heaven—God shield thee from his errors! How will I watch and toil to guard thee from them! He wakes; his tiny arms are stretched towards me; his eyes unclose; they meet my gaze, but will not answer it.

Little angel! you do not know me; you cannot think of me or love me yet; and yet how fervently my heart is knit to yours; how grateful I am for all the joy you give me! Would that your father could share it with me—that he could feel my love, my hope, and take an equal part in my resolves and projects for the future—nay, if he could but sympathize in half my views, and share one half my feelings, it would be indeed a blessing to both himself and me: it would elevate and purify his mind, and bind him closer to his home and me.

Perhaps, he will feel awakening interest and affection for his child as it grows older. At present, he is pleased with the acquisition, and hopes it will become a fine boy and a worthy heir; and that is nearly all I can say. At first, it was a thing to wonder and laugh at, not to touch: now, it is an object almost of indifference, except when his impatience is roused by its 'utter helplessness' and 'imperturbable stupidity' (as he calls it), or my too close at-

tention to its wants. He frequently comes and sits beside me while I am busied with my maternal cares. I hoped at first it was for the pleasure of contemplating our priceless treasure; but I soon found it was only to enjoy my company, or escape the pains of solitude. He is kindly welcome of course, but the best compliment to a mother is to appreciate her little one. He shocked me very much on one occasion: it was about a fortnight after the birth of our son, and he was with me in the nursery. We had neither of us spoken for some time: I was lost in the contemplation of my nursling, and I thought he was similarly occupied—as far, at least, as I thought about him at all. But suddenly he startled me from my reverie by impatiently exclaiming,—

"Helen, I shall positively hate that little wretch, if you worship it so madly! You are absolutely infatuated about it."

I looked up in astonishment, to see if he could be in earnest.

"You have not a thought to spare for anything else," he continued in the same strain: "I may go or come, be present or absent, cheerful or sad; it's all the same to you. As long as you have that ugly little creature to doat upon, you care not a farthing what becomes of me."

"It is false, Arthur; when you enter the room, it always doubles my happiness; when you are near me, the sense of your presence delights me, though I don't look at you; and when I think about our child, I please myself with the idea that you share my thoughts and feelings, though I don't speak them."

"How the devil, can I waste my thoughts and feelings on a little worthless idiot like that?"

"It is your own son Arthur,—or, if that consideration has no weight with you, it is mine; and you ought to respect my feelings."

"Well, don't be cross; it was only a slip of the tongue," pleaded he. "The little fellow is

well enough, only I can't worship him as you do."

"You shall nurse him for me, as a punishment," said I, rising to put my baby in its father's arms.

"No, don't, Helen — don't!" cried he, in real disquietude.

"I will: you'll love him better, when you feel the little creature in your arms."

I deposited the precious burden in his hands, and retreated to the other side of the room, laughing at the ludicrous, half embarrassed air with which he sat, holding it at arms length, and looking upon it as if it were some curious being of quite a different species to himself.

"Come, take it, Helen; take it," he cried at length. "I shall drop it, if you don't."

Compassionating his distress—or rather the child's unsafe position, I relieved him of the charge.

"Kiss it, Arthur; do—you've never kissed it yet!" said I, kneeling and presenting it before him.

"I would rather kiss its mother," replied he, embracing me. "There now; won't that do as well?"

I resumed my seat in the easy chair, and gave my little one a shower of gentle kisses to make up for its other parent's refusal.

"There goes!" cried the jealous father. "That's more, in one minute, lavished on that little senseless, thankless, oyster, than you have given me these three weeks past."

"Come here then, you insatiable monopolist, and you shall have as many as you like, incorrigible and undeserving as you are.—There now, won't that suffice? I have a good mind never to give you another till you have learnt to love my baby as a father should."

"I like the little devil—"

"Arthur!"

"Well, the little angel—well enough," and he pinched its delicate little nose to prove his affection, "only I can't *love* it—what is there to love? It can't love me—or you either; it

can't understand a single word you say to it, or feel one spark of gratitude for all your kindness. Wait till it can shew some little affection for me, and then I'll see about loving it. At present it is nothing more than a little selfish, senseless, sensualist, and if *you* see anything adorable in it, it's all very well—I only wonder how you can."

"If you were less selfish yourself, Arthur, you would not regard it in that light."

"Possibly not, love; but so it is: there's no help for it."

CHAPTER X.

THE NEIGHBOUR.

DEC. 25th, 1823. Another year is gone. My little Arthur live and thrives. He is healthy but not robust, full of gentle playfulness and vivacity, already affectionate, and susceptible of passions and emotions it will be long ere he can find words to express. He has won his father's heart at last; and now my constant terror is, lest he should be ruined by that father's thoughtless indulgence. But I must beware of my own weakness too, for I never knew till

now how strong are a parent's temptations to spoil an only child.

I have need of consolation in my son, for (to this silent paper I may confess it) I have but little in my husband. I love him still; and he loves me, in his own way—but oh, how different from the love I could have given, and once had hoped to receive! how little real sympathy there exists between us; how many of my thoughts and feelings are gloomily cloistered within my own mind; how much of my higher and better self is indeed unmarried—doomed either to harden and sour in the sunless shade of solitude, or to quite degenerate and fall away for lack of nutriment in this unwholesome soil!—But, I repeat, I have no right to complain: only let me state the truth—some of the truth at least,—and see hereafter, if any darker truths will blot these pages. We have now been full two years united—the 'romance' of our attachment must be worn away. Surely I have now got down to the lowest gradation

in Arthur's affection, and discovered all the evils of his nature: if there be any further change, it must be for the better, as we become still more accustomed to each other: surely we shall find no lower depth than this. And, if so, I can bear it well—as well, at least, as I have borne it hitherto.

Arthur is not what is commonly called a *bad* man: he has many good qualities; but he is a man without self-restraint or lofty aspirations—a lover of pleasure, given up to animal enjoyments: he is not a bad husband, but his notions of matrimonial duties and comforts are not my notions. Judging from appearances, his idea of a wife, is a thing to love one devotedly and to stay at home—to wait upon her husband, and amuse him and minister to his comfort in every possible way, while he chooses to stay with her; and, when he is absent, to attend to his interests, domestic or otherwise, and patiently wait his return; no matter how he may be occupied in the meantime.

Early in spring, he announced his intention of going to London: his affairs there demanded his attendance, he said, and he could refuse it no longer. He expressed his regret at having to leave me, but hoped I would amuse myself with the baby till he returned.

"But why leave me?" I said. "I can go with you: I can be ready at any time."

"You would not take that child to town?"

"Yes—why not?"

The thing was absurd: the air of the town would be certain to disagree with him, and with me as a nurse: the late hours and London habits would not suit me under such circumstances; and altogether he assured me that it would be excessively troublesome, injurious, and unsafe. I overruled his objections as well as I could, for I trembled at the thoughts of his going alone, and would sacrifice almost anything for myself, much even for my child, to prevent it; but at length he told me, plainly, and somewhat testily, that he could not do

with me: he was worn out with the baby's restless nights, and must have some repose. I proposed separate apartments; but it would not do.

"The truth is, Arthur," I said at last, "you are weary of my company, and determined not to have me with you. You might as well have said so at once."

He denied it; but I immediately left the room, and flew to the nursery to hide my feelings, if I could not sooth them, there.

I was too much hurt to express any further dissatisfaction with his plans, or at all to refer to the subject again, except for the necessary arrangements concerning his departure and the conduct of affairs during his absence,—till the day before he went, when I earnestly exhorted him to take care of himself and keep out of the way of temptation. He laughed at my anxiety, but assured me there was no cause for it, and promised to attend to my advice.

"I suppose it is no use asking you to fix a day for your return?" said I.

"Why, no: I hardly can, under the circumstances; but be assured, love, I shall not be long away."

"I don't wish to keep you a prisoner at home," I replied: "I should not grumble at your staying whole months away—if you can be happy so long without me -- provided, I knew you were safe; but I don't like the idea of your being there, among your friends, as you call them."

"Pooh, pooh, you silly girl! Do you think I can't take care of myself?"

"You didn't last time.—But THIS time, Arthur," I added, earnestly, "show me that you can, and teach me that I need not fear to trust you!"

He promised fair, but in such a manner as we seek to sooth a child. And did he keep his promise? No;—and, henceforth, *I can never trust his word.* Bitter, bitter confession! Tears blind me while I write. It was early in March that he went, and he did not return till July This time, he did not trouble himself to make

excuses as before, and his letters were less frequent, and shorter and less affectionate, especially after the first few weeks: they came slower and slower, and more terse and careless every time. But still, when *I* omitted writing he complained of my neglect. When I wrote sternly and coldly, as I confess I frequently did at the last, he blamed my harshness, and said it was enough to scare him from his home: when I tried mild persuasion, he was a little more gentle in his replies, and promised to return; but I had learnt, at last, to disregard his promises.

Those were four miserable months, alternating between intense anxiety, despair, and indignation; pity for him, and pity for myself. And yet, through all, I was not wholly comfortless; I had my darling, sinless, inoffensive little one to console me, but even this consolation was embittered by the constantly recurring thought, "How shall I teach him, hereafter, to respect his father, and yet to avoid his example?"

But I remembered that I had brought all

these afflictions, in a manner wilfully, upon myself; and I determined to bear them without a murmur. At the same time I resolved not to give myself *up* to misery for the transgressions of another, and endeavoured to divert myself as much as I could; and besides the companionship of my child and my dear, faithful Rachel, who evidently guessed my sorrows and felt for them, though she was too discreet to allude to them,—I had my books and pencil, my domestic affairs, and the welfare and comfort of Arthur's poor tenants and labourers to attend to; and I sometimes sought and obtained amusement in the company of my young friend Esther Hargrave: occasionally, I rode over to see her, and once or twice I had her to spend the day with me at the manor. Mrs. Hargrave did not visit London that season: having no daughter to marry, she thought it as well to stay at home and economise; and, for a wonder, Walter came down to join her in the beginning of June and stayed till near the close of August.

The first time I saw him was on a sweet, warm evening, when I was sauntering in the park with little Arthur and Rachel, who is head-nurse and lady's-maid in one—for, with my secluded life and tolerably active habits, I require but little attendance, and as she had nursed me and coveted to nurse my child, and was moreover so very trustworthy, I preferred committing the important charge to her, with a young nursery-maid under her directions, to engaging any one else :—besides it saves money ; and since I have made acquaintance with Arthur's affairs, I have learnt to regard that as no trifling recommendation ; for, by my own desire, nearly the whole of the income of my fortune is devoted, for years to come, to the paying off of his debts, and the money he contrives to squander away in London is incomprehensible.—But to return to Mr. Hargrave : —I was standing with Rachel beside the water, amusing the laughing baby in her arms, with a twig of willow laden with golden catkins, when

greatly to my surprise, he entered the park, mounted on his costly black hunter, and crossed over the grass to meet me. He saluted me with a very fine compliment, delicately worded, and modestly delivered withal, which, he had doubtless concocted as he rode along. He told me he had brought a message from his mother, who, as he was riding that way, had desired him to call at the manor and beg the pleasure of my company to a friendly, family dinner to-morrow.

"There is no one to meet but ourselves," said he; "but Esther is very anxious to see you; and my mother fears you will feel solitary in this great house so much alone, and wishes she could persuade you to give her the pleasure of your company more frequently, and make yourself at home in our more humble dwelling, till Mr. Huntingdon's return shall render this a little more conducive to your comfort."

"She is very kind,' I answered, "but I am

not alone, you see;—and those, whose time is fully occupied, seldom complain of solitude."

"Will you not come to-morrow, then? She will be sadly disappointed if you refuse."

I did not relish being thus compassionated for my loneliness; but however, I promised to come.

"What a sweet evening this is!" observed he, looking round upon the sunny park, with its imposing swell and slope, its placid water, and majestic clumps of trees. "And what a paradise you live in!"

"It is a lovely evening," answered I; and I sighed to think how little I had felt its loveliness, and how little of a paradise sweet Grassdale was to me—how still less to the voluntary exile from its scenes. Whether Mr. Hargrave divined my thoughts, I cannot tell, but, with a half-hesitating, sympathizing seriousness of tone and manner, he asked if I had lately heard from Mr. Huntingdon.

"Not lately." I replied.

"I thought not," he muttered, as if to himself, looking thoughtfully on the ground.

"Are you not lately returned from London?" I asked.

"Only yesterday."

"And did you see him there?"

"Yes— I saw him."

"Was he well?"

"Yes—that is," said he, with increasing hesitation and an appearance of suppressed indignation, "he was as well as—as he deserved to be, but under circumstances I should have deemed incredible for a man so favoured as he is." He here looked up and pointed the sentence with a serious bow to me. I suppose my face was crimson.

"Pardon me, Mrs. Huntingdon," he continued, "but I cannot suppress my indignation when I behold such infatuated blindness and perversion of taste;—but, perhaps you are not aware—" He paused.

"I am aware of nothing sir—except that he

delays his coming longer than I expected; and if at present, he prefers the society of his friends to that of his wife, and the dissipations of the town to the quiet of country life, I suppose I have those friends to thank for it. *Their* tastes and occupations are similar to his, and I don't see why his conduct should awaken either their indignation or surprise."

"You wrong me cruelly," answered he: "I have shared but little of Mr. Huntingdon's society, for the last few weeks; and as for his tastes and occupations, they are quite beyond me—lonely wanderer as I am. Where I have but sipped and tasted, he drains the cup to the dregs; and if ever for a moment I have sought to drown the voice of reflection in madness and folly, or if I have wasted too much of my time and talents among reckless and dissipated companions, God knows I would gladly renounce them entirely and for ever, if I had but *half* the blessings that man so thanklessly casts behind his back—but *half* the inducements to

virtue and domestic orderly habits that he despises—but *such* a home, and *such* a partner to share it!—It is infamous!" he muttered between his teeth. "And don't think, Mrs. Huntingdon," he added aloud, "that I could be guilty of inciting him to persevere in his present pursuits: on the contrary, I have remonstrated with him again and again; I have frequently expressed my surprise at his conduct and reminded him of his duties and his privileges —but to no purpose; he only —"

"Enough, Mr. Hargrave; you ought to be aware that whatever my husband's faults may be, it can only aggravate the evil for me to hear them from a stranger's lips."

"*Am* I then a stranger?" said he in a sorrowful tone. "I am your nearest neighbour, your son's god-father, and your husband's friend: may I not be your's also?"

"Intimate acquaintance must precede real friendship: I know but little of you, Mr. Hargrave, except from report."

"Have you then forgotten the six or seven weeks I spent under your roof last autumn? *I* have not forgotten them. And I know enough of *you*, Mrs. Huntingdon, to think that your husband is the most enviable man in the world, and I should be the next if you would deem me worthy of your friendship."

"If you knew more of me, you would not think it—or if you did, you would not say it, and expect me to be flattered by the compliment."

I stepped backward as I spoke. He saw that I wished the conversation to end; and immediately taking the hint, he gravely bowed, wished me good evening, and turned his horse towards the road. He appeared grieved and hurt at my unkind reception of his sympathizing overtures. I was not sure that I had done right in speaking so harshly to him; but at the time, I had felt irritated—almost insulted by his conduct; it seemed as if he was presuming upon the absence and neglect of my hus-

band, and insinuating even more than the truth against him.

Rachel had moved on, during our conversation, to some yards distance. He rode up to her, and asked to see the child. He took it carefully into his arms, looked upon it with an almost paternal smile, and I heard him say, as I approached—

"And this too, he has forsaken!"

He then tenderly kissed it, and restored it to the gratified nurse.

"Are you fond of children, Mr. Hargrave?" said I, a little softened towards him.

"Not in general," he replied; "but that is such a *sweet* child—and so like its mother," he added in a lower tone.

"You are mistaken there; it is its father it resembles."

"Am I not right, nurse?" said he, appealing to Rachel.

"I think, sir, there's a bit of both," she replied.

He departed; and Rachel pronounced him a very nice gentleman. I had still my doubts on the subject.

When I met him on the morrow, under his own roof, he did not offend me with any more of his virtuous indignation against Arthur or unwelcome sympathy for me; and, indeed, when his mother began, in guarded terms, to intimate her sorrow and surprise at my husband's conduct, he, perceiving my annoyance, instantly came to the rescue, and delicately turned the conversation, at the same time warning her, by a sidelong glance, not to recur to the subject again. He seemed bent upon doing the honours of his house in the most unexceptionable manner, and exerting all his powers for the entertainment of his guest, and the display of his own qualifications as a host, a gentleman, and a companion; and actually succeeded in making himself very agreeable—only that he was too polite.—And yet, Mr. Hargrave, I don't much like you; there is a certain want of openness about you that does not take my fancy, and a lurking

selfishness, at the bottom of all your fine qualities, that I do not intend to lose sight of. No; for, instead of combating my slight prejudice against you as uncharitable, I mean to cherish it, until I am convinced that I have no reason to distrust this kind, insinuating friendship you are so anxious to push upon me.

In the course of the following six weeks, I met him several times, but always, save once, in company with his mother or his sister, or both. When I called on them, he always happened to be at home, and when they called on me, it was always he that drove them over in the phaeton. His mother, evidently, was quite delighted with his dutiful attentions and newly acquired domestic habits.

The time that I met him alone was on a bright but not oppressively hot day in the beginning of July: I had taken little Arthur into the wood that skirts the park, and there seated him on the moss-cushioned roots of an old oak; and, having gathered a handful of bluebells and wild

roses, I was kneeling before him, and presenting them, one by one, to the grasp of his tiny fingers; enjoying the heavenly beauty of the flowers, through the medium of his smiling eyes; forgetting, for the moment, all my cares, laughing at his gleeful laughter, and delighting myself with his delight,—when a shadow suddenly eclipsed the little space of sunshine on the grass before us; and, looking up, I beheld Walter Hargrave standing and gazing upon us.

"Excuse me, Mrs. Huntingdon," said he, "but I was spell-bound; I had neither the power to come forward and interrupt you, nor to withdraw from the contemplation of such a scene.—How vigorous my little godson grows! and how merry he is this morning." He approached the child and stooped to take his hand; but, on seeing that his caresses were likely to produce tears and lamentations instead of a reciprocation of friendly demonstrations, he prudently drew back.

"What a pleasure and comfort that little

creature must be to you, Mrs. Huntingdon!" he observed with a touch of sadness in his intonation, as he admiringly contemplated the infant.

"It is," replied I; and then I asked after his mother and sister.

He politely answered my enquiries, and then returned again to the subject I wished to avoid; though with a degree of timidity that witnessed his fear to offend.

"You have not heard from Huntingdon lately?" he said.

"Not this week," I replied.—Not these three weeks, I might have said.

"I had a letter from him this morning. I wish it were such a one as I could show to his lady." He half drew from his waistcoat pocket a letter with Arthur's still beloved hand on the address, scowled at it, and put it back again, adding—"But he tells me he is about to return next week."

"He tells *me* so every time he writes."

"Indeed!—Well it is like him.—But to *me* he always avowed it his intention to stay till the present month."

It struck me like a blow, this proof of premeditated transgression and systematic disregard of truth.

"It is only of a piece with the rest of his conduct," observed Mr. Hargrave, thoughtfully regarding me, and reading, I suppose, my feelings in my face.

"Then he is really coming next week?" said I, after a pause.

"You may rely upon it—if the assurance can give you any pleasure.—And is it *possible*, Mrs. Huntingdon, that you can rejoice at his return?" he exclaimed, attentively perusing my features again.

"Of course, Mr. Hargrave; is he not my husband?"

"Oh, Huntingdon, you know not *what* you slight!" he passionately murmured.

I took up my baby and, wishing him good morn-

ing, departed, to indulge my thoughts unscrutinized, within the sanctum of my home.

And *was* I glad?—Yes, delighted;—though I was angered by Arthur's conduct, and though I felt that he had wronged me, and was determined he should feel it too.

CHAPTER XI.

DOMESTIC SCENES.

On the following morning, I received a few lines from him myself, confirming Hargrave's intimations respecting his approaching return. And he did come next week, but in a condition of body and mind even worse than before. I did not however intend to pass over his derelictions this time without a remark;—I found it would not do. But the first day, he was weary with his journey, and I was glad to get him back: I would not upbraid him then; I would wait till to-morrow. Next morning, he was weary

still: I would wait a little longer. But at dinner, when, after breakfasting at twelve o'clock on a bottle of soda-water and a cup of strong coffee, and lunching at two on another bottle of soda-water mingled with brandy, he was finding fault with everything on the table and declaring we must change our cook—I thought the time was come.

"It is the same cook as we had before you went, Arthur," said I. "You were generally pretty well satisfied with her then."

"You must have been letting her get into slovenly habits then, while I was away. It is enough to poison one—eating such a disgusting mess!" And he pettishly pushed away his plate, and leant back despairingly in his chair.

"I think it is you that are changed, not she," said I, but with the utmost gentleness, for I did not wish to irritate him.

"It may be so," he replied carelessly, as he seized a tumbler of wine and water, adding, when he had tossed it off—"for I have an in-

fernal fire in my veins, that all the waters of the ocean cannot quench!"

"What kindled it?" I was about to ask, but at that moment the butler entered and began to take away the things.

"Be quick Benson—do have done with that infernal clatter!" cried his master—"And *don't* bring the cheese!—unless you want to make me sick outright."

Benson, in some surprise, removed the cheese, and did his best to effect a quiet and speedy clearance of the rest, but, unfortunately, there was a rumple in the carpet, caused by the hasty pushing back of his master's chair, at which he tripped and stumbled, causing a rather alarming concussion with the trayful of crockery in his hands, but no positive damage, save the fall and breaking of a sauce-tureen;—but, to my unspeakable shame and dismay, Arthur turned furiously around upon him, and swore at him with savage coarseness. The poor man turned pale, and visibly trembled as he stooped to pick up the fragments.

"He couldn't help it, Arthur," said I; "the carpet caught his foot—and there's no great harm done. Never mind the pieces now, Benson, you can clear them away afterwards."

Glad to be released, Benson expeditiously set out the dessert and withdrew.

"What *could* you mean, Helen, by taking the servant's part against me," said Arthur, as soon as the door was closed, "when you knew I was distracted?"

"I did not know you were distracted, Arthur, and the poor man was quite frightened and hurt at your sudden explosion."

"Poor man indeed! and do you think I could stop to consider the feelings of an insensate brute like that, when my own nerves were racked and torn to pieces by his confounded blunders?"

"I never heard you complain of your nerves before."

"And why shouldn't I have nerves as well as you?"

"Oh, I don't dispute your claim to their possession, but *I* never complain of mine."

"No—how should you, when you never do anything to try them?"

"Then why do you try yours, Arthur?"

"Do you think I have nothing to do but to stay at home and take care of myself like a woman?"

"Is it impossible then, to take care of yourself like a man when you go abroad? You told me that you could—and would too; and you promised—"

"Come, come, Helen, don't begin with that nonsense now; I can't bear it."

"Can't bear what?—to be reminded of the promises you have broken?"

"Helen, you are cruel. If you knew how my heart throbbed, and how every nerve thrilled through me while you spoke, you would spare me. You can pity a dolt of a servant for breaking a dish; but you have no compassion for *me*, when my head is split

in two and all on fire with this consuming fever."

He leant his head on his hand, and sighed. I went to him and put my hand on his forehead. It was burning indeed.

"Then come with me into the drawing-room, Arthur; and don't take any more wine; you have taken several glasses since dinner, and eaten next to nothing all the day. How can *that* make you better?"

With some coaxing and persuasion, I got him to leave the table. When the baby was brought I tried to amuse him with that; but poor little Arthur was cutting his teeth, and his father could not bear his complaints; sentence of immediate banishment was passed upon him on the first indication of fretfulness; and, because, in the course of the evening, I went to share his exile for a little while, I was reproached, on my return, for preferring my child to my husband. I found the latter reclining on the sofa just as I had left him.

"Well!" exclaimed the injured man, in a

tone of pseudo-resignation. "I thought I wouldn't send for you; I thought I'd just see —how long it would please you to leave me alone."

"I have not been *very* long, have I, Arthur? I have not been an hour, I'm sure."

"Oh, of course, an hour is nothing to you, so pleasantly employed; but to *me*—"

"It has not been pleasantly employed," interrupted I. "I have been nursing our poor little baby, who is very far from well, and I could not leave him till I got him to sleep."

"Oh to be sure, you're overflowing with kindness and pity for everything but me."

"And why should I pity *you?* what is the matter with you?"

"Well! that passes everything! After all the wear and tear that I've had, when I come home sick and weary, longing for comfort, and expecting to find attention and kindness, at least, from my wife,—she calmly asks what is the matter with me!"

"There is *nothing* the matter with you," returned I, "except what you have wilfully brought upon yourself against my earnest exhortation and entreaty."

"Now, Helen," said he, emphatically, half rising from his recumbent posture, "if you bother me with another word, I'll ring the bell and order six bottles of wine—and, by Heaven, I'll drink them dry before I stir from this place!"

I said no more but sat down before the table and drew a book towards me.

"Do let me have quietness at least!" continued he, "if you deny me every other comfort," and sinking back into his former position, with an impatient expiration between a sigh and a groan, he languidly closed his eyes as if to sleep.

What the book was, that lay open on the table before me, I cannot tell, for I never looked at it. With an elbow on each side of it, and my hands clasped before my eyes, I de-

livered myself up to silent weeping. But Arthur was not asleep: at the first slight sob, he raised his head and looked round, impatiently exclaiming—

"What are you crying for, Helen? What the deuce is the matter *now?*"

"I'm crying for you Arthur," I replied, speedily drying my tears; and starting up, I threw myself on my knees before him, and, clasping his nerveless hand between my own, continued: "Don't you know that you are a part of myself? And do you think you can injure and degrade yourself, and I not feel it?"

"*Degrade* myself, Helen?"

"Yes, degrade! What have you been doing all this time?"

"You'd better not ask," said he with a faint smile.

"And you had better not tell—but you cannot deny that you *have* degraded yourself miserably. You have shamefully wronged yourself, body and soul—and me too; and I can't endure it quietly—and I won't!"

"Well, don't squeeze my hand so frantically and don't agitate me so, for Heaven's sake! Oh, Hattersley! you were right; this woman will be the death of me, with her keen feelings and her interesting force of character—There, there, do spare me a little."

"Arthur, you *must* repent!" cried I, in a frenzy of desperation, throwing my arms around him and burying my face in his bosom. "You *shall* say you are sorry for what you have done!"

"Well, well, I am."

"You are not! you'll do it again."

"I shall never live to do it again, if you treat me so savagely," replied he, pushing me from him. "You've nearly squeezed the breath out of my body." He pressed his hand to his heart, and looked really agitated and ill.

"Now get me a glass of wine," said he, "to remedy what you've done, you she tiger! I'm almost ready to faint."

I flew to get the required remedy. It seemed to revive him considerably.

"What a shame it is," said I, as I took the empty glass from his hand, "for a strong young man like you to reduce yourself to such a state!"

"If you knew all, my girl, you'd say rather, 'What a wonder it is you can bear it so well as you do! I've lived more in these four months, Helen, than you have in the whole course of your existence, or will to the end of your days, if they numbered a hundred years;—so I must expect to pay for it in some shape."

"You will have to pay a higher price tha you anticipate, if you don't take care—there will be the total loss of your own health, and of my affection too—if *that* is of any value to you."

"What, you're at that game of threatening me with the loss of your affection again, are you? I think it couldn't have been very genuine stuff to begin with, if it's so easily demolished. If you don't mind, my pretty

tyrant, you'll make me regret my choice in good earnest, and envy my friend Hattersley, his meek little wife—she's quite a pattern to her sex, Helen; he had her with him in London all the season, and she was no trouble at all. He might amuse himself just as he pleased, in regular bachelor style, and she never complained of neglect; he might come home at any hour of the night or morning, or not come home at all; be sullen sober, or glorious drunk; and play the fool or the madman to his own heart's desire without any fear or botheration. She never gives him a word of reproach or complaint, do what he will. He says there's not such a jewel in all England, and swears he wouldn't take a kingdom for her."

"But he makes her life a curse to her."

"Not he! She has no will but his, and is always contented and happy as long as he is enjoying himself."

"In that case, she is as great a fool as he is; but it is not so. I have several letters from

her, expressing the greatest anxiety about his proceedings, and complaining that you incite him to commit those extravagances—one especially, in which she implores me to use my influence with you to get you away from London, and affirms that her husband never did such things before you came, and would certainly discontinue them as soon as you departed and left him to the guidance of his own good sense."

"The detestable little traitor! Give me the letter, and he shall see it as sure as I'm a living man."

"No, he shall not see it without her consent; but if he did, there is nothing there to anger him—nor in any of the others. She never speaks a word against him; it is only anxiety *for* him that she expresses. She only alludes to his conduct in the most delicate terms, and makes every excuse for him that she can possibly think of—and as for her own misery, I rather *feel* it than *see* it expressed in her letters."

"But she abuses *me;* and no doubt you helped her."

"No; I told her she over-rated my influence with you, that I would gladly draw you away from the temptations of the town if I could, but had little hope of success, and that I thought she was wrong in supposing that you enticed Mr. Hattersley or any one else into error. I had, myself, held the *contrary* opinion at one time, but I now believed that you mutually corrupted each other; and, perhaps, if she used a little gentle, but serious remonstrance with her husband, it might be of some service, as though he was more rough-hewn than mine, I believed he was of a less impenetrable material."

"And so *that* is the way you go on—heartening each other up to mutiny, and abusing each other's partners, and throwing out implications against your own, to the mutual gratification of both!"

"According to your own account," said I,

"my evil counsel has had but little effect upon *her*. And as to abuse and aspersions, we are both of us far too deeply ashamed of the errors and vices of our other halves, to make them the common subject of our correspondence. Friends as we are, we would willingly keep your failings to ourselves—even *from* ourselves if we could, unless by knowing them we could deliver you from them."

"Well, well! don't worry me about them: you'll never effect any good by that. Have patience with me, and bear with my languor and crossness a little while, till I get this cursed low fever out of my veins, and then you'll find me cheerful and kind as ever. Why can't you be gentle and good as you were last time?—I'm sure I was very grateful for it."

"And what good did your gratitude do? I deluded myself with the idea that you were ashamed of your transgressions, and hoped you would never repeat them again; but now, you have left me nothing to hope!"

"My case is quite desperate, is it? A very blessed consideration, if it will only secure me from the pain and worry of my dear, anxious wife's efforts to convert me, and her from the toil and trouble of such exertions, and her sweet face and silver accents from the ruinous effects of the same. A burst of passion is a fine, rousing thing upon occasion, Helen, and a flood of tears is marvellously affecting, but, when indulged too often, they are both deuced plaguy things for spoiling one's beauty and tiring out one's friends."

Thenceforth, I restrained my tears and passions as much as I could. I spared him my exhortations and fruitless efforts at conversion too, for I saw it was all in vain: God might awaken that heart supine and stupified with self-indulgence, and remove the film of sensual darkness from his eyes, but I could not. His injustice and ill-humour towards his inferiors, who could not defend themselves, I still resented and withstood; but when I alone was

their object, as was frequently the case, I endured it with calm forbearance, except at times when my temper, worn out by repeated annoyances, or stung to distraction by some new instance of irrationality, gave way in spite of myself, and exposed me to the imputations of fierceness, cruelty, and impatience. I attended carefully to his wants and amusements, but not, I own, with the same devoted fondness as before, because, I could not feel it: besides, I had now another claimant on my time and care — my ailing infant, for whose sake I frequently braved and suffered the reproaches and complaints of his unreasonably exacting father.

But Arthur is not naturally a peevish or irritable man—so far from it that there was something almost ludicrous in the incongruity of this adventitious fretfulness and nervous irritability, rather calculated to excite laughter than anger, if it were not for the intensely painful considerations attendant upon those symptoms of a disordered frame,—and his temper gradu-

ally improved as his bodily health was restored which was much sooner than would have been the case, but for my strenuous exertions; for there was still one thing about him that I did not give up in despair, and one effort for his preservation that I would not remit. His appetite for the stimulus of wine had increased upon him, as I had too well foreseen. It was now something more to him than an accessary to social enjoyment: it was an important source of enjoyment in itself. In this time of weakness and depression he would have made it his medicine and support, his comforter, his recreation, and his friend,—and thereby sunk deeper and deeper—and bound himself down for ever in the bathos whereinto he had fallen. But I determined this should never be, as long as I had any influence left; and though I could not prevent him from taking more than was good for him, still, by incessant perseverance, by kindness, and firmness, and vigilance, by coaxing, and daring, and determination,—I succeeded

in preserving him from absolute bondage to that detestable propensity, so insidious in its advances, so inexorable in its tyranny, so disastrous in its effects.

And here, I must not forget that I am not a little indebted to his friend Mr. Hargrave. About that time he frequently called at Grassdale, and often dined with us, on which occasions, I fear, Arthur would willingly have cast prudence and decorum to the winds and made 'a night of it,' as often as his friend would have consented to join him in that exalted pastime; and if the latter had chosen to comply, he might in a night or two, have ruined the labour of weeks, and overthown with a touch, the frail bulwark it had cost me such trouble and toil to construct. I was so fearful of this at first, that I humbled myself to intimate to him in private, my apprehensions of Arthur's proneness to these excesses and to express a hope that he would not encourage it. He was pleased with this mark of confidence, and cer-

tainly did not betray it. On that and every subsequent occasion, his presence served rather as a check upon his host, than an incitement to further acts of intemperance; and he always succeeded in bringing him from the dining-room in good time and in tolerably good condition; for if Arthur disregarded such intimations, as "Well, I must not detain you from your lady," or "We must not forget that Mrs. Huntingdon is alone," he would insist upon leaving the table himself, to join me, and his host, however unwillingly, was obliged to follow.

Hence, I learnt to welcome Mr. Hargrave, as a real friend to the family, a harmless companion for Arthur, to cheer his spirits and preserve him from the tedium of absolute idleness and a total isolation from all society but mine, and a useful ally to me. I could not but feel grateful to him under such circumstances; and I did not scruple to acknowledge my obligation on the first convenient opportunity; yet, as I

did so, my heart whispered all was not right, and brought a glow to my face, which he heightened by his steady, serious gaze, while, by his manner of receiving those acknowledgements, he more than doubled my misgivings. His high delight at being able to serve me, was chastened by sympathy for me and commiseration for himself—about I know not what, for I would not stay to inquire or suffer him to unburden his sorrows to me. His sighs and intimations of suppressed affliction seemed to come from a full heart; but either he must contrive to retain them within it, or breathe them forth in other ears than mine: there was enough of confidence between us already. It seemed wrong that there should exist a secret understanding between my husband's friend and me, unknown to him, of which he was the object But my after thought was, "If it is wrong, surely Arthur's is the fault, not mine."

And indeed, I know not whether at the time, it was not for *him* rather than myself that I

blushed; for, since he and I are one, I so identify myself with him, that I feel his degradation, his failings, and transgressions as my own; I blush for him, I fear for him; I repent for him, weep, pray, and feel for him as for myself; but I cannot act for him; and hence, I must be and I am debased, contaminated by the union, both in my own eyes, and in the actual truth. I am so determined to love him—so intensely anxious to excuse his errors, that I am continually dwelling upon them, and labouring to extenuate the loosest of his principles and the worst of his practices, till I am familiarized with vice and almost a partaker in his sins. Things that formerly shocked and disgusted me, now seem only natural. I know them to be wrong, because reason and God's word declare them to be so; but I am gradually losing that instinctive horror and repulsion which was given me by nature, or instilled into me by the precepts and example of my aunt. Perhaps, then, I was too severe in my judgments, for I ab-

horred the sinner as well as the sin; now, I flatter myself I am more charitable and considerate; but am I not becoming more indifferent and insensate too? Fool that I was to dream that I had strength and purity enough to save myself and him! Such vain presumption would be rightly served, if I should perish with him in the gulf from which I sought to save him! Yet, God preserve me from it!—and him too. Yes, poor Arthur, I will still hope and pray for you; and though I write as if you were some abandoned wretch, past hope and past reprieve, it is only my anxious fears—my strong desires that make me do so; one who loved you less would be less bitter—less dissatisfied.

His conduct has of late, been what the world calls irreproachable; but then I know his heart is still unchanged;—and I know that spring is approaching, and deeply dread the consequences.

As he began to recover the tone and vigour

of his exhausted frame, and with it something of his former impatience of retirement and repose, I suggested a short residence by the sea-side, for his recreation and further restoration, and for the benefit of our little one as well. But no; watering-places were so intolerably dull—besides, he had been invited by one of his friends to spend a month or two in Scotland for the better recreation of grouse-shooting and deer-stalking, and had promised to go.

"Then you will leave me again, Arthur?" said I.

"Yes, dearest, but only to love you the better when I come back, and make up for all past offences and short-comings; and you needn't fear me this time; there are no temptations on the mountains. And during my absence you may pay a visit to Staningley, if you like: your uncle and aunt have long been wanting us to go there, you know; but somehow, there's such a repulsion between the good lady and me, that I never could bring myself up to the scratch."

I was perfectly willing to avail myself of this permission, though not a little apprehensive of my aunt's questions and comments concerning my matrimonial experience, regarding which I had been very reserved in my letters, for I had not much that was pleasant to communicate.

About the third week in August, Arthur set out for Scotland, and Mr. Hargrave accompanied him thither, to my private satisfaction. Shortly after, I, with little Arthur and Rachel, went to Staningley, my dear old home, which, as well as my dear old friends its inhabitants, I saw again with mingled feelings of pleasure and pain so intimately blended that I could scarcely distinguish the one from the other, or tell to which to attribute the various tears, and smiles, and sighs awakened by those old familiar scenes, and tones, and faces. Not quite two years had past since I had seen and heard them last; but it seemed a far, far longer time; and well it might, for how immeasurably changed was I! how many things had I not

seen, and felt, and learnt since then! My uncle too appeared perceptibly more aged and infirm, my aunt more sad and grave. I believe she thought I had repented of my rashness; though she did not openly express her conviction, or triumphantly remind me of her slighted counsels, as I had partly feared she would; but she observed me narrowly—more narrowly than I liked to be observed—and seemed to mistrust my cheerfulness and unduly mark each little indication of sadness or serious thought, to notice all my casual observations, and silently draw her own inferences from them; while, by a system of quiet cross-questioning renewed from time to time, she drew from me many things I should not otherwise have told her, and laying this and that together, obtained, I fear, a pretty clear conception of my husband's faults and my afflictions, though not of my remaining sources of comfort and hope, for though I endeavoured to impress her strongly with the notion of Arthur's redeeming qualities, of our

mutual affection, and the many causes I had for thankfulness and self-congratulation, she received all such intimations coldly and calmly as if mentally making her own deductions—which deductions, I am persuaded, were generally far beyond the truth; though I certainly did exaggerate a little in attempting to picture the bright side of my position. Was it pride that made me so extremely anxious to appear satisfied with my lot,—or merely a just determination to bear my self-imposed burden alone, and preserve my best friend from the slightest participation in those sorrows from which she had striven so hard to save me? It might have been something of each, but I am sure the latter motive was predominant.

I did not much prolong my visit, for, not only did I feel my aunt's relentless watchfulness and incredulity to be a restraint upon me, and a silent reproach that oppressed me more than she could well imagine, but I was sensible that my little Arthur was an annoyance to

his uncle, though the latter wished him well, and no great amusement to his aunt, though an object of her earnest affection and anxious solicitude.

Dear aunt! have you so tenderly reared me from infancy, so carefully guided and instructed me in childhood and youth; and could I give you no return but this — to disappoint your hopes, oppose your wishes, scorn your warnings and advice, and darken your latter years with anxious fears and sorrow for the sufferings you cannot relieve?—It almost broke my heart to think of it; and again and again I endeavoured to convince her that I was happy and contented with my lot; but her last words, as she embraced me and kissed the child in my arms, before I entered the carriage, were,—

"Take care of your son, Helen, and there may be happy days in store for you, yet. How great a comfort and treasure he is to you now I can well imagine; but if you spoil him to gratify your present feelings, it will be too late to repent it when your heart is broken."

Arthur did not come home till several weeks after my return to Grass-dale; but I did not feel so anxious about him now: to think of him engaged in active sports among the wild hills of Scotland, was very different from knowing him to be immersed amid the corruptions and temptations of London. His letters, now, though neither long nor lover-like, were more regular than ever they had been before; and when he did return, to my great joy instead of being worse than when he went, he was more cheerful and vigorous, and better in every respect. Since that time, I have had little cause to complain. He still has an unfortunate predilection for the pleasures of the table, against which I have to struggle and watch; but he has begun to notice his boy, and that is an increasing source of amusement to him within doors; while his fox-hunting and coursing are a sufficient occupation for him without, when the ground is not hardened by frost; so that he is not wholly dependant on me for enter-

tainment. But it is now January: spring is approaching; and, I repeat, I dread the consequences of its arrival. That sweet season, I once so joyously welcomed as the time of hope and gladness, awakens, now, far other anticipations by its return.

CHAPTER XII.

SOCIAL VIRTUES.

MARCH 20th, 1824. The dreaded time is come, and Arthur is gone, as I expected. This time he announced it his intention to make but a short stay in London, and pass over to the continent, where he should probably stay a few weeks; but I shall not expect him till after the lapse of many weeks: I now know that, with him, days signify weeks, and weeks months.

I was to have accompanied him, but, a little before the time arranged for our departure, he allowed—and even urged me, with an appear-

ance of wonderful self-sacrifice, to go and see my unfortunate father, who is very ill, and my brother, who is very unhappy in consequence of both the illness and its cause, and whom I had not seen since the day our child was christened, when he stood sponsor along with Mr. Hargrave and my aunt. Not willing to impose upon my husband's good-nature in thus allowing me to leave him, I made but a very short stay; but when I returned to Grass-dale —he was gone.

He left a note to explain his so hasty departure, pretending that some sudden emergency had demanded his immediate presence in London, and rendered it impossible to await my return; adding that I had better not trouble myself to follow him, as he intended to make such a short stay, that it would hardly be worth while; and as, of course, he could travel alone at less than half the expense than if I accompanied him, it would perhaps be better to defer the excursion to another year, when he should

have got our affairs into a rather more settled state, as he was now endeavouring to do.

Was it really so?—or was the whole a contrivance to ensure his going forth upon his pleasure-seeking excursion, without my presence to restrain him? It is painful to doubt the sincerity of those we love, but after so many proofs of falsity and utter disregard to principle how can I believe so improbable a story?

I have this one source of consolation left:—he had told me some time previously, that if ever he went to London or Paris again, he should observe more moderation in his indulgences than before, lest he should destroy his capacity for enjoyment altogether: he had no ambition to live to a prodigious old age, but he should like to have his share of life, and above all, to relish its pleasures to the last—to which end, he found it necessary to economize, for already, he feared, he was not so handsome a fellow as he had been, and young as he was, he had lately detected some grey hairs among his

beloved chestnut locks; he suspected he was getting a trifle fatter too, than was quite desirable—but that was with good living and idleness; and for the rest, he trusted he was as strong and hearty as ever: only there was no saying what *another* such a season of unlimited madness and devilment, as the last, might not do towards bringing him down. Yes; he said this to *me* — with unblushing effrontery, and that same blythe, roguish twinkle of the eyes I once so loved to see, and that low, joyous laugh it used to warm my heart to hear.

Well! such considerations will doubtless have more weight with him than any that I could urge. We shall see what *they* can do towards his preservation, since no better hope remains.

July 30th.—He returned about three weeks ago, rather better in health, certainly, than before, but still worse in temper. And yet, perhaps, I am wrong: it is *I* that am less patient and forbearing. I am tired out with his injus-

tice, his selfishness and hopeless *depravity*—I wish a milder word would do—; I am no angel and my corruption rises against it. My poor father died last week: Arthur was vexed to hear of it, because he saw that I was shocked and grieved, and he feared the circumstance would mar his comfort. When I spoke of ordering my mourning, he exclaimed—

"Oh, I hate black! But however, I suppose you must wear it awhile, for form's sake; but I hope, Helen, you won't think it your bounden duty to compose your face and manners into conformity with your funerial garb. Why should you sigh and groan, and I be made uncomfortable because an old gentleman in ——shire, a perfect stranger to us both, has thought proper to drink himself to death?—There now, I declare you're crying! Well, it must be affectation."

He would not hear of my attending the funeral, or going for a day or two, to cheer poor Frederick's solitude. It was quite unnecessary, he

said, and I was unreasonable to wish it. What was my father to me? I had never seen him, but once since I was a baby, and I well knew he had never cared a stiver about me;—and my brother too, was little better than a stranger. "Besides, dear Helen," said he, embracing me with flattering fondness, "I cannot spare you for a single day."

"Then how have you managed without me, these *many* days?" said I.

"Ah! then I was knocking about the world, now I am at home; and home without you, my household deity would be intolerable."

"Yes, as long as I am necessary to your comfort; but you did not say so before, when you urged me to leave you, in order that you might get away from your home without me," retorted I; but before the words were well out of my mouth, I regretted having uttered them. It seemed so heavy a charge: if false, too gross an insult; if true, too humiliating a fact to be thus openly cast in his teeth. But I might have

spared myself that momentary pang of self-reproach. The accusation awoke neither shame nor indignation in him: he attempted neither denial nor excuse, but only answered with a long, low, chuckling laugh as if he viewed the whole transaction as a clever, merry jest from beginning to end. Surely that man will make me dislike him at last!

> "Sine as ye brew, my maiden fair,
> Keep mind that ye maun drink the yill."

Yes; and I *will* drink it to the very dregs: and none but myself shall know how bitter I find it!

August 20th.—We are shaken down again to about our usual position. Arthur has returned to nearly his former condition and habits; and I have found it my wisest plan to shut my eyes against the past and future, as far as *he* at least is concerned, and live only for the present; to love him when I can; to smile (if possible) when he smiles, be cheerful when he is cheerful, and pleased when he is agreeable; and when

he is not, to try to make him so—and if that won't answer, to bear with him, to excuse him, and forgive him, as well as I can, and restrain my own evil passions from aggravating his ; and yet, while I thus yield and minister to his more harmless propensities to self-indulgence, to do all in my power to save him from the worse.

But we shall not be long alone together. I shall shortly be called upon to entertain the same select body of friends as we had the autumn before last, with the addition of Mr. Hattersley and, at my special request, his wife and child. I long to see Milicent—and her little girl too. The latter is now above a year old; she will be a charming playmate for my little Arthur.

September 30th.—Our guests have been here a week or two ; but I have had no leisure to pass any comments upon them till now. I cannot get over my dislike to Lady Lowborough. It is not founded on mere personal pique ; it is the woman herself that I dislike,

because I so thoroughly disapprove of her. I always avoid her company as much as I can without violating the laws of hospitality; but when we do speak or converse together, it is with the utmost civility—even apparent cordiality on her part; but preserve me from such cordiality! It is like handling briar-roses and may-blossoms—bright enough to the eye, and outwardly soft to the touch, but you know there are thorns beneath, and every now and then you feel them too; and perhaps resent the injury by crushing them in till you have destroyed their power, though somewhat to the detriment of your own fingers.

Of late, however, I have seen nothing in her conduct towards Arthur to anger or alarm me. During the first few days I thought she seemed very solicitous to win his admiration. Her efforts were not unnoticed by him: I frequently saw him smiling to himself at her artful manœuvres: but, to his praise be it spoken, her shafts fell powerless by his side. Her most

bewitching smiles, her haughtiest frowns were ever received with the same immutable, careless good-humour; till, finding he was indeed impenetrable, she suddenly remitted her efforts, and became, to all appearance, as perfectly indifferent as himself. Nor have I since witnessed any symptom of pique on his part, or renewed attempts at conquest upon hers.

This is as it should be; but Arthur never will let me be satisfied with him. I have never, for a single hour since I married him, known what it is to realize that sweet idea, "In quietness and confidence shall be your rest." Those two detestable men Grimsby and Hattersley have destroyed all my labour against his love of wine. They encourage him daily to overstep the bounds of moderation, and, not unfrequently, to disgrace himself by positive excess. I shall not soon forget the second night after their arrival. Just as I had retired from the dining-room, with the ladies, before the door was closed upon us, Arthur exclaimed—

"Now then, my lads, what say you to a regular jollification?"

Milicent glanced at me with a half reproachful look, as if *I* could hinder it; but her countenance changed when she heard Hattersley's voice shouting through door and wall.

"*I'm* your man! Send for more wine: here isn't *half* enough!"

We had scarcely entered the drawing-room before we were joined by Lord Lowborough.

"What *can* induce you to come so soon?" exclaimed his lady, with a most ungracious air of dissatisfaction.

"You know I never drink, Annabella," replied he, seriously.

"Well, but you might stay with them a little: it looks so silly to be always dangling after the women—I wonder you can!"

He reproached her with a look of mingled bitterness and surprise, and sinking into a chair, suppressed a heavy sigh, bit his pale lips, and fixed his eyes upon the floor.

"You did right to leave them, Lord Lowborough," said I. "I trust you will always continue to honour us so early with your company. And if Annabella knew the value of true wisdom, and the misery of folly and—and intemperance, she would not talk such nonsense—even in jest."

He raised his eyes while I spoke, and gravely turned them upon me with a half surprised, half abstracted look, and then bent them on his wife.

"At least," said she, "I know the value of a warm heart and a bold, manly spirit!"

And she pointed her words with a glance of triumph at me, which seemed to say, "And that is more than *you* do," and a look of scorn at her husband, that entered into his soul. I was intensely exasperated; but it was not for me to reprove her, or, as it seemed, to express my sympathy with her husband without insulting his feelings. All I could do, to obey my inward impulse, was to hand him a cup of

coffee, bringing it to him myself, and before I served either of the ladies, by way of balancing her contempt by my exceeding deference. He took it mechanically from my hand, with a slight inclination, and, next minute, rose and placed it untasted on the table, looking, not at it, but at her.

"Well, Annabella," said he, in a deep and hollow tone, "since my presence is disagreeable to you, I will relieve you of it."

"Are you going back to them, then?" said she, carelessly.

"No," exclaimed he, with harsh and startling emphasis; "I will NOT go back to them! And I will never stay with them one moment longer than I think right, for you or any other tempter! But you needn't mind that—I shall never trouble you again, by intruding my company upon you so unseasonably."

He left the room, I heard the hall door open and shut, and immediately after, on putting aside the curtain, I saw him pacing down the

park, in the comfortless gloom of the damp, cloudy twilight.

Such scenes as this are always disagreeable to witness. Our little party was completely silenced for a moment. Milicent played with her teaspoon, and looked confounded and uncomfortable. If Annabella felt any shame or uneasiness, she attempted to hide it by a short, reckless laugh, and calmly betook herself to her coffee.

"It would serve you right, Annabella," said I at length, "if Lord Lowborough were to return to his old habits, which had so nearly effected his ruin, and which it cost him such an effort to break. You would then see cause to repent such conduct as this."

"Not at all, my dear! I should not mind if his Lordship were to see fit to intoxicate himself every day: I should only the sooner be rid of him."

"Oh, Annabella!" cried Milicent. "How *can* you say such wicked things! It would

indeed be a just punishment, as far as you are concerned, if providence should take you at your word, and make you feel what others feel that—" She paused as a sudden burst of loud talking and laughter reached us from the dining room, in which the voice of Hattersley was pre-eminently conspicuous, even to my unpractised ear.

"What *you* feel at this moment, I suppose?" said Lady Lowborough, with a malicious smile, fixing her eyes upon her cousin's distressed countenance.

The latter offered no reply, but averted her face and brushed away a tear. At that moment the door opened and admitted Mr. Hargrave; just a little flushed, his dark eyes sparkling with unwonted vivacity.

"Oh, I'm glad you're come, Walter!" cried his sister—"But I wish you could have got Ralph to come too."

"Utterly impossible, dear Milicent," replied he, gaily. "I had much ado to get away my-

self. Ralph attempted to keep me by violence; Huntingdon threatened me with the eternal loss of his friendship; and Grimsby, worse than all, endeavoured to make me ashamed of my virtue, by such galling sarcasms and inuendos as he knew would wound me the most. So you see, ladies, you ought to make me welcome when I have braved and suffered so much for the favour of your sweet society. He smilingly turned to me and bowed as he finished the sentence.

"Isn't he *handsome* now Helen?" whispered Milicent, her sisterly pride overcoming, for the moment, all other considerations.

"He would be," I returned, "if that brilliance of eye, and lip, and cheek were natural to him; but look again, a few hours hence."

Here the gentleman took a seat near me at the table, and petitioned for a cup of coffee.

"I consider this an apt illustration of Heaven taken by storm," said he, as I handed one to him. "I am in paradise now; but I have

fought my way through flood and fire to win it. Ralph Hattersley's last resource was to set his back against the door, and swear I should find no passage but through his body (a pretty substantial one too). Happily, however, that was not the only door, and I effected my escape by the side entrance, through the butler's pantry, to the infinite amazement of Benson, who was cleaning the plate."

Mr. Hargrave laughed, and so did his cousin; but his sister and I remained silent and grave.

"Pardon my levity, Mrs. Huntingdon," murmured he, more seriously, as he raised his eyes to my face. "You are not used to these things: you suffer them to affect your delicate mind too sensibly. But I thought of you in the midst of those lawless roisterers; and I endeavoured to persuade Mr. Huntingdon to think of you too; but to no purpose: I fear he is fully determined to enjoy himself this night; and it will be no use keeping the coffee waiting for him or his companions: it will be much if they join us at

tea. Meantime, I earnestly wish I could banish the thoughts of them from your mind—and my own too, for I hate to think of them—yes—even of my dear friend Huntingdon, when I consider the power he possesses over the happiness of one so immeasurably superior to himself, and the use he makes of it—I positively *detest* the man!"

"You had better not say so to me, then," said I; "for, bad as he is, he is part of myself, and you cannot abuse him without offending me."

"Pardon me, then, for I would sooner die than offend you—But let us say no more of him for the present if you please."

He then entirely changed the subject of discourse, and exerting all his powers to entertain our little circle, conversed on different topics with more than his usual brilliance and fluency, addressing himself, sometimes, exclusively to me, sometimes to the whole trio of ladies. Annabella cheerfully bore her part in the conversa-

tion ; but I was sick at heart,—especially when loud bursts of laughter and incoherent songs, pealing through the triple doors of hall and ante-room, startled my ear and pierced my aching temples ;—and Milicent partly shared my feelings ; so that, to us, the evening appeared a very long one, in spite of Hargrave's apparently, good-natured exertions to give it a contrary effect.

At last, they came ; but not till after ten, when tea, which had been delayed for more than half an hour, was nearly over. Much as I had longed for their coming, my heart failed me at the riotous uproar of their approach ; and Milicent turned pale and almost started from her seat as Mr. Hattersley burst into the room with a clamorous volley of oaths in his mouth, which Hargrave endeavoured to check by entreating him to remember the ladies.

"Ah ! you do well to remind me of the ladies, you dastardly deserter," cried he, shaking his formidable fist at his brother-in-law ; "if it

were not for them, you well know, I'd demolish you in the twinkling of an eye, and give your body to the fowls of heaven and the lilies of the field!" Then, planting a chair by Lady Lowborough's side, he stationed himself in it, and began to talk to her, with a mixture of absurdity and rascally impudence that seemed rather to amuse than to offend her; though she affected to resent his insolence, and to keep him at bay with sallies of smart and spirited repartee.

Meantime, Mr. Grimsby seated himself by me, in the chair vacated by Hargrave as they entered, and gravely stated that he would thank me for a cup of tea: and Arthur placed himself beside poor Milicent, confidentially pushing his head into her face, and drawing in closer to her as she shrunk away from him. He was not so noisy as Hattersley, but his face was exceedingly flushed, he laughed incessantly, and while I blushed for all I saw and heard of him, I was glad that he chose to talk to his companion in

so low a tone that no one could hear what he said but herself. It must have been intolerable nonsense at best, for she looked excessively annoyed, and first went red in the face, then indignantly pushed back her chair, and finally took refuge behind me on the sofa. Arthur's sole intention seemed to have been to produce some such disagreeable effects: he laughed immoderately on finding he had driven her away—drawing in his chair to the table, he leant his folded arms upon it, and delivered himself up to a paroxysm of weak, low, foolish laughter. When he was tired of this exercise he lifted his head and called aloud to Hattersley, and there ensued a clamorous contest between them about I know not what.

"What fools they are!" drawled Mr. Grimsby, who had been talking away, at my elbow, with sententious gravity all the time; but I had been too much absorbed in contemplating the deplorable state of the other two — especially Arthur—to attend to him.

"Did you ever hear such nonsense as they talk, Mrs. Huntingdon?" he continued. "I'm quite ashamed of them for my part: they can't take so much as a bottle between them without its getting into their heads—"

"You are pouring the cream into your saucer, Mr. Grimsby."

"Ah! yes, I see, but we're almost in darkness here. Hargrave, snuff those candles, will you?"

"They're wax; they don't require snuffing," said I.

"'The light of the body is the eye,'" observed Hargrave, with a sarcastic smile. "'If thine eye be *single* thy whole body shall be full of light.'"

Grimsby repulsed him with a solemn wave of the hand, and then, turning to me, continued, with the same drawling tones, and strange uncertainty of utterance and heavy gravity of aspect as before, "But as I was saying, Mrs. Huntingdon,—they have no head at

all: they can't take half a bottle without being affected some way; whereas I—well, I've taken three times as much as they have to-night, and you see I'm perfectly steady. Now that may strike you as very singular, but I think I can explain it:—you see *their* brains—I mention no names, but you'll understand to whom I allude —*their* brains are light to begin with, and the fumes of the fermented liquor render them lighter still, and produce an entire light-headedness, or giddiness, resulting in intoxication; whereas *my* brains being composed of more solid materials will absorb a considerable quantity of this alcoholic vapour without the production of any sensible result—"

"I think you will find a sensible result produced on that tea," interrupted Mr. Hargrave, "by the quantity of sugar you have put into it. Instead of your usual complement of one lump you have put in six."

"Have I so?" replied the philosopher, diving with his spoon into the cup and bringing up

several half-dissolved pieces in confirmation of the assertion. "Um! I perceive. Thus, Madam, you see the evil of absence of mind—of thinking too much while engaged in the common concerns of life. Now if I had had my wits about me, like ordinary men, instead of within me like a philosopher, I should not have spoiled this cup of tea, and been constrained to trouble you for another.—With your permission, I'll turn this into the slop-basin."

"That is the sugar basin, Mr. Grimsby. Now you have spoiled the sugar too; and I'll thank you to ring for some more—for here is Lord Lowborough, at last; and I hope his lordship will condescend to sit down with us, such as we are, and allow me to give him some tea."

His lordship gravely bowed in answer to my appeal, but said nothing. Meantime, Hargrave volunteered to ring for the sugar, while Grimsby lamented his mistake, and attempted to prove that it was owing to the shadow of the urn and the badness of the lights.

Lord Lowborough had entered a minute or two before, unobserved by any one but me, and been standing before the door, grimly surveying the company. He now stepped up to Annabella, who sat with her back towards him, with Hattersley still beside her, though not now attending to her, being occupied in vociferously abusing and bullying his host.

"Well, Annabella," said her husband, as he leant over the back of her chair, "which of these three 'bold, manly spirits' would you have me to resemble?"

"By heaven and earth, you shall resemble us all!" cried Hattersley, starting up and rudely seizing him by the arm. "Hallo Huntingdon!" he shouted—"*I've* got him! Come, man, and help me! And d—n me body and soul if I don't make him blind drunk before I let him go! He shall make up for all past delinquencies as sure as I'm a living soul!"

There followed a disgraceful contest; Lord Lowborough, in desperate earnest, and pale

with anger, silently struggling to release himself from the powerful madman that was striving to drag him from the room. I attempted to urge Arthur to interfere in behalf of his outraged guest, but he could do nothing but laugh.

"Huntingdon, you fool, come and help me, can't you!" cried Hattersley, himself somewhat weakened by his excesses.

"I'm wishing you God-speed, Hattersley," cried Arthur, "and aiding you with my prayers: I can't do anything else if my life depended on it! I'm quite used up. Oh, ho!" and leaning back in his seat, he clapped his hands on his sides and groaned aloud.

"Annabella, give me a candle!" said Lowborough whose antagonist had now got him round the waist and was endeavouring to root him from the door-post to which he madly clung with all the energy of desperation.

"*I* shall take no part in your rude sports!" replied the lady, coldly drawing back, "I wonder you can expect it."

But I snatched up a candle and brought it to him. He took it and held the flame to Hattersley's hands till, roaring like a wild beast, the latter unclasped them and let him go. He vanished, I suppose to his own apartment, for nothing more was seen of him till the morning. Swearing and cursing like a maniac, Hattersley threw himself on to the ottoman beside the window. The door being now free, Milicent attempted to make her escape from the scene of her husband's disgrace; but he called her back, and insisted upon her coming to him.

"What do you want Ralph?" murmured she, reluctantly approaching him.

"I want to know what's the matter with you," said he, pulling her on to his knee like a child. "What are you crying for Milicent? —Tell me!"

"I'm not crying."

"You are," persisted he, rudely pulling her hands from her face. "How dare you tell such a lie?"

"I'm not crying now," pleaded she.

"But you have been—and just this minute too; and I *will* know what for. Come now, you *shall* tell me!"

"Do let me alone Ralph! remember we are not at home."

"No matter: you *shall* answer my question!" exclaimed her tormentor; and he attempted to extort the confession by shaking her and remorsely crushing her slight arms in the gripe of his powerful fingers.

"Don't let him treat your sister in that way," said I to Mr. Hargrave.

"Come now, Hattersley, I can't allow that," said that gentleman, stepping up to the ill-assorted couple. "You let my sister alone, if you please." And he made an effort to unclasp the ruffian's fingers from her arm, but was suddenly driven backward and nearly laid upon the floor by a violent blow in the chest accompanied with the admonition,

"Take that for your insolence!—and learn to interfere between me and mine again."

"If you were not beastly drunk, I'd have satisfaction for that!" gasped Hargrave, white and breathless as much from passion as from the immediate effects of the blow.

"Go to the devil!" responded his brother-in-law. "Now Milicent, tell me what you were crying for."

"I'll tell you some other time," murmured she, "when we are alone."

"Tell me now!" said he with another shake and a squeeze that made her draw in her breath and bite her lip to suppress a cry of pain.

"*I'll* tell you, Mr. Hattersley," said I. "She was crying from pure shame and humiliation for you; because she could not bear to see you conduct yourself so disgracefully."

"Confound you, Madam!" muttered he, with a stare of stupid amazement at my 'impudence,' "It was *not* that—was it Milicent?"

She was silent.

"Come, speak up child!"

"I can't tell now," sobbed she.

"But you can say 'yes' or 'no' as well as 'I can't tell'—Come!"

"Yes," she whispered, hanging her head and blushing at the awful acknowledgement.

"Curse you for an impertinent huzzy then!" cried he, throwing her from him with such violence that she fell on her side; but she was up again before either I or her brother could come to her assistance, and made the best of her way out of the room and, I suppose, up stairs, without loss of time.

The next object of assault was Arthur, who sat opposite, and had no doubt richly enjoyed the whole scene.

"Now Huntingdon," exclaimed his irascible friend, "I WILL NOT have you sitting there and laughing like an idiot!"

"Oh, Hattersley!" cried he, wiping his swimming eyes—"you'll be the death of me."

"Yes I will, but not as you suppose: I'll have the heart out of your body, man, if you irritate me with any more of that imbecile

laughter!—What! are you at it yet?—There! see if that'll settle you!" cried Hattersley, snatching up a footstool and hurling it at the head of his host; but he missed his aim and the latter still sat collapsed and quaking with feeble laughter, with the tears running down his face; a deplorable spectacle indeed.

Hattersley tried cursing and swearing, but it would not do; he then took a number of books from the table beside him and threw them, one by one, at the object of his wrath, but Arthur only laughed the more; and, finally, Hattersley rushed upon him in a phrensy, and, seizing him by the shoulders, gave him a violent shaking, under which he laughed and shrieked alarmingly. But I saw no more: I thought I had witnessed enough of my husband's degradation; and, leaving Annabella and the rest to follow when they pleased, I withdrew—but not to bed. Dismissing Rachel to her rest, I walked up and down my room, in an agony of misery, for what had been done, and suspense, not

knowing what might further happen or how or when that unhappy creature would come up to bed.

At last he came, slowly and stumblingly, ascending the stairs, supported by Grimsby and Hattersley, who neither of them walked quite steadily themselves, but were both laughing and joking at him, and making noiseenough for all the servants to hear. He himself was no longer laughing now, but sick and stupid—I will write no more about *that*.

Such disgraceful scenes (or nearly such) have been repeated more than once. I don't say much to Arthur about it, for if I did, it would do more harm than good; but I let him know that I intensely dislike such exhibitions; and each time he has promised they should never again be repeated; but I fear he is losing the little self-command and self-respect he once possessed: formerly, he would have been ashamed to act thus—at least, before any other witnesses than his boon companions, or such

as they. His friend, Hargrave, with a prudence and self-government that I envy for *him*, never disgraces himself by taking more than sufficient to render him a little 'elevated,' and is always the first to leave the table, after Lord Lowborough, who, wiser still, perseveres in vacating the dining-room immediately after us; but never once, since Annabella offended him so deeply, has he entered the drawing-room before the rest; always spending the interim in the library, which I take care to have lighted for his accommodation—or, on fine moonlight nights, in roaming about the grounds. But I think she regrets her misconduct, for she has never repeated it since, and of late she has comported herself with wonderful propriety towards him, treating him with more uniform kindness and consideration than ever I have observed her to do before. I date the time of this improvement from the period when she ceased to hope and strive for Arthur's admiration.

CHAPTER XIII.

COMPARISONS: INFORMATION REJECTED.

October 5th.—Esther Hargrave is getting a fine girl. She is not out of the school-room yet, but her mother frequently brings her over to call in the mornings when the gentlemen are out, and sometimes she spends an hour or two in company with her sister, and me, and the children; and when we go to the Grove, I always contrive to see her, and talk more to her than to any one else, for I am very much attached to my little friend, and so is she to me. I wonder what she can see to like in me

though, for I am no longer the happy, lively girl I used to be; but she has no other society —save that of her uncongenial mother, and her governess (as artificial and conventional a person as that prudent mother could procure to rectify the pupil's natural qualities), and, now and then, her subdued, quiet sister. I often wonder what will be *her* lot in life—and so does she; but *her* speculations on the future are full of buoyant hope—so were mine once. I shudder to think of her being awakened like me to a sense of their delusive vanity. It seems as if I should feel her disappointment even more deeply than my own: I feel, almost, as if I were born for such a fate, but *she* is so joyous and fresh, so light of heart and free of spirit, and so guileless and unsuspecting too— Oh, it would be cruel to make her feel as I feel now, and know what I have known!

Her sister trembles for her too. Yesterday morning, one of October's brightest loveliest days, Milicent and I were in the garden enjoy-

ing a brief half hour together with our children, while Annabella was lying on the drawing-room sofa, deep in the last new novel. We had been romping with the little creatures, almost as merry and wild as themselves, and now paused in the shade of the tall copper beech, to recover breath and rectify our hair, disordered by the rough play and the frolicsome breeze—while they toddled together along the broad, sunny walk; my Arthur supporting the feebler steps of her little Helen, and sagaciously pointing out to her the brightest beauties of the border as they passed, with simi-articulate prattle that did as well for her as any other mode of discourse. From laughing at the pretty sight, we began to talk of the children's future life; and that made us thoughtful. We both relapsed into silent musing as we slowly proceded up the walk; and I suppose Milicent by a train of associations was led to think of her sister.

"Helen," said she, "you often see Esther, don't you?"

"Not very often."

"But you have more frequent opportunities of meeting her than I have: and she loves you I know, and reverences you too: there is nobody's opinion she thinks so much of; and she says you have more sense than mamma."

"That is because she is self-willed, and my opinions more generally coincide with her own than your mamma's. But what then, Milicent?"

"Well, since you have so much influence with her, I wish you would seriously impress it upon her, never, on any account, or for any body's persuasion, to marry for the sake of money, or rank, or establishment, or any earthly thing, but true affection and well-grounded esteem."

"There is no necessity for that," said I: "for we have had some discourse on that subject already, and I assure you her ideas of love and matrimony are as romantic as any one could desire."

"But romantic notions will not do: I want her to have true notions."

"Very right, but in my judgment, what the world stigmatizes as romantic, is often more nearly allied to the truth than is commonly supposed; for, if the generous ideas of youth are too often overclouded by the sordid views of after-life, that scarcely proves them to be false."

"Well, but if you think her ideas are what they ought to be, strengthen them, will you? and confirm them, as far as you can; for *I* had romantic notions once, and —— I don't mean to say that I regret my lot, for I am quite sure I don't—but—"

"I understand you," said I; "you are contented for yourself, but you would not have your sister to suffer the same as you."

"No—or worse. She might have far worse to suffer than I—for I *am really* contented, Helen, though you mayn't think it: I speak the solemn truth in saying that I would not exchange my husband for any man on earth, if I might do it by the plucking of this leaf."

"Well, I believe you: now that you have

him, you would not exchange *him* for another; but then you would gladly exchange some of his qualities for those of better men."

"Yes; just as I would gladly exchange some of my own qualities for those of better women; for neither he nor I are perfect, and I desire his improvement as earnestly as my own. And he will improve—don't you think so Helen?—he's only six and twenty yet."

"He may," I answered.

"He will—he WILL!" repeated she.

"Excuse the faintness of my acquiescence, Milicent; I would not discourage your hopes for the world, but mine have been so often disappointed, that I am become as cold and doubtful in my expectations as the flattest of octogenarians."

"And yet you do hope, still—even for Mr. Huntingdon?"

"I do, I confess—'even' for *him;* for it seems as if life and hope must cease together. And is he so *much* worse, Milicent, than Mr. Hattersley?"

"Well, to give you my candid opinion, I think there is no comparison between them. But you mustn't be offended, Helen, for you know I always speak my mind; and you may speak your's too; I shan't care."

"I am not offended, love; and *my* opinion is that if there *be* a comparison made between the two, the difference, for the most part, is certainly in Hattersley's favour."

Milicent's own heart told her how much it cost me to make this acknowledgment; and, with a childlike impulse, she expressed her sympathy by suddenly kissing my cheek, without a word of reply, and then turning quickly away caught up her baby, and hid her face in its frock. How odd it is that we so often weep for each other's distresses, when we shed not a tear for our own! Her heart had been full enough of her own sorrows, but it overflowed at the idea of mine;—and I too, shed tears at the sight of her sympathetic emotion, though I had not wept for myself for many a week.

But Milicent's satisfaction in her choice, is not entirely feigned: she really loves her husband; and it is too true that he loses nothing by comparison with mine. Either he is less unbridled in his excesses, or owing to his stronger, hardier frame, they produce a much less deleterious effect upon him; for he never reduces himself to a state in any degree bordering on imbecility, and with him the worst effect of a night's debauch is a slight increase of irascibility, or it may be a season of sullen ferocity on the following morning: there is nothing of that lost, depressing appearance—that peevish, ignoble fretfulness, that wears one out with very shame for the transgressor. But then, it was not formerly so with Arthur: he can bear less now than he could at Hattersley's age; and if the latter does not reform, his powers of endurance may be equally impaired when he has tried them as long. He has five years the advantage of his friend, and his vices have not mastered him yet: he has not

folded them to him and made them a part of himself. They seem to sit loose upon him, like a cloak that he could throw aside at any moment if he would—but how long will that option be left him?—Though a creature of passion and sense, regardless of the duties and the higher privileges of intelligent beings, he is no voluptuary: he prefers the more active and invigorating animal enjoyments, to those of a more relaxing, enervating kind. He does not make a *science* of the gratification of his appetites either in the pleasures of the table or anything else; he eats heartily what is set before him, without demeaning himself by any of that abandonment to the palate and the eye—that unbecoming particularity in approval or disapproval which it is so hateful to witness in those we would esteem. Arthur, I fear, would give himself up to luxury as the chief good, and might ultimately plunge into the grossest excesses, but for the fear of irremediably blunting his appetites, and destroying his powers of

further enjoyment. For Hattersley, graceless ruffian as he is, I believe there is more reasonable ground of hope; and—far be it from me to blame poor Milicent for his delinquencies—but I do think that if she had the courage or the will to speak her mind about them, and maintain her point unflinchingly, there would be more chance of his reclamation, and he would be likely to treat her better, and love her more, in the end. I am partly led to think so by what he said to me himself, not many days ago—I purpose to give her a little advice on the subject some time; but still, I hesitate from the consciousness that her ideas and disposition are both against it, and if my counsels failed to do good, they would do harm by making her more unhappy.

It was one rainy day last week: most of the company were killing time in the billiard-room, but Milicent and I were with little Arthur and Helen in the library, and between our books, our children, and each other, we expected to

make out a very agreeable morning. We had not been thus secluded above two hours, however, when Mr. Hattersley came in attracted, I suppose, by the voice of his child as he was crossing the hall, for he is prodigiously fond of her, and she of him.

He was redolent of the stables, where he had been regaling himself with the company of his fellow-creatures, the horses, ever since breakfast. But that was no matter to my little namesake: as soon as the colossal person of her father darkened the door, she uttered a shrill scream of delight, and, quitting her mother's side, ran crowing towards him — balancing her course with out-stretched arms,—and, embracing his knee, threw back her head and laughed in his face. He might well look smilingly down upon those small, fair features radiant with innocent mirth, those clear, blue, shining eyes, and that soft flaxen hair cast back upon the little ivory neck and shoulders. Did he not think how unworthy he was of such a possession? I fear

no such idea crossed his mind. He caught her up, and there followed some minutes of very rough play, during which it is difficult to say whether the father or the daughter laughed and shouted the loudest. At length, however, the boisterous pastime terminated — suddenly, as might be expected: the little one was hurt and began to cry; and its ungentle playfellow tossed it into its mother's lap, bidding her "make all straight." As happy to return to that gentle comforter as it had been to leave her, the child nestled in her arms and hushed its cries in a moment; and, sinking its little weary head on her bosom, soon dropped asleep.

Meantime, Mr. Hattersley strode up to the fire, and, interposing his height and breadth between us and it, stood, with arms akimbo, expanding his chest, and gazing round him as if the house and all its appertenances and contents were his own undisputed possessions.

"Deuced bad weather this!" he began. "There'll be no shooting to day, I guess."

Then, suddenly lifting up his voice, he regaled us with a few bars of a rollicking song, which abruptly ceasing, he finished the tune with a whistle, and then continued,—"I say Mrs. Huntingdon, what a fine stud your husband has!—not large but good.—I've been looking at them a bit this morning; and upon my word, Black Bess, and Grey Tom, and that young Nimrod are the finest animals I've seen for many a day!" Then followed a particular discussion of their various merits, succeeded by a sketch of the great things *he* intended to do in the horse-jockey line when his old governor thought proper to quit the stage—"Not that I wish him to close his accounts," added he; "the old trojan is welcome to keep his books open as long as he pleases for me."

"I hope so, *indeed*, Mr. Hattersley!"

"Oh yes! It's only my way of talking. The event must come, sometime, and so I look to the bright side of it—that's the right plan, isn't it, Mrs. H.?—What are you two doing here, by the by—where's Lady Lowborough?"

"In the billiard room."

"What a splendid creature she *is!*" continued he, fixing his eyes on his wife, who changed colour, and looked more and more disconcerted as he proceeded. What a noble figure she has! and what magnificent black eyes; and what a fine spirit of her own;—and what a tongue of her own, too, when she likes to use it—I perfectly adore her! — But never mind, Milicent; I would'nt have her for my wife—not if she'd a kingdom for her dowry! I'm better satisfied with the one I have.—Now *then!* what do you look so sulky for? don't you believe me?"

"Yes, I believe you," murmured she, in a tone of half sad, half sullen resignation, as she turned away to stroke the hair of her sleeping infant, that she had laid on the sofa beside her.

"Well *then*, what makes you so cross? Come here Milly, and tell me why you can't be satisfied with my assurance."

She went, and, putting her little hand within his arm, looked up in his face, and said softly,—

"What does it amount to Ralph? Only to this, that though you admire Annabella so much, and for qualities that I don't possess, you would still rather have me than her for your wife which merely proves that you don't think it necessary to love your wife: you are satisfied if she can keep your house and take care of your child. But I'm not cross; I'm only sorry; for," added she in a low, tremulous accent, withdrawing her hand from his arm, and bending her looks on the rug, "if you don't love me, you don't, and it can't be helped."

"Very true: but who told you I didn't? Did I say I loved Annabella?"

"You said you adored her."

"True, but adoration isn't love. I adore Annabella, but I don't love her; and I love thee Milicent, but I don't adore thee." In proof of his affection, he clutched a handful of her light brown ringlets and appeared to twist them unmercifully.

"Do you really, Ralph?" murmured she

with a faint smile beaming through her tears, just putting up her hand to his, in token that he pulled *rather* too hard.

"To be sure I do," responded he: "only you bother me rather, sometimes."

"*I* bother you!" cried she in very natural surprise.

"Yes, *you* — but only by your exceeding goodness — when a boy has been cramming raisins and sugar-plums all day, he longs for a squeeze of sour orange by way of a change. And did you never, Milly, observe the sands on the sea-shore; how nice and smooth they look, and how soft and easy they feel to the foot? But if you plod along, for half an hour, over this soft, easy carpet—giving way at every step, yielding the more the harder you press,—you'll find it rather wearisome work, and be glad enough to come to a bit of good, firm rock, that won't budge an inch whether you stand, walk, or stamp upon it; and, though it be hard as the nether millstone, you'll find it the easier footing after all."

"I know what you mean, Ralph," said she, nervously playing with her watch-guard and tracing the figure on the rug with the point of her tiny foot, "I know what you mean, but I thought you always liked to be yielded to; and I can't alter now."

"I do like it," replied he, bringing her to him by another tug at her hair. "You mustn't mind my talk Milly. A man must have something to grumble about; and if he can't complain that his wife harries him to death with her perversity and ill-humour, he must complain that she wears him out with her kindness and gentleness."

"But why complain at all, unless, because you are tired and dissatisfied?"

"To excuse my own failings, to be sure. Do you think I'll bear all the burden of my sins on my own shoulders, as long as there's another ready to help me, with none of her own to carry?"

"There is no such one on earth," said she

seriously; and then, taking his hand from her head, she kissed it with an air of genuine devotion, and tripped away to the door.

"What now?" said he. "Where are you going?"

"To tidy my hair," she answered, smiling through her disordered locks: "you've made it all come down."

"Off with you then!—An excellent little woman," he remarked when she was gone, "but a thought too soft—she almost melts in one's hands. I positively think I ill-use her sometimes, when I've taken too much—but I can't help it, for she never complains, either at the time or after. I suppose she doesn't mind it."

"I can enlighten you on that subject, Mr. Hattersley," said I: "she *does* mind it; and some other things she minds still more, which, yet, you may never hear her complain of."

"How do you know?—does she complain to you?" demanded he, with a sudden spark of fury ready to burst into a flame if I should answer 'Yes.'

"No," I replied; "but I have known her longer and studied her more closely than you have done. — And I can tell you, Mr. Hattersley, that Milicent loves you more than you deserve, and that you have it in your power to make her very happy, instead of which you are her evil genius, and, I will venture to say, there is not a single day passes in which you do not inflict upon her some pang that you might spare her if you would."

"Well—it's not *my* fault," said he, gazing carelessly up at the ceiling and plunging his hands into his pockets: "if my ongoings don't suit her, she should tell me so."

"Is she not exactly the wife you wanted? Did you not tell Mr. Huntingdon you must have one that would submit to anything without a murmur, and never blame you, whatever you did?"

"True, but we shouldn't always have what we want: it spoils the best of us, doesn't it? How can I help playing the deuce when I see

it's all one to her whether I behave like a christian or like a scoundrel such as nature made me?—and how can I help teazing her when she's so invitingly meek and mim—when she lies down like a spaniel at my feet and never so much as squeaks to tell me that's enough?"

"If you are a tyrant by nature, the temptation is strong, I allow; but no generous mind delights to oppress the weak, but rather to cherish and protect."

"I *don't* oppress her; but it's so confounded flat to be always cherishing and protecting;—and then how can I tell that I *am* oppressing her when she 'melts away and makes no sign?' I sometime thinks she has no feeling at all; and then I go on till she cries—and that satisfies me."

"Then you *do* delight to oppress her."

"I don't, I tell you!—only when I'm in a bad humour—or a particularly good one, and want to afflict for the pleasure of comforting;

or when she looks flat and wants shaking up a bit. And sometimes, she provokes me by crying for nothing, and won't tell me what it's for; and then, I allow, it enrages me past bearing—especially, when I'm not my own man."

"As is no doubt generally the case on such occasions," said I. "But in future, Mr. Hattersley, when you see her looking flat or crying for 'nothing' (as you call it,) ascribe it all to yourself: be assured it is something you have done amiss, or your general misconduct that distresses her."

"I don't believe it. If it were, she should tell me so: I don't like that way of moping and fretting in silence, and saying nothing—it's not honest. How can she expect me to mend my ways at that rate?"

"Perhaps she gives you credit for having more sense than you possess, and deludes herself with the hope that you will one day see your own errors and repair them, if left to your own reflection."

"None of your sneers, Mrs. Huntingdon! I *have* the sense to see that I'm not always quite correct—but sometimes I think that's no great matter, as long as I injure nobody but myself—"

"It *is* a great matter," interrupted I, "both to yourself (as you will hereafter find to your cost) and to all connected with you—most especially your wife—but indeed, it is nonsense to talk about injuring no one but yourself; it is impossible to injure yourself—especially by such acts as we allude to—without injuring hundreds, if not thousands, besides, in a greater or less degree, either by the evil you do or the good you leave undone."

"And as I was saying," continued he—"or would have said if you hadn't taken me up so short—I sometimes think I should do better if I were joined to one that would always remind me when I was wrong, and give me a motive for doing good and eschewing evil by decidedly showing her approval of the one, and disapproval of the other."

"If you had no higher motive than the approval of your fellow mortal, it would do you little good."

"Well, but if I had a mate that would not always be yielding, and always equally kind, but that would have the spirit to stand at bay now and then, and honestly tell me her mind at all times—such a one as yourself for instance —Now if I went on with you as I do with her when I'm in London, you'd make the house too hot to hold me at times, I'll be sworn."

"You mistake me: I'm no termagant."

"Well, all the better for that, for I can't stand contradiction—in a general way—and I'm as fond of my own will as another: only I think too much of it dosen't answer for any man."

"Well, I would never contradict you without a cause, but certainly I would always let you know what I thought of your conduct; and if you oppressed me, in body, mind, or estate, you should at least have no reason to suppose 'I didn't mind it.'"

"I know that my lady; and I think if my little wife were to follow the same plan it would be better for us both."

"I'll tell her."

"No, no, let her be; there's much to be said on both sides—and, now I think upon it, Huntingdon often regrets that you are not more like her—scoundrelly dog that he is—and you see, after all, you can't reform *him:* he's *ten* times worse than I—He's afraid of you, to be sure—that is, he's always on his best behaviour in your presence—but—"

"I wonder what his worst behaviour is like, then?" I could not forbear observing.

"Why, to tell you the truth, it's very bad indeed—isn't it, Hargrave?" said he, addressing that gentleman, who had entered the room unperceived by me, for I was now standing near the fire with my back to the door. "Isn't Huntingdon," he continued, "as great a reprobate as ever was d—d?"

"His lady will not hear him censured with

impunity," replied Mr. Hargrave, coming forward, "but I must say, I thank God I am not such another."

"Perhaps it would become you better," said I, "to look at what you are, and say, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'"

"You are severe," returned he, bowing slightly and drawing himself up with a proud yet injured air. Hattersley laughed, and clapped him on the shoulder. Moving from under his hand with a gesture of insulted dignity, Mr. Hargrave took himself away to the other end of the rug.

"Isn't it a shame, Mrs. Huntingdon?" cried his brother-in-law—"I struck Walter Hargrave when I was drunk, the second night after we came, and he's turned a cold shoulder on me ever since; though I asked his pardon the very morning after it was done!"

"Your manner of asking it," returned the other, "and the clearness with which you remembered the whole transaction, showed you

were not too drunk to be fully conscious of what you were about, and quite responsible for the deed."

"You wanted to interfere between me and my wife," grumbled Hattersley, "and that is enough to provoke any man."

"You justify it then?" said his opponent, darting upon him a most vindictive glance.

"No, I tell you I wouldn't have done it if I hadn't been under excitement; and if you choose to bear malice for it, after all the handsome things I've said—do so and be damned!"

I *would* refrain from such language in a *lady's* presence, at least," said Mr. Hargrave, hiding his anger under a mask of disgust.

"What have I said?" returned Hattersley, "Nothing but Heaven's truth—he will be damned, won't he, Mrs. Huntingdon, if he doesn't forgive his brother's trespasses?"

"You ought to forgive him, Mr. Hargrave, since he asks you," said I.

"Do you say so? Then I will!" And,

smiling almost frankly, he stepped forward and offered his hand. It was immediately clasped in that of his relative, and the reconciliation was apparently cordial on both sides.

"The affront," continued Hargrave, turning to me, "owed half its bitterness to the fact of its being offered in your presence; and since you bid me forgive it, I will—and forget it too."

"I guess the best return I can make, will be to take myself off," muttered Hattersley, with a broad grin. His companion smiled; and he left the room. This put me on my guard. Mr. Hargrave turned seriously to me, and earnestly began—

"Dear Mrs. Huntingdon, how I have longed for, yet dreaded this hour! Do not be alarmed," he added, for my face was crimson with anger; "I am not about to offend you with any useless entreaties or complaints. I am not going to presume to trouble you with the mention of my own feelings or your perfections, but I have

something to reveal to you which you ought to know, and which, yet, it pains me inexpressibly—"

"Then don't trouble yourself to reveal it!'

"But it is of importance—"

"If so, I shall hear it soon enough—especially if it is bad news, as you seem to consider it. At present, I am going to take the children to the nursery."

"But can't you ring, and send them?"

"No; I want the exercise of a run to the top of the house—Come Arthur."

"But you will return?"

"Not yet; don't wait."

"Then, when may I see you again?"

"At lunch," said I, departing with little Helen in one arm, and leading Arthur by the hand.

He turned away, muttering some sentence of impatient censure or complaint, in which "heartless" was the only distinguishable word.

"What nonsense is this Mr. Hargrave?"

said I, pausing in the doorway. "What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing—I did not intend you should hear my soliloquy. But the fact is, Mrs. Huntingdon, I have a disclosure to make—painful for me to offer as for you to hear—and I want you to give me a few minutes of your attention in private, at any time and place you like to appoint. It is from no selfish motive that I ask it, and not for any cause that could alarm your super-human purity; therefore, you need not kill me with that look of cold and pitiless disdain. I know too well the feelings with which the bearers of bad tidings are commonly regarded, not to—"

"What *is* this wonderful piece of intelligence?" said I, impatiently interrupting him. "If it is anything of real importance, speak it in three words before I go."

"In three words I cannot. Send those children away, and stay with me."

"No; keep your bad tidings to yourself. I

know it is something I don't want to hear, and something you would displease me by telling."

"You have divined too truly I fear; but still since I know it, I feel it my duty to disclose it to you."

"Oh, spare us both the infliction—and I will exonerate you from the duty. You have offered to tell; I have refused to her: my ignorance will not be charged on you"

"Be it so—you shall not hear it from me. But if the blow fall too suddenly upon you when it comes, remember—I wished to soften it!"

I left him. I was determined his words should not alarm me. What could *he* of all men, have to reveal that was of importance for *me* to hear? It was, no doubt some exaggerated tale about my unfortunate husband, that he wished to make the most of to serve his own bad purposes.

6th. He has not alluded to this momentous mystery since; and I have seen no reason to repent of my unwillingness to hear it. The

threatened blow has not been struck yet; and I do not greatly fear it. At present I am pleased with Arthur: he has not positively disgraced himself for upwards of a fortnight, and all this last week, has been so very moderate in his indulgence at table, that I can perceive a marked difference in his general temper and appearance. Dare I hope this will continue?

CHAPTER XIV.

TWO EVENINGS.

SEVENTH. Yes, I *will* hope! To-night, I heard Grimsby and Hattersley grumbling together, about the inhospitality of their host. They did not know I was near, for I happened to be standing behind the curtain, in the bow of the window, watching the moon rising over the clump of tall, dark elm-trees below the lawn and wondering why Arthur was so sentimental as to stand without, leaning against the outer pillar of the portico, apparently watching it too.

"So, I suppose we've seen the last of our merry carousals in this house," said Mr. Hattersley, "I *thought* his good-fellowship wouldn't last long.—But," added he, laughing, "I didn't expect it would meet its end this way. I rather thought our pretty hostess would be setting up her porcupine quills, and threatening to turn us out of the house, if we didn't mind our manners."

"You didn't foresee *this*, then?" answered Grimsby with a guttural chuckle. "But he'll change again when he's sick of her. If we come here a year or two hence, we shall have all our own way, you'll see."

"I don't know," replied the other: "she's not the style of woman you soon tire of—but be that as it may, it's devilish provoking now, that we can't be jolly, because he chooses to be on his good behaviour."

"It's all these cursed women!" muttered Grimsby. "They're the very bane of the world! They bring trouble and discomfort

wherever they come, with their false, fair faces and their d—d deceitful tongues."

At this juncture, I issued from my retreat, and smiling on Mr. Grimsby as I passed, left the room and went out in search of Arthur. Having seen him bend his course towards the shrubbery, I followed him thither, and found him just entering the shadowy walk. I was so light of heart, so overflowing with affection, that I sprang upon him and clasped him in my arms. This startling conduct had a singular effect upon him: first, he murmured, "Bless you darling!" and returned my close embrace with a fervour like old times, and *then* he started, and in a tone of absolute terror, exclaimed—

"Helen!—What the devil is this!" and I saw, by the faint light gleaming through the overshadowing tree, that he was positively pale with the shock.

How strange that the instinctive impulse of affection should come first, and then the shock of the surprise! It shows, at least that the affection is genuine: he is not sick of me yet.

"I startled you, Arthur," said I, laughing in my glee. "How nervous you are!"

"What the deuce did you do it for?" cried he, quite testily, extricating himself from my arms, and wiping his forehead with his handkerchief. "Go back, Helen—go back directly! You'll get your death of cold!"

"I won't—till I've told you what I came for. They are blaming you, Arthur, for your temperance and sobriety, and I'm come to thank you for it. They say it is all 'these cursed women,' and that we are the bane of the world; but don't let them laugh, or grumble you out of your good resolutions, or your affection for me."

He laughed. I squeezed him in my arms again, and cried in tearful earnest—

"Do—do persevere!—and I'll love you better than ever I did before?"

"Well, well, I will!" said he, hastily kissing me. "There now, go.—You mad creature, how *could* you come out in your light evening dress, this chill autumn night?"

"It is a glorious night," said I.

"It is a night that will give you your death, in another minute. Run away, do!"

"Do you see my death among those trees, Arthur?" said I, for he was gazing intently at the shrubs, as if he saw it coming, and I was reluctant to leave him, in my new-found happiness and revival of hope and love. But he grew angry at my delay, so I kissed him and ran back to the house.

I was in such a good humour that night: Milicent told me I was the life of the party, and whispered she had never seen me so brilliant. Certainly, I talked enough for twenty, and smiled upon them all. Grimsby, Hattersley, Hargrave, Lady Lowborough—all shared my sisterly kindness. Grimsby stared and wondered; Hattersley laughed and jested, (in spite of the little wine he had been suffered to imbibe), but still, behaved as well as he know how; Hargrave and Annabella, from different motives and in different ways emulated me, and

doubtless both surpassed me, the former in his discursive versatility and eloquence, the latter in boldness and animation at least. Milicent, delighted to see her husband, her brother and her over-estimated friend acquitting themselves so well, was lively and gay too, in her quiet way. Even Lord Lowborough caught the general contagion: his dark, greenish eyes were lighted up beneath their moody brows; his sombre countenance was beautified by smiles; all traces of gloom, and proud or cold reserve had vanished for the time; and he astonished us all, not only by his general cheerfulness and animation, but by the positive flashes of true force and brilliance he emitted from time to time. Arthur did not talk much, but he laughed, and listened to the rest, and was in perfect good-humour, though not excited by wine. So that, altogether we made a very merry, innocent and entertaining party.

9th. Yesterday, when Rachel came to dress me for dinner, I saw that she had been crying.

I wanted to know the cause of it, but she seemed reluctant to tell. Was she unwell? No. Had she heard bad news from her friends? No. Had any of the servants vexed her?

"Oh, no Ma'am!" she answered—"It's not for myself."

"What then, Rachel? Have you been reading novels?"

"Bless you, no!" said she with a sorrowful shake of the head; and then she sighed and continued, "But to tell you the truth, Ma'am, I don't like master's ways of going on."

"What do you mean Rachel?—He's going on very properly—at present."

"Well ma'am, if you think so, it's right."

And she went on dressing my hair, in a hurried way, quite unlike her usual calm, collected manner,—murmuring, half to herself, she was sure it was beautiful hair, she "could like to see 'em match it." When it was done, she fondly stroked it and gently patted my head.

"Is that affectionate ebulition intended for

my hair, or myself, nurse?" said I, laughingly turning round upon her;—but a tear was even now in her eye.

"What *do* you mean, Rachel?" I exclaimed.

"Well, ma'am, I don't know,—but if—"

"If what?"

"Well, if I was you, I wouldn't have that Lady Lowborough in the house another minute —not another *minute* I wouldn't!"

I was thunderstruck; but before I could recover from the shock sufficiently to demand an explanation, Milicent entered my room—as she frequently does, when she is dressed before me; and she stayed with me till it was time to go down. She must have found me a very unsociable companion this time, for Rachel's last words rung in my ears. But still, I hoped—I trusted they had no foundation but in some idle rumour of the servants from what they had seen in Lady Lowborough's manner last month; or, perhaps, from something that had passed between their master and her during her

former visit. At dinner, I narrowly observed both her and Arthur, and saw nothing extraordinary in the conduct of either—nothing calculated to excite suspicion, except in distrustful minds—which mine was not, and therefore I would not suspect.

Almost immediately after dinner, Annabella went out with her husband to share his moonlight ramble, for it was a splendid evening like the last. Mr. Hargrave entered the drawing-room a little before the others, and challenged me to a game of chess. He did it without any of that sad, but proud humility he usually assumes in addressing me, unless he is excited with wine. I looked at his face to see if that was the case now. His eye met mine keenly, but steadily: there was something about him I did not understand, but he seemed sober enough. Not choosing to engage with him, I referred him to Milicent.

"She plays badly," said he: "I want to match my skill with yours. Come now!—you

can't pretend you are reluctant to lay down your work—I know you never take it up except to pass an idle hour, when there is nothing better you can do."

"But chess players are so unsociable," I objected; "they are no company for any but themselves."

"There is no one here—but Milicent, and she—"

"Oh, I shall be delighted to watch you!" cried our mutual friend—"Two *such* players—it will be quite a treat! I wonder which will conquer."

I consented.

"Now Mrs. Huntingdon," said Hargrave, as he arranged the men on the board, speaking distinctly, and with a peculiar emphasis as if he had a double meaning to all his words, "you are a good player,—but I am a better: we shall have a long game, and you will give me some trouble; but I can be as patient as you, and, in the end, I shall certainly win." He fixed

his eyes upon me with a glance I did not like—keen, crafty, bold, and almost impudent; already half triumphant in his anticipated success.

"I hope not, Mr. Hargrave!" returned I, with vehemence that must have startled Milicent at least; but *he* only smiled and murmured,—

"Time will shew."

We set to work; he, sufficiently interested in the game, but calm and fearless in the consciousness of superior skill; I, intensely eager to disappoint his expectations, for I considered this the type of a more serious contest—as I imagined he did—and I felt an almost superstitious dread of being beaten: at all events, I could ill endure that present success should add one tittle to his conscious power (his insolent self-confidence, I ought to say,) or encourage, for a moment, his dream of future conquest. His play was cautious and deep, but I struggled hard against

him. For some time the combat was doubtful, at length, to my joy, the victory seemed inclining to my side: I had taken several of his best pieces, and manifestly baffled his projects. He put his hand to his brow and paused, in evident perplexity. I rejoiced in my advantage, but dared not glory in it yet. At length, he lifted his head, and, quietly making his move, looked at me and said, calmly,—

"Now, you think you will win, don't you."

"I hope so," replied I, taking his pawn that he had pushed into the way of my bishop with so careless an air that I thought it was an oversight, but was not generous enough, under the circumstances, to direct his attention to it, and too heedless, at the moment, to foresee the after consequences of my move.

"It is those bishops that trouble me," said I; "but the bold knight can overleap the reverend gentleman," taking my last bishop with his knight;—"and now, those sacred persons once removed, I shall carry all before me."

"Oh Walter, how you talk!" cried Milicent—"She has far more pieces than you still."

"I intend to give you some trouble yet," said I; "and perhaps, sir, you will find yourself checkmated before you are aware. Look to your queen."

The combat deepened. The game *was* a long one, and I *did* give him some trouble: but he *was* a better player than I.

"What keen gamesters you are!" said Mr. Hattersley, who had now entered, and been watching us for some time. "Why, Mrs. Huntingdon, your hand trembles as if you had staked your all upon it! and Walter—you dog—you look as deep and cool as if you were certain of success,—and as keen and cruel as if you would drain her heart's blood!—But if I were you, I wouldn't beat her, for very fear: she'll hate you if you do—she will, by Heaven!—I see it in her eye."

"Hold your tongue, will you?" said I—his talk distracted me, for I was driven to extremi-

ties. A few more moves and I was inextricably entangled in the snare of my antagonist.

"Check,"—cried he: I sought in agony some means of escape—"mate!" he added, quietly but with evident delight. He had suspended the utterance of that last fatal syllable the better to enjoy my dismay. I was foolishly disconcerted by the event. Hattersley laughed; Milicent was troubled to see me so disturbed. Hargrave placed his hand on mine that rested on the table, and squeezing it with a firm but gentle pressure, murmured "Beaten—beaten!" and gazed into my face with a look where exultation was blended with an expression of ardour and tenderness yet more insulting.

"*No, never*, Mr. Hargrave!" exclaimed I, quickly withdrawing my hand.

"Do you deny?" replied he, smilingly pointing to the board.

"No, no," I answered, recollecting how strange my conduct must appear; "you have beaten me in that game."

"Will you try another, then?"

"No."

"You acknowledge my superiority?"

"Yes—as a chess-player."

I rose to resume my work.

"Where is Annabella?" said Hargrave, gravely, after glancing round the room.

"Gone out with Lord Lowborough," answered I, for he looked at me for a reply.

"And not yet returned!" he said seriously.

"I suppose not."

"Where is Huntingdon?" looking round again.

"Gone out with Grimsby—as you know," said Hattersley suppressing a laugh, which broke forth as he concluded the sentence.

Why did he laugh? Why did Hargrave connect them thus together? Was it true, then?—And was this the dreadful secret he had wished to reveal to me? I must know—and that quickly. I instantly rose and left the room to go in search of Rachel, and demand an explanation of her

words; but Mr. Hargrave followed me into the ante-room, and before I could open its outer door, gently laid his hand upon the lock.

"May I tell you something, Mrs. Huntingdon?" said he, in a subdued tone, with serious, downcast eyes.

"If it be anything worth hearing," replied I, struggling to be composed, for I trembled in every limb.

He quietly pushed a chair towards me. I merely leant my hand upon it, and bid him go on.

"Do not be alarmed," said he: "what I wish to say is nothing in itself; and I will leave you to draw your own inferences from it. You say that Annabella is not yet returned?"

"Yes, yes—go on!" said I, impatiently, for I feared my forced calmness would leave me before the end of his disclosure, whatever it might be.

"And you hear," continued he, "that Huntingdon is gone out with Grimsby?"

"Well?"

"I heard the latter say to your husband—or the man who calls himself so—"

"Go on, sir!"

He bowed submissively, and continued, "I heard him say,—'I shall manage it, you'll see! They're gone down by the water; I shall meet them there, and tell him I want a bit of talk with him about some things that we needn't trouble the lady with; and she'll say she can be walking back to the house; and then I shall apologize, you know, and all that, and tip her a wink to take the way of the shrubbery. I'll keep him talking there, about those matters I mentioned, and anything else I can think of, as long as I can, and then bring him round the other way, stopping to look at the trees, the fields, and anything else I can find to discourse of'" Mr. Hargrave paused, and looked at me.

Without a word of comment or further questioning, I rose, and darted from the room and out of the house. The torment of suspense was not to be endured: I would not suspect my

husband falsely, on this man's accusation, and I would not trust him unworthily—I must know the truth at once. I flew to the shrubbery. Scarcely had I reached it, when a sound of voices arrested my breathless speed.

"We have lingered too long; he will be back," said Lady Lowborough's voice.

"Surely not, dearest!" was *his* reply, "but you can run across the lawn, and get in as quietly as you can: I'll follow in a while."

My knees trembled under me; my brain swam round: I was ready to faint. She must not see me thus. I shrunk among the bushes, and leant against the trunk of a tree to let her pass.

"Ah, Huntingdon!" said she reproachfully, pausing where I had stood with him the night before—"it was here you kissed that woman!" she looked back into the leafy shade. Advancing thence, he answered, with a careless laugh—

"Well, dearest, I couldn't help it. You know I must keep straight with her as long as I can.

Havn't I seen you kiss your dolt of a husband, scores of times?—and do *I* ever complain?"

"But tell me, don't you love her still—a *little?*" said she placing her hand on his arm looking earnestly in his face—for I could see them plainly, the moon shining full upon them from between the branches of the tree that sheltered me.

"Not *one bit*, by all that's sacred!" he replied, kissing her glowing cheek.

"Good heavens, I *must* be gone!" cried she, suddenly breaking from him, and away she flew.

There he stood before me; but I had not strength to confront him now; my tongue cleaved to the roof of my mouth, I was well nigh sinking to the earth, and I almost wondered he did not hear the beating of my heart above the low sighing of the wind, and the fitful rustle of the falling leaves. My senses seemed to fail me, but still I saw his shadowy form pass before me, and through the rushing

sound in my ears, I distinctly heard him say, as he stood looking up the lawn—

"There goes the fool! Run Annabella, run! There—in with you! Ah, he didn't see! That's right Grimsby, keep him back!" And even his low laugh reached me as he walked away.

"God help me now!" I murmured, sinking on my knees among the damp weeds and brushwood that surrounded me, and looking up at the moonlit sky, through the scant foliage above. It seemed all dim and quivering now to my darkened sight. My burning, bursting heart strove to pour forth its agony to God, but could not frame its anguish into prayer; until a gust of wind swept over me, which, while it scattered the dead leaves, like blighted hopes, around, cooled my forehead, and seemed a little to revive my sinking frame. Then, while I lifted up my soul in speechless, earnest application, some heavenly influence seemed to strengthen me within: I breathed more freely; my vision cleared; I saw distinctly the pure moon shining

on, and the light clouds skimming the clear, dark sky; and then, I saw the eternal stars twinkling down upon me; I knew their God was mine, and he was strong to save and swift to hear. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," seemed whispered from above their myriad orbs. No, no; I felt he would not leave me comfortless: in spite of earth and hell I should have strength for all my trials, and win a glorious rest at last!

Refreshed, invigorated if not composed, I rose and returned to the house. Much of my newborn strength and courage forsook me, I confess, as I entered it, and shut out the fresh wind and the glorious sky: everything I saw and heard seemed to sicken my heart—the hall, the lamp, the staircase, the doors of the different apartments, the social sound of talk and laughter from the drawing-room. How could I bear my future life? In this house, among those people—Oh, how could I endure to live! John, just then entered the hall, and seeing me,

told me he had been sent in search of me, adding that he had taken in the tea, and master wished to know if I were coming.

"Ask Mrs. Hattersley to be so kind as to make the tea, John," said I. "Say I am not well to-night, and wish to be excused."

I retired into the large, empty dining-room, where all was silence and darkness, but for the soft sighing of the wind without, and the faint gleam of moonlight that pierced the blinds and curtains; and there I walked rapidly up and down, thinking of my bitter thoughts alone. How different was this from the evening of yesterday! *That* it seems, was the last expiring flash of my life's happiness. Poor, blinded fool that I was, to be so happy! I could now see the reason of Arthur's strange reception of me in the shrubbery: the burst of kindness was for his paramour, the start of horror for his wife. Now, too I could better understand the conversation between Hattersley and Grimsby: it was doubtless of his love for *her* they spoke, not for me.

I heard the drawing-room door open : a light quick step came out of the ante-room, crossed the hall, and ascended the stairs. It was Milicent, poor Milicent, gone to see how I was—no one else cared for me ; but *she* still was kind. I shed no tears before, but now they came—fast and free. Thus she did me good, without approaching me. Disappointed in her search, I heard her come down—more slowly than she had ascended. Would she come in there, and find me out? No; she turned in the opposite direction and re-entered the drawing-room. I was glad, for I knew not how to meet her, or what to say. I wanted no confidant in my distress. I deserved none—and I wanted none. I had taken the burden upon myself: let me bear it alone.

As the usual hour of retirement approached, I dried my eyes, and tried to clear my voice and calm my mind. I must see Arthur to-night, and speak to him ; but I would do it calmly : there should be no scene—nothing to

complain or to boast of to his companions—nothing to laugh at with his lady love. When the company were retiring to their chambers, I gently opened the door, and just as he passed, I beckoned him in.

"What's to do with *you*, Helen?" said he. "Why couldn't you come to make tea for us? and what the deuce are you here for, in the dark? What ails you, young woman—you look like a ghost?" he continued, surveying me by the light of his candle.

"No matter," I answered—"to you — you have no longer any regard for me, it appears; and I have no longer any for you."

"Hal-low! what the devil is this?" he muttered.

"I would leave you to-morrow," continued I, "and never again come under this roof, but for my child"—I paused a moment to steady my voice.

"What in the devil's name *is* this, Helen?" cried he. "What can you be driving at?"

"You know, perfectly well. Let us waste no time in useless explanation, but tell me, will you—"

He vehemently swore he knew nothing about it, and insisted upon hearing what poisonous old woman had been blackening his name, and what infamous lies I had been fool enough to believe.

"Spare yourself the trouble of forswearing yourself and racking your brains to stifle truth with falsehood," I coldly replied. "I have trusted to the testimony of no third person. I was in the shrubbery this evening, and I saw and heard for myself."

This was enough. He uttered a suppressed explanation of consternation and dismay, and muttering, "I *shall* catch it now!" set down his candle on the nearest chair, and, rearing his back against the wall, stood confronting me with folded arms.

"Well! — what then?" said he, with the

calm insolence of mingled shamelessness and desperation.

"Only this," returned I: "will you let me take our child and what remains of my fortune, and go?"

"Go where?"

"Anywhere, where he will be safe from your contaminating influence, and I shall be delivered from your presence—and you from mine."

"No—by *Jove* I won't!"

"Will you let me have the child then, without the money?"

"No—nor yourself without the child. Do you think I'm going to be made the talk of the country, for your fastidious caprices?"

"Then I must stay here, to be hated and despised—But henceforth, we are husband and wife only in the name."

"Very good."

"I am your child's mother, and *your* housekeeper—nothing more. So you need not trou-

ble yourself any longer, to feign the love you cannot feel: I will exact no more heartless caresses from you—nor offer—nor endure them either—I will not be mocked with the empty husk of conjugal endearments, when you have given the substance to another!"

"Very good—if *you* please. We shall see who will tire first, my lady."

"If I tire, it will be of living in the world with you; not of living without your mockery of love. When *you* tire of your sinful ways, and show yourself truly repentant, I will forgive you—and, perhaps, try to love you again, though that will be hard indeed."

"Humph!—and meantime, you will go and talk me over to Mrs. Hargrave, and write long letters to aunt Maxwell to complain of the wicked wretch you have married?"

"I shall complain to no one. Hitherto, I have struggled hard to hide your vices from every eye, and invest you with virtues you never possessed—but now you must look to yourself."

I left him—muttering bad language to himself, and went up stairs.

"You are poorly Ma'am," said Rachel, surveying me with deep anxiety.

"It is too true, Rachel!" said I, answering her sad looks rather than her words.

"I knew it—or I wouldn't have mentioned such a thing."

"But don't *you* trouble yourself about it," said I, kissing her pale, time-wasted cheek—"I can bear it—better than you imagine."

"Yes, you were always for 'bearing'—But if I was you I wouldn't bear it—I'd give way to it, and cry right hard!—and I'd talk too, I just *would*—I'd let him know what it was to—"

"I have talked," said I: "I've said enough."

"Then I'd cry," persisted she. "I wouldn't look so white and so calm, and burst my heart with keeping it in!"

"I *have* cried," said I, smiling in spite of my misery; "and I *am* calm now, really, so don't discompose me again, nurse: let us say

no more about it—and *don't* mention it to the servants. — There, you may go now. Good night ;—and don't disturb your rest for me : I shall sleep well—if I can."

Notwithstanding this resolution, I found my bed so intolerable that, before two o'clock, I rose, and, lighting my candle by the rushlight that was still burning, I got my desk and sat down in my dressing-gown to recount the events of the past evening. It was better to be so occupied than to be lying in bed torturing my brain with recollections of the far past and anticipations of the dreadful future. I have found relief in describing the very circumstances that have destroyed my peace, as well as the little trivial details attendant upon their discovery. No sleep I could have got this night would have done so much towards composing my mind, and preparing me to meet the trials of the day—I fancy so, at least ;—and yet, when I cease writing, I find my head aches terribly ; and when I look into the glass I am startled at my haggard, worn appearance.

Rachel has been to dress me, and says I have had a sad night of it she can see. Milicent has just looked in to ask me how I was. I told her I was better, but to excuse my appearance admitted I had had a restless night. —I wish this day were over! I shudder at the thoughts of going down to breakfast—How shall I encounter them all?—Yet let me remember it is not *I* that am guilty: *I* have no cause to fear; and if *they* scorn me as the victim of their guilt, I can pity their folly and despise their scorn.

CHAPTER XV.

CONCEALMENT.

EVENING. Breakfast passed well over, I was calm and cool throughout. I answered composedly all enquiries respecting my health; and whatever was unusual in my look or manner, was generally attributed to the trifling indisposition that had occasioned my early retirement last night. But how am I to get over the ten or twelve days that must yet elapse before they go? Yet why so long for their departure? When they *are* gone how shall I get through the months or years of my future

life, in company with that man—my greatest enemy—for none could injure me as he has done? Oh! when I think how fondly, how foolishly I have loved him, how madly I have trusted him, how constantly I have laboured, and studied, and prayed, and struggled for his advantage; and how cruelly he has trampled on my love, betrayed my trust, scorned my prayers and tears, and efforts for his preservation—crushed my hopes, destroyed my youth's best feelings, and doomed me to a life of hopeless misery—as far as man can do it—it is not enough to say that I no longer love my husband—I HATE him! The word stares me in the face like a guilty confession, but it is true: I hate him—I hate him!—But God have mercy on his miserable soul!—and make him see and feel his guilt—I ask no other vengeance! if he could but fully know and truly feel my wrongs, I should be well avenged; and I could freely pardon all; but he is so lost, so hardened in his heartless depravity that, in this life, I be-

lieve he never will. But it is useless dwelling on this theme: let me seek once more to dissipate reflection in the minor details of passing events.

Mr. Hargrave has annoyed me all day long with his serious, sympathizing, and (as *he* thinks) unobtrusive politeness—if it were more obtrusive it would trouble me less, for then I could snub him; but, as it is, he contrives to appear so really kind and thoughtful that I cannot do so without rudeness and seeming ingratitude. I sometimes think I ought to give him credit for the good feeling he simulates so well; and then again, I think it is my *duty* to suspect him under the peculiar circumstances in which I am placed. His kindness may not all be feigned, but still, let not the purest impulse of gratitude to him, induce me to forget myself; let me remember the game of chess, the expressions he used on the occasion, and those indescribable looks of his, that so justly roused my indignation, and I think I shall be

safe enough. I have done well to record them so minutely.

I think he wishes to find an opportunity of speaking to me alone: he has seemed to be on the watch all day! but I have taken care to disappoint him; not that I fear anything he could say, but I have trouble enough without the addition of his insulting consolations, condolences, or whatever else he might attempt; and, for Milicent's sake, I do not wish to quarrel with him. He excused himself from going out to shoot with the other gentlemen in the morning, under the pretext of having letters to write; and instead of retiring for that purpose into the library, he sent for his desk into the morning-room where I was seated with Milicent and Lady Lowborough. They had betaken themselves to their work; I, less to divert my mind than to deprecate conversation, had provided myself with a book. Milicent saw that I wished to be quiet, and accordingly let me alone. Annabella, doubtless, saw it too; but

that was no reason why she should restrain her tongue, or curb her cheerful spirits: *she* accordingly chatted away, addressing herself almost exclusively to me, and with the utmost assurance and familiarity, growing the more animated and friendly, the colder and briefer my answers became. Mr. Hargrave saw that I could ill endure it; and, looking up from his desk, he answered her questions and observations for me, as far as he could, and attempted to transfer her social attentions from me to himself; but it would not do. Perhaps, she thought I had a headache and could not bear to talk—at any rate, she saw that her loquacious vivacity annoyed me as I could tell by the malicious pertinacity with which she persisted. But I checked it, effectually, by putting into her hand the book I had been trying to read, on the fly leaf of which I had hastily scribbled,—

"I am too well acquainted with your character and conduct to feel any real friendship for you, and, as I am without your talent for dissimulation, I cannot assume the appearance

of it. I must, therefore, beg that hereafter, all familiar intercourse may cease between us; and if I still continue to treat you with civility, as if you were a woman worthy of consideration and respect, understand that it is out of regard for your cousin Milicent's feelings, not for yours."

Upon perusing this, she turned scarlet and bit her lip. Covertly tearing away the leaf, she crumpled it up and put it in the fire, and then employed herself in turning over the pages of the book and, really or apparently, perusing its contents. In a little while Milicent announced it her intention to repair to the nursery, and asked if I would accompany her.

"Annabella will excuse us," said she, "she's busy reading."

"No, I won't," cried Annabella, suddenly looking up and throwing her book on the table. "I want to speak to Helen a minute. You may go Milicent, and she'll follow in a while." (Milicent went.) "Will you oblige me, Helen?" continued she.

Her impudence astounded me; but I complied, and followed her into the library. She closed the door, and walked up to the fire.

"Who told you this?" said she.

"No one: I am not incapable of seeing for myself."

"Ah, you are suspicious!" cried she, smiling with a gleam of hope—hitherto, there had been a kind of desperation in her hardihood; now she was evidently relieved.

"If I *were* suspicious," I replied, "I should have discovered your infamy long before. No, Lady Lowborough, I do not found my charge upon suspicion."

"On what *do* you found it then?" said she, throwing herself into an arm-chair, and stretching out her feet to the fender, with an obvious effort to appear composed.

"I enjoy a moonlight ramble as well as you," I answered, steadily fixing my eyes upon her: "and the shrubbery happens to be one of my favourite resorts."

She coloured again, excessively, and remained silent, pressing her finger against her teeth, and gazing into the fire. I watched her a few moments with a feeling of malevolent gratification; then, moving towards the door, I calmly asked if she had anything more to say.

"Yes, yes!" cried she eagerly, starting up from her reclining posture. "I want to know if you will tell Lord Lowborough?"

"Suppose I do?"

"Well, if you are disposed to publish the matter, *I* cannot dissuade you, of course—but there will be terrible work if you do—and if you don't, I shall think you the most generous of mortal beings—and if there is anything in the world I can do for you—anything short of —" she hesitated.

"Short of renouncing your guilty connection with my husband, I suppose you mean," said I.

She paused, in evident disconcertion and

perplexity, mingled with anger she dared not show.

"I cannot renounce what is dearer than life," she muttered in a low, hurried tone. Then, suddenly raising her head and fixing her gleaming eyes upon me, she continued earnestly, "But Helen—or Mrs. Huntingdon, or whatever you would have me call you—*will* you tell him? If you are generous, here is a fitting opportunity for the exercise of your magnanimity: if you are proud, here am I—your rival—ready to acknowledge myself your debtor for an act of the most noble forbearance."

"I shall not tell him."

"You will not!" cried she delightedly. "Accept my sincere thanks, then!"

She sprang up, and offered me her hand. I drew back.

"Give me no thanks; it is not for *your* sake that I refrain. Neither is it an act of any forbearance: I have no wish to publish your

shame. I should be sorry to distress your husband with the knowledge of it."

"And Milicent? will you tell her?"

"No, on the contrary I shall do my utmost to conceal it from her. I would not for much that she should know the infamy and disgrace of her relation!"

"You use hard words, Mrs. Huntingdon—but I can pardon you."

"And now Lady Lowborough," continued I, "let me counsel you to leave this house as soon as *possible.* You must be aware that your continuance here is excessively disagreeable to me—not for Mr. Huntingdon's sake," said I, observing the dawn of a malicious smile of triumph on her face—"You are welcome to him, if you like him, as far as *I* am concerned—but because it is painful to be always disguising my true sentiments respecting you, and straining to keep up an appearance of civility and respect towards one for whom I have not the most distant shadow of esteem;

and because, if you stay, your conduct cannot possibly remain concealed much longer from the only two persons in the house who do not know it already. And, for your husband's sake, Annabella, and even for your own, I wish—I earnestly advise and *entreat* you to break off this unlawful connection at once, and return to your duty while you may, before the dreadful consequences--"

"Yes, yes, of course," said she, interrupting me with a gesture of impatience.—"But I cannot go, Helen, before the time appointed for our departure. What possible pretext could I frame for such a thing? Whether I proposed going back alone—which Lowborough would not hear of—or taking him with me, the very circumstance itself, would be certain to excite suspicion — and when our visit is so *nearly* at an end too—little more than a week —surely, you can endure my presence *so* long! I will not annoy you with any more of my friendly impertinences."

"Well! I have nothing more to say to you."

"Have you mentioned this affair to Huntingdon?" asked she, as I was leaving the room.

"How dare you mention his name to me!" was the only answer I gave.

No words have passed between us since, but such as outward decency or pure necessity demanded.

CHAPTER XVI.

PROVOCATIONS.

NINETEENTH.—In proportion as Lady Lowborough finds she has nothing to fear from me, and as the time of departure draws nigh, the more audacious and insolent she becomes. She does not scruple to speak to my husband with affectionate familiarity in my presence, when no one else is by, and is particularly fond of displaying her interest in his health and welfare, or in anything that concerns him, as if for the purpose of contrasting her kind solicitude with my cold indifference. And he re-

wards her by such smiles and glances, such whispered words, or boldly spoken insinuations, indicative of his sense of her goodness and my neglect, as makes the blood rush into my face, in spite of myself—for I would be utterly regardless of it all—deaf and blind to everything that passes between them, since the more I show myself sensible of their wickedness, the more she triumphs in her victory, and the more he flatters himself that I love him devotedly still, in spite of my pretended indifference. On such occasions I have sometimes been startled by a subtle, fiendish suggestion inciting me to show him the contrary by a seeming encouragement of Hargrave's advances; but such ideas are banished in a moment with horror and self-abasement; and then I hate him tenfold more than ever, for having brought me to this!—God pardon me for it—and all my sinful thoughts! Instead of being humbled and purified by my afflictions, I feel that they are turning my nature into gall. This must be my

fault as much as theirs that wrong me. No true christian could cherish such bitter feelings as I do against him and her—especially the latter: him, I still feel that I could pardon—freely, gladly—on the slightest token of repentance; but *she*—words cannot utter my abhorence. Reason forbids, but passion urges strongly; and I must pray and struggle long ere I subdue it.

It is well that she is leaving to-morrow, for I could not well endure her presence for another day. This morning, she rose earlier than usual. I found her in the room alone, when I went down to breakfast.

"Oh Helen! is it you?" said she, turning as I entered.

I gave an involuntary start back on seeing her, at which she uttered a short laugh, observing,—

"I think we are *both* disappointed."

I came forward and busied myself with the breakfast-things.

"This is the last day I shall burden your hospitality," said she, as she seated herself at the table. "Ah, here comes one that will not rejoice at it!" she murmured, half to herself, as Arthur entered the room.

He shook hands with her and wished her good morning: then, looking lovingly in her face, and still retaining her hand in his, murmured pathetically,—

"The last—last day!"

"Yes," said she with some asperity; "and I rose early to make the best of it—I have been here alone this half hour, and *you*, you lazy creature—"

"Well, I thought I was early too," said he—"but," dropping his voice almost to a whisper, "you see we are not alone."

"We never are," returned she. But they were almost as good as alone, for I was now standing at the window, watching the clouds, and struggling to suppress my wrath.

Some more words passed between them,

which, happily, I did not overhear; but Annabella had the audacity to come and place herself beside me, and even to put her hand upon my shoulder and say softly,—

"You need not grudge him to me, Helen, for I love him more than ever you could do."

This put me beside myself. I took her hand and violently dashed it from me, with an expression of abhorrence and indignation that could not be suppressed. Startled, almost appalled, by this sudden outbreak, she recoiled in silence. I would have given way to my fury and said more, but Arthur's low laugh recalled me to myself. I checked the half-uttered invective, and scornfully turned away, regretting that I had given him so much amusement. He was still laughing when Mr. Hargrave made his appearance. How much of the scene he had witnessed I do not know, for the door was ajar when he entered. He greeted his host and his cousin both coldly, and me with a glance intended to express the deepest sympathy mingled with high admiration and esteem.

"How much allegiance do you owe to that man?" he asked below his breath, as he stood beside me at the window, affecting to be making observations on the weather.

"None," I answered. And immediately returning to the table, I employed myself in making the tea. He followed, and would have entered into some kind of conversation with me, but the other guests were now beginning to assemble and I took no more notice of him, except to give him his coffee.

After breakfast, determined to pass as little of the day as possible in company with Lady Lowborough, I quietly stole away from the company and retired to the library. Mr. Hargrave followed me thither, under pretence of coming for a book; and first, turning to the shelves, he selected a volume; and then, quietly, but by no means timidly, approaching me, he stood beside me, resting his hand on the back of my chair, and said softly,—

"And so you consider yourself free, at last?"

"Yes," said I, without moving, or raising my eyes from my book,—free to do anything but offend God and my conscience."

There was a momentary pause.

"Very right," said he; "provided your conscience be not too morbidly tender, and your ideas of God not too erroneously severe; but can you suppose it would offend that benevolent Being to make the happiness of one who would die for yours?—to raise a devoted heart from purgatorial torments to a state of heavenly bliss when you could do it without the slightest injury to yourself or any other?"

This was spoken in a low, earnest, melting tone as he bent over me. I now raised my head; and, steadily confronting his gaze, I answered calmly,—

"Mr. Hargrave, do you mean to insult me?"

He was not prepared for this. He paused a moment to recover the shock; then, drawing himself up and removing his hand from my chair, he answered, with proud sadness,—

"That was not my intention."

I just glanced towards the door, with a slight movement of the head, and then returned to my book. He immediately withdrew. This was better than if I had answered with more words, and in the passionate spirit to which my first impulse would have prompted. What a good thing it is to be able to command one's temper! I must labour to cultivate this inestimable quality: God, only, knows how often I shall need it in this rough, dark road that lies before me.

In the course of the morning, I drove over to the grove with the two ladies, to give Milicent an opportunity for bidding farewell to her mother and sister. They persuaded her to stay with them the rest of the day, Mrs. Hargrave promising to bring her back in the evening and remain till the party broke up on the morrow. Consequently, Lady Lowborough and I had the pleasure of returning *tête-à-tête* in the carriage together. For the first mile or two, we

kept silence, I looking out of my window, and she leaning back in her corner. But I was not going to restrict myself to any particular position for her: when I was tired of leaning forward, with the cold, raw wind in my face; and surveying the russet hedges, and the damp, tangled grass of their banks, I gave it up, and leant back too. With her usual impudence, my companion then made some attempts to get up a conversation; but the monosyllables 'yes,' or 'no,' or 'humph,' were the utmost her several remarks could elicit from me. At last, on her asking my opinion upon some immaterial point of discussion, I answered,—

"Why do you wish to talk to me, Lady Lowborough?—you must know what I think of you."

"Well, if you *will* be so bitter against me," replied she, "I can't help it;—but *I'm* not going to sulk for anybody."

Our short drive was now at an end. As soon as the carriage door was opened, she

sprang out, and went down the park to meet the gentlemen, who were just returning from the woods. Of course I did not follow.

But I had not done with her impudence yet: — after dinner, I retired to the drawing-room, as usual, and she accompanied me, but I had the two children with me, and I gave them my whole attention, and determined to keep them till the gentlemen came, or till Milicent arrived with her mother. Little Helen, however, was soon tired of playing, and insisted upon going to sleep; and while I sat on the sofa with her on my knee, and Arthur seated beside me, gently playing with her soft, flaxen hair,—Lady Lowborough composedly came and placed herself on the other side.

"To-morrow, Mrs. Huntingdon," said she, "you will be delivered from my presence, which, no doubt, you will be very glad of—it is natural you should;—but do you know I have rendered you a great service?—Shall I tell you what it is?"

"I shall be glad to hear of any service you

have rendered me," said I, determined to be calm, for I knew by the tone of her voice she wanted to provoke me.

"Well," resumed she, "have you not observed this salutary change in Mr. Huntingdon? Don't you see what a sober, temperate man he is become? You saw with regret the sad habits he was contracting, I know; and I know you did your utmost to deliver him from them,—but without success, until I came to your assistance. I told him, in few words, that I could not bear to see him degrade himself so, and that I should cease to — no matter what I told him,—but you see the reformation I have wrought; and you ought to thank me for it."

I rose, and rang for the nurse.

"But I desire no thanks," she continued, "all the return I ask is, that you will take care of him when I am gone, and not, by harshness and neglect, drive him back to his old courses."

I was almost sick with passion, but Rachel was now at the door: I pointed to the children, for I could not trust myself to speak: she took them away, and I followed.

"Will you, Helen?" continued the speaker.

I gave her a look that blighted the malicious smile on her face—or checked it, at least for a moment—and departed. In the ante-room I met Mr. Hargrave. He saw I was in no humour to be spoken to, and suffered me to pass without a word; but when, after a few minutes' seclusion in the library, I had regained my composure, and was returning, to join Mrs. Hargrave and Milicent, whom I had just heard come down stairs and go into the drawing-room,—I found him there still, lingering in the dimly lighted apartment, and evidently waiting for me.

"Mrs. Huntingdon," said he as I passed, "will you allow me one word?"

"What is it then?—be quick if you please."

"I offended you this morning; and I cannot live under your displeasure."

"Then, go, and sin no more," replied I, turning away.

"No, no!" said he hastily, setting himself before me—"Pardon me, but I must have your forgiveness. I leave you to-morrow, and I may not have an opportunity of speaking to you again. I was wrong, to forget myself—and you, as I did; but let me implore you to forget and forgive my rash presumption, and think of me as if those words had never been spoken; for, believe me, I regret them deeply, and the loss of your esteem is too severe a penalty—I cannot bear it."

"Forgetfulness is not to be purchased with a wish; and I cannot bestow my esteem on all who desire it, unless they deserve it too."

"I shall think my life well spent in labouring to deserve it, if you will but pardon this offence—Will you?"

"Yes."

"Yes? but that is coldly spoken. Give me your hand and I'll believe you.—You won't? Then, Mrs. Huntingdon, you do *not* forgive me!"

"Yes—here it is, and my forgiveness with it: only—*sin no more.*"

He pressed my cold hand with sentimental fervour, but said nothing, and stood aside to let me pass into the room, where all the company were now assembled. Mr. Grimsby was seated near the door: on seeing me enter almost immediately followed by Hargrave, he leered at me, with a glance of intolerable significance, as I passed. I looked him in the face, till he sullenly turned away, if not *ashamed*, at least *confounded* for the moment. Meantime, Hattersley had seized Hargrave by the arm, and was whispering something in his ear —some coarse joke, no doubt, for the latter neither laughed nor spoke in answer, but, turning from him with a slight curl of the lip, disengaged himself and went to his mother,

who was telling Lord Lowborough how many reasons she had to be proud of her son.

Thank Heaven, they are all going to-morrow.

CHAPTER XVII.

DUAL SOLITUDE.

DECEMBER 20th, 1824. — This is the third anniversary of our felicitous union. It is now two months since our guests left us to the enjoyment of each other's society; and I have had nine weeks' experience of this new phase of conjugal life—two persons living together, as master and mistress of the house, and father and mother of a winsome, merry little child, with the mutual understanding that there is no love, friendship, or sympathy between them. As far as in me lies, I endeavour to live peace-

ably with him: I treat him with unimpeachable civility, give up my convenience to his, wherever it may reasonably be done, and consult him in a business-like way on household affairs, deferring to his pleasure and judgment, even when I know the latter to be inferior to my own.

As for him: for the first week or two, he was peevish and low—fretting, I suppose, over his dear Annabella's departure—and particularly ill-tempered to me: everything I did was wrong; I was cold-hearted, hard, insensate; my sour, pale face was perfectly repulsive; my voice made him shudder; he knew not how he could live through the winter with me; I should kill him by inches. Again I proposed a separation, but it would not do: he was not going to be the talk of all the old gossips in the neighbourhood: he would not have it said that he was such a brute his wife could not live with him; —no; he must contrive to bear with me.

"I must contrive to bear with *you* you mean,"

said I, "for as long as I discharge my functions of steward and housekeeper, so conscienciously and well, without pay and without thanks, you cannot afford to part with me. I shall therefore remit these duties when my bondage becomes intolerable." This threat, I thought, would serve to keep him in check, if anything would.

I believe he was much disappointed that I did not feel his offensive sayings more accutely, for when he had said anything particularly well calculated to hurt my feelings, he would stare me searchingly in the face, and then grumble against my "marble heart," or my "brutal insensibility." If I had bitterly wept, and deplored his lost affection, he would, perhaps, have condescended to pity me, and taken me into favour for a while, just to comfort his solitude and console him for the absence of his beloved Annabella, until he could meet her again, or some more fitting substitute. Thank heaven, I am not so weak as that! I was in-

fatuated once, with a foolish, besotted affection, that clung to him in spite of his unworthiness, but it is fairly gone now—wholly crushed and withered away; and he has none but himself and his vices to thank for it.

At first, (in compliance with his sweet lady's injunctions, I suppose) he abstained wonderfully well from seeking to solace his cares in wine; but at length he began to relax his virtuous efforts, and now and then exceeded a little, and still continues to do so - nay, sometimes, *not* a little. When he is under the exciting influence of these excesses, he sometimes fires up and attempts to play the brute; and then I take little pains to suppress my scorn and disgust: when he is under the *depressing* influence of the after consequences, he bemoans his sufferings and his errors, and charges them both upon me; he knows such indulgence injures his health, and does him more harm than good; but he says I drive him to it by my unnatural, unwomanly conduct; it will be the ruin of him

in the end, but it is all my fault;—and *then*, I am roused to defend myself—sometimes, with bitter recrimination. This is a kind of injustice I cannot patiently endure. Have I not laboured long and hard to save him from this very vice? would I not labour still, to deliver him from it, if I could? But could I do so by fawning upon him and caressing him when I know that he scorns me? Is it *my* fault that I have lost my influence with him, or that he has forfeited every claim to my regard? And should I seek a reconciliation with him, when I feel that I abhor him, and that he despises me?—and while he continues still to correspond with Lady Lowborough, as I know he does? No, never, never, never!—he may drink himself dead, but it is NOT my fault!

Yet I do my part to save him still: I give him to understand that drinking makes his eyes dull, and his face red and bloated; and that it tends to render him imbecile in body and mind; and if Annabella were to see him as often as I

do, she would speedily be disenchanted; and that she certainly will withdraw her favour from him, if he continues such courses. Such a mode of admonition wins only coarse abuse for me—and indeed I almost feel as if I deserved it, for I hate to use such arguments, but they sink into his stupified heart, and make him pause, and ponder, and abstain, more than anything else I could say.

At present, I am enjoying a temporary relief from his presence: he is gone with Hargrave to join a distant hunt, and will probably not be back before to-morrow evening. How differently I used to feel his absence!

Mr. Hargrave is still at the Grove. He and Arthur frequently meet to pursue their rural sports together: he often calls upon us here, and Arthur not unfrequently rides over to him. I do not think either of these soi-disant friends is overflowing with love for the other; but such intercourse serves to get the time on, and I am very willing it should continue, as it saves me

some hours of discomfort in Arthur's society, and gives him some better employment than the sottish indulgence of his sensual appetites. The only objection I have to Mr. Hargrave's being in the neighbourhood, is that the fear of meeting him at the Grove, prevents me from seeing his sister so often as I otherwise should; for, of late he has conducted himself towards me with such unerring propriety that I have almost forgotten his former conduct. I suppose he is striving to 'win my esteem.' If he continue to act in this way, he *may* win it;—but what then? the moment he attempts to demand anything more, he will lose it again.

February 10th.—It is a hard, embittering thing to have one's kind feelings and good intentions cast back in one's teeth. I was beginning to relent towards my wretched partner —to pity his forlorn, comfortless condition, unalleviated as it is by the consolations of intellectual resources and the answer of a good conscience towards God—and to think I ought

to sacrifice my pride, and renew my efforts once again to make his home agreeable and lead him back to the path of virtue; not by false professions of love, and not by pretended remorse, but by mitigating my habitual coldness of manner, and commuting my frigid civility into kindness wherever an opportunity occurred; and not only was I beginning to think so, but I had already begun to act upon the thought—and what was the result? No answering spark of kindness—no awakening penitence, but an unappeasable ill-humour and a spirit of tyrannous exaction that increased with indulgence, and a lurking gleam of self-complacent triumph, at every detection of relenting softness in my manner, that congealed me to marble again as often as it recurred; and this morning he finished the business:—I think the petrifaction is so completely effected at last, that nothing can melt me again. Among his letters was one which he perused with symptoms of unusual gratification, and then

threw across the table to me, with the admonition,—

"There! read that, and take a lesson by it!"

It was in the free, dashing hand of Lady Lowborough. I glanced at the first page; it seemed full of extravagant protestations of affection; impetuous longings for a speedy reunion; and impious defiance of God's mandates, and railings against his providence for having cast their lot asunder, and doomed them both to the hateful bondage of alliance with those they could not love. He gave a slight titter on seeing me change colour. I folded up the letter, rose, and returned it to him, with no remark but,—

"Thank you—I *will* take a lesson by it!"

My little Arthur was standing between his knees, delightedly playing with the bright, ruby ring on his finger. Urged by a sudden, imperative impulse to deliver my son from that contaminating influence, I caught him up in

my arms and carried him with me out of the room. Not liking this abrupt removal, the child began to pout and cry. This was a new stab to my already tortured heart. I would not let him go; but, taking him with me into the library, I shut the door, and, kneeling on the floor beside him, I embraced him, kissed him, wept over him with passionate fondness. Rather frightened than consoled by this, he turned struggling from me and cried out aloud for his papa. I released him from my arms, and never were more bitter tears than those that now concealed him from my blinded, burning eyes. Hearing his cries, the father came to the room. I instantly turned away lest he should see and misconstrue my emotion. He swore at me, and took the now pacified child away.

It is hard that my little darling should love him more than me; and that, when the well-being and culture of my son is all I have to live for, I should see my influence destroyed

by one whose selfish affection is more injurious than the coldest indifference or the harshest tyranny could be. If I, for his good, deny him some trifling indulgence, he goes to his father, and the latter, in spite of his selfish indolence, will even give himself some trouble to meet the child's desires: if I attempt to curb his will, or look gravely on him for some act of childish disobedience, he knows his other parent will smile and take his part against me. Thus, not only have I the father's spirit in the son to contend against, the germs of his evil tendencies to search out and irradicate, and his corrupting intercourse and example in after life to counteract, but already *he* counteracts my arduous labour for the child's advantage, destroys my influence over his tender mind, and robs me of his very love;—I had no earthly hope but this, and he seems to take a diabolical delight in tearing it away.

But it is wrong to despair; I will remember the counsel of the inspired writer to him "that

feareth the Lord and obeyeth the voice of his servant, that *sitteth in darkness and hath no light;*—let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE NEIGHBOUR AGAIN.

DECEMBER 20th, 1825.—Another year is past; and I am weary of this life. And yet, I cannot wish to leave it: whatever afflictions assail me here, I cannot wish to go and leave my darling in this dark and wicked world alone, without a friend to guide him through its weary mazes, to warn him of its thousand snares, and guard him from the perils that beset him on every hand. I am not well fitted to be his only companion, I know; but there is no other to supply my place. I am too grave to minister

to his amusements and enter into his infantile sports as a nurse or a mother ought to do, and often his bursts of gleeful merriment trouble and alarm me; I see in them his father's spirit and temperament, and I tremble for the consequences; and, too often, damp the innocent mirth I ought to share. That father on the contrary has no weight of sadness on his mind —is troubled with no fears, no scruples concerning his son's future welfare; and at evenings especially, the times when the child sees him the most and the oftenest, he is always particularly jocund and open-hearted: ready to laugh and to jest with anything or anybody —but me—and I am particularly silent and sad: therefore, of course, the child dotes upon his seemingly joyous, amusing, ever indulgent papa, and will at any time gladly exchange my company for his. This disturbs me greatly; not so much for the sake of my son's affection (though I do prize that highly, and though I feel it is my right, and know I have done much

to earn it,) as for that influence over him which, for his own advantage, I would strive to purchase and retain, and which for very spite his father delights to rob me of, and, from motives of mere idle egotism, is pleased to win to himself; making no use of it but to torment me, and ruin the child. My only consolation is, that he spends comparatively little of his time at home, and, during the months he passes in London or elsewhere, I have a chance of recovering the ground I had lost, and overcoming with good the evil he has wrought by his wilful mismanagement. But then it is a bitter trial to behold him, on his return, doing his utmost to subvert my labours and transform my innocent, affectionate, tractable darling into a selfish, disobedient, and mischievous boy; thereby preparing the soil for those vices he has so successfully cultivated in his own perverted nature.

Happily, there were none of Arthur's "friends" invited to Grass-dale last autumn:

he took himself off to visit some of them instead. I wish he would always do so, and I wish his friends were numerous and loving enough to keep him amongst them all the year round. Mr. Hargrave, considerably to my annoyance, did not go with him; but I think I have done with that gentleman at last.

For seven or eight months, he behaved so remarkably well, and managed so skilfully too' that I was almost completely off my guard, and was really beginning to look upon him as a friend, and even to treat him as such, with certain prudent restrictions (which I deemed scarcely necessary); when, presuming upon my unsuspecting kindness, he thought he might venture to overstep the bounds of decent moderation and propriety that had so long retained him. It was on a pleasant evening at the close of May: I was wandering in the park, and he, on seeing me there as he rode past, made bold to enter and approach me, dismounting and leaving his horse at the gate.

This was the first time he had ventured to come within its inclosure since I had been left alone, without the sanction of his mother's or sister's company, or at least the excuse of a message from them. But he managed to appear so calm and easy, so respectful and self-possessed in his friendliness, that, though a little surprised, I was neither alarmed nor offended at the unusual liberty, and he walked with me under the ash trees and by the water-side, and talked, with considerable animation, good taste, and intelligence, on many subjects, before I began to think about getting rid of him. Then, after a pause, during which we both stood gazing on the calm, blue water; I revolving in my mind the best means of politely dismissing my companion, he, no doubt, pondering other matters equally alien to the sweet sights and sounds that alone were present to his senses,— he suddenly electrified me by beginning, in a peculiar tone, low, soft, but perfectly distinct, to pour forth the most unequivocal expressions

of earnest and passionate love; pleading his cause with all the bold yet artful eloquence he could summon to his aid. But I cut short his appeal, and repulsed him so determinately, so decidedly, and with such a mixture of scornful indignation tempered with cool, dispassionate sorrow and pity for his benighted mind, that he withdrew, astonished, mortified, and discomforted; and, a few days after, I heard that he had departed for London. He returned however in eight or nine weeks—and, did not entirely keep aloof from me, but comported himself in so remarkable a manner that his quick-sighted sister could not fail to notice the change.

"What have you done to Walter, Mrs. Huntingdon?" said she one morning, when I had called at the Grove, and he had just left the room after exchanging a few words of the coldest civility. "He has been so extremely ceremonious and stately of late, I can't imagine what it is all about, unless you have de-

sperately offended him. Tell me what it is, that I may be your mediator, and make you friends again."

"I have done nothing willingly to offend him," said I. "If he is offended, he can best tell you himself what it is about."

"I'll ask him," cried the giddy girl, springing up and putting her head out of the window; "he's only in the garden—Walter!"

"No, no, Esther! you will seriously displease me if you do; and I shall leave you immediately, and not come again for months—perhaps years."

"Did you call, Esther?" said her brother, approaching the window from without.

"Yes; I wanted to ask you—"

"Good morning, Esther," said I, taking her hand and giving it a severe squeeze.

"To ask you," continued she, "to get me a rose for Mrs. Huntingdon." He departed. "Mrs. Huntingdon," she exclaimed, turning to me and still holding me fast by the hand,

"I'm quite shocked at you — you're just as angry, and distant, and cold as he is: and I'm determined you shall be as good friends as ever, before you go."

"Esther, how can you be so rude!" cried Mrs. Hargrave, who was seated gravely knitting in her easy chair. "Surely, you never *will* learn to conduct yourself like a lady!"

"Well mamma, you said, yourself—" But the young lady was silenced by the uplifted finger of her mamma, accompanied with a very stern shake of the head.

"Isn't she cross?" whispered she to me; but, before I could add my share of reproof, Mr. Hargrave reappeared at the window with a beautiful moss rose in his hand.

"Here, Esther, I've brought you the rose," said he, extending it towards her.

"Give it her yourself, you blockhead?" cried she, recoiling with a spring from between us.

"Mrs. Huntingdon would rather receive it from you," replied he in a very serious tone,

but lowering his voice that his mother might not hear. His sister took the rose and gave it to me.

"My brother's compliments, Mrs. Huntingdon, and he hopes you and he will come to a better understanding by and by.—Will that do, Walter?" added the saucy girl, turning to him and putting her arm round his neck, as he stood leaning upon the sill of the window—"or should I have said that you are sorry you were so touchy? or that you hope she will pardon your offence?"

"You silly girl! you don't know what you are talking about," replied he gravely.

"Indeed I don't; for I'm quite in the dark."

"Now Esther," interposed Mrs. Hargrave, who, if equally benighted on the subject of our estrangement, saw at least that her daughter was behaving very improperly, "I must insist upon your leaving the room!"

"Pray don't, Mrs. Hargrave, for I'm going

to leave it myself," said I, and immediately made my adieux.

About a week after, Mr. Hargrave brought his sister to see me. He conducted himself, at first, with his usual cold, distant, half-stately, half-melancholy, altogether injured air; but Esther made no remark upon it this time; she had evidently been schooled into better manners. She talked to me, and laughed and romped with little Arthur, her loved and loving playmate. He, somewhat to my discomfort, enticed her from the room to have a run in the hall; and, thence, into the garden. I got up to stir the fire. Mr Hargrave asked if I felt cold, and shut the door — a very unseasonable piece of officiousness, for I had meditated following the noisy playfellows, if they did not speedily return. He then took the liberty of walking up to the fire himself, and asking me if I were aware that Mr. Huntingdon was now at the seat of Lord Lowborough, and likely to continue there some time.

"No; but it's no matter," I answered carelessly; and if my cheek glowed like fire; it was rather at the question than the information it conveyed.

"You don't object to it?" he said.

"Not at all, if Lord Lowborough likes his company."

"You have no love left for him, then?"

"Not the least."

"I knew that—I knew you were too high-minded and pure in your own nature to continue to regard one so utterly false and poluted, with any feelings but those of indignation and scornful abhorrence!"

"Is he not your friend?" said I, turning my eyes from the fire to his face, with perhaps a slight touch of those feelings he assigned to another.

"He *was*," replied he, with the same calm gravity as before, "but do not wrong me by supposing that I could continue my friendship and esteem to a man who could so infamously—

so impiously forsake and injure one so transcendently—well, I won't speak of it. But tell me, do you never think of revenge?"

"Revenge! No—what good would that do—it would make him no better, and me no happier?"

"I don't know how to talk to you, Mrs. Huntington," said he smiling; "you are only half a woman—your nature must be half human, half angelic. Such goodness overawes me; I don't know what to make of it."

"Then sir, I fear you must be very much worse than you should be, if I, a mere ordinary mortal, am by your own confession, so vastly your superior;—and since there exists so little sympathy between us, I think we had better each look out for some more congenial companion." And forthwith moving to the window, I began to look out for my little son and his gay young friend.

"No, *I* am the ordinary mortal, I maintain," replied Mr. Hargrave. "I will not allow my-

self to be worse than my fellows; but *you* Madame—I equally maintain there is no body like you. But are you happy?" he asked in a serious tone.

"As happy as some others, I suppose."

"Are you as happy as you desire to be?"

"No one is so blest as that comes to, on this side eternity."

"One thing I know," returned he, with a deep, sad sigh; "you are immeasureably happier than I am."

"I am very sorry for you, then," I could not help replying.

"Are you *indeed*?—No—for if you were, you would be glad to relieve me."

"And so I should, if I could do so, without injuring myself or any other."

"And can you suppose that I should wish you to injure yourself?—No; on the contrary, it is your own happiness I long for more than mine. You are miserable now, Mrs. Huntingdon," continued he, looking me boldly in the

face. "You do not complain, but I see—and feel—and know that you are miserable—and must remain so, as long as you keep those walls of impenetrable ice about your still warm and palpitating heart;—and I am miserable too. Deign to smile on me, and I am happy: trust me, and you shall be happy also, for if you *are* a woman, I can make you so—and I *will* do it in spite of yourself!" he muttered between his teeth, "and as for others, the question is between ourselves alone: you cannot injure your husband, you know; and no one else has any concern in the matter."

"I have a son, Mr. Hargrave, and you have a mother," said I, retiring from the window, whither he had followed me.

"They need not know," he began, but before anything more could be said on either side, Esther and Arthur re-entered the room. The former glanced at Walter's flushed, excited countenance, and then at mine—a little flushed and excited too, I dare say, though from far

different causes. She must have thought we had been quarrelling desperately, and was evidently perplexed and disturbed at the circumstance; but she was too polite, or too much afraid of her brother's anger to refer to it. She seated herself on the sofa, and putting back her bright, golden ringlets, that were scattered in wild profusion over her face, she immediately began to talk about the garden and her little playfellow, and continued to chatter away in her usual strain till her brother summoned her to depart.

"If I have spoken too warmly, forgive me," he murmured on taking his leave, "or I shall never forgive myself."

Esther smiled and glanced at me: I merely bowed, and her countenance fell. She thought it a poor return for Walter's generous concession, and was disappointed in her friend. Poor child, she little knows the world she lives in!

Mr. Hargrave had not an opportunity of meeting me again in private for several weeks

after this ; but when he did meet me, there was less of pride and more of touching melancholy in his manner than before. Oh, *how* he annoyed me ! I was obliged, at last almost entirely to remit my visits to the Grove, at the expence of deeply offending Mrs. Hargrave and seriously afflicting poor Esther, who really values my society—for want of better, and who ought not to suffer for the fault of her brother. But that indefatigable foe was not yet vanquished : he seemed to be always on the watch. I frequently saw him riding lingeringly past the premises, looking searchingly round him as he went—or if *I* did not, Rachel did. That sharp-sighted woman soon guessed how matters stood between us, and descrying the enemy's movements from her elevation at the nursery window, she would give me a quiet intimation, if she saw me preparing for a walk when she had reason to believe he was about, or to think it likely that he would meet or overtake me in the way I meant to traverse. I would then

defer my ramble, or confine myself for that day to the park and gardens—or if the proposed excursion was a matter of importance, such as a visit to the sick or afflicted, I would take Rachel with me, and then I was never molested.

But one mild, sunshiny day, early in November, I had ventured forth alone, to visit the village school and a few of the poor tenants, and on my return, I was alarmed at the clatter of a horse's feet behind me approaching at a rapid, steady trot. There was no stile or gap at hand, by which I could escape into the fields: so I walked quietly on, saying to myself—

"It may not be he after all; and if it is, and if he *do* annoy me—it shall be for the last time —I am determined, if there be power in words and looks against cool impudence and mawkish sentimentality so inexhaustible as his."

The horse soon overtook me, and was reined up close beside me. It *was* Mr. Hargrave. He greeted me with a smile intended to be soft and melancholy, but his triumphant satisfaction at

having caught me at last, so shone through, that it was quite a failure. After briefly answering his salutation and inquiring after the ladies at the Grove, I turned away and walked on; but he followed, and kept his horse at my side: it was evident he intended to be my companion all the way.

"Well! I don't much care. If you want another rebuff, take it—and welcome," was my inward remark. "Now sir, what next?"

This question, though unspoken, was no long unanswered: after a few passing observations upon indifferent subjects, he began, in solemn tones the following appeal to my humanity:—

"It will be four years next April since I first saw you, Mrs. Huntingdon,—*you* may have forgotten the circumstance, but *I* never can—I admired you then, most deeply, but I dared not love you: in the following autumn, I saw so much of your perfections that I could not fail to love you, though I dared not shew it. For

upwards of three years, I have endured a perfect martyrdom. From the anguish of suppressed emotions, intense and fruitless longings, silent sorrow, crushed hopes, and trampled affections, —I have suffered more than I can tell, or you imagine—and you were the cause of it—and not, altogether, the innocent cause. My youth is wasting away; my prospects are darkened; my life is a desolate blank; I have no rest day or night: I am become a burden to myself and others;—and you might save me by a word—a glance, and will not do it—Is this right?"

"In the first place, I don't believe you," answered I: "in the second, if you will be such a fool, I can't hinder it."

"If you affect," replied he earnestly, "to regard as folly, the best, the strongest, the most godlike impulses of our nature,—*I* don't believe *you*—I know you are not the heartless, icy being you pretend to be—you had a heart once, and you gave it to your husband. When you found

him utterly unworthy of the treasure you reclaimed it;—and you will not *pretend* that you loved that sensual, earthly minded profligate so deeply, so devotedly that you can never love another?—I know that there are feelings in your nature that have never yet been called forth—I know, too, that in your present neglected, lonely state you are, and *must* be miserable. You have it in your power to raise two human beings from a state of actual suffering to such unspeakable beatitude as only generous, noble self-forgetting love can give, (for you *can* love me if you will; you may tell me that you scorn and detest me, but—since you have set me the example of plain speaking—I will answer that *I do not believe you!* but you will not do it! you choose rather to leave us miserable; and you coolly tell me it is the will of God that we should remain so. *You* may call this religion, but *I* call it wild fanaticism!"

"There is another life both for you and for me," said I. "If it be the will of God that we

should sow in tears, now, it is only that we may reap in joy, hereafter. It is his will that we should not injure others by the gratification of our own earthly passions; and you have a mother, and sisters, and friends, who would be seriously injured by your disgrace; and I too have friends, whose peace of mind shall never be sacrificed to my enjoyment—or yours either, with my consent—and if I were alone in the world, I have still my God and my religion, and I would sooner die than disgrace my calling and break my faith with Heaven to obtain a few brief years of false and fleeting happiness—happiness sure to end in misery, even here—for myself or any other!"

"There need be no disgrace—no misery or sacrifice in any quarter," persisted he. "I do not ask you to leave your home or defy the world's opinion."—But I need not repeat all his arguments. I refuted them to the best of my power; but that power was provokingly small, at the moment, for I was too much flurried with

indignation—and even shame—that he should thus dare to address me, to retain sufficient command of thought and language to enable me adequately to contend against his powerful sophistries. Finding, however, that he could not be silenced by reason, and even covertly exulted in his seeming advantage, and ventured to deride those assertions I had not the coolness to prove, I changed my course and tried another plan.

"Do you really love me?" said I seriously, pausing and looking him calmly in the face.

"Do I love you!" cried he.

"*Truly?*" I demanded.

His countenance brightened; he thought his triumph was at hand. He commenced a passionate protestation of the truth and fervour of his attachment which I cut short by another question:—

"But is it not a selfish love?—have you enough disinterested affection to enable you to sacrifice your own pleasure to mine?"

"I would give my life to serve you."

"I don't want your life — but have you enough real sympathy for my afflictions to induce you to make an effort to relieve them, at the risk of a little discomfort to yourself?"

"Try me, and see!"

"If you have—*never mention this subject again.* You cannot recur to it in any way, without doubling the weight of those sufferings you so feelingly deplore. I have nothing left me but the solace of a good conscience and a hopeful trust in Heaven, and you labour continually to rob me of these. If you persist, I must regard you as my deadliest foe."

"But hear me a moment—"

"No, sir! you said you would give your life to serve me: I only ask your *silence* on one particular point. I have spoken plainly; and what I say I mean. If you torment me in this way any more, I must conclude that your protestations are entirely false, and that you hate me in your heart as fervently as you profess to love me!"

He bit his lip and bent his eyes upon the ground in silence for a while.

"Then I must leave you," said he at length looking steadily upon me, as if with the last hope of detecting some token of irrepressible anguish or dismay awakened by those solemn words. "I must leave you. I cannot live here, and be for ever silent on the all-absorbing subject of my thoughts and wishes."

"Formerly, I believe, you spent but little of your time at home," I answered: "it will do you no harm to absent yourself again, for a while—if that be really necessary."

"If that be really *possible*," he muttered—"and can you bid me go so coolly! Do you really wish it?"

"Most certainly I do. If you cannot see me without tormenting me as you have lately done, I would gladly say farewell and never see you more."

He made no answer, but, bending from his horse, held out his hand towards me. I looked

up at his face, and saw, therein, such a look of genuine agony of soul that, whether bitter disappointment, or wounded pride, or lingering love, or burning wrath were uppermost, I could not hesitate to put my hand in his as frankly as if I bade a friend farewell. He grasped it very hard, and immediately put spurs to his horse and gallopped away. Very soon after, I learned that he was gone to Paris, where he still is, and the longer he stays there the better for me.

I thank God for this deliverance!

END OF VOL. II.

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