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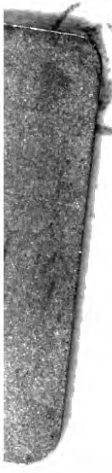
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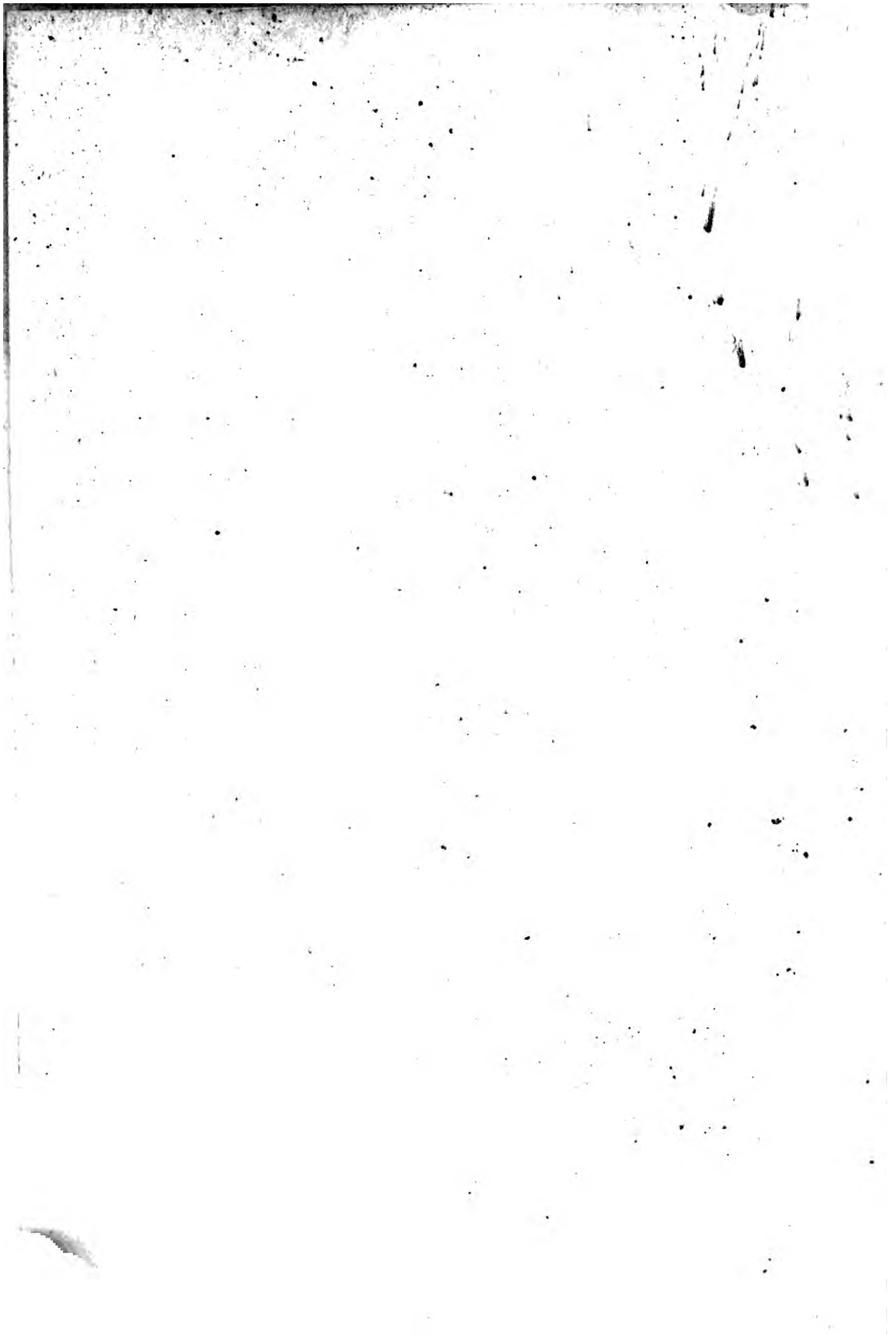
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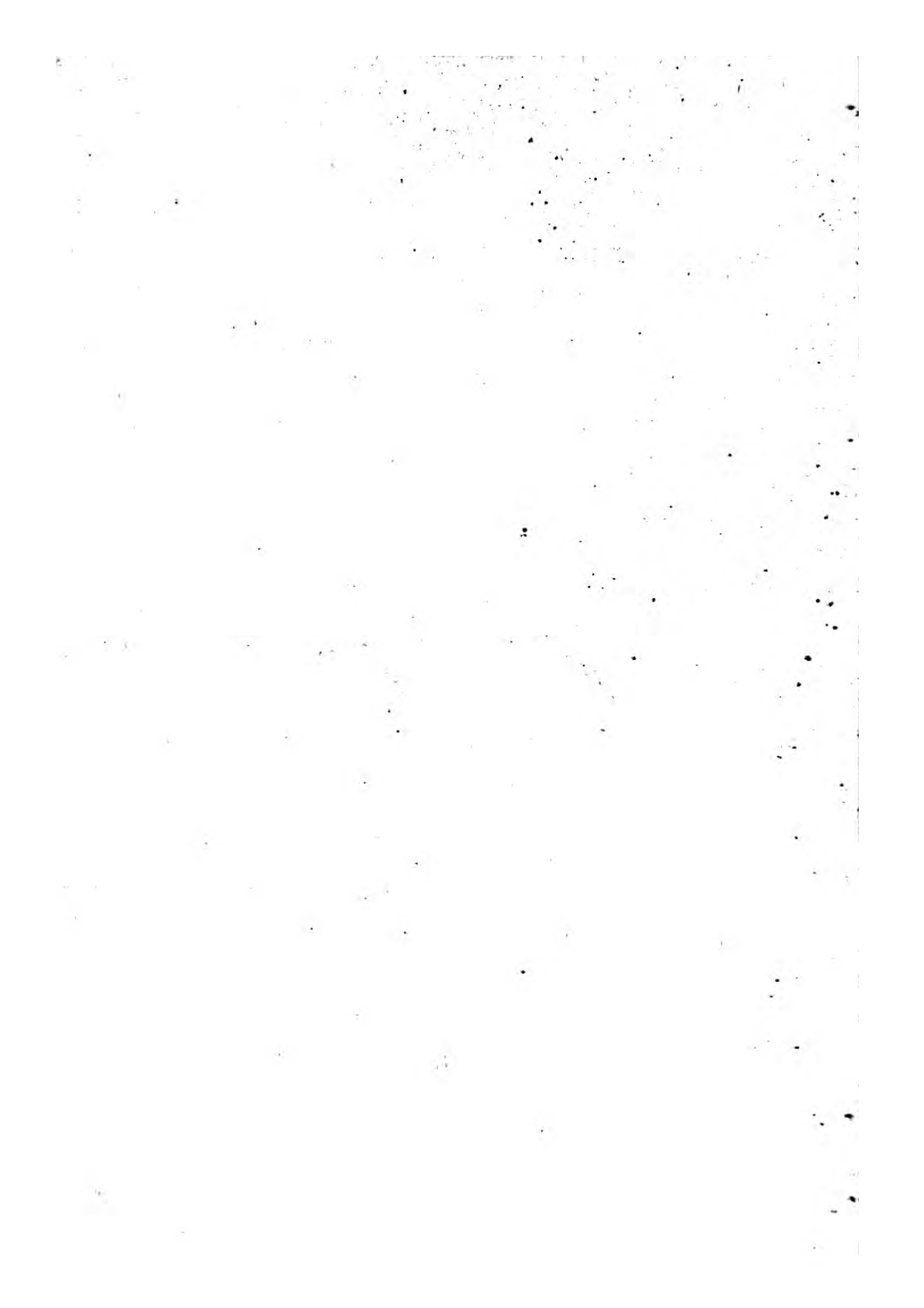




Johnson. L. 197



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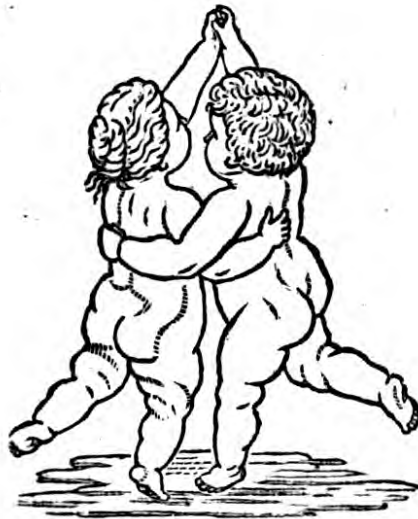
THIS YEAR, NEXT YEAR,
SOME TIME, NEVER.

BY

PUCK.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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THIS YEAR, NEXT YEAR, SOME TIME, NEVER.

CHAPTER I.

“MY DEAR MAGGIE,
“Wasn't there just a shadow of vexation in the tone of your last letter? I may be mistaken. As it was only the second letter that I have had from you, I must not suppose myself infallible in my notions; still I don't think I like it as well as the first. Did I say anything you did not like? Tell me when I do. Could the changed tone have anything to do with what I said about coming down Monday night with Lady Wade? Surely, child, you aren't such a little goose as to think anything of that. But little differences can best be settled when we meet, and I will answer any questions you like to put. I start Saturday night for Paris. I shall leave that gay city on Monday; shall arrive at Lausanne on Tuesday.

I fancy I had better stop there, at all events until I have seen you to talk over what had best be done. When it is getting a little dusk on *Tuesday evening*, say at about 8.30, or a little later, I shall present myself at that gate that you describe as leading from the hotel grounds to the path by the lake. I shall wait about there three-quarters of an hour to an hour. If you have not come to the meeting-place by ten o'clock, I shall conclude you are prevented for that evening, and shall expect you to write to me *poste restante*, Lausanne, to tell me when and where you can see me. You understand, dear? Very business-like, isn't it? But I am awfully bothered with packing; I am a shocking hand at it. Hoping to see you very soon after you get this, and that you will be as glad to see me as I shall be to see you,

“I am, with love,

“Ever affectionately yours,

“JOHN.”

That is John's letter received yesterday; and to-day is Tuesday. Will the day never end?

There was a talk at breakfast of the whole party going by boat to spend the day at Vevay. For some time it seemed quite settled that they should go; then a doubting mood came over Mr. Scott. Mary was wild for the excursion to come off that very day, and no other. She piled up the advantages of that day: “There isn't a cloud to be seen, the air is perfect; just a gentle breeze to cool us, but not enough to stir the lake. Oh, the day is perfect! Do let us go to-day.

It was delightful just going across to Evian yesterday, but to go to Vevay will be much nicer. Mr. Price, say you will go, and then my father will take us, I am sure."

"My dear young lady," Mr. Price answered, "I am quite ready to go there, or anywhere else that you please, to-day, or any other day."

"Oh, that is good of you! Then it is settled that we go, isn't it, daddy dear?" she said, coaxingly.

"It's settled that we go one day, my dear," replies her father.

"How tantalizing you are this morning! Why can't we go?"

"I am not so sure as you seem about the day ending fine. I think the breeze means rain, or a storm; besides, I find I have letters that must be written to-day."

"But didn't you know that before you raised my hopes so high?"

He looks impatient at this close questioning.

"Mary," says her governess, "you should not ask a reason for everything like that. It is enough that your father cannot go to-day." She is secretly rejoiced; for when they make an excursion anywhere, it is within her experience that if the fancy takes Mr. Scott, they may go on and on to some more distant place, and come home some hours beyond the time fixed when "Bradshaw" was consulted and the plans made in the morning.

As the day grows, there is no mistaking the storm signals in the air; the breeze which had freshened,

dies away, leaving a heavy calm that makes itself felt, and weighs down and silences the living breathing atoms. As the clouds gather and tower, the birds that all day long—and nearly all night too, it seems—hold concerts in the trees are hushed. And the stillness in nature weighs down still more the spirits, though we know not why. Every one is low in vitality. Some folks are made cross thereby, and they pass it on and the evil spreads; others are melancholy and despondent. The clouds obscure the bright star, Hope, and they think her light is to be hidden from them evermore; and those people who have a conscience living in them yet, can't then stifle its voice. In the stillness it will speak, and they must listen, and go over with it their arguments once more. One can't settle with conscience (convince it to one's own satisfaction), and have done once and for ever. When one is down, all the old scores rise up and give one a kick. All these stormy petrels swoop down more thickly on one in a spot like this, perfected by Nature, where man, her highest effort, when he is comparatively unsupported by his kind, is more at the mercy of her influences, and feels himself more amenable to them. A speck, sometimes a blot on nature, and yet, preach to one's self as one may, this tiny insignificant atom self, this *I*, try to put it down and teach it humility as one may, is to itself the centre of the whole universe. Egoism, unconscious sometimes, is everywhere. Even love, the love we differentiate passion, is a pouring out on another of something that we *have* to give, and *must* give, but which exacts an exchange; and is,

when the store is large and the exchange sufficient for replenishment, one of the most fascinatingly enthralling occupations in life.

Given the fervour of Southern blood unawakened till five-and-twenty years have matured and perfected it, an exquisite and fertile imagination, a highly wrought sensibility, the man just found who to her is the realization of dreams and hopes, and the approach of the hour when the two will meet, storm permitting, —and you have an epitome of the conditions which render this day of leagues' length to Maggie. The fear of the storm quickening yet more her pulse with the added excitement of an element of doubt.

After luncheon, our party, which now usually includes the Americans, stroll through the open windows of the *salle-à-manger* to the terrace, to look at the thickly gathered threatening clouds, and get, if possible, more air to breathe this oppressive day.

The stillness may be felt—the end of a long-drawn breath before a great effort. The lightning flashes and the thunder rolls in quick succession. There is a hush again; then may be heard the patter of big heavy rain-drops on the thick leaves of the shrubs, that fall as if pressed from the inky clouds by the heavy rolling thunder that has gone before. The drops are the opening of a fierce, steady down-pour that lasts without intermission for full three hours; the rush of it deadens the sound of the thunder, but does not cool the air. The cool rain and hot earth throw off an enervating steam.

Our party, tired after a time of watching Nature's

artillery practice, separate to read, or write, or do nothing wearily, as the case may be. . . . Dinner is over at last. They sit late at table to-night. The rain has ceased, but moisture drops from the trees, and all the grounds are soaked with rain; even the partially sheltered terrace partakes, but in a lesser degree, the general humidity; and no one seems disposed to venture even on to the terrace, though they stroll towards the windows, and discuss weather prospects for the morrow.

Maggie, quivering with suppressed excitement, not able to form any plans for meeting, not even knowing if she can get out until she hears what the others will do, stands with her face turned away from her party, looking out and listening, impatience mounting high. Then the pro and con of the storm returning in the night having been discussed, the prospect of Vevay comes up. She is listening now.

"We may as well discuss that in the billiard-room," says Mr. Scott abruptly; "we can't smoke out of doors. You have been wanting a chance to play. Come, Mary, if there is no one in possession of the table you and Frank here can see which is best at that. I suppose you both have the best of all your arguments, ah! ah!"

"I shall smoke a cigarette then; won't you, Frank?"

"You will not, Mary," says her scandalized mother.

"John dear, you won't let her."

But John goes on chuckling at the idea.

Mr. Price politely says, "Why don't you give us the pleasure of your company, Mrs. Scott? I don't

suppose there will be any one besides ourselves there yet awhile. Won't you all come? Do, now."

Hearing herself included in the invitation, Maggie turns round while Mrs. Scott decides. She hopes much that she will go. It will be much easier to get out of going into the billiard-room with them than it will be to take herself away from Mrs. Scott and her daughter, if they go to their own room.

"If I thought there would be no one there, we would go; but there may be. You would like it, Edith dear?" asks Mrs. Scott.

"Certainly. It will be a change. Do your country-women play billiards much, Mr. Price?"

"Not in Boston. But I like to see ladies play. I can easily see if the room is free, anyhow, if you will sit down in the hall and wait a minute. I will be back there."

The hall is a large square place. A gallery runs partly round it, in which are comfortable settees, placed at intervals. There they seat themselves to await Mr. Price; Maggie anxious to be gone, yet dreading the moment when she will have to bring out her excuse.

"What a pleasant man he is! See how genial he is looking! Some people would think it a bother," remarks Mrs. Scott, in a low tone, as Mr. Price comes towards them.

He is a tall, spare man, iron grey, his face like a rugged rock smoothed somewhat by time's influences.

"There is no one there," he says. "I have told Mr. Scott you are coming to take part in the tournament. Now, Mrs. Scott, I shall see your skill."

"I am not going to play," says Mrs. Scott, rising from her seat; "only to look on and see that my child does not smoke a cigarette, ridiculous puss!"

"Now or never," thinks Maggie. "I won't come, Mrs. Scott, if you will excuse me," she gets up courage to say. She does not wish to offer a definite excuse, as that may bring her into a bother.

"Not coming to see Mary play! Oh, do come!"

"I have a letter I rather want to write." She fancies Edith looks at her with suspicion, but she comes well to her rescue.

"Writing your letter will be much more interesting and profitable than seeing Mary play," she says, with more decision than she usually evinces. "Whenever I look on at billiards, I have to keep down a perfectly overpowering desire to play myself. Looking on is so tantalizing."

"I dare say," says Mrs. Scott good-humouredly, "though I never find it so. Certainly, go and write your letters. There is paper in the blotting-book; pray use it. Mr. Scott thought the paper very cheap in Switzerland, and he bought a great lot of it," she says to Mr. Price, as they walk away together.

"Thanks to your mother, but I like writing in my own room best," Maggie says to Edith, who gives her a little nod as they separate.

Miss M'Arthur walks slowly upstairs. She has not made up her mind what it will be best for her to do yet. She is pondering as she goes—"It is half-past eight. If I go at once, by the time I get to the spot he will be there, and I can stay twenty minutes

or so, and then come back to write a letter ; or I can write a little letter quickly, then wrap up and go boldly out, and say when I come back, if I see any of them, that I wanted a walk. Which?"

Some people rather like to vacillate. Those who like it usually have their doubts solved for them ; they can't make up their minds till it is too late to take the first course of action, consequently they drift into the last.

Maggie is quite of the opposite class. She hates usually to let things slide, though in her position in the Scott family she seldom has a chance given her to decide on anything.

The last course recommends itself to her ; there is less of trickery in it. Yes, she likes that much the best.

After all, she will write in the salon—will write a few lines of platitudes to Miss Gore. Not wit enough in her for the commencement even of a letter to Agatha ; one has to brace one's self up to write a letter to her. She sits down to write. . . . She is quite ashamed of her letter. Excitement has made the strokes zigzag, and some of the letters that ought to have finished at an imaginary line have gone below. "Can I really send it, to grieve her trained and careful eye? No matter ; it is written, and I need keep him waiting no longer."

She springs up and positively dances from the room. In less than three minutes, dressed as the dampness and prudence demand, she descends the broad staircase that is in full view of any one in the

hall. This is an awful moment. If the sanctity of the family party in the billiard-room has been invaded, she may meet them, and then good-bye to her expedition. With almost a somnambulist expression on her face, her wondrous eyes dilated and looking with a far-off gaze at the distant passage from which the occupants of the billiard-room would emerge, she descends into the hall. She is safe! She turns abruptly to the right, where a door gives quick egress to the garden through a smaller hall, lined with flowers.

It is dark and gloomy outside. Filled as she is to overflowing with the delight of this meeting, she stands still, holding her breath for a half-second. She has too much sensibility and too powerful an imagination all round to be callous to external influence, and it is dark and sombre, and she shrinks from going out into the blackness among those forbidding-looking trees, for just half a second, while the idea flashes lightning-like across her brain, "Am I doing right? Is this a warning, this shrinking from the gloom?" But she shakes it all away from her, and, hurrying down the terrace steps, plunges in among those fear-inspiring trees, with a smile at herself for her foolish trepidation.

She comes to the little gate—the trysting-place—out of breath with the speed that carried her quickly through her path of terror. In her careless haste her skirts have gathered moisture from the shrubs that have brushed them in passing, but which she had not noticed; she had thought only of getting into safety,

as represented to her in the proximity of Captain Munro and the absence of trees.

It is past nine o'clock. Munro has been at the meeting-place full half an hour. His first attitude of waiting, leaning on the gate, listening and watching intently the tree-embowered paths leading from the hotel, had changed into a cautious venture a little way up one path and then up the other. Patience is not a virtue often cultivated by men, and this waiting with nothing to see or do—he does not smoke—soon becomes irksome, especially as he jumps to the conclusion that she will not come—this damp night has put a stop to it. But he said in his letter to her that he would wait till ten o'clock, so wait he must another hour. Well, walking to and fro a little distance by the lake will be better than this doing nothing loitering; so he paces to and fro, planning the next meeting.

Captain Munro is not a man of brilliant parts, nor what people would call a smart soldier. He has not even a liking for his profession, as far as he knows himself; but if ever he is placed in a position where clear-headedness in laying plans, embracing the smallest details, is of service, he will come out well and with honour. Up to now, a perfect mastery of all the intricacies of "Bradshaw," and the small manœuvres necessary to the successful carrying out of a love intrigue, have alone brought out these all but unsuspected qualities of generalship. He has a forehead that slopes backward. Once we associated that with the Simiadæ—were inclined to the belief that it

denoted small brain-power. But I have known other men besides Captain Munro with those foreheads who have possessed much more than an average amount of brain-power, though I am not prepared to give them the front rank among intellectual men. But this is a digression only interesting to phrenologists.

Presently, in turning at the end of his beat, which is not a long one, he fancies he sees something moving at the gate. He hurries towards it.

Then Maggie, recognizing him as he walks out of the blackness, ventures through the gate.

“My darling!” he said; then turned his lips to hers, and with his arm

“Drew her towards him.”

“But you are quite out of breath, child!” he said concernedly. “Don’t speak for a minute or two. Why, I believe you were scared, and ran all the way at the top of your speed. I dare not venture far to meet you, because I did not know which path you would take. I went a little way in when I first came. I had almost given you up. You are late, aren’t you?”

But after asking the question, when she looks up from his coat to answer, he stops her words on her lips.

For a minute or two they stand wrapt in the delight of meeting, not articulating words; then he feels that her dress is damp. It is too dark to see much of each other.

“You are damp,” he says. “This won’t do; you will be catching cold. We must walk to and fro

briskly for a little. Never fear ; I won't let you tumble into the lake. I can't swim, I am sorry to say, and couldn't earn your gratitude fishing you up ; besides, unless you were luminous—painted like a buoy I saw the other day—I shouldn't be able to see you when once you had slipped in."

Thus assured, she takes his proffered arm, and very near together, with rhythmic motion as entrancing as perfect unison in valse, they move away. In cooing tones in keeping with the love-laden hour, they ask and answer questions. She tells of all her doubts and fears of getting to him.

"Poor little thing!" he says, "I expect plunging in among those trees must have seemed very terrible to you ; but I will see you safely through them presently. But how long can you stay out? Will you have to report yourself to them before you go to your room to-night?"

"Not that exactly ; but my room is next Mary's, and she will come to it. So will Edith, I expect. She likes a confidential chat with me—you must tell me about her Cecil presently—so I must be in about twenty minutes to ten, not any later."

"What a nuisance! I must strike a match presently to look at the time, but not yet. We have a good quarter of an hour yet."

"You must not get me late."

"No ; you may depend on me."

"If Edith only knew you were here, the hotel would not hold her. She is not nearly as much in awe of her father as she was."

“And a very good thing too. That man is a perfect bully to you all, I consider; I should like him to be taught a lesson. A little *vice versa* would do him good. Fielding’s frightfully spooney, you know. And Edith?”

“Oh, she’s head over ears in love; thinks of him with every breath she draws. The pleasures of the table don’t put him on one side when she eats honey; it is very good here, and she likes honey. She is feeding on him at the same time.” (Captain Munro laughs.) “You may laugh, but it is every word true. Now, listen to the crowning point—and to a sceptic like you, even, it ought to be convincing. When she looks at herself in the glass—think of her self-abnegation—she sees him as often as she sees herself; there!”

They both laugh at that triumph of love over vanity, heartily.

“But, Maggie”—the “Maggie” has a thrilling intonation; he is proud of calling her by her familiar name in these early days—“how can you know that? You aren’t gifted with second sight, are you? She doesn’t tell you, I suppose? That would beat Cecil’s confidence to me out and out.”

“Of course she does not tell me; but in certain conditions one becomes clairvoyant.”

“What do you mean? I saw that Madame Card once; she seemed to do some wonderful things, but I set it down as humbug, somehow. You don’t believe in clairvoyance, do you?”

Maggie laughs. She is glad that he is not clair-

voyant enough to see in what her power of reading Edith consists.

“You laugh because you have been chaffing me.”

“No, really I haven’t been chaffing you. It is true, I have seen Edith look at herself in the glass when I know that she has just seen him. I could tell by her eyes. She has that dreamy, far-away look in them. When Cecil is very much there, I can always see her.”

“What a terrible little woman it is. Do you think, now, that you could tell my thoughts, dear, by looking at my eyes?”

“It is too dark to see now, and I don’t know you as I know Edith Scott. Men very likely—my knowledge of men comes from Mr. Scott and books—have dark little corners in their minds, where dust accumulates, and spiders and such things”—she gave a little shudder—“crawl. I could not see through that, you know! If you were as transparent as Edith, and kept your windows clean, I might be able to see in, sir.”

His laugh is a little hollow this time, and he does not follow up that subject of discussion further, but he goes on to speak of Cecil.

“Don’t you think we ought to go back now?” Maggie asks presently. “I am afraid it’s getting late.” They had walked nearly half a mile from the gate by this time.

“I was just thinking we ought to turn; so you see I am clairvoyant as regards your thoughts now. It wasn’t wise of me to bring you so far away from

shelter with these threatening clouds overhead. Stupid of me not to think of it, but there's no harm come of it so far."

"Very nice," she thinks, "that he should have forgotten time, place, and clouds." Then, although they have discovered the path of wisdom to be the one back to the hotel, they do not hasten to walk in it; the poetry of motion, as exemplified in walking, gives way for a little to another form of it, in ecstatic osculation. Once more at leisure to talk, she asks him what his hotel is like at Lausanne.

"I hadn't time to find out much about it," he replies. "I only got there at five; then there was the tub business—one gets so dusty travelling all day—and there was dinner; that was fairly good. There is a big garden, I see; my room overlooks that and this village, and, of course, the lake and mountains beyond. Of course this place would be much nicer to stop at; but you think with me, don't you, that I can't stop at this hotel?"

"Yes, I do. If you were to appear and he saw you, we should be moved off the same day, I am quite sure of that; and of course he would see you—would not he? You could not, I am afraid, stay in the same hotel with us without being discovered, could you?" she asks in a deprecating, coaxing manner.

"I am afraid I can't, dearie; it would be risky and disagreeable, and I don't see what we should gain by it—do you?" Very softly and soothingly is this "do you?" said.

These frequent little appeals are very sweet to

Maggie. She has not been accustomed to be consulted about anything, save as a matter of form.

"No, I see, dear," she answers, "you can't do it; but it would have been so nice if you could."

For answer, his head goes down and his arm steals round her waist. . . .

"What about to-morrow?" he resumes. "What can you manage to-morrow? Will you be coming up to Lausanne for—for letters?" He smiles as he says "for letters."

"I don't think so; at least, there is a talk of our going to Vevay to-morrow by boat, if the sky and lake are favourable."

"I must go to Vevay one day alone"—said disconsolately. "I suppose there isn't much chance of their going off anywhere and leaving you behind, is there? Would it seem strange if you made an excuse to stay at home? Then we could manage somewhere together, dear, in an opposite direction, couldn't we?"

She hesitates a minute before answering. "How maddeningly delightful that would be! How doubly beautiful all these charming spots would look with him!" she thinks; but she shakes her head and says, "Impossible, I fear."

"Think about it, will you? and tell me when next we meet." They are at the gate now. "Stay, tell me here when that may be. If it is a dull day," he goes on rapidly, having quite lost his habitual drawl, he is speaking against time, "I shall stroll about Lausanne. I shall be by the post-office between

eleven and twelve o'clock. If you don't come then, I shall be at the same place about four o'clock. You understand, dear? And if the Scott girls are with you, I suppose it must be a chance meeting. Not a word about this or anything said by either of us to-night, you know. Of course, if you can get away alone, so much the better. And in any case I shall be here at this gate, or strolling just beyond at the same time—unless you can think of any better place or plan; then you would write to me to Hotel Gibbon, so that I might have the letter in time to know of the alteration. You understand all that, dearie, quite?"

"Yes, quite; I won't forget. But I must go now; I am sure it is getting late."

"I am afraid it is. Good night."

"I thought you were going as far as the end of the trees with me?"

"So I am, going as near as I dare, child" (she likes to be called child; it gives her a protected feeling, quite new and very pleasant); "only we will say 'Good night' here. We might have to separate in a hurry, you know."

She gives a soft little laugh and says, "You are much cleverer than I."

And "Good night" occupies more time than wisdom warrants; but then, poor wisdom so frequently has to give way to inclination that she must be pretty well used to it by this time. But wisdom waits and has her day when inclination, surfeited, grows dull and languid.

CHAPTER II.

IN their progress through the then impressive grounds, Maggie has still a feeling of awe, but no fear. How could she feel afraid with his arm around her? They make a slight detour so as to come into the open near the far end of the terrace, where opens the door of the small hall which leads almost to the foot of the staircase that Maggie must ascend.

“I came here about four years ago,” Captain Munro remarks, “but, you see, I remember the geography of the place yet.”

They are about to emerge on the open space at the foot of the terrace, which seemed given over to darkness and solitude. Only the light from the *salle-à-manger* throws patches of brightness across the terrace, and a lesser light falls from the curtained windows of the salon; all else is shrouded in darkness.

“One minute, dear,” he says, as after another “Good night” she is about to break away. “Write

me a little letter often to amuse me in my solitude. I can't write to you, you know."

"Hush!" she says in a startled voice. "Look."

He looks towards the house. From one of the dining-room windows two figures have come out on the terrace; they commence to pace to and fro leisurely, in a mechanical way that bespeaks conversation or musing with cigarettes.

"Do you know them?" he whispers.

"I know one—the American I have spoken of, the man they were in the billiard-room with. That shows that they have gone upstairs, and that I am late. I *must* go in."

"Look as they pass the windows. Is the other man Mr. Scott?"

"No; he is not stout enough. I think it is a little Swiss who has been here the last day or two."

"It wouldn't do to go in by the principal entrance I suppose?"

"No, I could not risk that; if Mr. Scott should chance to be in the hall, I don't know what would happen. I couldn't do that."

"Is the American a cad?"

"No, a gentleman; decidedly a gentleman."

"Then even if he sees you he will keep your counsel. If you don't take any notice of him, he will understand; but if you start at the right moment, dearie, you ought to get in at the back of them without being seen."

"Tell me when, and I will go."

"I am so sorry you are so bothered."

She simply answers "Yes;" she is too anxious to talk.

"Now, as soon as they shall have passed the hall door to go back I will say 'Now,' and then you start for the door at a pretty good pace, but not fast enough to loose your breath as you did coming to the gate. Then you will get nicely in before they see who it is. Mind you don't tumble up the steps, child. I shall watch from here."

He holds her tightly to him for a second, watching them the while; then he says, "Now," and releases her.

Quietly and swiftly she speeds; how her feet carry her she does not know. She watches the two receding figures breathlessly; they turn just as she gains the terrace. They may have seen her—she knows not, but makes straight for the door, which fortunately is easy to open, and she is in the hall in comparative safety. It is brightly lighted. She hurries through it, mindful that there she may be recognized by Mr. Price, if he should have seen anything move across the terrace, and should be curious enough to look in as he passes the door.

The glare of the brightly lighted hall adds to her dazed feeling. She does not look to see if Mr. Scott is there, but hurries up the stairs, feeling like a hunted creature, whose instinct impels her to bury herself out of the sight of every one. And yet she fears that she must see the Scotts directly—that they must at any cost know that she is back, if they have missed her. Her room is at the side of the

house. When she gains the corridor, she has to pass the doors of their salon and the Scotts' sleeping and dressing room before coming to the girls' rooms and hers. The door of the salon is not quite closed; in passing she does not stop; but she fancies she sees Mr. Scott's burly figure half out of the window that opens on the balcony. She had not thought before of that possibility. Could he have seen her come in from there? What a wretched night she will have unless her fears can be set at rest! To know the worst would be better than suspense. She cannot see any one in the salon, save this figure half in and half out. She draws her key from her pocket, in readiness to unlock her door before she reaches it. Of course none of them have been in her room. How could they have got in? Yet when she has closed the door and lighted her candles, which burn dimly at first, as is the manner of candles, she looks round timidly, as if half expecting to find some one or something to tell her what has happened while she has been away.

She looks at her watch. It is past ten. They keep very early hours at Ouchy.

She quickly takes off her toque and wrap, and smoothes, or rather arranges her hair; then she busies herself quietly about her room, trying to hear some sound from Mary's, which has a door of communication from her room, which door she keeps locked unless asked to open it. She hears nothing. What shall she do? Knock at that door, or go to Edith? She does both. She knocks at the parting door, but

receives no answer ; then she goes to Edith's room. Almost before she has knocked, signs of life come from it—a buzz of voices and then laughter.

“Who is it?” asks Mary.

“May I come in?”

The door opens and she enters.

“We have been wanting you so badly. I knocked at your door when we came up about ten minutes ago, but I thought you could not be there. You did not deign to reply.” How guilty she felt! “We have quite enjoyed our evening ; haven't we, Edie? We were actually allowed to remain in the billiard-room after a strange man came in. That man you are so curious about, mum dear, because he has next to no forehead, and that slopes, and a frightful jaw—you know, the ape-faced man who has been here the last two days?”

“Yes, I know. I thought he could not have any brains. Have you made any discovery in that direction?”

“Yes, he spoke to both Edie and me ; but we did not make any discoveries that way. It was Mr. Price drew him out ; and really he seemed to know everything—in English, too.”

“How absurd, Mary !” said her sister. “Who can understand what you mean?”

“Oh, mum does. I not only mean that he knows a lot of English authors, and a lot about England and America, but he talks very well about it in English. You must talk to him to-morrow. I believe it is because he is so ugly that father let us

stay where he was. Edith did not stay all the time, though, and so he won't mind our noticing him any more than if he were the ape he looks."

"Anyhow Mary stood quite agape to listen. He was more interesting than Frank."

"But I think you had better go to bed, Mary. Don't you, Miss M'Arthur?"

"It *is* getting late, Mary. Have you said good night to your father and mother?"

"Oh yes; and mother said she supposed you were tired, and had gone to bed, when we did not find you in the salon. But she was wrong for once; you don't look a bit tired. I don't want to go to bed. I have enjoyed to-night, after spending a most dreary, dismal day. All day long I could think of nothing but that poor boy in bed with rheumatic fever all through me. If I had not persisted in wanting those water-lilies the Sunday before we came away, he might have been out enjoying this bright summer weather. When that sturdy Mark Covey, who looks as if he wouldn't feel it if you put a pin into him—unless he saw it—didn't like getting his feet and Sunday trousers wet, I ought not to have been satirical; I ought not to have said I would have got them myself if I had been a boy. I did not expect poor Harry Furber to have got them for me, though I was awfully surprised when he came late into school, and brought that handful of beautiful water-lilies and laid them down before me. It was good of him, and I was pleased; but of course he was sitting all school-time in his wet boots and stockings.

That did the mischief, and we neither of us thought anything of it. It is very good of the poor boy not to tell people, now he is ill, how he caught his cold. When I am alone, I cannot get him out of my head. Oh dear!"

"Staying up late won't help you, dear. The more tired you are, the more unhappy you will feel. Take your candle, and I will come and put it out for you presently."

Looking very woe-begone and spiritless, the complete opposite of her late mood, the poor child takes her candle and dejected self off.

Maggie feels that Edith is looking at her in a yearning, anxious manner, while they exchange a few commonplace remarks. She feels that Edith half suspects something—thinks that she has something to tell; perhaps only that she has had a letter that she would like to hear about. But she must not tell her, although the temptation to do so is great. Loitering in these circumstances is irksome, so she too prepares to leave. After she has said "Good night," when her hand is on the door, she says, "If we do not go to Vevay or anywhere with your father, I should like to go to the post-office some time to-morrow, if we can manage it."

Edith's face becomes radiant; she feels that there is something pleasant for her in that in some way, and her joyful "I am sure it won't be fine enough for anything else," sends Maggie away content in her turn, without the feeling that a shadow of dissatisfaction is hanging between them. They are both

happier for that remark of Maggie's; both possess a large share of love of approbation, coupled with much sensitiveness, and to have gone to bed leaving Edith hurt with her would have been vexatious, even on this night.

CHAPTER III.

BREAKFAST without letters is usually but a sorry meal in the privacy of one's own castle. One has not been awake long enough to collect ideas ; but here in this ever-changing human kaleidoscope, yclept hotel, even a letterless breakfast, if taken in the *salle-à-manger*—and Mr. Scott likes no feeding in his salon, “to leave the smell behind,” as he puts it—is anything but a *triste* affair, especially now that the presence of Mr. Price and his son, which has become habitual, has enlarged the circle of their round table to its extreme capability, and certainly has more than increased by the ratio of two in seven the suavity of it.

So shining an example of American consideration and deference to the fair sex as Mr. Price is not without an effect, unknown to himself, on Mr. Scott, who less frequently now begins to speak in the middle of a remark from his wife and daughters, than heretofore, and who does not find shutting them up the most congenial occupation in his day. Arguments with Mr. Price take the place of it—arguments which, thanks to his American cousin's forbearance, do not

degenerate into heated abuse of the other's pet theories or favourite statesmen.

Our people, this morning after the storm, meet with all the elasticity of a crisis past. Yesterday was a day of enforced inaction—of waiting on the elements, which day, like a fast day, has given zest to the resumption of the usual functions.

Even Mary, with her first visitation of big remorse upon her, is ready this morning to make the best she can of the present. On entering the *salle-à-manger* she had gone to the window, and had swept the horizon with her eye. Against her will she finds the survey unpromising for the much-longed-for excursion to Vevay ; so, not having a good report to make of the weather, she seats herself at table without a remark on it. Frank is already in his place next her. He was the first down, and had ordered breakfast for his father and himself ; he is now busy discussing it. Mr. Price enters ; he salutes them all, then seats himself in the only vacant seat between his boy and Miss M'Arthur, who wonders if he could have recognized her in the hall last night.

“We had quite an amusing evening in the billiard-room last evening, as I dare say you have heard,” he remarks to her. “Frank tells me you are curious about that young Swiss who was there. I smoked a cigarette or two with him on the terrace when your party left us, and I thought him exceedingly intelligent ; but you ladies are closer observers than we, and you might be able to find a weak point in his armour. You must talk to him yourself, anyhow.”

“Eh? what?” asks Mr. Scott, who had finished his instructions to the waiter, and catches the last word. “Who is that Miss M‘Arthur is to talk to?”

Mary sees the subject of the inquiry, just then entering the room; she hushes her father, and whispers to him the information he asks.

Mr. Price and Maggie also see him, and she says in a very low tone, “I would accept your verdict willingly on any one else, and I do here, and yet I should like to talk to him myself. Monkeys are a weakness of mine. Most people, I think, dislike them——”

She stops a minute. This remarkable reproduction of one has halted close to her, and is exchanging a few civilities in very good English with her party.

“Mr. Meinhertz, you ought to have the key to your weather! what is the day going to be like?” asks Mr. Price.

“I am afraid my key, if I ever had one, is rusty. I have spent more time in any other country than my own since I was a boy. I nearly always go to Nice or Monte Carlo for the winter, and there one does not have to consult the clouds every day. But to go back to your question of the weather: I think it will be neither one thing nor the other to-day. A storm does upset the weather, I think.”

“Ah yes, I think it does,” his questioner remarks; and a waiter having drawn out a chair in readiness at a neighbouring table, the Swiss passes on to it.

“‘He has paid a guinea to a toilet club,’ evidently. You know that song?”

“Talks very much through his teeth,” Miss M‘Arthur

says in a very low voice. "It seems as if that lower jaw is too heavy for speech, and is more fit for grinding purposes." She is bent on verifying her idea.

"Ah, Miss M'Arthur, the Darwinian theory peeps. Do you think he has read Darwin?"

"I wonder. A man like that is a challenge to the unbelievers, I think;" and she looks up at Mr. Price with so much interest and animation in her large dark eyes, that he thinks, "How uncommonly handsome she is!" and feels inclined to prolong the conversation indefinitely.

All this would be as Greek to Mr. Scott if he had heard it, but he has not. He has finished his eggs and bacon; he always untiringly eats them at breakfast, for one thing.

While he is waiting for an omelette, he resumes his put-by *rôle* of talker-in-chief by remarking how very plentiful eggs are everywhere out of England, and asks Mr. Price if it is so in America. Into that conversation it is not necessary to follow them. Mr. Price would certainly have preferred continuing a discussion on the origin of man with the good-looking girl by his side, who seems an enthusiastic guesser at truth in any form, and is not too highly primed with facts of which she has no doubts. But Mr. Price had very early in their acquaintance taken the length of Mr. Scott's foot; he knows where the shoe is likely to pinch, and also that if it does pinch, the wearer will kick out at any one within reach, and all may suffer because his shoe is not just easy; consequently he responds at length to Mr. Scott's inquiries, and talks

with him until his omelette is brought. After that appears there is no need to notice him for a little time.

Addressing Mrs. Scott, Mr. Price remarks, "I suppose there is very little chance of your being tempted away from this place to-day. Our excursions to Vevay and Chil must wait anyhow, I suppose, for a brighter day than this promises to be."

"I certainly hope we shall not go anywhere to-day. In our case there is no need to go anywhere unless the weather is perfect. We shall stay here some time longer probably, and so can wait for a perfect day before going on the lake. Is it so with you? Will you be staying much longer at Ouchy, do you think?"

"I think so. When one finds one's self in a good hotel in a pretty spot like this, and has friends in it—if you will permit me to say so—a man would think twice before cutting himself adrift from it all, and my boy would not at all like being taken away from Miss Mary, although they do fight so many battles for their respective countries. They should read 'Freeman' together; they might be more tolerant then. You wouldn't like to go away, would you, Frank?"

"No, indeed: this is the only place, since we left Boston, where I haven't felt lonesome."

"How that man" (meaning the Swiss) "stares!" Edith says in a very low voice to Miss M'Arthur, while the above conversation is going on.

"Yes; in such an assured way. Does he ever look in the glass?"

“I think I must go to Geneva to-day. I have a commission to buy a monster musical-box there, for a friend in New York. “Are you inclined, sir, to go with me?” asks Mr. Price.

Miss M'Arthur and Edith ceased their low remarks to listen now. Edith's is a tell-tale face; she cannot help looking elate. Her father unfortunately sees it, and it decides him to remain at Ouchy all day, notwithstanding a strong desire to be present at the purchase of the musical-box. He has half made up his mind that he will buy one for Oaklands, but has put off going to Geneva from day to day. This would have been a good opportunity; they might have got two at a cheaper rate than one. He feels quite savage with Edith for keeping him at home.

“I can't go to-day,” he says abruptly, and in a tone that caused all of them to look at him, the change of voice was so marked.

“I am sorry for that,” said the American; “I should have liked your opinion on it. I mustn't drive off the buying much longer; my friend wants it soon.”

Mr. Scott would like to ask him to put off going for one day, but he half suspects his daughter of having an assignation with that young idiot, and means to keep a very sharp look-out on her, and certainly, if he means going to Geneva to-morrow, won't let her know of it beforehand. Indeed, he doesn't see why he should not go without her knowing that he has gone. With that notion in view, he says in a careless sort of way—

“I'm no judge of those things. Edith knows more

about them than I do, I expect. If you don't go to-day, we might all go to-morrow, very likely." He watches his daughter's face narrowly as he says that; but Edith, who knows of no plan for to-morrow, looks quite unconcerned about that project.

Miss M'Arthur sees that Mr. Scott is suspicious of Edith, and the idea comes to her that perhaps he thought it was his daughter he saw hurry in last night. He is so likely to have seen something from his post on the balcony.

"Why, certainly, I will put off going to Geneva till to-morrow or the next day, if the ladies can be induced to go with us then," said complaisant Mr. Price, who would, in truth, much prefer their society to a *tête-à-tête* excursion with Mr. Scott.

"Is it too damp, John, do you think, to sit in the garden this morning?" asks Mrs. Scott.

"Much too damp," is the curt reply.

"And the terrace?"

"Of course it's not so bad on the terrace; but I should think your own room would be best, unless you can be persuaded for once in a way to walk up to Lausanne." He says that in an aggrieved manner. "This is just the morning for a walk."

Edith and Miss M'Arthur dare not exchange glances; the situation is becoming too critical.

"What will happen if he sees Captain Munro passing in front of the post-office?" thinks Maggie. "Of course he will conclude that his friend is lurking near, and there will be a fearful hurricane."

"I will walk to Lausanne willingly," says his wife.

"I like the town. It is only when the sun pours down on me as I toil up that dusty hill that I object to the walk. There certainly will be no dust this morning. I think the early morning is the best time for walking, don't you, Mr. Price?"

"Certainly, ma'am. If we shan't be too large a party, Frank and I would be happy to join you. We haven't half seen Lausanne yet."

"Yes, do come. One does not notice the distance one walks when one is amused. It will be much pleasanter if you and Frank come. Mr. Scott will let me walk my own pace if he has you to walk off with. I am selfish, you see," she says with a smile as she rises from the table.

"I must taste the fresh air now," says Mary, going towards the window. "I don't see why we have been so closely shut in this morning. Surely a dislike to fresh air is not one of our insular prejudices?" She opens wide both sides of the French window, and steps out to the terrace.

The heavy rainfall of yesterday has revived in everything its brightest tints of green, and has freshened the air considerably. It is indeed a feast of pure air. Mrs. Scott and Mary revel in the change of temperature. Not so Edith and Miss M'Arthur. The latter, notwithstanding Mary's remonstrances, was on the point of withdrawing to the shelter of the hotel, when her pupil puts her hand through her arm to detain her, saying—

"You must stay a minute or two longer, mum dear. I have sent Frank to tell his father that it is just

right here for a cigarette. He stopped to talk to the ape, and they will be sure to come out together in a minute, and I shall be so disappointed if you don't get a chance to talk to him."

"You don't know what it is to feel chilled," her sister remarks, "or you would not imagine a talk to that man would compensate."

Mr. Scott had drawn his wife away to the far end of the terrace, where he is making her the recipient of his vexatious suspicions of Edith—suspicions which she warmly combats.

"Surely we can walk to and fro a few minutes? I can see there is a movement. Ugh! how hideous he is when he laughs!"

The three pace to and fro, taking care not to go within earshot of Mr. and Mrs. Scott.

"How absurd that we should all go together to Lausanne this morning, like a flock of sheep!" says Edith, the presence of Mary not being able to check this little outburst of indignation.

"I am sure I think it will be great fun," says her sister.

"Oh yes"—said loftily—"everything is great fun to you."

"Indeed, Edith, it is not;" and a shade comes over the bright young face at the remembrance of the poor invalid boy, to whom her thoughts had flown at her sister's remark.

Miss M'Arthur presses her hand with her arm sympathetically, and also as a warning to her not to quarrel with Edith.

Just then Frank comes bounding out, followed leisurely by his father and the little Swiss.

“Frank, Miss Mary,” says the American, “brought me your permission to come and smoke here.” Then addressing the other two, he says, “Have we also yours?”

“Certainly,” say both in almost the same breath.

“Mr. Meinhertz”—indicating the Swiss with a little wave of his cigarette case towards him—“and I have been talking of Lausanne. Part of his education was got there, and he has been telling me of some quiet new grounds, and has kindly offered to get us admission to one or two places of interest not usually seen by strangers.”

“It is very good of you, I am sure,” says Edith, addressing the Swiss. “I am sure we shall be delighted to put ourselves under your guidance, if my father has no other plans for us. He does not himself care much for pictures and museums; at least, not to stay long in them.”

“There are no pictures to detain one long in Lausanne. I suppose you have seen the principal galleries of Europe?”

She answers, “All.”

His words are pronounced correctly, but, owing to the heavy protruding jaw or to his not sufficiently unclosing his teeth, they are not very distinct, and it is necessary to give one's whole attention to him to clearly understand what he says. He and Edith are walking side by side. She finds the close attention wearisome. She has no curiosity about this man.

Three-volumed novels are almost her only literature, and those she skims for the plot—the love passages. Sometimes, when the excitement of the plot is overpowering, she looks at the conclusion before entering on the third volume, to calm her feverish interest in the people.

“You will acquit me of this missorting, won’t you, Miss M’Arthur?” says Mr. Price. “I did my best to gratify you.”

“My gratitude is in proportion to your intention, I assure you. I am afraid you will give me up, as I don’t seem able to seize opportunities when they are offered.”

“On the contrary, you will become a study to me in your turn. I shall be speculating on how many good chances you will miss before you take one.”

“‘There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune,’

you know. It is rather old-fashioned, I am afraid, to quote Shakespeare, but one of my governesses was always doing it, and I have taken it from her, I suppose. A horrible feeling to know that one has missed one chance, and won’t have another. But you will give me another, you say, from curiosity. I like men to own to being curious, because, of course, you all are.”

“We have inquiring minds, certainly.”

“That is a verbal distinction; I don’t know that it is a difference. I own to being curious. People

interest me wonderfully, and I always feel personally grateful to distinct varieties. A woman's life would be much more monotonous than it is if it were not for some people starting off the smoothly beaten track on paths of their own, and so causing a little diversion. I know a splendid woman in England. She isn't more than a girl in years, but one would never think of speaking of her as a girl. She and all her ideas are matured. They seem to come to her matured—her ideas, I mean. I should like you to know her ; she is so good and clever and original."

"Tell me more about this paragon, if you will. It is pleasant to hear one woman praise another."

"I must try first to put you right on that point. It is a disgraceful libel on women to say that they don't ever praise another woman, or even like to hear one praised. What women do not like, is to hear men laud to the sky women that they know the little tricks of. I have not a large acquaintance among men or women myself, but I hear a good bit of gossip, and I have come to the conclusion that I would rather take a man's opinion on a man, and a woman's of a woman—I mean an average kind of woman's. I have no doubt but there are envious women and uncharitable women in the world ; but I think they are the exception, not the rule."

"I agree with you in a great measure. Don't think I mean to libel your sex, pray ; I only said it was pleasant to hear one woman praise another. That does not necessarily mean that they seldom do it."

“No, it does not ; but if you use catch phrases like that, you must not be surprised if I put the meaning to them that they are usually supposed to bear.”

Mr. and Mrs. Scott now joined the promenaders, and there is quite a fresh kaleidoscopic grouping of colour and form. For a moment Mr. Scott looks scowlingly at the Swiss from under his bent brows, as if questioning if he might be Fielding in disguise ; then, mollified by his addressing a rather flattering remark to him, he allows the scowl to lift and the scrutiny to haze off to the distant landscape in an oblivious manner. Then he concentrates his regard on his own party, who seem to him to be becoming just a little too friendly with these strangers, walking out here on the terrace with them in the early morning with no hats on. No, that won't quite do ; a bad precedent, and must be stopped. He takes out his cigarettes, and, with a little wave of dismissal, as much as to imply, “We don't want you now,” says——

“You all take so long to get ready. You had better go. Be dressed in half an hour's time.” He takes out his watch. “It is now 10.20 ; be in the hall at ten minutes to eleven.”

“That is another libel,” says Miss M'Arthur in a low voice to Mr. Price. “And I can't try to put Mr. Scott right. I should not dare. His look is more expressive than his word.”

“I suppose he rather likes people to be afraid of him,” thinks Mr. Price as he joins the two men in their walk. “He is not of my way of thinking, anyhow.”

I should begin to ask myself some questions if I found even Frank afraid of me."

Maggie is glad the day is cool enough to allow of her wearing her navy-blue serge, the walking dress she wore when she first met Captain Munro at the museum. Of course he would not remember it, but somehow she looks upon that as a lucky dress. Whenever she wore that latterly in England she met her friend. To-day she does not want to meet him; it will be a hundred times better that she should not; still she dresses with more than usual care—lovingly, one might almost say on the chance that his eye might rest upon her approvingly—if but for one moment.

CHAPTER IV.

IT is nearly twelve o'clock as Captain Munro, as usual, irreproachably and unobtrusively clothed according to time and place, hurries out of his hotel and makes his way, without looking to the right hand or the left, in the direction of the post-office. He has read over a large accumulation of letters forwarded to him at Lausanne, while sitting at his open window, where from time to time he could look out over Ouchy on the lake, and distant snow-capped Alps, and just at one spot he could sweep the road that he is expecting Maggie to pass over. He has answered one or two of the most urgent letters; he has breakfasted, and now he starts out free to follow his own will. The day is at his disposal, and surely somehow he will come across the girl he wants to meet; it will be hard lines if he does not, he thinks. As he hurries on he does not in the least realize to what he is hurrying. He has come away from all his friends and ordinary occupation that he and Maggie may know more of each other, may cement their friendship before he goes into exile. She knows that he can't marry

yet—can't afford it ; that is as far as his thought takes him on his side. Of her he thinks, " If she really cares for me she will wait till I come back ; if she does not—well, there will be no great harm done either way." A sudden check comes to this train of reasoning, waking him with an unpleasant shock to the world of reality. As he turns the street corner he has come upon a spectacle of quite a long string of people known to him, and, what is worse, of people knowing him. Most fortunately, they are going in the same direction as he is. Maggie is walking behind the others with a big fellow, who seems very much taken with her, and she with him, to all appearance. He had never thought of Maggie as being able to be interested even in another fellow. Not a pleasant sight that for any man, however easy-tempered and unsuspecting ; and I have never pretended that Captain Munro is " easy-tempered." In the place of the prefix " easy " I should be inclined to put " ugly," if I had to describe him faithfully. He has a great inclination, as he follows at a little distance behind them—he has crossed over to the same side of the street as they are on, as being more out of sight of all the Scott family—to turn round and start off in quite another direction ; he has a great mind to do it, but he does not. All his traditions of life are opposed to rapid action. To let things slide, that is his creed and rule of conduct, and he acts up to it now.

They are passing the post-office ; but that is on the right side of the street—they are on the left. Maggie turns her head to look at it. Just then Edith, who is

walking with her mother a step or two in advance of her, turns her head to look behind at Maggie. He is all but sure that she saw him, and he wonders what she will do. He is not kept long in suspense. She says something to her mother, then to Maggie, and detaching herself from them, goes into a confectioner's—the same confectioner's shop into which she and Maggie took Agatha's letter to read. Maggie and her tall attendant also turn in.

He feels sure this move is because she saw him, but he does not in the least know what it means. He stands still at the doorway of a shop, ready to rush in if, when Mrs. Scott tells her husband where the others are, he should take it into his head to walk back to meet them. Fortunately he does not do so. He seems very much interested in his talk, points before him at some object, and then goes on. Mrs. Scott says something to the boy walking by Mary, who rushes back, pops his head into the confectioner's, delivers his message in the twinkling of an eye, and then starts off again to overtake Mrs. Scott and her daughter.

“What the — shall I do now?” asks Captain Munro of himself, and himself can give no answer. If he goes boldly into the confectioner's, it will put the two girls in the awkward predicament of having to ask a comparative stranger to keep a secret for them. He does not at all like the notion of Maggie having to confide in or ask anything of this man, so he thinks he won't do that. What shall he do? Won't he look a fool in their eyes, loafing about like this, not knowing

whether to go or stay? No man likes to look foolish, especially to the eye of beauty. By chance his shop is a jeweller's. The discovery is welcome. He goes now and stands looking in the window as if really interested in the contents, but he is actually waiting there to be discovered or not, as may seem wisest to Maggie, he keeping the while a furtive watch on the door by which they must issue.

He has not long to wait. The girls—the freemasonry among girls is marvellous—had evidently agreed on the plan of action. Edith comes out first, followed closely by Maggie. She turns decidedly towards him, as if waiting for him to see her. He faces her now. She bows and waits. He then advances quickly. "I fancied it was you who went in there," he says, "and I have been waiting about to make sure." He shakes hands with both. "Which way are you going?"

"Not your way, I fancy," says Maggie. "We are going to have a private view of something or other. Mr. and Mrs. Scott and a guardian Swiss are in front, and you know you are in temporary disgrace with Mr. Scott; so, if you please, only walk a step or two in our direction, and we won't feel surprised if you drop away at any moment without warning."

The American, as was intended, has heard this speech of Maggie's. He now takes the hint and walks on with her, she remarking to him by way of explanation, "Mr. Scott has strong prejudices, because a friend of that man's has annoyed him. He would wish us to cut him, which isn't reasonable, you know,

since there is nothing against him, and nothing more against his friend than his having the good taste to greatly admire Miss Scott. No harm in that, you will think ; the harm is in his having told her so."

"Ah! I understand. Odd chance that meeting him here."

"English people, you know, are supposed to appreciate the picturesque in any country more than in their own, and so one always meets English and Americans, but of course not from the same reason."

Behind, this little conversation is going on.

"I am so pleased to have met you, Captain Munro, and I do hope you won't think us all horrid. Miss M'Arthur was obliged to make that not very civil speech for the American's benefit, you know. He is a good bit with my father, and it was a hint for him."

"I think it was very cleverly done by Miss M'Arthur."

"You understand? You don't think it rude?"

"No, I won't think it rude. You are staying about here?"

"Yes ; at such a nice place—Ouchy. You know it?"

"Ye-as, very well. A big garden to the hotel."

"A lovely garden, and a gate from it leading away by the lake. We often stroll there. It would be lovely by moonlight. We have been consulting almanacs in a quite unprecedented manner for the time of full moon."

"Ye-as." He is not so enthusiastic for a bright moonlight night as his companion, and is feeling a little anxious as to Mr. Scott's whereabouts ; added

to which, his conversational powers are not great. He can talk about things that interest him to people that interest him, but that is not conversation.

There is a minute's silence ; then Edith says rather flurriedly, "When did you see your friend last, and how was he?" She hesitated when she got as far as, "When did you see." She did not like to say "Cecil," and she could not speak of him as "Mr. Fielding;" that would seem so cold and horrid.

Captain Munro has quite a genial smile on his face now, as he says, "My friend was very well on Saturday, when he came to see me off, and I had a few lines from him this morning ; he sent remembrances, underlined, to all friends that I might chance to see of his. He goes on Saturday to see his mother, who lives at Keswick, you know. I am to be sure to write to him there. He seems unusually interested in me and Switzerland just now ; and they say in the X. Y. Z., you know, that he means taking Miss Browne and her money-bags to India. He's always with her, you know ; was actually going to a school-treat one day this week—an awful grind that, I should say. I've never been to one, and I don't know any one who has (unless it's our colonel), but it's worse even than a bazaar, I fancy."

Edith laughs a merry little laugh, although, shocking to relate, she is walking in a town. It is the first Maggie has heard since that eventful Sunday before they left England. She turns round at the sound. She wishes much that she could be with them.

"You are amused, dear?"

“Naturally; you may think so, when I actually laugh here.” After a minute’s silence, she says, “I am afraid, Captain Munro, we ought to say *au revoir*, and you ought to carry out the plan Miss M’Arthur laid out and disappear. That looks like a semi-public building, does not it? and my father may be at one of the windows.”

Maggie turns round and gives a sweet smile at parting, to which Captain Munro responds by a rather injured expression of countenance, as he raises his hat in farewell. Sweet smiles are not exactly men’s weapons. I know a genial smile, which is essentially manly, can’t be forced.

“I was laughing in that absurd manner,” explains Edith, as Mr. Price goes into the road to enable her to join Miss M’Arthur on the footpath, “at the idea of the school-treat at Otham. I had forgotten that it is to-day. Agatha will be so energetic; it makes one feel quite weak to see her on these occasions. She is the head of everything, everywhere at the same time. Has Miss M’Arthur told you of our remarkable friend Miss Browne?” Edith’s eyes are glowing, and she is speaking with an enthusiasm quite new in her since Mr. Price has seen her.

“Yes; Miss M’Arthur tells me I ought to know her. What is it, I wonder, in our nature that seems to predispose us not to like any person that we hear greatly bepraised, and that we are told we shall be sure to like? It can’t be jealousy.”

“I don’t know,” says Edith; and then she dreams of Cecil for a little.

“Can you tell me, Miss M'Arthur? You speculate on most things, I think.”

Maggie is feeling rather disappointed with Captain Munro—unless, indeed, he felt a shade jealous; *that* she could readily forgive. She was thinking more of him than Mr. Price's proposition.

“Do you mind repeating what you said?” she asks. “If I am to answer, I must be clear about it.”

Mr. Price repeats his question.

“I really don't know what to say. It can't be jealousy; I agree with you there; because you can't be jealous of Agatha's possessing all the good qualities under the sun, as you are a man and she a woman. I suppose it is that we like to preserve the right of private judgment intact. What is your own matured opinion on the phenomenon?”

“I think it is partly what you say, and partly—I am afraid I shall shock you—a disbelief in perfection among our fellows. Not in Miss Browne's case, this, please understand. Although you and Miss Scott praise her so highly, I don't feel in the least that I should like her.”

“Exactly. You won't allow us to draw cheques on your private-judgment bank. You refuse to honour them; we have no credit with you. We are deeply hurt.”

“My dear Miss M'Arthur”—and he laughs pleasantly—“I assure you your credit is unlimited in my private-judgment bank; draw on it as much as you will. There are some people one trusts instinctively.”

“Would he trust me if he saw me meet my friend clandestinely?” she thinks, while he is speaking. Aloud—“Yes; I believe in instinct, where it has fair play. But we wish to believe in some people, I think, and that gives a bias to instinct that warps it, and once warped it is useless.”

“I quite believe in instinct,” says Edith, awaking from her day-dreams.

They have arrived at a big building, in the shade of the doorway of which the Scotts await them.

“You have been long enough in that rubbish-shop to have quite taken away all wholesome appetite for lunch,” is Mr. Scott’s greeting. “I wonder, Mr. Price,” he continues, “that you encouraged them in such a bad practice.”

“I think we brought away all our purchases in sundry small bags; I have several in my pockets, I know;” and he good-humouredly takes three or four out to verify his assertion.

“Thanks, many,” says Edith, “for allowing your pockets to be bulged so good-naturedly. Frank, these are for you. After lunch they are to be eaten. Don’t offer Mary one before. Chocolate is a weakness of hers. Ask her to tell you about it.”

“I propose,” says Mr. Scott, “that we have lunch here. Mr. Meinhertz tells me Hotel Gibbon—where Gibbon wrote his ‘Decline and Fall,’ you know—is a very good hotel, and I invite you all to lunch with me there.”

They all accept, and very soon are *en route* for the hotel and lunch.



In an agony of mind Miss M'Arthur looks at Edith, who appears perfectly unmoved, she not knowing that Munro is stopping at Hotel Gibbon.

A change of cuisine, of wine, and of place where lunch comes off, count as an excitement to Mr. Scott in these, to him, empty days of enforced absence from the much-desired city, and his spirits rise, and he is for the nonce positively genial. Under this influence all, with the exception of Miss M'Arthur—whose heart sinks lower and lower each time the door of the *salle* opens—expand and become genial too.

The Swiss is sitting next her, but the wished-for, if it does not come too late, certainly comes at the wrong time for her to appreciate it. How can she care to begin, and pursue with coolness or satisfaction, a physiognomical study, let alone the study of an object bearing on guesses or deductions in natural history, when her heart is palpitating with fear, and when "Will he come?" is the only thought that the brain can produce, and that goes over and over again in it, to the utter destruction of appetite and desire to talk? Her companion's ideas not being heavily weighted with a dominant foreign body, he talks away at a great pace, taking a large share in the general conversation. Presently there is a lull in that, and he has leisure to observe more closely his right-hand neighbour, the dark handsome girl who has said so little. He would like to make her talk to him. Next to being handsome, and in some instances even before it, comes originality. Now, the Swiss knows that he is not handsome, but he is successful. An

ugly man with a remarkably characteristic face commands attention. All force compels—he has no shyness, no doubt of himself, to stand in his way. To be without a particle of shyness is to be a foot taller than ninety people out of every hundred ; one can look down on them and take their measure, and take them also at a disadvantage. The Swiss mistakes Miss M'Arthur's extreme quietude for shyness, and commences to reassure her with a little polite solicitude. "You don't seem to like the cooking here. Can I ask for anything different—that you could eat—for you ? It isn't as good as usual to-day."

Now, Miss M'Arthur ought to have felt grateful for this kind notice, but she does not. After pretending very much not only to eat, but to be very much occupied with eating, it is annoying to know that one has failed, and that even a stranger has remarked the want of appetite. If Mr. Scott hears a word his attention will be drawn to her, and that will be too much for her overstrained nerves to bear ; so she hastens not only to reply, but to talk. Mr. Price had looked and smiled as the Swiss commenced speaking to her, as much as to say, "You have your wished-for chance now."

"No, thank you ; I want nothing more," she says. "There is nothing the matter with the cooking, but I have still a distinct recollection of breakfast, and one can't do justice to lunch, or any meal, until one has forgotten the one that preceded it ; at least I cannot."

"Ah, exactly," said the Swiss. "The English make heavy breakfasts, and eat too often. I noticed

that when I was in England. I am more accustomed to French ways."

"I wonder what else you noticed in England besides our greediness. It is most amusing to see ourselves as passing foreigners see us. We most of us have ugly mouths, says one, and we all more or less resemble fishes and horses—from our insular position and our devotion to sport, in which the horse enters largely—and you revive an old accusation. You say we eat too much. But we don't eat so much as our ancestors, and that we are degenerating in physique is well known. Then, again, we surely don't eat as much as the Germans, who are not degenerating, by all accounts, in physique or mind. I fancy that the food we Teutonic races eat acts as ballast, steadies us, and keeps us from flying up, up, up, out of sight, like our Gallic neighbours, who alternate between ups and downs in a manner totally unlike the typical English people. But what else did you notice about us while in England? I like to hear, even if I seem to resent the imputations. You are a soldier, I believe: what do you think of our army? I know it is small. In saying that myself, I disarm your criticism on that point."

Miss M'Arthur has now come to an interesting subject. She never has one great pleasure to girls in love—she cannot talk of the beloved object to any one; but here, in discussing the army of which he is a unit, she approached him, and half forgets in it her dread of seeing him just now.

"I can't speak with authority on the British army

as it is, but a few years back I should have been well content with your soldiers against any in Europe. I can't say as much for the officers."

Every one now of our party is listening to the discussion. Mr. Scott looks in a triumphant manner at Edith, but the look is lost; her eyes are on the two who are talking.

"But what do you say of the officers?" asks Maggie, with a heightened colour.

"The majority of them are much too fond of leave and lawn-tennis, and your generals are too conceited."

"Indeed! You copy the tone of some of the newspapers."

"Perhaps so, but it is involuntary. I know it from my own experience."

"May I hear it?" Maggie is not sorry that he has left her unit stratum for a higher, if there is to be abuse from this man.

"Certainly. When the Zulu War was commencing I went to the Cape. I volunteered to join your army there. I was told it would be nothing, only a military promenade. My services were declined. Over-confidence cost you much that time"

"But is not bravery confidence in one's self?" asks Maggie, willing to get away from delicate ground.

"Personal bravery has something of that in it. But over-confidence is a great fault in a general until the moment comes when there is nothing else left to him."

Mr. Scott is no longer interested to listen. He rises from the table, and wanders out to the terrace, shaded by spreading chestnut trees—a grateful shade

on a sunny day to this terrace, otherwise exposed to the full blaze of the sun from morning till it sinks at eve behind the distant mountains, tinging them with roseate hues.

At each end of the terrace is a telescope. He begins to adjust one to his sight, losing in thus focussing one distant speck all the wide stretching grandeur of the varied panorama beneath him, of blooming verdure, lake, and distant snow-topped Alps.

The others follow him at leisure. Mary and Frank, with the love in children of something to do, take possession of the other telescope; the rest of the party stand admiringly on the terrace, then pass on to the garden. But that act of will in his wife and daughter does not please Mr. Scott.

"Wait," he says. "This is a capital glass. I want you to see that peak—Mont Blanc, I should say."

Thus arrested, they must take their turn at straining their eyes in the direction he has chosen. He keeps them some time at this peep-show; when *he* is tired, they proceed to the garden, an old-fashioned garden, in which grow many sweet-scented flowers.

"How did you like him?" asks Mr. Price, joining Maggie, who is with Edith, as soon as practicable.

"Not much. Who is he, a foreigner, that he should think his services might be accepted by Lord Chelmsford?"

"Very conceited of him," adds Edith.

"That ugly little man was the best swordsman in the French army. He was aide-de-camp to General

B——, who retreated to Switzerland, you may remember, in the Franco-German war. He had to fight no end of duels with French officers, because when he sent in his resignation, he gave as his reason that there was neither honour, glory, nor something else—I forget what was the third thing—he could not gain in the French army. He said them off glibly in French, and I did not quite catch the last insult. For such naturally the French considered them, and challenges rained in on him. He has seen a good bit of service one way and another, and is certainly a remarkable man.”

“I don’t like him, although I like bravery,” returned Maggie.

“You don’t like his strictures on your officers, Miss M‘Arthur?”

“I think them unjust,” says Edith, thinking of Cecil.

“I find him conceited,” adds Maggie.

“I can’t say if he is or is not unjust. He believes in himself, certainly; but is he conceited?”

“That I don’t know; but at least he has a conceited air, and one may as well be conceited as appear so.”

“*He* is not good-looking,” says Mr. Price, rather pointedly. He is thinking of the man they met this morning, and made a fuss with; he certainly appeared to him to have a supercilious, if not a conceited manner. Without being what is called in love with Miss M‘Arthur, he feels a great interest in her; there is a gentle thoroughness about her that he likes. Her

words are not mere words ; they convey her thoughts. One need not be in love to a little bit resent any great interest felt by a woman one sees much of in another man.

“ He certainly is *not* good-looking,” returns Miss M'Arthur, “ and so ought to be most careful that his manner shall be agreeable.”

“ Certainly,” echoes Edith ; “ and he must *know* that he is very plain.”

“ I can't see with your eyes, but if he fails to please women, there is doubtless something radically wrong in his manner. Can't you two take him in hand ? A woman can do much, and two could do more,” he says, smiling. He can be very generous where he fears no rivalry.

“ He is too dreadful,” says Edith.

“ Yes, a woman can do something,” replies Maggie. “ But she should be married before she begins the polishing process ; she might otherwise be misunderstood, and that would be horrible. Besides, what would Mr. Scott say ? ”

Then between them they tell of the Folkestone episode, and how they were commanded to speak to no one.

“ He has made a marvellous exception in your favour,” says Maggie.

“ I am very glad,” he answers.

“ Is it not intolerable that we should be drilled into exclusiveness, as if there was any fear of our becoming at all familiar with chance acquaintances ? ” Edith's delicate nostrils are slightly inflated, and she

looks the personification of high-bred exclusiveness at this moment.

“He need have been afraid of no one but Mary,” adds Miss M'Arthur.

“I am very much obliged to Miss Mary,” said Mr. Price, smilingly. “If it had not been for her fraternizing with my boy, I should never have got inside your exclusive circle. I remember the first day you appeared at dinner; I got to Ouchy the day before. There were only Germans in the hotel who couldn't speak English, and the Swiss, but I had not spoken to him then. I hailed your unmistakably English faces with delight.”

“How did you know us to be English?” they both ask together.

“I will for answer quote a countryman of mine, he expresses it better than I should. ‘There is a character in the expression of an Englishwoman's face that you look for in vain in an Italian's. It has also a half-proud look, which I like, although it gives a coldness to it.’ I saw that at dinner that first night.”

We all like to know the impression we make on others when it is favourable. Maggie and Edith are both gratified. Unconsciously one likes to have a quotation applied to one; it somehow implies distinction.

The above conversation has gone on while making the tour of the garden at a discreet distance behind the others. Now Mr. Scott turns and waits; when they have nearly come up to him he says, “Mr. Meinhertz tells me that there is a very pretty drive from here to

Prilly. Will you and Frank go with us, Mr. Price? If you have nothing better to do, come; we will make a day of it. Never mind for once about getting back to Ouchy to dinner. We shall find something somewhere, I dare say."

There is no dissentient voice; but as they drive along, Maggie devoutly hopes that she will be back in time to keep her second tryst with Captain Munro for this day. The first was almost a failure; if the second falls through, what will he not think of her? He did not look pleased this morning. "Of course he knows absolutely nothing of me, and he may think me a coquette," she says to herself; and the impatience she feels to put herself right in his eyes prevents that calm enjoyment that is necessary to the full appreciation of the peaceful beauties Nature so bountifully spreads before her. She is not in tune with it.

CHAPTER V.

THERE is a wide-spread notion that if we begin a day badly, so for us it ends. It coexists with a lingering superstition that it is unlucky to turn back for anything after one has once set forth. Very likely ; the forgetful are not usually the lucky (?). Most superstitions and old folklore, when looked into, explain their own meanings. To take this first belief—which of us is blest with a sufficiently equable temper, as not to carry traces of thwarting number one with him to meet, and heighten the effect of the next little thing that goes wrong ?

Our hero for the present—hero in virtue of his connection with my heroine, be it understood—is not blest with a temper proof against small vexations, though for that matter small vexations are the mosquitoes of daily life, stinging and annoying out of all proportion to their size.

When Captain Munro turned away from his friends, he felt, without reason, decidedly “put out,” and of course inclined to blame some one for it. Here was the morning’s amusement, that he had counted on,

dashed in a moment, and nothing at hand to supply its place.

He felt ill-used. He could not stroll about Lausanne for fear of coming across the Scotts again. For the same reason, it would not be wisdom to go to Ouchy ; at least, not without knowing beforehand when the boats start. It would be annoying, and spoil everything, to be discovered loafing about the pier by Mr. Scott. Certainly he could take a walk quite out of the town to some one of the places of interest abounding in the picturesque neighbourhood. But he can't make up his mind to that ; so he strolls back to the hotel to consult time-tables.

As he walks he thinks of Maggie. He is not pleased with her—why, he could hardly say. He objects to Americans—“cads mostly,” he tells himself. If she is not interested in this man, why did she not fall back to walk with him ? Girls can always manage those little matters if they choose. Then he waxes angry. “If she thinks she has brought me here to make a fool of me, she will find herself mistaken.”

A heavy cloud of sullenness towers over his dark handsome face as he cogitates in this wise—“Women are more or less mercenary, and Americans who travel are usually rich.”

In this anti-enjoyable frame of mind he reaches his hotel. Arrived there, he goes to his room to consult his own “Bradshaw,” in preference to looking out the departure of boats in the reading-room. He finds the page easily. Geneva-wards 1.30 ; the other way, for Vevay, Chillon, etc., 2.20. If he goes at all by boat,

it must be at that last time. He will keep in his room, he decides, until the last moment. He can get down to Ouchy in half an hour and go straight on to the boat. None of the Scotts are likely to be about so soon after their lunch as that. He draws a table and chair to his open window, and sits down to write to Fielding. The boy will like to hear that he has seen Edith ; he has no cause to be uneasy about her yet.

He stops every now and then in his writing to look out, not so much in appreciation of the fair prospect before him, as to look at that short bit of the road to Ouchy, commanded by his window, the bit that he watched earlier in the morning with such totally different feelings.

His letter is finished, and he, standing at the window is looking at his watch to see if it is not close on the time for starting, when he hears a hum of voices on the terrace beneath his window.

The thick chestnut trees screen it completely from his sight. The hum of voices is unmistakably from English people ; there is no buzz of shriller tongue in it. He is not a curious man by any means. He is too much wrapped in a mantle of exclusiveness for that, regarding people outside his set as "cads" probably, or "snobs," until the contrary is proved to his satisfaction.

Something—a familiar tone, perhaps, that reaches him—arouses now his interest in these chattering people, and he becomes anxious to get a peep at them. He noticed no English last night at dinner.

He clears away his writing materials by tossing

them impatiently into an empty drawer, then returns to his former post at the open window, his watch half drawn out of his pocket.

"I can do the mile and a half to Ouchy in twenty minutes," he says to himself, as he stands there impatiently watching for some of the party to go beyond the terrace.

Certainty grows. That laugh is very like Mary Scott's. He listens more intently. Some rumbling voices bring down an anathema as they pass on the other side of the garden wall, just as he fancied he was beginning to disentangle the voices. He looks down at his watch. "One minute more" He slips it back into his pocket: the boat may go without him. He is all but sure now that the people below are his people, but he will make quite sure.

As we know, they were kept by Mr. Scott and the telescope for some little time on the terrace. At last they emerge beyond, and he sees that his instinct was true, which is always a source of mild satisfaction to any one. But he also sees that "that cad" is still dancing attendance on Maggie, and he resents it. It is plain to see that it is Maggie, not Edith, that is the attraction. He walks by *her* side, looks down on *her*, bending a little towards her, as if much interested in what she is saying. And she is chatting away gaily, he tells himself. He can tell it by the way she turns her head towards him. He knows just how she is looking—by instinct. And she ought, he argues, to be feeling the reverse of gay, if she were vexed to miss him in the morning.

When he is annoyed he shows it ; he can't so easily put things from him, and be amused. He is trying her at the bar of his private judgment. The precedent, which is his law, is his own feelings in a similar case.

He had fully intended, by-the-bye, if he had found Edith with Maggie in the morning, to be cautious and talk quite as much to Edith as to her ; but in trying her at his own judgment-bar, he does not dream of *excusing* her by his own precedent.

As they cross the garden at the end, they are lost to view for a minute or two, by reason of intervening trees.

They come again into sight. Eager as he is to watch their faces, prudence makes him retreat behind the curtain, from which position he sees enough to deepen his annoyance.

The climax is reached when he hears every word of Mr. Scott's proposal of the joint excursion to Prilly. He stays in his room until he judges that they must have left the hotel, although the temptation was strong to see the order of their going.

He employs himself in abusing everybody roundly to himself. He is half conscious that he has been principally to blame, but that does not mend matters. It is never pleasant to feel that one's self has been a fool. If he had asked this girl straight out to marry him some day, this could not have happened. There are moments when so-called wisdom goes to the wind ; he wishes now that he hadn't kept wisdom so close to his elbow.

Angry as he feels with her, she has never seemed

so desirable in his eyes as now, when she seems to be slipping away from him.

How well she carried herself! How charming she looked in her animation! He thrills with the remembrance of her voice, her touch, only last night. How greatly impressed that man seemed with her! This third reason for the passion, he feels, is a very cogent one. Men almost invariably, yet unconsciously, are influenced in these matters by the commercial maxim, "The worth of a thing is what it will fetch," and competition raises value.

All these angry, dissatisfied feelings, by simmering half a day in his mind, become by night intensified.

He is anxious, most anxious, to meet Maggie; the desire to see her is stronger in him than it has ever been before. But a sulky man is a sulky man—a self-evident assertion, which means that a habit of sulkiness is so difficult to break through, resisting expediency, common sense, and innumerable other reasons for its evaporation. There is a fierce satisfaction in the feeling that nourishes it that is its own reward. He, misguided man, hugs his besetting weakness; he desires to show that he is not pleased; he wishes her to feel like a culprit. To make it apparent to her—as if his manner will not do that!—he puts the drag on his impatience, and contrives to arrive twenty minutes late at the trysting-place.

She is there before him. People deep in sulks are never glad. Captain Munro, when he sees that he is relatively late, feels much better satisfied with himself, but not glad, certainly. She is just inside the

gate, under the overarching trees, waiting there till he comes up.

He lifts his hat as he approaches her, indistinctly growls out "Good evening," and just puts his hand across the gate and takes hers, in that take-it-or-leave-it-alone manner that she detests.

Her heart for a second stands still. She has had so much trouble to get here unobserved to-night. It has been a tiring, sight-seeing day, too. Her anticipations of this meeting had buoyed her along; now the revulsion of feeling is so painful that she feels sick and faint. If this is the way he treats her, she will go back, and then all will be over between them, she feels. That thought makes her hesitate before taking so important a step.

He has noticed how quickly her smile died away, how crestfallen, almost ill, she looks now. As she says nothing, he is compelled to commence the conversation. He is satisfied with the very visible effect his coldness has produced, and that mollifies a little the tone in which he says, "You haven't waited here long, I hope?"

"Not very long," she answers in her usual low, sweet voice, but with all the life gone out of it.

He notices directly the alteration. "I am afraid you are tired. You have had a fatiguing day?" His words are considerate, but his manner of uttering them is coldly civil.

"How do you know that? But it is true, and I am tired. I shall be wise to go in and go to bed. Miss Scott has already gone, quite knocked up."

He does not want her to go in his present ungenerous, exceptional mood—he would feel as sold to loose her as a cat suddenly deprived of the mouse that he is playing with ; but he can't bring himself yet to say "Don't go." He takes the middle course, answering her question, ignoring her remarks.

He watches her countenance closely as he says, "I saw you from my window at Hotel Gibbon, when you were walking in the garden with *that* man."

A flush of colour comes and goes in her face at these words ; but he cannot read its meaning. How can he enter into the indignant feeling of a pure-minded girl, who has for the first time pressed her lips to a lover's, in the abandonment of love, tenderness, aye, and of passion, at finding that before a day had gone by since this love passage, he is suspecting her of forgetting him for another man ? "Because I have loved him, and have permitted his caresses, he thinks me light of love. How truly horrible ! How deeply am I punished for my clandestine"—poor Miss Gore!—"meetings ! How I have been deceived in him ! I thought him the soul of chivalry, as regards women, he seemed so nice-minded. Ah, it is since last night that he has changed his opinion of me ! I ought not to have come out in the darkness to meet him."

These thoughts, though they flash lightning-like through her mind, make an uncomfortable pause.

He wonders that she makes no answer, and thinks, "Can it be that she feels convicted of playing me false ?" He does not quite know what to say. These

pauses, so unusual between them, are uncomfortable. In hastening to say something, he stumbles on this ill-advised remark, "You did not know that I was looking on."

She draws herself up proudly. "No, Captain Munro ; how could I know it?" Her tone as she says this is calm and incisive. "But I knew perfectly well that we were in your hotel, and it would not have *surprised* me to have seen you at any moment. For *your* sake I hoped you would not come upon us unexpectedly." Her spirit is roused within her. The step she dreaded to take but a few minutes back seems easy now, nay, desirable. Of what use to linger? Sudden death, the quick, sharp, irrevocable end of all, had always strongly attracted her fancy. Now she will put her theory into practice. But there shall be no misunderstanding between them. He shall know how he has offended her before she goes.

"That would have been awkward," he is saying the while ; "but, of course, I knew you were about somewhere, and that made me cautious."

The word "cautious" annoys her in her present mood, and is as fuel to the fire.

"There is something intensely disagreeable to me in all this necessity for caution," she answers, still speaking calmly ; but her hand she notices is shaking nervously, and she hides it away under her wrap, ashamed of it. He looks at her in astonishment—this is quite a new phrase.

"The *necessity* for caution," she continues ironically,

“is distasteful to me. And the insinuation you have just made shows me what a light opinion you have of me.” (“Indeed,” he begins.) “Wait a minute, Captain Munro. You do not seem in the least to have understood me, and I have been quite mistaken in you. I should never have met you as I did last night, please understand, if I had for one moment thought that it would make you think so lightly of me. Truth in one’s self makes suspicion of another impossible.”

She turned from him at that, and walked rapidly away, leaving him standing at the other side of the gate like a fool, quite amazed at the unexpected turn things have taken.

“Miss M‘Arthur!” he calls as loudly as he dares. She hears, but neither stops nor looks back. In another minute she is out of sight, a bend in the path interposing a bed of rhododendrons between them.

“What a brute I have been!” is his first thought; “What the —— can I do now?” the second. “It is getting dusk, but let caution go;” he hates caution at this moment as much as she does. He must speak to her to-night, must ask her to forgive him for his base suspicions.

He is through the gate in an instant, but he does not know the winding paths as well as Maggie, and the grounds of Beau Rivage are maze-like, especially at dusk. “Which way did we go last night? Ah, last night!”

He must have taken the wrong turning; he can

see nothing of her. But on he goes, somewhere ; he fancies in the right direction. At last he is clear of the maze. But he is too late to make his peace. Up the terrace steps he sees her go, and on into the hotel —not once looking back.

CHAPTER VI.

SUDDEN death! If sudden death to the body leaves the thinking, spiritual part of one as actively tormenting as the sudden death of hope in love does, then is death no death, no peaceful haven for the wearied traveller, such as the way-worn long for. Sudden death, alas! poor Maggie—brave words of high courage, called for by the occasion; *but* the hereafter?

Not in the excitement of battle, when the blood runs hot and passion is fierce, is the hard lines of warfare, but in the after-trial of suffering, when, left wounded on the battle-field, cruelly wounded, and athirst, nay, craving for drink, one suffers, with no tangible hope to help one to bear and to wait.

To Maggie there is no chink for the least little ray of hope to shine through. She is wounded, smarting, suffering; and she feels that the man who has so hurt her in her pride and through her love, is not the hero she thought him. The scales have fallen from her eyes. She sees him clearly, therefore there is no

room for hope ; nothing to do but to suffer, and that with a smiling face—no luxury of tears. Her idol is shattered past mending, as she thinks, and she is not of that order in nature that is able, as soon as one idol is destroyed, to sweep away the bits and set up another on the empty pedestal.

And the shattered idol, what of him? He tears up the hill leading up to Lausanne in a state of disgust—disgust at himself—cursing his sullen temper, which is at the bottom of it all. But, unpleasant as it all is now, he does not contemplate its lasting so very long. To apologize is never pleasant, but he feels that he was wrong, decidedly wrong. He will write to her ; he will apologize ; he will offer to call, to beard Mr. Scott—to do much, in fact, to get again on the same footing with her as he was only last night. . . . And again he curses his temper, and goes over all that she said.

The sharp walk and the resolutions he has formed make him feel on better terms with himself after a while. By the time he has reached his hotel and regained his room he has shaken off much of his annoyance, and he sits down to write by the flickering light of his candles—rendered more than usually unsteady by a strong draught from the window, which he had thrown up when he came back—in a fairly good frame of mind. But beginning the letter he finds less easy than it seemed when walking along. This is what at length gets written, after much hesitation and tearing up of unsatisfactory attempts :—

“Hotel Gibbon, Wednesday Night.

“MY DEAR MAGGIE,

“I most sincerely regret having vexed you so much just now. *Please* believe me when I say that never for one second have I thought of you, save with the highest respect. I apologize humbly for allowing myself to be so stupidly carried away as to hint that that man’s attention received any encouragement or serious thought from you. Will not this letter itself plead for me? You will see, surely, that in sending this to your hotel, I have let caution go to the winds. I *must* see you, dear. If you do not bring me your forgiveness to the old meeting-place at 8.30 p.m., or as soon after as possible, to-morrow (Thursday), I shall call on you at your hotel early the following morning, in spite of Mr. Scott’s displeasure. *Indeed*, dearest, I am more sorry than I can tell to have vexed you.

“With much love,

“Ever affectionately yours,

“JOHN.

“I shall be away at Vevay all day, so don’t trouble to write; I should not get your letter. Come to the gate, *please*.”

The postscript, which he adds after mature consideration, he considers as a masterpiece of astuteness. He feels sure that her first impulse on reading his letter will be to write to decline meeting him, these secret meetings being a sore point with her; but as the day passes and she has not pledged herself by letter not to meet him, she may relent, and at the last

moment, even, decide to come. He thinks he will go down now to post his letter, to insure its reaching her at early morning. He gets as far as his door with it, then hesitates—wants her to have the letter, of course, but is it best she should have it so early? Whenever he has been hasty to act in the past, he has repented it after. He stands by his door, and thinks over her probable feelings. He is sure that she loves him, for love can't die in a minute. If she expects a letter the first thing and does not get it, perhaps she may think she has been too hasty, and by the time she does get the letter may be more inclined to meet him half-way. Anyhow, whichever way he decides, there is no hurry needed.

He draws a chair to his window, that has that far-stretching view of lake and piled-up mountains, and over all is the solemn, soul-stirring silence of night. He does not smoke, so can't consult the friend that most men fly to when they have perplexing doubts to solve.

Matthew Arnold says, "Few people who feel a passion think of learning anything from it." This man being of a contemplative turn of mind, and not of a volcanic, boiling-over nature, has learnt much from his passions, and is learning still. Sitting here now, looking out into the semi-obscurity that is a setting to his thoughts, but does not arrest them, he reviews many episodes in his past life. There have been in it what seemed at the time big crises of a sort. Some he does not care to dwell on; those he is able to dismiss. He can learn enough from what are left.

At this distance of time he is able to look back and judge himself with the calmness of a looker-on. And his dead loves he follows in their journey to the grave with the callousness of an undertaker calculating on his profit. . . . He awakes from his dream of fair women, and being in the main a clear-seeing man, even into that complex machine one's self, whose lens changes from convex to concave with one's mood, he asks himself if it can be possible that these shadowy people once moved him *almost* as this girl does now. Well, he can see that it is a good thing that this and that affair came to an end as they did. Still retrospect will not cure him of this passion. He would give a great deal if he had not been such a fool when he met her. . . . Yes, on the whole it will be better not to send the letter till the morning; then he can read it over again, and perhaps it may be as well to post it from Vevay.

CHAPTER VII.

TIS said that once upon a time a man, overwhelmed with the monotonous necessity of shaving every morning, committed suicide.

If I attempt to describe another hotel breakfast, the monotony of it may be suicidal to this story, as far as the reader is concerned. It has always seemed to me that the fun of writing a novel would be in pulling it to pieces as one's own critic, a more daring innovation than that following Whistler's plan of quoting disparaging criticism of his pictures in their catalogue. Notwithstanding the fun that might be made of this "roll call," I must touch lightly on our party again assembled in this pleasant *salle*, which I love, at the important meal breakfast; for if any strings have gone out of tune in the night, it is when they are first touched in the morning that they discover themselves, giving off discordant sounds, jarring to sensitive ears and nerves.

To begin with Mr. Scott: he is most decidedly out of tune—"headache," he says, "from drinking that vile wine at Prilly"—kept him awake half the night. His manner to the Swiss, who has not heard this explana-

tion of it, is exceedingly curt. He had come up to our party with almost more than his usual air of assurance, confident of a good reception ; for had not he spent the greater part of yesterday with them, by Mr. Scott's invitation? His is a stolid face, and in it is no surprise at the coolness ; but he moves quickly from Mr. Scott, and stands a short time only by Edith and the governess, before passing to his own table.

Mrs. Scott feels very sorry for the young man. More generous than the young people, she pities him for his ugliness. She makes up her mind to be increasingly cordial to him, when she has the chance later in the day.

Letters arrive—letters for nearly every one ; conversation ceases for a while. Frank and Miss M'Arthur are the only people with nothing to read, and they are not near enough to care to talk to one another, and she is not in the vein. She had watched Mr. Scott distribute the letters, but surely with no definite hope of there being one for her.

Mr. Scott has scanned the post-mark and writing of the letter he passes to Edith.

"Agatha seems to write very often," he says suspiciously.

"To tell about the school-treat I expect," she answers. "It was on Monday." Then she opens the letter that he may see that it was from Agatha.

"Why wasn't I told of it?" he asks testily, glad of a chance to bubble over.

"I don't know." She always says as little as possible to her father.

“Why wasn’t I told of the school-treat?”

His wife, who had been absorbed in an epistle, had not heard what was said before. “I don’t know, dear; I suppose we none of us thought about it.”

“But some one ought to have thought of it. We have always contributed to it before.”

“Agatha, my dear, would not let the children suffer. She——”

“That’s not it. I like to contribute my usual quota, you know, and it is expected of me. I ought to have been reminded.”

“I am sorry; but write a cheque directly after breakfast, and if you are busy, I will enclose it to the vicar.”

“That’s not it. I ought to have been reminded.” Then he opens his letters, and so is induced to let the subject drop for the present.

Mr. Price pretends to be absorbed in his letters, but he notices Scott’s disagreeable persistence, and thinks Mrs. Scott must have a hard time.

There is an enclosure in Edith’s letter for Mary; as she reads it her eyes fill with tears. It is a kind little note from Agatha, telling her that she had taken her invalid some grapes on the morning of the treat, “and the book you wished me to buy him for you, ‘The Chorister Brothers.’ He was delighted; said over and over again that he did not know how to thank you enough. ‘I so love reading,’ the poor boy said. ‘Tell Miss Mary I shan’t mind missing the school-treat now.’ He told me that he and his mother frequently used to sit up and read a bit at night when work was done,

and father and the others gone to bed. Strange he should be so intelligent, and yet have a sister half an idiot. She is very troublesome some days, and has to be bribed to stay near her brother, when the mother is obliged to leave him." The note finished by saying, "Be sure, dear child, that I will look well to your favourite's comforts while you are away. I am having some flannel garments made for him. Don't think it is a trouble. I quite enjoy going to see him ; he is so sensible and nice." (Then she mentions the prizes Mary's Sunday-school children got at the treat.) "A joke for you, Mary. It is almost too good to be true, but it is true. Our churchwarden was overheard saying to Mark Cane, the churchwarden of S——, you know, about a week ago, 'We are getting very high at our church ; we have matins now.' 'Oh, that's nothing to us,' replied Lane ; 'we've had kamptulicon all the way up to the altar, this long time.'"

If Agatha put this anecdote into Mary's letter to divert her attention a little from Harry, she succeeded admirably. Mary's fancy was so tickled by the exchange of experience between the two bucolic officials, both of whom she knew, that her laughter, coming so closely on her tears, was slightly hysterical. Frank was almost as much amused as herself when she explained the joke, and Mr. Scott even condescended to be entertained, when he had quite mastered it.

Edith's letter is of great length ; she reads little bits aloud from it to the company, and quite forgets to finish her breakfast, until her father reminds her of it. Later on she reads the whole epistle to her mother, who

takes a tolerable amount of interest in the doings of the village, and very much in the doings of her prospective son-in-law.

“MY DEAR EDITH.

“The first school-treat you have missed since I have known Otham was actually a success without you, but then I had a most efficient volunteer in your friend. At first, as you may suppose, he did not in the least know what was going on, or what was expected of him; for the sake of appearing to be doing something, he trotted about after me in proper bow-wow fashion. As you know, I specially interest myself in the boys, and in setting them going he was invaluable. He impressed the boys, too, greatly; they hadn't seen any one so tall and upright for a long time. He started and decided races, standing sometimes to be ran round, when the distance was there and back again, and I must say this for him, putting up very good humouredly with the inevitable pawing and clutching from eager competitors that the position carries with it. I had sent about for donkeys, and managed to secure four, beautifully caparisoned in the usual way. Two donkeys were saddled for cavaliers, one had a side-saddle, and the other a chair for the infants. The poor things were scarcely allowed any rest from their labour, save at feeding-time (the children's). In this equestrian department(?) Mr. Fielding was again invaluable in keeping a little order. The children all clamoured at once for rides, and, sad to relate, showed themselves utterly unprincipled in their

manner of obtaining them, declaring that they hadn't had a ride for ever so long, which we knew to be a bare-faced fib (unless impatience has no measure for time), as not ten minutes had elapsed since he or she had been taken off an animal. Remonstrance was useless; they were absolutely impressionless to anything but a desire for a ride, and they tried the same shabby tactics over and over again.

Lady Wade actually induced that odious husband of hers to look in on us, with her, for a little while—for a very little while, I am happy to say; for he scrambled pennies and upset everything while he did us the honour to remain. Luckily no pockets, not even all his, can carry more than a limited quantity of bronze. It was a perfect pandemonium; boys, girls, 'infants' even, struggling to become rich, tumbling over each other, and even fighting. Result—several bruises and one or two bleeding noses, and those children are awfully frightened to see their own blood. Of course he found time to chaff me in his usual elegant style; offered to run a race with me. I was gratified, intensely gratified, to find that my—your—my bow-wow did not run off to wag his tail at the new-comers after the manner of puppies. He merely went up to exchange a few words with Lady Wade, and was back again at his post directly.

“Major MacG—— was in attendance, but, as you know, she likes a big following, and manages somehow to get it. I could only spare her a minute. She asked about you all, and said she would write, in a vague way. Of course, the Rev. William was not

proof against her attractions, but shamefully deserted his post of entertainer-in-chief to the girls while she was in the field. Miss Woolner, who had been in retreat in the vicarage, "not feeling very grand," as her nephew said, now came out, attracted doubtless by the jingling bells of the ponies. She was stately and obsequious at the same time. How dearly she loves any one with a title. She makes me feel ultra-democratic when I am near. When the Crinton party had left, she tried to interfere with my arrangements—not effectually, as you may guess, but she roused my temper as she always contrives to do, and that is vexatious on these festive occasions. I can't be in a rage one minute, and smile and forget it the next, as some people can. I know she feels as bad as I do, but she is more jesuitical, and contrives to say very nasty things in a suave manner. But I won't bother you further with my veritable *bête noir*. I hate a long plain black dress since I have known her. The vicar conducted the ponies off the ground, nearly getting those long boots of his run over for his pains. I was not at all sorry to see it. That stupid Punch would jump up at them, and bark just under their noses; they, resenting it, dashed off, nearly running over Punch and bringing the wheels pretty well on to its master's boots (I never know how far his toes come 'home' in them, as the village shoemaker says).

"If it had not been for a happy thought of Mr. Fielding's—how refreshing the sight of his name is again, isn't it?—I don't know when the thirsty children would have got any tea. You know how

thirsty the children, down to the smallest, are on these occasions. As usual, tea was made in the mile-high tin can, the tea-leaves being tied up in muslin and infused. After a short time had been allowed for brewing, jug the first was placed under the tap, which was turned, but no tea came flowing forth. Then the wise heads of the entertainment gathered round the can, all at the same time suggesting cause and cure. The vicar took the lid off with the intention of looking in. Fancy any one thinking of doing that when the water was boiling! He had to beat a hasty retreat, forgetting in his scare to replace the lid. You know his mild 'Oh, my!' when he is astonished? It did not fail him now. Miss Woolner said the bags must have got in front of the spout. At that some one suggested a walking-stick as the proper machinery for lifting out the bags. 'Why try to take them out?' said another. William then, from a discreet distance, poked about with a stick. By this time nearly all the thick slices of bread-and-butter had disappeared, and the children were at cake—sweet cake, half a pound each—and nothing to drink. Then came your young man's suggestion (what a pity there is no usable English word to express the relationship in the preliminary probational stage to matrimony! My next variation will be the good old sentimental term 'sweetheart'.) 'Don't you think,' said he, 'that one of the kids may have put something up the spout?' We unanimously jumped at the notion. 'Here's my knife,' said the vicar. The tap was turned off, and the aforesaid nameless young man tried with the penknife to do something. 'I

can't reach it, if there is anything ; a bent wire would be best.' Miss Woolner directed the groom to go to the vicarage for some. 'Stop,' said her nephew ; 'it would be better for me to go. I know where to put my hand on some wire ;' and away he ambled—you know the pace and the aspect of the flapping coat when he is going it—Punch and Judy at his heels. We had just rigged a jug up with string to try dipping it from the top, when the panting vicar arrived with a coil of stout wire. Fielding operated, and—would you believe any country-bred boy would have thought of it?—brought down a long bit of string that had been tightly rammed far up the spout for fun. I hope that boy was a thirsty soul. The tea was nearly black. The jugs were pushed so hastily under the tap for it, and every one was so clamorous to drink, that it is more than probable that in some cases the directions to water the black tea were unheeded, in which case some little people must have had impulses to stand on their heads with excitement. What room the cake had left was more than filled with tea. Mug after mug was emptied. I overheard Dick Spratt bragging that he had polished off five mugs of it.

“Then the ‘grace after meat’ hymn was sung, and the prizes distributed, the mothers dropping in to claim their progenies, and I was most thankful when the last one was gone. Eda Watt I discovered in tears, towards the end, at the loss of that pearl necklace that Mary and I have so often wondered at. I told her if it couldn't be found I would give her something as good. I could not promise pearls,

although Ruskin (the unpractical) is so much in favour of beautifying life everywhere, that I am told he once said, 'Better jewels should be displayed on one's servants than locked away unseen in case and safe ;' but very likely that is a libel, or not correctly quoted. The plan might have been possible in the days and in the land where 'Rich and rare were the gems she wore' was no temptation.

"Mr. Fielding went as far as the gate with me. He deserved a little talk of you, after working so hard for me and the children. He starts on Saturday for Keswick. I shall see him again before that. He does not send messages, it is a point of honour with him, as you know, but you are not bound in the same way. I mention this as a remark made in conversation, but I think it would be exceedingly awkward to keep up a one-sided game of that sort, and it's of no use repeating, 'Lead us not into temptation,' when we put ourselves deliberately in the way of it.

"There are queer rumours about Captain White. Anyhow, he has disappeared. If you have met Captain Munro you may have heard something of it. I want to hear if Mr. Scott permits you to know him now. We were speculating on it last night: *he* said 'yes ;' I, 'no.' I haven't time for a word more than love to all.

"AGATHA."

"Very good, I am sure, of Agatha to write such a long letter" was Mrs. Scott's remark when the reading was ended. Edith had got her mother in

her own room, where the reading would have no interruption. "I always liked Agatha," she continues. "She says nothing about her poor mother."

"It does not show want of feeling, mother."

"No, dear, I did not mean that, but I like to hear of her mother. I know all the same that it hurts Agatha to speak about her."

Edith, big girl that she is, gets up from the couch where she has been seated with her mother, and transfers herself to her mother's lap, kisses her on both cheeks ; then, averting her face a little, she says—

"Is not he a darling?"

"I liked him from the first, dear, but I am sorry he is going to India."

"So am I, darling, awfully. But why are you sorry? Is it because of the climate?"

"Partly. The Red Sea is dangerous."

"But not where they will go, and he is steady. The climate is dangerous if people drink, I have heard."

"Yes, but it is not only that : India seems to spoil people, men and women. There is so much scandal—fastness I mean."

"I don't think Cecil will be spoiled. He won't be there very long alone."

"You think you will take care of him?" Edith nods her head solemnly. "But, my child, I shall not like to lose you. India seems such a long way off, when I think of your going there;" and the tears come into her eyes at the thought of losing her favourite daughter.

"Three weeks' distant only, mother dear, and it's

rather the fashion for people to see India in these days ; and my father dearly likes to do 'the right thing.' You will all be coming on a visit to me some day. I shall be living in a long bungalow, which we shall have made look pretty with little inexpensive things, and out there, with a good many servants, we shall seem quite rich, and you won't be ashamed of us. The worst thing about it will be having to be civil to the queen and princesses."

"My child"—shaking her head and trying to smile—"your father will not be got over so easily. I am afraid he is still thinking of Walter for you."

"Why? Has he said anything lately? But don't speak of him as Walter."

"He said yesterday that some one ought to write to him. I did not remember it, but your father says that we promised to let him know where we were going this summer."

"What did you say?"

"I said that if any one wrote, I thought it would be better that he should."

"And he will?"

"Oh yes, he will."

"I am not at all afraid for myself," said the young girl, straightening herself, as if to prove the strength of her physical and her confidence in her moral backbone. "But when he is vexed it makes it so uncomfortable for every one, and especially for you, dear. You can't get away as we can. But you have nursed me long enough. I am heavy, and I had forgotten." She jumps up quickly at the thought.

“All your weight wasn't on me.” Then Mrs. Scott gets up from the couch. “I ought to go now ; your father will be wanting me.”

“I saw him go on the pier a little while back with Mr. Price and Frank, who have gone to Geneva. Mary is still practising, you know, and that even she would be stopped at if he came in.” Then she goes up to her mother, who is standing irresolutely near the door, places her two hands on her shoulders, and says, “Tell me ; he was not the right one, was he ? I have wondered lately.”

The colour deepens in Mrs. Scott's face at this unexpected and queer question from her daughter.

“I don't think we middle-aged people need talk of those things, dear.”

“Prevarication, madam. Now, do tell me. I am sure”—triumphantly—“that he was not your first love. I won't let you go till you have told me. He wasn't, was he ?”

“No”—reluctantly said ; “but people don't often marry their first love, or talk of these things to their children. I am sure I never thought of questioning my mother in this way. You remind me of Mary now.”

“Never mind about that. How was it ? Even if my father calls you, I won't let you go until I know.”

“Foolish child !”

“I hope there was no jilting anywhere.”

“My dear Edith !”—indignantly.

“There, now, I have roused you ; but if you don't

THIS YEAR, NEXT YEAR,

go on, I shall feel sure that it was you who behaved badly."

"My dear—he died!"

"Oh!"

"I was only eighteen; my father did not approve. He had no prospects."

"The nice people never have," from Edith.

"He was only a doctor, but his people were nice. As soon as he had passed, he went to Bombay as a ship's doctor. I saw him before he left, and never again. He took fever attending—over-attending, poor fellow!—to his patients. The outbreak was of a very serious nature. He was up at night as well as day—overtaxed his strength, and so took it, and died, just as they reached Bombay."

"Poor little mother!"

"Your father and he had taken a liking to each other. He was with him at the last. He, your father, had been a little wild, I fancy; had got into a fast set—"

"My father!" from Edith, astonished.

"It was more than twenty years ago, remember, and people alter much in twenty years. His father sent him to India to break the connection, I think, but that is not important now. I heard the news of the death from his mother—"

"My grandmother?"

"No, Frank's mother. Then after a time your father came home, and, as he had promised, found me out and gave me some little things he wished me to have in remembrance. Your father had been very

good to him, and I was grateful. He told me everything about that voyage. We met again after a year had gone, and then we talked of him. Afterwards, some time afterwards, he spoke of himself; and that is how it came about. At first it seemed impossible to think of any one in that way; but my father was dead then, and there was no one to care much about me—and that is all.”

“ Poor little mother,” said Edith, kissing her. “ I am glad Cecil isn’t a doctor. And fever isn’t so often fatal now with disinfectants and superior knowledge. But how dreadful it was for you ! ”

CHAPTER VIII.

AS luncheon-time did not bring Mr. Scott, it is concluded that he must have gone with the American to Geneva.

Mrs. Scott—who is that odd combination, an easy-tempered creature, who is constantly making herself unhappy in her anxieties—cannot quite divest herself of the idea that something may have happened to him. “I don’t quite like to sit down to lunch without him,” she says, in answer to a reminder from Edith that it is some minutes since the ringing of the luncheon bell.

“Why not, mother? I am sure he has gone to Geneva (and he will have bought a musical-box, which we don’t want); I saw him go on the pier with the Prices, you know.”

As Mrs. Scott can’t give a reason for not going to lunch, she contents herself with, “Such an odd thing to do; so unlike your father’s methodical ways.” (Not really, Mrs. Scott; he intends going in this way for a reason.)

"Lunch, mother dear," says Mary, coming into the room airily, and bringing with her an atmosphere of brightness. "You ought to have been out this morning," she says, as she takes off her hat. "It is lovely, but I couldn't get mum one step beyond the grounds. The Swiss has been dogging us. It has been great fun. I rather like his ugliness-ship. Where's pater, that he hasn't looked you up before now? You and Edith are the slow coaches of our family." When she has been told of her father's supposed trip to Geneva, she exclaims at the hardship of being left out of the expedition.

"But I thought," said her sister, "that you had enjoyed your morning so much? What more can you want?"

"To enjoy my afternoon, to be sure."

Then they go down. Mrs. Scott has her opportunity to be civil to that poor young man now.

They form a pleasant party at lunch. An interesting German family, made up of father, mother, and two daughters, sitting next them, attempt a little conversation, the girls shyly airing their English. Every one expands, and the Scotts show their lights on candlesticks, in the absence of the family bushel, *alias* extinguisher. Maggie alone fails to rise to the occasion, but her silence is scarcely noticed in the general flow of hilarity.

The Swiss tries to persuade Mrs. Scott to let him take her party on the lake in a boat. Mary, of course, is charmed with the suggestion.

"It is very kind of you, but I cannot go, or give

my consent to my daughters going. I have a horror of lakes. I think the sea much less treacherous. I have always heard that the winds sweep down on the lakes without the slightest warning."

"Yes, that is so," he replied ; "but if we don't put up a sail, that would not matter. I will promise not to carry one, and I will take a strong, steady oarsman in the boat, and I can pull."

"Do go, mother ; it will be so jolly."

"My dear, don't ask me ; I really can't go, Mr. Meinhertz. I am a coward in little boats ; they always seem to me so unsafe, and I am sure they are unsafe. The least movement, and over one goes. You are very kind, but indeed I must say 'No' for my daughters and myself."

It seems to him useless to urge the excursion any more. He wonders why the dark girl is so quiet to-day ; he tried vainly to make her talk to him in the garden. She looks unhappy. He wishes she would take to him ; she interests him much.

"Do you dislike little boats ?" he asks, looking across the table at her.

"I like them on the river, in ——. That is all I know of them."

"Would you be afraid, do you think, on the lake ?"

"I don't know."

"Are you generally nervous, like most ladies ?"

"No ; at least, not for long. The feeling is too uncomfortable to be indulged in. Some people—those who have fear—die a hundred times in their lives, at the very least."

“You are wise.”

“No; only wise enough to see the unwisdom of some things. I don't know that I have much physical courage. I have not been tried. You have, I have heard.”

He is gratified that she should have heard that. One can afford to be deprecatory of a fact well established for one, therefore he says, “Is it courage, in the highest sense of the word, not to know fear? I am so constituted, physically, that I do not know what fear is.”

(“Ah!” she thinks, “no imagination, low organization.”) “What?” she asks, “don't you mean that you have never any misgivings for your own safety?”

“How delightful to feel like that!”—from Mary.

“I can conceive it”—from Mrs. Scott.

“I have confidence,” he says.

“Confidence in yourself. When you fought those duels, for instance, did you know yourself to be the better man?”

“Still, there was danger, surely,” suggests Edith, who has suspended her talk to the younger German girl to listen.

“And,” adds Mary, “when you began your duelling career, you weren't the best man then, were you?”

“I don't know that, Miss Mary. I was a mere boy then. We were all students, and young together. We fought when our blood was hot. I felt myself as good as another, if not better.”

“Very nice,” says Mary, “to feel one's self better than any one else at something. I should like that.”

"My dear," says her mother, "I don't think ambitious people can be really happy."

"But perhaps they are always hoping to be," returns her daughter, so readily that they all smile.

"You are very happy now, I am sure," says her mother.

"Yes, I am content, or nearly content—(I wanted a row this afternoon badly)—with the present, and I am looking forward."

"You are incorrigible," says her sister.

Presently Mrs. Scott is visited by a qualm of mis-giving that her husband will not like them to be on such easy terms as they seem to have got on with this exceedingly friendly young man. The worst, or the best, of a hotel with grounds like this is, that if you frequent them—and they are most attractive here—you must meet the other people staying in the house. The terrace is so charming; to breathe the pure air from it, and to look beyond over greenery and lake far away till vision is lost in the snow-piled distance, is a never-ending delight, save on that one day when the rain came down so heavily. It has been their custom, after each meal, to make their way instinctively on to the terrace.

Now Mrs. Scott feels that it will be well not to do so. She tries to nip the movement in the bud by saying, as she rises from the table, "I hope you will enjoy your row on the lake, Mr. Meinhertz, this afternoon." She inclines her head, and is turning towards the door.

She had reckoned without Mary, when she thought

to retreat so easily. That irrepressible young person says, "But, mother, we can go into the grounds to see the start. Such a lovely afternoon! How nice if you had a yacht, Mr. Meinhertz!"

"I am sorry I don't own one. Soon there will be a friend of mind at Vevay who will have one. If Mrs. Scott will allow me to introduce him, I am sure the first thing he will do will be to ask you all to do him the favour of taking a cruise with him."

"How jolly! Pray introduce him soon."

Poor Mrs. Scott has tried vainly to frown her daughter into more discretion. Now she is compelled to take a part that does not suit her. She has to be repressive to the best of her power. "It is very good of you, Mr. Meinhertz, to wish to indulge my child's wild freaks; but indeed you must not. I should be no happier in a yacht. Don't mention us to your friend, please; Mr. Scott does not care for yachting. Really, Mary, you must not wish to do everything!" This said quite sternly to her young daughter.

"I don't think my father would dislike the yacht," says Mary, who is not to be put down. "He and I are capital sailors." She speaks with all the over-confidence of inexperience. She has crossed the Channel!

"I don't think I shall go alone on the lake," remarks Mr. Meinhertz.

"You know the young ladies who were next us at lunch. Why don't you ask them?" Every one but themselves has left the table before Mary has the hardihood to say this.

“Mary!” says her sister indignantly.

“My dear!”—from Mrs. Scott. “Mr. Meinhertz will think you very impertinent.”

“You don’t, do you, Mr. Meinhertz?”

“That is a question you should not ask,” says Miss M’Arthur. “Would you expect Mr. Meinhertz to say ‘Yes’?”

“Certainly, if he thought me so.”

“You may say what you like to me, Miss Mary.”

“There!”—in a most triumphant tone. “Where are you going this afternoon, madam?” she asks her mother.

“I don’t know”—curtly. How Mrs. Scott wishes she would be quiet. “You have a letter to write, remember.”

“Oh! to Agatha. But I don’t feel inclined to do it.”

“You feel rollicking,” says Mr. Meinhertz. He pronounces the word in a comical, halting way. “Is that right? Is it good English?”

“Quite right, very good English,” says Miss M’Arthur. He had addressed the question to her.

“You speak English very well,” says Mary.

“You must have been a long time in England,” says Edith.

He bows his acknowledgment to the compliments implied and expressed.

Mrs. Scott is wondering how she can draw her party off.

Edith and Mary seem neither of them inclined to put a stop to their talk to Mr. Meinhertz. They

are not thinking, as she is, whether their father would approve. It is certain that he would strongly disapprove. It is one thing if he chooses to take any one up, and it is quite another thing if they do. That type of unmanageableness, the bull in the china shop, is not more difficult to be got out delicately than is this youngest daughter, who at any moment is capable of tossing her mother on the horns of a dilemma. To say anything to her is useless, as she is this afternoon brimming over with animal spirits. Mrs. Scott is not of the class of women to whom cutting the Gordian knot with their scissors would ever suggest itself. At last she catches Miss M'Arthur's eye. She raises her own to the ceiling in the direction of their rooms. The hint is taken.

"I want you, Mary," says Miss M'Arthur. She gives the Swiss a stately little inclination of her head, and walks to the door.

Mary has no other resource but to follow. In this way is Mrs. Scott's mind set at ease by the breaking up of the conference.

* * * * *

As Byron wrote "The Prisoner of Chillon" and part of "Manfred" in Switzerland, Miss M'Arthur had brought his poems away with her, that she might read them in the land of their inspiration. She must take a book with her into the garden as an excuse for silence. The time has come to her when in a poet of his temperament she finds verses to fit her present sad plight. A good part of her afternoon

is spent with him. Edith had suggested going to Lausanne, but, to her surprise, Miss M'Arthur had excused herself from going. She copies out the following bits, thinking thereby to commit them more surely to memory, she not having applied to Loissette for a better method.

“Who loves, raves—’tis youth’s frenzy—but the cure
Is bitterness still, as charm by charm unwinds
Which robed our idols, and we see too sure
Nor worth nor beauty dwells from out the mind’s
Ideal shape of such, yet still it binds
The fatal spell, and still it draws us on,
Reaping the whirlwind from the oft-sown wind.

* * * * *

It is not in the storm nor in the strife
We feel benumbed, and wish to be no more,
But in the after silence on the shore,
When all is lost except a little life.”

* * * * *

Maggie, miserable enough, is slowly dressing for dinner. She had gone early to her room with that excuse. She is restless and wretched. Has she been too hasty and misjudged him, or does she know him as he really is? To and fro, to and fro, these opposite ideas chase one another in her brain. She tries to strengthen her anger in the latter thought. Whichever may be at the moment before her, her despondency is the same; she can do nothing but wait. Wait for what? Her cure? That will be long in coming, and before her she sees a vista of long-stretched-out pain. She sits before her glass, and the sight of her own sad face makes her more fully, if possible, realize her misery. A knock comes at her

door. She thinks it is the chambermaid, and says "Entrez," without looking round.

"It is not 'l'eau chaud' this time," says Edith laughingly, holding up a little letter. "For you, dear, *Vevay* postmark. I am so glad I chanced to be in our room when it was brought by that civil Henri. How scandalized my father would be if he had been there! Of course it's from Captain Munro; I know his writing."

A sinking of the heart comes, that is pain, as she thinks, "He has gone, then; and this is his farewell. How can I read it before Edith? She is expectant and excited. What shall I do?" Then, almost mechanically, scarce knowing in advance what she will say, this comes from her.

"Thanks very much, dear; but it has made you late, and I shall feel so guilty if by detaining you I get you into disgrace. If you can get dressed in time, come to my room before dinner; then I shall have read it, and will tell you who it is from. You know I am such a punctual person; I can't enjoy a letter unless I have time to read it."

"Yes, I know, and perhaps you may make me punctual some day; but I should never be able to resist reading a *billet-doux*." She lingers a minute or so longer; then, as Miss M'Arthur shows no sign of gratifying her curiosity, she reluctantly leaves her.

No sooner is the door closed than the leisurely dressing is stopped, and the letter hurriedly taken up. The sight once again of the well-known scrawling characters agitates her painfully. She holds it

for a second unopened in her hand ; the tumult it has roused almost frightens her, and rushing through her mind again comes this thought : " If only it were all right between us, I think I should go out of my mind with joy." A great descent from the high resolve of last night.

The state of beatitude into which the reading of his letter steps her surpasses the limited powers of description of a mere prose writer.

Strange, that in these circumstances one minute of time suffices for a complete metamorphosis. In one bound, in less than a minute, she has cleared an abyss of black, unfathomable depths, to float peacefully the next in an atmosphere of ethereal blue, a fairyland of shadowless light. The few lines in the letter we wot of flood with intense happiness a loving, love-yearning nature. " Darling ! " she says fondly, nursing the precious little letter that had brought her such bewildering joy. Very foolish of her of course, but these ecstatic transports are the clothes of Love—the visible emanation of an essence, extracted by passion's heat, and flowing back to nourish its own source.

* * * * *

With a deeper shade of red on his florid face, produced by the strong light poured down on him while on the shadowless water, and with a glow of satisfaction there, that was born of having sold every one by going out like this for a whole day without any warning, and with the chance of his coming back at any moment to hinder his people



from forming any plan for making the most of the opportunity, Mr. Scott makes his advent at dinner, where he first sees again his family circle, on returning from his day at Geneva.

Everybody welcomes everybody. Mrs. Scott is glad that her husband has returned safely and in good temper. Mary is delighted to see Frank again; and, he almost before he is seated, confides to her that the day has not been at all good, but that if she had gone, they two could have walked together and talked, and that would have been something like.

“Like what?” asks his confederate, not for information, but correction.

“There, you spoil everything directly.”

“Then it is a good thing for you that I did not go to-day.”

Frank, feeling nipped, is silent until he has finished that course; but his pent-up tongue cannot endure longer confinement—he has so much to tell.

The Swiss had taken care, by tipping, that his seat should be next where the Scotts would take their places. Edith is next him; Miss M'Arthur by her; on her right Mr. Price seats himself.

“What have you been doing with yourselves all day?” Then, noticing her radiant face, he adds, “I can see in your face you must have had a pleasant day.”

She had not by any means had a pleasant *day*, but a confidence is out of the question.

“I don't know that,” she says. “It has not been

bright here ; the sun has scarcely deigned to show its face all day, and we have not been beyond this place."

"That does not sound exciting, but it has agreed with you, evidently ; you look so much brighter than you did when we went away. You must have absorbed some of the brightness of the day, although you have scarcely seen the sun."

"That is unusual with me. I can't help my spirits being very much influenced by the weather. I love sunshine so much, and dislike twilight and darkness immensely. I should like an artificial light directly there was not enough sun. Now, don't you like dinner, for instance, best by artificial light ? That I think one of the best things about winter. All light stimulates me so much that I can only sleep well in a perfectly dark room."

"You are neither stolid nor lymphatic. Don't imagine for one moment, please, that I have only just made that discovery. I was merely repeating a fact to account for that. I suppose we are all more or less influenced by light as regards health and spirits ; but gaslight, one of your artificial lights, is injurious to health, if good at the time for one's spirits. I wonder if we shall like to see the electric light in common use amongst us ?"

"I hope so. You must be proud of the discovery you 'English people, in your third home,' have made."

"That is a very pretty way, Miss M'Arthur, of reminding us not to be too bumptious. But I am infinitely more proud of Emerson than of all our inventors put together."

“Yes, I dare say you are. You are not one of the men who look upon time as money, and the utilizing it, in a commercial sense, as one of the aims of life.”

“Thank you. How much more delicate are the compliments of your sex than are those of mine, when you condescend to pay them! With the best intention in the world, I have not been able to get beyond telling you that you are not stolid or lymphatic.”

She laughs pleasantly at his depreciation of himself, and says, “But I never intended to be complimentary; that is the joke. I merely, as you did, stated a discovery I had made. A truth is always telling, you know.”

“There! That makes me still more feel my inferiority.”

“Pray keep your inferiority in that respect. I hate compliments—— No, that is not altogether true. I am very mortal, notwithstanding myself. I treasure the compliments I have received. But this is the droll part of it, that, although I appreciate, in a way, the compliments, I don't any the more like the complimenters.”

“Then be sure I will never cudgel my brain for one to pay you. Mind, this is not a compliment, only a truth—take it as a disparagement if you will—that you are unusually candid. You seem to know yourself, and you are not afraid to be known. That is no advance on stolid or lymphatic, is it? Please say that it is not.”

“No; that shall be put away under the head of plain-speaking. I like that from people I care about.

I am peculiar, perhaps, in this ; but I never entirely like a person unless I may say what I like to them without fear of being misunderstood."

"I understand. I wish you would say anything to me that you think. You have not, I imagine, met many people you could say anything to?"

"No. That child has been the nearest approach to my ideal friend. We understand each other as far as we go."

"Yes ; I have discovered a good bit of you, a crude you, in her."

"But she can't help me in things that puzzle me. She has had no experience of the world—of life."

"Naturally not. She is shrewd as far as she goes. Can I in any way help you—I, who speculate on the problem of life? Emerson greatly helped me ; he might help you."

"Yes, I am sure you and he might help me a great deal. He is not orthodox, I know ; but that does not signify. One can get good out of every earnest thinker. In quite a circumscribed way, too, I wonder, not about the problem of life, but about the men and women in it ; and there you cannot help me. The social problem interests me because I set a high value on moral education as well as intellectual. I wonder how bad—or how good, if that sounds better—the men and women of civilization are."

"That depends in a way on the standard you measure by."

"A woman's standard, naturally."

"Ah !"

“Yes, I know that makes a vast difference. I hope you don’t think it queer of me to talk like this for once, but I have thought that I should like to go into a confessional-box.” (Mr. Price looks astonished.) “Not to confess—that is the last thing in the world that I should do—but, just unseen and unknown, to ask questions of some sensible, experienced man. As I said just now, mine is a woman’s standard; but surely deceit, for instance, would be wrong by any standard. You can answer that part of what I have said.”

“Yes; that deceit is wrong would be generally admitted.”

“And yet, if one believes what one hears and sees, it is considered legitimate. I will tell you what I mean. I went to see ‘Pink Dominoes’ at the Criterion, a few years ago, when I was quite young, in my holidays, and the whole house laughed and enjoyed as one man every fresh evidence of deceit. It seemed a high joke that a man should deceive his wife; it shocked me, and it made me think and wonder.”

“I understand your feelings. I have heard instances such as you mean excused on this plea—that half the world is happier for being deceived.”

“But the people who so argue are the deceivers, not the deceived. A state of false security isn’t good, surely. I hate deceit.”

Mr. Price is here appealed to by his son, and Maggie is left to her own reflections for a little while. Her last words leave an echo in her mind. “I hate

deceit. Is it deception to go to meet him unknown to every one? No one is hurt thereby. I owe no account to the Scotts of my doings, save as regards their daughter. Of course, if she were to know anything about it, that would be wrong in the way of example. What would this man think of me if he knew, I wonder? But if all the world thought me wrong, and he wished it, I would go again and again to meet him. My own conscience would be clear. What can it be? What is the power stronger than myself at times that draws me to him? Is love mesmeric that it is so powerful? I seem to feel his presence even now; and though I like much to talk to Mr. Price, the time that keeps me from him seems never ending. When we meet, then, oh, how swiftly time flies! Am I a fool to lose myself, my will, which is myself, like this in another? God grant he may be worthy!"

So she is lost for some minutes to the outward clattering world of knives and forks, and the distant buzz of talk that makes it impossible to believe that the other people raise their voices no higher than those about us. Surely, to cause such a volume of sound, some people must speak loudly.

Mr. Scott is still talking to the Swiss, who has the merit now of being a fresh listener. He is expatiating knowingly on the advantages offered by rival firms in musical boxes. "You see what competition does," he says triumphantly.

All sit late to-night. A good many people had been away the whole day to other places on the lake,

and there is much talking and comparing notes thereon. Twilight strengthens, and still they linger, talking more lazily and rarely, yet with not sufficient energy left in them to move to other quarters to begin the evening afresh. This doing nothing lazily becomes irksome first to the mercurial Mary, who, addressing her father pertly as "Mr. Scott," asks, "What do you say to billiards now?"

"I have been on my legs most of the day, Miss Pert, and don't care for your suggestion; that is what I have to say."

"Then you don't care to play, but can sit comfortably by and smoke while Frank and I amuse ourselves."

"That is all very well for you and Frank, but other people may want the table."

"Not yet; not if we go at once. I know their habits. They like to doze a little after dinner over their papers or music. I saw a man one evening fast asleep, close to the piano. I dare say he dreamt he was composing the music that must have got into his dreams. Do let me come. You left me at home all day, you know."

Mary, as is usual with her father (unless his mind is very much set the other way), gains her point. They make a move towards the billiard-room. At the door Mr. Price waits for Maggie to go in first.

"I am not coming," she says. "I have just explained to Mrs. Scott."

CHAPTER IX.

CAPTAIN Munro manages to get through a long day at Vevay—a day doubly longer than its hours—by means of a sharp walk to Clarens and back. Walking moderately along, his own thoughts leave scarcely room for outside expressions to enter. He passes La Tour and the Castle of Blonay with scarcely a glance, though one might have thought even a remnant of a fortification might have interest to a soldier. He comes back to Vevay, still looking morose; has lunch at Des trois Couronnes, where, there being nothing in himself to make him content to sit awhile, in lazy enjoyment of the lovely scenes, on the trellis-covered terrace, he proceeds to his never-ending employment of letter-writing. One need never, in the most favourable conditions, stretch out far without coming upon a crumpled rose-leaf in one's bed; and he has made his bed with such careless roughness that, until there has been time to remake it, uneasy he must lie, without even the grand satisfaction of abusing another roundly for it.

When he returns from Vevay, instead of going all the way to his hotel to dine and hurry back, he prefers

risking dinner at Hôtel d'Angleterre. With him no dinner, however good, ever weighed a feather's weight in a scale against a woman. He wishes, on this occasion, to be on the spot with the punctuality that leaves a balance to the good. There is a strong enough element of uncertainty as to her coming to make him exceedingly anxious. He is rewarded by a very fair dinner. He also takes in the bearings of the hotel with a view to the practicability of taking up his quarters there, if that shall seem otherwise advisable.

After dinner he cannot resist the temptation of strolling in the Hôtel Beau Rivage grounds. He sees from there, first the drawing and then the reading room reveal themselves in a blaze of light; then he judges that dinner must be about over. The hotel has a great fascination for him. He would like to ascend the terrace, that he may look through the windows at the *table d'hôte*. It seems a safe thing to do unobserved in the fading light of evening, yet he hesitates. Captain Munro has plenty of courage, but he has a horrid dread of being found in a ridiculous position; therefore he decides to wait below and watch for her coming out. Will she come? No feeling of jealousy of the American prompted the wish to peep—that was all swept away last night—but a longing to see once more, without being seen, a face that has been in his thoughts all day, and that he may not see again. She will come out of that door, he is sure, if she come. He will be able to see her distinctly. The light from the saloon window will be enough for that if the moon should be behind

a cloud just then. So thinking and watching, the time drags on. At last she is coming. He draws back a little into the shadow of the tree. Will she hesitate? Will she be afraid of the darkness to-night?

No, not for one second does she stop; her love leaves no room for fear. Swiftly and lightly she comes down the steps, and straight towards him, not, however, seeing him—not seeing him till she is almost in his arms.

“Maggie darling, don’t let me frighten you.”

“You were only just in time,” she says.

“But I was in time.” She nestles in his arms, and he knows that he is forgiven.

Then, after a minute of rapturous, wordless communion, “Are you sure you have quite forgiven me?” he asks—not in doubt, but that he may hear her speak her forgiveness in the voice that is music to him.

He has his two arms round her waist. She, looking up, with eyes all truth, into his, says unhesitatingly and without reservation, “Quite.”

“And will you promise—promise solemnly—never, whatever fancies may come into your head, to believe them?—promise, dearie, never to have doubts of me again?”

She smiles saucily, so happy in his love, that she can play with it now. “I promise never again to doubt you in the same way, but other doubts *may* come, you know. We have not had our explanation about Lady Wade and the train yet. I *think* I must reserve the right of being jealous of——”

He will not let her finish.

"Foolish child ; but you can ask what questions you like. I will answer, you know."

"Let us go by the lake," she says ; "it is less solemn there than here, and I would rather take *her* lightly than seriously, if I can."

The shrubbery walks are sinuous, as we know, but the way through them to-night seems unusually long. Not, be it understood, to the lovers, who, at length, and after many pauses, come to that ever-to-be-remembered gate.

"You should not have left me like that," he says.

You hurt me *dreadfully*, darling, when I thought you had light thoughts of me ; but—I was very miserable." . . .

"But we must talk," she continues, after the silence that is not still ; "we have so much to say, and we see each other so seldom, and for such a little while."

"That is what I was thinking about at dinner. I nearly made up my mind to come down here."

"Not here ?"

"No, near here—Hôtel d'Angleterre. We could see more of each other that way."

"I should like that, of course."

Then they pass out of the shadow of the tree and are in face of the placid lake, kissed at intervals into brightness by the silvery moon, as the light swift clouds reveal her.

"All heaven and earth are still, though not in sleep,
But breathless as we grow when feeling most ;
And silent as we stand in thoughts too deep.
All heaven and earth are still. From the high host
Of stars to the lull'd lake and mountain-coast

All is concentrated in a life intense,
Where not a beam, nor air, nor leaf is lost,
But hath a part of being, and a sense
Of that which is of all, Creator and defence."

Poetic expression few have, but all people, when the glamour of love is on them, feel poetic emotions, unspeakable, in their hearts.

No words are spoken for a few minutes, although there is so much to talk of when first they emerge into the full influence of the hour and scene.

"And all between
Thy margin and the mountains, dusk yet clear,
Mellow'd and mingling, yet distinctly seen."

"It is lovely," she breathes out in a blissful sigh.

"Yes, there is something solemn about it."

"One feels one's nothingness in grand scenery like this—an infinitesimal part of Nature when one is in harmony with her. But last night, dear, if all had been as beautiful here—and very likely it was—as it is now, it would have seemed as nothing in the intensity of my sensations. A mere dead shell it would have seemed to me. But there, I had no room for it in my thoughts; I was so angry and hurt."

"We won't talk of that any more, child. Ask me questions," he says coaxingly. "You have so much to ask me, don't you know?"

Then they walk slowly on, his arm around her, she at intervals questioning him.

"Tell me," she says presently, "about that railway journey. Need you have got into the carriage with her? I thought you told me you avoided travelling with ladies."

"So I do, unless they are special friends. But what could I do? That brute of a husband was to have met her, and he wasn't there. It was the last train, you know."

"How was it? Of course you *called* afterwards."

"Yes; I was obliged to, eh? He had been to a race-meeting, and she to the Darvilles', and they agreed to meet to come down by the last train; but of course, just like him, he got to the station after the train had left. At least, that's the excuse he made."

"Now tell me about meeting her. Tell me everything."

"Well, you know, I really tried my best at first not to be seen. I recognized her getting out of a cab just as I drove up. I was a good time getting out—paid the man through the top, you know, to give time for her to get in. I went straight through by another entrance. I made sure she would go to the ladies' waiting-room to be called for. But no; she was so afraid, she told me afterwards, that he would look for her in the wrong room—I expect she guessed he might not be in a state to remember anything clearly, you know—that she came out where he must pass her to go to the right platform. I saw her come and wouldn't see her, but she discovered me at once. She came up to me in a very nervous state, and asked me if I had seen anything of Sir Percival. And now, dearie, what do you say to me, now I have told you, eh?"

"That you were a good boy, so far, and that I do feel very sorry for Sir Percival's wife."

"You won't commit yourself to more than that?"

"No; I want to hear more. Perhaps, as you dislike the husband so much, you were keeping out of *his* way up to now."

"Oh, really, that *is* hard lines!"

"Well, when she came up to you?"

"I said I hadn't seen her delightful husband."

"You told her that?"

"How you take one up! No. If you want the exact words, here they are: 'No, Lady Wade. Where do you think he is?' There, don't you see, I was preparing to go away in search of the husband. Now, won't you praise me, child?"

"Yes; just a little more."

"'Well,' she said, 'thank you very much. But I came out here as being the most likely place to meet him, although I told him the waiting-room; but he was just going off, and very likely did not take it in.' Then I looked up at the clock and said, 'The train doesn't start for four minutes; you sit down here just a minute while I look into the rooms, and then I will be back, and it will be time to be getting into the train.' I went off, but no Sir Percival was to be seen anywhere. When I came back I said, 'What will you do—go back or go down?' She said, 'Oh, I must go on now, if you will kindly put me in a carriage.' I did, and then stood outside a minute nearly, wondering what I ought to do. A horrible bore to go down and be expected to talk a lot, but ought I to leave her alone in the circumstances? She was a good bit nervous and upset, one could plainly

see. Then the guard fellow came along, you know, and said, 'Going by train, sir?' I said, 'Yes.' 'Then jump in.' Still I hesitated; and then perhaps she guessed I might be waiting for her to say something, so she said, 'As you don't like smoking carriages, it won't be a hardship to go down in this.' I ought to have said something, but I did not; I got in."

Then Maggie laughed aloud.

"What is it?" he asks.

"Only the picture you have given me of yourself, dear. I can so exactly picture everything, even to your slow way of saying 'Yes' to the guard, who was in a hurry. But do go on. Tell me how you got on after."

"Well, I hadn't, unfortunately, provided myself with a newspaper. If I had I should have pretended, anyhow, to read, don't you see?"

"Yes, but what did you say when you got in?"

"I said, 'Those fellows hustle one so. I don't suppose the train will start for another minute.'"

"Did she sympathize with you, or laugh at you, as I should have done?"

"She did neither; she said, 'Do you think he will come yet?' Then I kept my head out, looking vainly for him, as you may suppose, until the train started. She is still fond of that fellow, you know. Then I drew my head in, and told her he was not to be seen, and asked if she would like the window quite up. But we are wasting our time over her, and you haven't told me a word of how you are getting on, and what sort of humour he has been in lately, or

how long you can stay out, or what you can manage for to-morrow." Captain Munro has got out of the reluctant kind of drawl in which he has told his adventures, and has become quite rapid.

"I will tell you anything you like in return presently, and you have been very good, but do tell me if you talked much going down."

"We didn't talk at all at first. She seemed tired, and leaned back in the corner and closed her eyes ; it suited me to pretend to think her asleep. What could two, nearly strangers, find to talk about all the way down? I got out some letters and my pocket-book, and jotted down a few things I didn't want to forget. When we had got about a third of the way down she opened her eyes and seemed to rouse herself. She asked how far we had got. I said I hadn't noticed, but by the time we ought to be at ——. Then she said, 'You go up and down a good deal, don't you?' And then we chatted about different things—people principally—until the end, and very glad I am to have got to the end ; and you must reward me, dearie. Own now that I deserve it, won't you?"

"Yes, I do own it ; you were good, and I do hope I haven't teased you. But somehow, I don't know why, I feel that I might easily be jealous of her—of no one else."

"And yet you did not like me to hint at feeling jealous of you. Is that quite fair?"

"It does not seem so, does it? But, you see, I know myself, and can't understand your suspecting *me*, while to me it seems that you have seen so many

people, and must have got into a way of giving away bits of your heart, and such habits are dangerous to get out of." After a second's hesitation—"I want it all."

For answer, he presses his lips to hers in one long kiss.

"My Life, my Love! once he drew
With one long kiss my whole soul thro'
My lips, as sunlight drinketh dew."

* * * * *

"Must you go yet? It was all right the other night, you know."

"Yes, but I must not be too daring, or this might be stopped for ever."

"Then I should have to call on you."

Quite content now that she knows he would do that to see her, she no longer feels that there is anything beneath her feminine dignity or contrary to her own standard of propriety in these meetings; it seems to her simply that by thus sacrificing her own pride, she saves both *him* and Mr. Scott from much unpleasantness, and she glories in doing anything for *him*.

They linger yet by the shore. It is a lovely night, more fascinating in its quick alternations of light and shade than if the moon had shone serenely, with not a suspicion of a cloud at hand to veil her clear cold light. The sky is strewn with broken billowy clouds, that scud in varied depth of shade across her silvery light, its brightness showing through their frequent fissures—a broken mass of clouds, regular in their irregularity; a sea of cloud-waves.

After a few minutes of exquisite silence, the full silence of unspoken rapture, he says in a melancholy tone, "I wish I hadn't to go to India."

"So do I, dear ;" and her glance speaks volumes of loving regret. "But must you go?"

"Must go—not rich enough to throw up my profession just yet ; but I can save when I am there, you know. Ah, you look doubtful ; but I will, really."

Hers is a face to show all emotions, not a mask for concealing them. He sees the unutterable sadness that steals over it, and answering that—no words have been spoken—he adds, with an effort at cheerfulness, and speaking with the quiet emphasis of conviction—

"In less than three years, unless I have unusually bad luck, I shall get sent to the dépôt." Her face does not brighten much at that. He continues lightly now, as if he is hopeful of it himself, "And something may turn up before. If I get promotion, I *might* exchange. But I must go ; you see that?"

She is altogether inclined to see things through his eyes, and she does now. She sees that he must go, but how she wishes that taking her with him could come into his plans ! Three years ? It is dreadful ; and as she thinks of it, her hand, which has been in his, clasps his clingingly. She does not break out into loud regrets ; that action, and her speaking face, tell all that one versed in love's unspoken code need wish to know. He fully understands and appreciates her eloquent silence ; he is not a man of many words himself.

"You see," he says, after a short pause, "exchang-

ing now, even if I could manage it—and exchanges aren't so easy since your friends the Liberals upset everything—wouldn't suit me at all. I suppose there is no doubt but that White has sent in his papers? *That* makes me senior captain, and when I get my step, I can try to exchange. When one exchanges, one is junior to every one of the same rank in a new regiment, don't you know? so that would never do now, would it, dearie? At the very worst I can't be away more than three years, and I may be back quite soon. You will remember that, child," he says soothingly, "won't you?"

"Oh yes, I shall remember that," she says quite simply.

And then, that being sealed, they turn and walk again in silence, she busy with thoughts of him, he thinking of her and calculating possibilities. "But no, nothing more *must* be thought of," he tells himself firmly. He is too poor. Poverty, unless one is going to bury one's self where no one can see it for the rest of one's days, is hateful, is degrading. No one, he tells himself firmly, has a right to put himself and his belongings into such a hateful strait.

The gate awakens her to a knowledge of place and time, and what that signifies to her. It must be late. Dreadful thought! Mr. Scott may be on the terrace. She tells her companion her fears.

He looks at his watch and says, "It wants five minutes yet to ten—your bedtime, you say. We can be there in time yet. Don't worry, child; it will be all right."

Quickly they thread their way back to the hotel, she explaining that he, Mr. Scott, did not look pleased when he heard her tell his wife that she would not go into the billiard-room with them.

Mr. Scott is one of those men who, whether he has managed to regulate his own watch or not, expects all the watches of his people to keep time with his own, even in its irregularities; and for one of the smaller timepieces to get too fast is, if anything, a greater offence than is the opposite extreme.

As they hurry along, he tells her he shall be at the same place at the same time to-morrow night, but that early to-morrow he shall take up his quarters at Hôtel d'Angleterre, and that, if it is possible, she is to go alone past the hotel in the morning, when he will join her; but that if she can't manage to get away alone—why, then—Miss Scott will be better than the child.

“Hush!” she says, pointing to the glowing tips of two freshly lighted cigar-ends advancing, perhaps, on them.

He draws her back into the deeper concealment afforded by a huge clump of rhododendrons. The smokers, considerate or unobservant, do not appear to have seen them; they take the path to the left, and so do not quite pass them.

“Do you know them?” he whispers.

“One—the Swiss.” She is quite trembling with fright.

“Silly child!” he says, kissing her eyelids and every bit of her frightened face.

"I must go," she says. "Good night;" and she tries to disengage herself.

"I can come a little further with you," he answers. "I want to see if the coast is clear for you, you know."

It is. She scarcely waits for a last "Good night;" she is so anxious to save her credit, now that her fears have the mastery.

Apparently all is well. He watches until she has gained the shelter of the hotel; then he, not caring to meet any more votaries of the modern god Nicotine, passes quickly out of the grounds by the gate that will take him past *her* window.

CHAPTER X.

MAGGIE, frightened out of all proportion to the cause by two glowing cigar-ends, fancies that she will have a further fiery ordeal to encounter in meeting Mr. Scott taking his cigar somewhere to be smoked. She is immensely relieved when she emerges into the full light of the hall, only to see and be seen by Mr. Price, who comes at once towards her, saying pleasantly, as he chooses a cigar from the open case—

“If English women habitually smoked, I should say you had just come from enjoying a cigarette on the terrace this fine night.”

“I have been beyond the terrace, but I am not to be entrapped into admitting the suggested weakness as mine. It is so lovely to-night out of doors. I thought the lake beautiful the day we first came, when the sun shone on it from a cloudless sky, but I little thought then of what it could look in different conditions, in moonlight and half-lights, with their mystic effects. Oh, it is lovely, this lake!” And she delivers herself of this enthusiastic eulogy in such a

pretty, confidential manner, and with so beaming a look, that a conceited man, which Mr. Price is not, or one biased by hopes, which Mr. Price is on the verge of becoming, might well be excused interpreting in a way favourable to himself.

"You make me feel that in billiard-marking I have lost a great deal," he answers.

"*You* might have been tired of it, you know, if you had gone out earlier, and I suppose the first cigar after an interval is the best," she answers laughingly, "and I am keeping you from *two* enjoyments."

"Indeed, you are not keeping me from enjoyment," he says emphatically. "Did you think that I was such a slave to smoke as all that?"

"No, I didn't fancy you a slave to it, but habit or something makes some men like to do the same thing at the same time, and you were looking lovingly at your cigars when you came to me. There! as the hall clock begins resonantly to strike ten, I shall be in sad disgrace if I am known to have been straying about at this hour. Ten o'clock, according to Mr. Scott, is the time at which all good people should go to their rooms. I think I must put Cinderella in his way. The fairy godmother was more indulgent. I feel as if I had lost one glass slipper—half my reputation—already. I must go."

"Wait a minute; they have only just gone. I asked him to go on the terrace to smoke."

"Thank goodness he didn't go," she thinks.

"A tiring day at Geneva was the excuse, coupled with his bad night last night."

"Yes, I remember ; I must go at once ;" and off she starts, with a little friendly nod of farewell over her shoulder.

He meant to have shaken hands, and had with forethought got the cigar, as well as the case, into his left hand in readiness.

As she trips along the corridor her thankfulness deepens. She sees that the door of the Scotts' salon is quite closed. Noiselessly she gains her own room, but her extreme caution in turning the key was not necessary. Mary is chattering too much in the adjoining apartment for anybody to have heard her entrance. In a minute she hears Edith's soft voice. For her to condescend to go to her sister's room is remarkable. Maggie guesses the reason. It is that she may question her presently about the Vevay letter. Mary's presence before dinner had postponed it ; happily the answer is easier now.

She knocks at the door of communication, and then opens it. Mary overwhelms her with an avalanche of questions, which she answers in a few words. Then she runs on with, "My respected parent couldn't quite get over your not coming to the billiard-room. He said to mother, 'What did Miss M'Arthur say she was going to do?' And when she said 'Nothing,' he didn't seem to see it, and he couldn't let the subject drop. He asked me if you didn't like billiards, and I said, 'Yes ; but I dare say, like me, she likes playing better than looking on ;' and even then he didn't seem to see it, and I——"

"Oh, do stop, Mary," says her sister impatiently.

“Miss M'Arthur has heard enough about that, I am sure.”

“You shut me up because you want to talk yourself, but I am sure mum likes to hear what I have to tell,” she says jealously. “Don't you, mum?”

“In a usual way I do, dear, but not after ten at night. What would your father think of all this? We must say good night, Edith, I think.”

“Yes, and then she and you will talk in your room ever so long.”

“Indeed, no.”

“Will you come to say good night to me?”

“Yes, if you are quick.”

* * * * *

“And what did the letter say?” asked Edith softly, as soon as they are within closed doors. “I have been dying to hear. Has he gone away?”

“No; he was only at Vevay for a few hours. He thinks of coming to Hôtel d'Angleterre to-morrow.”

“What, the hotel down here?” and she walks to the window, and puts on one side the blind, to see what she can see of it.

“Yes,” says Maggie, coming up to her and looking over her shoulder. “We can't see much of it from here, though.”

“How nice! We must see him sometimes. He has gone in extensively for army signalling; I wonder if he could teach us flag talk and flashes. I hope we shall stay here.”

“Why, what makes you think we may not?” asks Maggie in alarm.

“I don't know ; only when he gets into a bad way at a place, you know, he never likes it after. And something has vexed him frightfully since we came out of the billiard-room. He was following us, and then he stopped behind for just a minute to ask a waiter something, I thought, and when we had just gone into our salon, you know, to wait to say good night—well, when I went to kiss him, he would hardly let me—you know his way—and he only submitted with a little better grace to Mary's kiss. And when Mary was half clinging to mother at the door to make her promise to come and say good night to her, he said in that tone of his that I don't know how my mother can put up with, ‘Come in ; shut the door ;’ and then I knew something had gone wrong. I scarcely ever look at Parliamentary news, as you know, but I chanced to see the other day that a Mr. Mac Something or the other was going to propose that women should be included in the ‘Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Bill,’ and I was very glad to see it. What brutes some men are !” and in her indignation she raises her voice a little.

Tap, tap, tap at the door. “Don't talk about my chattering any more, Edith,” comes from the other side.

No notice is taken of the interruption, beyond Edith, who is wound up to talk, dropping her voice again as she continues, “It was the waiter who brought your letter, I think, that he stopped to speak to, so be prepared for questions in the morning at breakfast. He didn't say he had heard from Cecil, did he ?”

"My dear child, there would not have been time for another letter. You are insatiable."

"Ah, but two years of this unsatisfactory waiting!" she says.

"Three years is worse," *thinks* Maggie, who astonishes her companion with a sympathetic sigh.

"He is suspicious of Agatha's writing now, and I am so longing to hear again."

Maggie cannot keep back a little laugh. "Why, you only had a letter from her this morning!"

"Was it only this morning?" and she laughs too.

"If we sit up talking," says Maggie, "we shall be late down to-morrow, and that will never do."

"Especially with orders coming to pack, perhaps. What a bother that will be! My things are all over the place."

"Yes, the chambermaid must be perplexed what to do with the vails and handkerchiefs that are strewn everywhere. My dear child,"—and Maggie puts her arm round Edith's waist and kisses her, to soften the impending rebuke—"this seems such a good chance for you to learn to be tidy. It will be so much nicer for him some day if you have become tidy and more punctual."

"Yes," says Edith, kissing her to show that she has not resented the governessing, "I mean to try one of these days. I will begin in a tidier fashion at the next place we stop at, but it isn't worth while here. You will see we shall not be here long."

Edith was right in her forecast. The Scott barometer stood at stormy when next the family con-

sulted it. He was about unconscionably early the next morning, and before the usual hour for breakfast he was in his seat alone at the table.

Mrs. Scott had given the alarm, and tried to forward her husband's wishes for early breakfast by going to the respective rooms of her flock.

"What is up?" Mary asked. "Are we going anywhere?"

"I don't know. Nowhere for pleasure. Your father did not sleep well; you must not bother him with questions."

In answer to her eldest daughter's query, she tells her that her father is dreadfully vexed about something, but he won't say what, and that they may go back to England at once. Then she remembers her orders, and says, "I quite forgot; I was not to say anything to any one, so be sure you don't say a word."

She manages to get her flock down about ten minutes earlier than the appointed time; but she did not dare to wait upstairs, lest she should be suspected of making confidences.

When the daughters and Miss M'Arthur come down, they find Mr. and Mrs. Scott sitting perfectly mute at opposite ends of the table, objects of pity both—he suspicious and at war with all the world; she suffering for and through him, and looking as wretched as he looks sullenly angry.

He scarcely answers the bright, the quiet, and the mild good-mornings of the three, as they take, otherwise in silence, their accustomed places. Edith and

Miss M'Arthur both feel that they may be the cause of this. Edith has nothing to reproach herself with; neither, for the matter of that, has Maggie; still she feels that he may have found out whom she met. Yet how could he, when he went straight upstairs from billiards? She feels that if she does not say a word, she will appear guilty. Yet to whom can she talk without giving offence? She wishes either Mr. Price or the breakfast, or both, would come.

Mary in the meantime has recovered somewhat from her momentary chill, and has made several attempts to make her father talk to her; but the few words she extracts have to be dragged painfully from him, so that as soon as Frank comes on the scene, she joyfully welcomes his advent, and troubles herself no longer with so unprofitable a subject as her father proves this morning.

As soon as practicable all Mr. Scott's family slip away from him. As he goes toward the terrace, they go to their room. From her perch on the stone balustrade of their own small balcony, where she had betaken herself—it being, in her opinion, the next best place to the freedom of the grounds—Mary reports to the inner circle that her father and Mr. Price have walked off together. “And there is Frank looking for me,” she adds. “I feel like a bird in a cage hung outside the window to see what it can't enjoy. This pretence of freedom is cruel; it is worse than being shut up inside. I wonder if the birds feel as I do? I won't put mine out again on the chance.”

“You put yourself there,” said her sister.

But Mary does not hear or heed ; she is calling to Frank, who sees her and is holding a conversation with her.

She leaves her perch and puts her head in at the window. "Mother dear, Frank wants me to go out. Do let me go. If father comes in soon, as I expect he will, I can't practise. Do let me go."

"Very well," says the mother, who finds "No" the most difficult word in the whole dictionary to pronounce ; "but you and Frank must not tease your father."

"And don't quarrel, if you can help it," admonishes her sister.

A contemptuous glance in passing is all the answer vouchsafed. Sisters so well know all the little vulnerable points, and the best of them can't resist the temptation of sticking pins in occasionally.

When she is gone there is a little sober talk, Mrs. Scott throughout striving to keep up the transparent fiction of her husband being out of sorts as regards health. "This place does not suit him," she remarks, "and we may have to leave at any moment. It would be as well, I think, as we have to do all our packing ourselves, if we were to begin to pack."

This change of residence is peculiarly distressing to Maggie, to whom the lake shore has become a happy hunting-ground. "Do you know," she asks, "where we shall go next?" She is thinking that she must at once send a letter to Captain Munro to tell him of this altogether vexatious change of plans.

"No ; nothing is decided yet," says Mrs. Scott

dolefully; "but we may leave here in a hurry. It may be to-day, but it is more likely, I fancy, to be to-morrow. Perhaps I ought not to have said Mary might go out. She could have helped you, Miss M'Arthur."

"Never mind. It is a pity she should not be with Frank this last day. How they will miss each other!"

"Yes, and we shall miss his father, I am sure;" and mildly match-making Mrs. Scott looks for some sign in Maggie's face of the correctness of her surmise, but sees none. "I shall be sorry in every way to leave. I like this place."

"So do I," says Edith, "unless we are to go back to England. That I should like immensely;" and her soft eyes brighten, and she has a far-away look in them, as if she sees the one face that England means to her.

"Are we likely to go to England?" asks Miss M'Arthur, regretfully. England to her just now is a kind of polar region in its sunless winter.

"I wish I could tell you, but I can't say."

"Do you mean you are not to say?" asks Edith.

Miss M'Arthur, feeling herself *de trop*, quits the room.

"I can't say," answers her mother, "because your father changes his mind so many times. Even when he has more than half decided to go to this or that place, he turns round a few minutes after to some other. There is only one thing," she continues in a tone a trifle less trouble-laden, "that makes me think he may not start off to-day. He is anxious to get a

rather important letter that will most likely be here to-morrow morning. I dislike moving. I am sure when I woke this morning and found what an irritable state your father was in, I thought we should have been off before now. He must feel better since breakfast, or he would have been here to say we were to get ready to leave. He surely won't think what he said then sufficient, and come in expecting to find us prepared to go ;" and she looks at her daughter in a hopelessly perplexed way.

"Oh no, surely not." Edith is disinclined for the disagreeable ordeal of packing, and prefers to think she need not begin just yet.

Mrs. Scott walks about the room, collecting a few things belonging to themselves with an idea of forwarding the migratory preparations. "These are yours," she says, bringing Edith a book, a thimble, and plush embroidery.

"I shan't want those till the last minute," her daughter says. "I wonder what has put him out?" She half guesses the letter has something to do with it, but can't say so to her mother.

"I don't know any more than you do what it is. Perhaps it is only indigestion. I begin to think that more than half the ills of this life come from indigestion."

"Mother!" says Edith in a horrified tone. She is convinced that the blight that specially seizes the young shoots is caused by the parents' worship of Mammon, and not their devotion to the pleasures of the table.

“Your father will eat everything he fancies ; and then perhaps the wine was not good.” He has quite imbued her with the belief that all harm from wine comes from its not being good. A popular form of self-deceit, this, when the wine has been too good and too plentiful.

“What a nuisance going away is when one hasn’t a maid !” groans Edith, preparing to take away her small properties. “And if we are going to cross the frontier, everything may get tumbled over and over. Why can’t we declare something and be exempt? I am sure if I had the money my father has I should do that.”

“You must not think he has unlimited money, Edith. He said only the other day that you seemed to think that money might be thrown away, it was so plentiful.”

“And what had I done to make him say that?” asks Edith, turning round and facing her mother indignantly, conscious of good intentions.

“It was the day we were walking to Lausanne, and you asked me for some money to give those fat little toddles who brought you flowers.”

“And he called *that* throwing away money—giving it to those shabbily dressed little children, whose parents must be poor! I hope, mother, that you ventured to take my part and theirs. I wish you were not afraid of him. I can’t understand a wife being so much afraid of her husband. It isn’t as if he were so very, very much older than you ; then I could understand it a little better.”

"Yes, I did tell him it was your kind heart, not extravagance. When did you ever know me not try to take my children's part, Edie?"

The mother's reproachful tone is too melting to Edie's feelings to allow her to keep up her tragedy-queen *rôle* any longer. Down go her slippers and book, and she puts her arms round her mother's neck and kisses her fondly, saying, "I know, dear. Only it vexes me to see you sat upon. You ought not to be."

"Perhaps it is weak, but to have peace I put up with it."

"Which you don't get."

"I get more than I should if I opposed your father in everything."

"I don't know; he is so peculiar. And to say that I throw money away just as I have made up my mind to be economical! I am not going always to wear silk stockings, for one thing, and I thought perhaps I would try and wear some imitation lace on my things, instead of real, the next time I want new."

And Edith goes her way to reduce into the compass of one trunk the filled-to-overflowing (so it would appear) drawers and receptacles in her room, her mother's glance following her with admiring fondness. She is a graceful, willowy girl, with all the delicate beauty of promise in her face and form, and with an innocent mind awakening to sympathy with others through her own rich conception of what happiness might be.

CHAPTER XI.

CAPTAIN Munro, driving to his hotel in an open carriage amidst his baggage, looks up naturally at Maggie's window, though not much expecting to see her there at that early hour.

Not only is she there, but she has her hat on. She points with her hand in the direction he is going, which he takes to mean that she is now coming that way. He had engaged his room, which has a view of the pier, overnight : so now, arrived there, there is nothing to detain him in the hotel, and he strolls out at once towards Beau Rivage and his lady-love.

Maggie, advancing along the hot, white road in her free-stepping, graceful manner, is a welcome sight. He is quick to admire a good carriage, and ranks it even above a pretty foot and ankle. She gives a little nod as soon as she sees him, then manages somehow to interpose her sunshade between them until they are quite near, obviating so the uncomfartableness of keeping up the smile the sight of a friend calls forth, until it becomes idiotic or spasmodic.

"You must not think I am going to haunt this

road," she says, when he has placed himself by her side, and they continue walking away from the sight of her hotel windows. "I have something disagreeable to say. It is that which brings me out so early."

He looks quickly in her face, but seeing pleasure there instead of annoyance, as she speaks of something disagreeable to say, he fancies it is an innocent little subterfuge of hers to account for her having come to meet him so soon after his arrival at his new quarters ; so he says lightly, "I don't call eleven early ; but then, some people are evidently *not* early risers."

"But, if you please, I am an early riser in reason. I am not, I am happy to say, a nuisance in that way. I don't get up disturbingly early, and crow about it after the manner of some feathered and unfeathered bipeds, who upset everybody by getting up when the majority wisely prefer to sleep, and then take their sleep out in the day or evening, to the derangement and wet-blanketing of the wide-awake people. I call myself early now because I fancied I had scarcely given you time to pay the man and take possession. But, seriously, there is something very disagreeable, I am afraid, in store for us."

"Really! What is it? I didn't think you serious for a moment."

Then she tells him the state of affairs with the Scotts, interspersed with a few expressions of disgust from Munro, not complimentary to Mr. Scott.

"What an ill-conditioned brute the man is!" he ejaculates, when Maggie tells how he spoke to his wife. Men invariably pity other men's wives—when

they are attractive. "I hope to goodness these tantrums may blow over," he says, when she has finished her recital of all that has been said and done since last night. "What shall we do if he sticks to this notion and carries you off?"

"I don't know." She says this very dolefully.

Then a weight of silence falls on them.

Maggie looks up at her lover, and sees with astonishment that the expression of his face is what, if worn by Mr. Scott, she would pronounce ugly. She, being of a sweet, tranquil, governable temper, does not quite know what to make of this discovery. She has had no brothers of her own, and the Scotts have no brothers, so she has learnt nothing of human nature and inhuman "temper" in the school of home. She knows nothing of the world, and the little people that make up the world, save from books. She has done nothing; why should he look like that with her? she thinks. Of course anything puts Mr. Scott out of temper with everybody, but she has always thought him exceptional; a monster, rather than a fair type of mankind; a being to be propitiated with the best of everything—dainties to eat, smiles to meet his gaze, and wills around him that are all flexible to his. She has some visionary ideas of men, compounded from pleasant far-away remembrances of her dead father and her own imaginings—an impossible angelic being, always in a suit of armour warranted to keep all temptations out and all virtues in.

"Shall we turn in here?" he asks.

They have been pursuing their way through what

by courtesy might be called a street. The "here" indicated a big—I don't know how many aced—field that stretches from the back of the village nearly up to Lausanne.

"It will be pleasanter," she says; "but I must not go too far. No one knows I am out, even."

"What a bother those people are!" he says surlily.

The fields don't seem to give more satisfaction than the road. His next remark is, "I can't think how people can live in those staring little white boxes"—indicating some scattered dazzlingly white houses with vivid green jalousies which are scattered on the road leading to Lausanne, and which command the path they are following. He seems, oddly enough, Maggie thinks, to have transferred his animosity from Mr. Scott to these aggressive evidences of clean primness and want of taste.

"I shouldn't like to live in one, but I can imagine the pride an owner might take in its spick-and-spanness. There isn't much exercise, though, for the people who build or choose to live in them. They have such perfect gems of picturesqueness in the houses dotted down here and there on the lake. Why, there's a perfectly charming house at Coppel, I think, with about three stories in the roof, and little windows looking out of it that remind one of the openings in a dovecote."

"I think I know the one you mean," he observes somewhat absently. He is looking uneasily from one to the other of the objectionable, unwinking green eyes that seem staring at them from these confounded

little houses. "Give me your sunshade a minute," he says.

She gives it to him, wonderingly. Then he stoops down, and kisses her gravely.

"Oh!" she says softly. Now she understands. Then he takes her hand, which the sunshade has freed, and they walk on nearer to one another, but not in too pronouncedly lover-like a manner, should a recognizing eye chance on them.

"I can't think," he says more genially, "on any plan worth anything, if the brute"—the last word jerked from under his moustache—"takes you away; at least, not until I know where he is going. Why, he may, if he is suspicious of meetings and that kind of thing, carry you off to some primitive one-hotel, one-post sort of place, where there's no getting near. I wonder if my letter is at the bottom of it? You say his daughter took it? Perhaps he thinks Fielding is dodging about, and has written to her?"

"We neither of us thought of that. How clever of you!"

"No, I am not that. I can't see that any place can be anything like as good as where you are. Those grounds and the quiet shore are just right. But you will come to-night, child, and tell me what more there is to tell, eh, dear?"

That is the first word of endearment he has used to-day. Maggie begins to enjoy her walk more, and that little word serves to unloosen her tongue again.

"I will come if possible, you know, dear; but Mr. Scott seems not to like—the girls say—my taking

myself away from the rest of them, as I have done lately when they have gone to play billiards. There is one thing to be said, though. If he is very angry he won't like the noise of the balls, and won't like to see us merry, so we may not adjourn there after dinner. But for his wife's sake, I hope his walk with the American will have done him good. She is so nice; I wonder sometimes she hasn't improved him a little, don't you?"

"Oh, I don't know. Some men are such ill-conditioned brutes. Look at Sir Percival Wade. The more they are given way to, the worse they are."

"But I don't at all think Lady Wade is one of the submissive wives," says Maggie, who can't let her imaginary rival be endowed with qualities she is sure she can lay no claim to.

"Very likely not," he says indifferently.

"We ought to turn now," she remarks; "it will be downhill as we go back, fortunately, or I shouldn't save lunch. Think of the crime of that."

The wide prospect as they turn is wondrously fair, and over it and from it comes a hum of summer gladness. She makes him own that it is charming, notwithstanding the distorting twist her disagreeable news gave him. But he will take exception to those horrible green-and-white uniformed sentinels that look across at them. She tries in playful opposition to find something to say in excuse for them, and being readier with wit than he, makes out a case.

After a little time spent in impersonal talk, he brings it back to their own affairs. "To-morrow," he

says, "is Saturday, remember. I should hardly think he would leave to-morrow, and Sunday, I suppose, is out of the question. What do you think?"

"Quite out of the question. He won't have his horses out on Sunday. If it is too wet for us to walk to church, we may stay at home."

"Yes, but that little bit of water between England and the Continent has a lot of washing-out power. Why, I have known highly respectable fathers of families, like Mr. Scott, get those notions, and a good many others that they have seemed to respect, washed quite away by that strip of water. The sin of going to races on Sunday, for instance. Why, they go to see the Grand Prix run without a thought of its being sinful, their prejudices all washed away."

"Prejudices, dear! Why, surely you would not go to races on Sunday?"

"But they have their races on Sunday, you know, so one must go on Sunday if one wants to see them run."

"Then don't see them run, dear. I am not in favour of the old-fashioned Puritan Sunday. I read books that old-fashioned people would not call good books, and feel that that is not wrong; it has only to do with myself. But a line *must* be drawn somewhere."

"Drawn just outside your own special predilection, eh, dearie? You wouldn't care much for the Grand Prix, probably?" A half-smile of banter flits across his face, a whole smile being yet beyond his resources.

She smiles also. "Ah, but I did not say my books

were not good ; only that old-fashioned people might say so. Now, your races distinctly are not good."

"I am not so sure of that," he answered. "Where's the harm ? Improves the breed of horses, you know."

"I understand. A poor excuse is better than none ; but that has nothing to do with Sunday racing."

"Sunday is a holiday, and the masses, whom it is the fashion of the day to think should have as many holidays as possible, can go then."

"You are not serious, I can see by your face. You say this to tease me and drive me into a corner. I am not nearly there ; but it hardly seems worth my while to go deep for missiles to throw at what is a sort of scarecrow you have put up to frighten me, and not yourself at all. Seriously, dear, I don't like races, and wish you would promise me not to bet. You will, won't you ?"

"Promise you, or bet ?"

"Promise me *not to bet*."

"No, dear ; I can't promise that quite, because when I make a promise I like to keep it. I will promise, if that will satisfy you, that I won't do much in that way. But just a little excitement is good for one, you know ; something to look in the papers for—the betting, you know. You need not be afraid for me ; every one does it."

It is ambiguous, certainly. But then she likes what he said about a promise, and that puts a gloss on the shiftiness of the rest. She is *in love*, and does not merely love. "You promise me that?" she says earnestly.

“Yes, I promise, dear. How far may I come with you?”

They have emerged from the fields, and are in a line with Maggie’s hotel.

“I was going to say you must not come much farther. Indeed, we had better”—said reluctantly—“part here.”

“Just a little farther, dearie, just to settle, you know, on a plan of action. I think I had better go to the old meeting-place, don’t you? It is better than watching about by your window, don’t you think?”

“Much better.”

“Well, then, I shall be there soon after eight, and shall wait about till ten, for the chance of your getting away some time. After that, if I have not seen you, I shall watch your window, and you will throw me out a note, telling me anything you may have learnt, and what I can do to see you, and anything else you like, you know. But I shall quite expect to see you, dear, some time between half-past eight and ten.”

“You know I shall come if I can. I almost wish you smoked to fill up the waiting-time; it must seem so long.”

“Oh, never mind that, child. A stroll by the lake isn’t half bad in itself, don’t you know?”

“You must not come any farther.”

“Really must not?”

“Really must not.”

“*Au revoir*, then.”

He lingers yet, loth to part even here in this dusty unpoetic-by-comparison spot, with houses

near, and a few passers-by who look at them stolidly, if not curiously, and the Beau Rivage Hotel facing them not many paces away, and lunch-time near. Still he can't make up his mind to put distance between them.

She, too, is loth to part, and she looks at him wistfully. When will they meet again? All is so uncertain. But she is more prone to action than he, and it is she who turns away, feeling that what must be done, must be.

"How pleasant to be near him!" she thinks, with a sigh. "How good to have been near him! For when near to-day, there was something wanting."

No wonder that to her there was a half-defined feeling of garishness in this meeting, as contrasted with those soul-intoxicating, rapturous interchanges of thought, look, caress; all the senses charmed and the feelings intensified by the hour, the scene, and the witching, thrilling influence of the moon's intense strange light by the margin of the lake. Those moonlit visits to the fairyland of earth! Love, that intensest form of life, the mainspring of life, has spoilt her a little for the everyday, unromantic interchange with him of ordinary talk. She is a match that lights only on its special box; and in the bright broad daylight the match lights on the box, certainly, but the illumination is only slightly visible, and once the box seemed damp and the light was slow to come.

CHAPTER XII.

BY the somewhat imposing gate that connects the Beau Rivage Hotel grounds with the port and village of Ouchy, Maggie, on her return from her errant excursion, meets Mr. Price. At sight of him all her dreams take flight, and she thinks with fear and trembling of the neglected preparation for departure, and the disgrace she is likely to find herself in.

“There is a hue and cry after you, Miss M'Arthur,” is his greeting.

“What, am I very late? I have been exploring, and the time flew.”

“You are five minutes late; all your people are in their seats, and in your place is wonderment and visible consternation. What would you have done, Miss M'Arthur, if they had gone off without you? I assure you it was a very near thing,” he continues. as they hurry towards the terrace that my people will have helped to wear away with the reader's patience, maybe. “I had a good deal of difficulty in our morning stroll to persuade Mr. Scott not to

start off to-day. I think he is safe here for to-day—I quite understood so—but when we met Mrs. Scott just now, and she asked him about it, my morning's uphill work seemed to have vanished, and he spoke as if four o'clock might be the hour for starting—somewhere."

"I hope most devotedly that we shall not leave here to-day, or for a long time. Four o'clock! That would be too dreadful."

"So do I sincerely hope you may stay longer, for many reasons. You and I have not yet settled, or even discussed, that quite current topic in these open, communicative days—of life: is it worth living? What would you say?"

She smiled more to herself than to him.

"My own life," she said,—“that comes first to one's thoughts. I pick that out from the mass of life, and I think it well worth living.”

"If all goes well in the path you are pursuing?" he asks, looking with intentness at her.

"Yes," she replies. She almost forgets in talking to him that she is not soliloquizing. He seems to understand her.

"You—I forgot, when speaking to you, that you are not of my date—you have not yet reached that stage in life's journey when one can pause to look back on the road that has been traversed, and can judge in looking back what will be before one, and can see what life must be in the aggregate. In youth, the springtime of life, there is so much promise; but the bright sun that calls forth buds

alternates with sharp frosts and nipping winds, that destroy and stint and cripple much of the fruit that is forming. Not very much out of all this promise reaches perfection. And then, later on, when some fruit ripens to perfection, there are the attacks from yellow wasps—the love of gold and earwigs—which may be doubts—to pass through before the fruit falls, or is plucked in ripeness. But how dreadfully prosy you will vote me. You will say I talk like a book, and shun me evermore.”

“No, indeed ; and if we stay, I hope you will talk to me of life. You observe so much. But now I want your help to face the enemy. I feel quite frightened. Why are we all afraid of this man ?” she says in an indignant tone, to give herself a little backing, as she pulls herself together, just as she is about to enter the presence of their Jove, who always keeps thunderbolts handy.

There are few people assembled at the *déjeuner*, and they scattered and comparatively quiet. She feels a guilty thing as she advances under Mr. Scott’s full eye, which has even, she thinks, an irascible light in its habitual green-grey inexpressiveness.

They are all silent, watching her. The Swiss had wished to join their party, having learnt nothing permanently from Mr. Scott’s curtness the day before. He had come up to him in a free and easy, assured manner, and had been ruthlessly shut up and shut out from their circle by a short rejoinder from Mr. Scott to his harmless remark. He has transferred his attention to the German family, a little way down the

table, who have welcomed him unhesitatingly to their bosom. Somehow it has come to be quite understood in the hotel, of which he is an *habitué*, that he is a young man of substance, such as fathers and mothers love.

“I am so sorry to be late, Mr. Scott,” says Maggie, in her softest tones, as she quickly seats herself. She apologizes directly to him, as being the better way to mollify his anger; besides, she wishes to draw some words from his high-mightiness, that will show the state of his delicate temper.

“Isn’t your watch right?” is the reproof, which means, ‘If it is right, there is not a shadow of excuse for *you*.’

“I believe it is; but I did not consult it sufficiently, I am afraid. I have been to the other side of the village, exploring,” she says, looking from him to Mrs. Scott, “as I——” She hesitates a second. “It won’t do to say, ‘as I thought you were going away.’ He will think it impertinent in me to wish to see more of a place than he chooses to take us to see.”

Considerate Mr. Price covers her breakdown by taking up the subject. “I suppose, Mr. Scott,” he says, “you have examined that old square tower that was part of a castle, built in eleven hundred and something. Do you remember the date, Frank? Those massive structures of by-gone days specially interest us. We have nothing like them in our country. A gigantic hotel or railway depôt is about our grandest architectural effort.”

Mr. Scott usually rises to a bait of this kind. He

feels all the glories of the Old World reflected in his ample person. But now he scarcely notices it; the water in which he is swimming is too much troubled. Mrs. Scott and Edith only contribute their help towards keeping the topic afloat a little while. In comparative silence, broken by Mr. Scott only to find fault with the viands, the *déjeuner* comes to an end.

Vacillation—I will and I won't, I don't know what to do and I won't ask anybody, and if any one suggests the slightest thing, it *must* be wrong—is the mood in which Mr. Scott passes the day. He issues orders, then half contradicts them, leaving everything vague, yet taking it for granted that his belongings can interpret the wishes that have no definite shape to himself, and are ever changing and getting half readjusted, always, and in every respect, to his own dissatisfaction. He is only clear on one point, that he is—ill-used. He is a pitiable object, a source of misery to himself and others. He thinks he can trust no one. Every one is in league against him, and all try to annoy him as much as possible. He can trust no one, not even his wife or Mary. The latter seems—if she is not actually in the conspiracy against him—to avoid him now as much as possible, and that is a suspicious circumstance.

This is the visitant that has stirred all the turbid waters of the pool—the certainty that his daughter's lover is near, and that she is receiving letters from him, and, of course, if she has not seen him, she will be contriving soon to do so. He had it from the waiter, that there was a letter for one of the young

ladies while he was away at Geneva, when no English mail could have come in. On that evidence he builds his certainty, which, confined within himself, engenders all manner of bad thoughts towards, and mistrust of, everybody. If he could only pounce on the offender, the young scamp who has broken his word, he would—well, he doesn't know clearly what would happen, beyond his giving him a rough piece of his mind. The desire, in a chaotic, jumbled state, to take further action is not wanting, but courage, other than of his opinions, he, very secretly and not fully confessed to himself, feels that he has not.

On the side of the harassed family is smouldering rebellion and discontent, which glows with the heaped-on occasions. In time, little sparks of fire fly off in a slight sharpness of manner from one to the other, when some one has not understood or has been deaf to a question, or has insisted too strongly that there *is* room in one's trunk for such and such a thing, when it looks overflowing already. Mary's discontent is loudest. If she hasn't Frank to talk to, she would much rather be at home. Maggie's—the deepest—is the most silent. Edith mixes this treatment of them by her father and his arbitrary dismissal of her lover together, and finds in them additional proof of the constant wayward injustice of his nature. "He thwarts every one, I believe, for the mere satisfaction it gives himself," she said to Maggie, in one of the many exchanges of visits they make to each other in their own rooms this afternoon.

They could not more carefully avoid the salon,

where Mr. Scott is, if they had been told that a mad dog was in possession. He employs himself chiefly in turning over "Bradshaws" and "Murray," and in writing letters, which do not please him. At the end there is quite a heap of torn paper in the grate, but not a single letter for the post. Mrs. Scott at intervals comes from her room to where he is so employed; then, if she has gleaned anything, she goes to tell it to Edith, whose room is next hers, and so the gleanings get passed on.

Once or twice he asks what Edith is doing when his wife comes back. He does not appear to dislike her going to and fro to-day. Sometimes it would have been a cause of offence—tittle-tattling, he would have called it. When the afternoon has half gone, the idea of going away that day is seen to be a fiction, but he does not abandon it until he knows that there is only time left for a short walk in the grounds before dinner. Then the mandate goes forth, and travels rapidly from room to room, that they are positively to start early the next morning for Aix, and that nothing in the way of packing must be left until the morning.

With half-frightened glances towards the lair, as if they were doing a forbidden thing, the three girls steal presently past on their way to open air and freedom; for this afternoon's occupation, with the spirit of it, has made the desire of getting away from the very atmosphere of it strong in them.

"I feel," said Mary, as she left the hotel behind her, "like a seamstress walking home after a close



day's work. I feel so glad to be let loose ; I feel I could fly."

"If I were a seamstress," says Edith, "I should feel too weary to enjoy anything but the prospect of bed. What do you say, mum?" She has adopted Mary's pet name largely since she has been so confidential with her governess, as being less stiff than "Miss M'Arthur," and less familiar than "Maggie."

"Just now," mum replies, "I feel as Mary does ; but *if* I had been working closely with my needle all day, I dare say the rest-longing would be before everything."

"Don't you think we might venture just to examine the tower Mr. Price was speaking of?" says Edith, when they are consulting as to which path they will take. She knows that mum saw Captain Munro in her morning's walk, and she also desires to see him.

"Oh, do go, mum. There is no one to speak to—not a soul that I can see in here. If we go outside, we shall see if the Prices are on their way back from Lausanne. Do go."

"I dare not go again. I was late, you know, this morning, unfortunately. We must not go beyond the gate now."

"What a bother!"

"You must not say that, Mary. You have got into a bad habit of saying 'What a bother!' to almost everything."

"Let me just look out of the gate, not go outside. Frank is a very obstinate boy, and thinks everything American much better than English things ; still I

like him. He is so awfully proud of their trotting horses. He saw one—Maud S——, I think he called her—trot a mile in two minutes ten and three-quarter seconds, he says. It was a year or two ago. I tell him he must have forgotten; I can't believe it, can you? and he thinks very little of our racehorses. He says they are of no use like these trotters."

"Does Frank exaggerate?" asked Edie.

"If you mean, does he tell fibs? no. I don't know about exaggeration. Everything, according to him, is big and grand and splendid—in America." She imitates the boy's voice so exactly, as she says the last words, that even her captious sister is obliged to smile.

"Now, only just look out of the gate," says Miss M'Arthur.

"I believe father is at the window," remarks Edith. "I can see a figure behind the curtain. Come away, Mary."

"What a bother!"

"*Mary!*"

"I am so sorry, but it is a nuisance all the same. I fancied I could see some one."

"Then that would not be the Prices."

"You know what I mean, Edie. You are so dreadfully particular; you are always vexing me."

"You should not get vexed at such little things."

Then they strolled down towards the lake, glorious with the glinting, dancing sunlight on its rippling waters; a path of light ever receding as one advances, a very Will-o'-the-wisp of brightness, like the dazzling visions of youth.

"It is lovely! What a pity to have to leave it!" is the almost simultaneous sentiment expressed by all three, though in slightly varied words.

"The reflection in the lake of mountains ever so distant, and all these vine-clad terraces, and the trees, and even the boats, seems to me so wonderful and beautiful," says Edith.

"Yes, that's very beautiful," says her younger sister, patronizingly; "but not so grand and wondrous as those mountains, peak beyond peak, till the eye can follow them no farther. That awakes one's wonderment, as well as admiration. I wonder if all those birds about mean squally weather?" she adds, changing her tone from grave to gay in an instant. "Pretty creatures! what a pleasant life they seem to have! I suppose if I were a male creature, instead of thinking that, I should be wondering if I could have hit the birds at that distance, and wishing I had my gun. Look, that's the boat we ought to be in." She points to the right in the direction of the landing-stage.

Just landing at the pier, they see Mr. Meinhertz and the German family he chummed with at the *déjeuner*. They watched this small incident with amusement and many remarks. The girls seemed to require a great deal of help from Mr. Meinhertz.

"That is a very long-suffering young man," says Edie, as he separates from his boating party and is unmistakably making for them. "If I were he, I should cut the whole of us. I think my father's manner of shutting him up just now was abominable."

"You should not say such things of your father, Edith," says Mary, indignantly, yet glad to have a case against her elder sister.

"You were abusing him just now yourself."

"I didn't say anything half as bad as abominable. I said it was a shame to take us away from this lovely spot to that horrid Aix, where everybody has something the matter with them. Aix is a horrid place, compared with this, is it not, Mr. Meinhertz?"

The young man, who has just come up to them, looking exceedingly broad and muscular in his flannels, shows all his strong-looking teeth in laughing, as he says—

"Aix is a pretty enough place, and you will not see any objects of pity there, Miss Mary. Ah, ah! did you expect to see each other person crippled with rheumatism?"

"Certainly not," says Mary, haughtily. She hates to be laughed at, or to be thought to have said anything absurd.

"You are not going to leave here yet, I hope?" He had intended this to be appropriated by the cold-looking (as he thinks) dark girl, but she is not looking at him, after the manner of most girls when a man is trying to make himself agreeable to them, but is looking far away, and her thoughts and attentions are not given to him. He has been much fêted this afternoon by the people he took on the lake, and the contrast of manner piques him. He thinks it will be worth while to try to make *her* speak to him; she can light up, he knows.

"I am afraid we go to-morrow," said Edith, as no one else seems inclined to answer him ; "quite early, I believe."

"I am exceedingly sorry to hear it. You will find Aix, of course, a much gayer place than this, notwithstanding its invalids ; but I don't think you will like it, take it altogether."

"I am sure we shall not."

"No," says Mary, whose love of talking gets the better of her resentment. "I hate the idea of leaving here ; we all do."

"Then why go," he naturally asks, "if you none of you want to go? Oh, perhaps it is for the baths," he adds.

"If it is for the baths, it is to keep off rheumatism. We none of us have ever had it," says Mary.

"Nor gout, nor neuralgia? It is said to be good for them, remember."

"Oh, is it?" says Edith. "I didn't know that. I had never heard of the place till our princess went last year, and her sketches were in *Good Words*. I dare say I ought to have known all about it before."

They stand some time chattering lightly. The Swiss has been able to ask one or two questions directly of Maggie, although her name he can't recall, and she has answered civilly, but with no desire to join in the talk. Dogged people of his type don't accept as their own Raleigh's rhyming creed—

"If she undervalue me,
What care I how fair she be?"

They desire to make themselves valued, and if time be given to their perseverance, they, if they are clever, succeed in eight cases out of ten.

“Here come Mr. and Mrs. Scott,” says Mr. Meinhertz, who is facing the path down which they stroll, and is the only one in a position to see them.

A silence falls on all ; they wonder what it will be best to do.

“I am afraid,” says the Swiss, with ready wit, “that Mr. Scott is not feeling well to-day. You must tell me if he is not well enough to talk to strangers. Perhaps he came here for tranquillity. What do you think?”

Edie, not good in an emergency, looks at Maggie, for her to answer.

“Mr. Scott *is* out of sorts” (how true!). “When he is, he never cares to talk. But we will walk towards them. They may have come to remind us of the dinner-hour ; then, as you have to dress, we won’t keep you any longer.”

This little arrangement, which did away with any notion that they were ashamed to be seen talking to the young man, while it saved him a snubbing, was carried out. Mr. Meinhertz just stopped long enough to make his dress an apology for going away immediately, as Maggie had suggested, but even that second confirmed his notion, that the father of those nice girls was a ——. He had heard the peremptory way in which they were ordered off to dress.

Mr. Scott had not found his mare’s-nest, and he

does not quite know how to feel about it. It would have given him a grim satisfaction to have pounced on his daughter's lover in the act of breaking his word. He sadly wanted an outlet. Felling a tree, or any other hard open-air work would be a great safety-valve.

CHAPTER XIII.

MR. PRICE is undoubtedly a very nice, good man, and Emerson a sublime, original thinker; but to meet a disciple of the most original thinker the world has ever known when, with the greatest possible difficulty and risk, one has escaped to give a few stolen minutes to one's lover, is enough to make one devoutly wish that the great man's disciple had remained in his own hemisphere.

There had been no talk, no billiards; and not a ghost of a smile flickered, not a glimmer of fun lighted in any eye in the Scotts' salon, whither, by command, they had all assembled this evening.

Gloom and silence, silence and gloom. The room dimly lighted—brilliancy of any kind would have been an offence—a stifling feeling of oppression. Each one fancying herself specially in disgrace, and the cause of the mood that has now sunk down to funereal. Nothing to do. Books, work, writing materials—all entombed; and the tongues, apparently, with them, as they are not used.

Mr. Scott looks over the newspapers, which have

accumulated to a big pile, rings for the waiter to take the major part of them away; then he takes *Truth* and the *World* to his room, to be done up with the rugs; and so thoroughly does his spirit dominate, that they see them go without venturing to suggest looking at them; Mary, longing to occupy herself with the puzzles, yet not daring to ask, with the remembrance of the snub she got just now fresh in her memory. She had merely wished to go to her room to unearth something to employ her ever-active self, but had been told to stay where she was, and not go and upset everything. "We shall all go to bed soon, to be up early to-morrow," he added, because it was his youngest daughter, and if he could be civil to any one, it would be to her. That hope kept Maggie from feeling quite despairing. She can listen to the ticking of the clock without being wearied out with the monotonous sound. Each tick seems to bring escape nearer, but it also piles up the restlessness which this empty waiting doubly engenders.

Mr. Scott sits at a table, with the only books—"Bradshaw" and "Murray"—under his own thumb; deceiving no one in appearing to be occupied with them. Maggie, who sits by the window, so that she can see out into the shadowy dimness—the moon has not yet risen—looks often in the direction where her lover is impatiently pacing, she knows; then across to the clock. Mr. Scott then comes into her line of sight, and awakens quite turbulent feelings in her breast. In a second or two, she studies his face and

wonders about him. She never liked his eyes; the "colour" not pleasing her. But that was a small matter. She disliked the full, meaningless look of them. And the mouth—how coarse! what an absence of sensibility! what an obstinate upper lip! what an abandonment to sensuousness; markedly, the pleasures of the table in the Tower. "And this man, I suppose, is clever in a way, since he makes money, which we only long for," she thinks. Perhaps it requires that people should be of coarse fibre to be successful in the race for wealth. She notices in her frequent glances at the mantelpiece that he from time to time looks furtively at Edith. Then she looks and discovers her to be placidly sleeping in her low easy-chair. Mrs. Scott is also on the borderland of that refuge for the inert, Mary looking from one to the other in despair. She had been able to say just a few words now and then—when she could contain them no longer—to her mother. Now she ventures to cross the room to her governess, saying quite piteously, "We could play cat's-cradle if you had such a thing as a long bit of string anywhere." It could scarcely have been a surprise when mum shook her head, one would think.

This movement of Mary's breaks the spell. Mrs. Scott sits up, wide awake. Maggie gathers courage to hear her own voice, now some one has spoken again to challenge the clock's right to have it all its own way. "I think you had better go to bed, dear," she said; and suited action to the words by getting up to accompany her.

“Quite right,” remarked Mr. Scott; “and, remember, no loitering. Be as quick as you like into bed, and as quick out of it in the morning. We have a long journey before us, remember.”

A few more words of direction and admonition, and the most tedious sitting in the memory of any of the number came, as all things come, however protracted, to an end, the obstructive party being Mr. Scott.

After that, Maggie had boldly told the two girls that she must run down to take a last look at the lake, refusing, as unwise, Edith’s offer to accompany her. She only intends to be away ten minutes, and starts off at once, feeling that Mr. Scott is pretty safe. He will be smoking his cigar now they have left him. Mrs. Scott will probably have some last words to distribute; still, with the message she has left, she does not fear.

On the terrace, she had been met by Mr. Price. At sight of him, she knew it was all up with her much-cogitated plan. Having explained that the weariness of the evening had driven her out to get rid of it in the open air, she is obliged to stay a few minutes, to make good her excuse. She felt vexed all round—vexed unspeakably, to be balked thus at the last moment of the only chance that may come for a long time, of meeting her lover. Vexed to be deprived of that bitter-sweet solace to separation, a tender farewell. Vexed, too, that she had put herself inadvertently in a false position as regarded Mr. Price. What more likely than for him to think she has come to the

terrace for the chance of a more special farewell than would be possible in the presence of the others, in the hurry of getting off? Hateful thought, and there, over the trees, perhaps among them watching her, is the man she has come out at last to meet, after an evening of so much anxious waiting. It is hard—horribly hard! While she is seething with impatience, disgust, and vexation, Mr. Price is saying—

“Do be persuaded by me to go down for a last look at the lake by moonlight. It is delightful there on a night like this. It is your last night, remember; you ought to make the most of it. Do come.” His tone of voice as well as his words, are most insistent.

“Thanks, no; it is too late, and we shall have a lake at Aix. You must not fancy you have a monopoly here of lake and moonlight. Besides, I only came out for a second. Mr. Scott will be here directly, and, you know, I am afraid of him.”

“That I cannot understand. Why should you fear any one? At any moment, when you choose, you can leave them.” He says this meaningly, and she feels that he is looking down intently on her.

“Of course,” she says, with a constrained little laugh, “I am free in a way, I know; but it does not please me to leave the Scotts. With one exception, I like them much, and freedom does not consist in change of chains. Good night, Mr. Price. I am a coward, so I retreat by the drawing-room. I know he never comes that way.”

“Don’t go yet. I——”

“I must. Good night;” and she has turned away

into the drawing-room, where there is safety among the people. Not a thought of Mr. Price in her mind, other than vexation that he should have spoiled her chance of good-bye, that sweet sorrow. Her escape was twofold, had she but known it; for Mrs. Scott, not five minutes later, took her place on the Beau Rivage stage, impelled thither by the *ennui* that drives all people not at peace in themselves.

Thwarted in everything, and almost inclined to cry, Maggie drops the letter written under constant difficulties and interruption to the spot where she is longing immeasurably to be herself. She dares scarcely look if he gets it even, Mrs. Scott being actually in her room, but unconscious of the novel form of letter posting going on from it.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE rabid early risers, with whom early rising ranks as one of the cardinal virtues, aver that if one loses an hour in the morning by staying in bed, one may hurry after it all day without overtaking it.

On the other hand, the moderate risers frequently find that being disturbed, as they would call it, at an unaccustomed hour in the morning, makes them, while gaining an hour, lose a large portion of their serenity.

Nobody, save the head of the family, liked this earlier rising, which they privately and unanimously voted unnecessary. And so it was. They had time—plenty of time—to spare before breakfast.

Miss M'Arthur, who keeps a careful watch on the road from the Hôtel d'Angleterre, is also mindful of writing facilities for John; goes to Mr. Scott to ask if she shall address some large envelopes, and leave them at the bureau, that their letters may be forwarded in them. She is surprised and sold when he tells her that he has already done that. He adds, very much to her disgust—

"I gave orders for your letters as well as ours to be sent to me. It saves trouble." That was his explanation of this high-handed proceeding.

The hotel servants, to whom preparing breakfast and getting people off by trains comes with clock-like regularity, are not to be hurried this morning by the bustling of the few poor things whose turn has come to be despatched. The Scott family seem to be doing all the flitting to and fro and hurrying; the servants keeping out of the way, or looking imperturbably on.

Every one but Maggie has gone down to sit in an expectant attitude at the breakfast-table, as a reproach to the lagging waiters. She lingers till the last minute at her window, hoping for a glimpse of him. The sight of the crown of his hat would be better than nothing, she feels.

At last, from her window, she sees, walking with the brisk pace that usually denotes an object in view, the being she is looking for. She watches his coming with a scrutiny that would certainly have made him feel uncomfortably shy had he known it. She shows herself just before he gets in a line with her observatory. After the preliminary hat-raising, he half draws from his waistcoat pocket what appears to be a tiny note, then he points with his walking-stick in the direction of the chief entrance to the hotel, which he knows to be at the opposite side to the *salle-à-manger*. She nods her comprehension of his pantomime, and forthwith goes to receive her precious *billet-doux* at the hall door. It is of glass. She

sees a look on his face that seems to say, "Dare you come outside for a second?" But she does not dare; she is already blameably late. She shakes her head solemnly; he opens the door, pops the letter into her hand, then looks volumes of loving regret. Not a word is said; the next instant he has disappeared, and she has turned to cross the hall, slipping her letter into her pocket as she goes.

Breakfast and the Prices have just come to table; father and son express their intention of going to the station to see their friends off. Those who are going away have the unsatisfactory feeling of eating against time, and as if all their future happiness depends on catching this particular train, and they are doubtful of doing it. They don't shine in conversation this morning. Edith alone is placid and undisturbed. But then, to her time is an abstract idea only; practically she has not mastered it, and is never, in any circumstances, aware of what may or may not be done in a given time. Mary and Frank talk a little to each other in a subdued tone, the spirit of argument, for a short space of time, being broken within them.

Mr. Scott is fussy, but, oddly enough, in a better mood—more pleased with Mrs. Scott, one would say—than he was yesterday. There is in him even an air of sunny satisfaction this morning.

When Maggie and Mrs. Scott return to their rooms, it is to find everything just as they left them, although several special orders had been given that the luggage was to be strapped and taken down in the interval. Bells are rung; chambermaids, mindful of tips, hurry

in response. At length all the little *contretemps* inseparable from a change of quarters are pretty well over. The family and their friends all packed in the omnibus, all the staff of the hotel, it being a leisure time, are assembled at the door to wish them *bon voyage*. Mr. Scott, after hurrying every one into the vehicle as if there is not half a minute to lose, leisurely walks round to count the baggage.

"Do come, my dear," says his wife, thoroughly fretted into an unrecognizable state of fidgetiness by the trials she has gone through. When she went, for instance, to her eldest daughter's room to look round, she found she had left more things out to be put in her travelling bag, that she might want, she said, than any two ordinary bags would contain. Under strong protest—"I shall want that, mother, and that"—she had carried half the things away to be distributed and squeezed into the other receptacles, to the perplexity of the others, who considered their respective bags already more than full.

At the last minute Mr. Meinhertz puts his head in at the omnibus door. "Had no idea you were off so soon. Going to Aix? Ah, I think of going that way."

Mr. Scott signals the start. "Impertinent," he mutters. The conclusion to his speech is lost in air. The drive to the station is all against choler. Apparently the repeater by which Mr. Scott swears, and with which he is wont to challenge the accuracy of all other watches in the globe, from the same spirit that induces the constant reader of a special newspaper to believe in that one because he has adopted it

against all others—to-day is losing its character, as he consults it constantly, without being any the wiser for the consultation.

He fusses and fumes ; makes a noise with his tongue against the roof of his mouth, of a "Tut, tut" sound. "What were they thinking of at the hotel, to give us such horses? Shameful, I call it—shameful! We shall just miss our train;" and the clicking or the worry makes him scarlet. "Besides," he continues, "'Bradshaw' says, 'With luggage one ought to be at the station fifteen minutes before the train starts.'"

Mr. Price takes on himself the thankless office of consoler. "I don't think," he says, "that any one, unless they persistently willed it, could miss a train here or in France. They take I don't know how many minutes to look up stragglers. Then, when they have got them safely seated, the officials seem to require breathing-time before the awful responsibility of actually starting the train comes."

This description, which makes the girls smile, has no effect in calming Mr. Scott, for the very good reason that he had not listened to it. Watch out again—"Dear me! they might go faster, I am sure." He tries to get the window down to call to the driver ; while he is struggling with it, he sees that they are just turning off from the hill. The horses go at a brisker pace, and he turns himself round. Then the alarm takes another form : "Do they start trains by Paris time?" If not, he is sure they will be late.

Mr. Price goes with him to the booking-office. "You will book through to Aix, of course?" he says.

“No; the ladies may be tired. If we don't book through, we can stay a night or two at Geneva.”

“But the luggage has ‘Aix’ on it.”

“Oh, that can easily be altered. I told them to put ‘*Via* Geneva.’ I shall put my pencil through ‘Aix’ in a minute, and that will be all right.” He quite chuckles at the thought of his ruse.

“You will let me know your movements?”

“Certainly.”

With Mr. Price's help, the intricacies of the Swiss money are easily mastered this time; but when they have been steered to their railway carriage, and have arranged themselves and their wraps and their bags satisfactorily, Mr. Scott, who thinks he has been exceedingly generous in rewarding the attentive porters, is disgusted to see one open his hand to show him what he had given him, and ask for more. He thought he had given him two or three small pieces of silver, instead of which it was the greeny-white metal that is so deceiving to travellers, and the *pour boire* only amounted to threepence. Mr. Scott waves the man away indignantly, at the same time hurling a few words of his French at him. Frank, who has got into the carriage for a few last words, happens to see the coins, and so, by explaining, prevents perhaps a tourist letter getting printed in one of the dailies, in the big gooseberry season, filled with abuse of foreigners and their extortions.

Mr. Price makes quite a pretty speech at parting—expresses a hope of soon seeing them all again. “Mr. Scott has promised to let me hear when you are

settled at Aix," he says; but that concluding remark does not awaken any surprise—in fact, falls unnoticed.

Mary, who has taken the seat opposite her father, puts her head out of the window as the train at last slowly carries them away, and nods and waves to her friends as long as they are discernible, her youthful warmth of feeling being very gratifying to the forlorn ones left alone on the edge of the Lausanne platform.

Not long after leaving the station, Mr. Scott, not being able any longer to put off the gratification of seeing the sold expressions of his women-kind, tells them that to-day their destination is not Aix, but Geneva. The effect of this announcement is as galvanizing as he could wish; the youngest member of his family being especially voluble on it. Frank and herself are two most important figures to her; that their epistolary arrangements should be thrown out of gear for a day or two is most vexatious, and she says so.

Thereat Mr. Scott comes down heavily on her for arranging to write, even to a boy like Frank, without consulting her mother—he would like to have said, "and myself;" but even he can see that as he is ostensibly talking to a child about another child, that would be somewhat ridiculous. He waxes hotly eloquent and didactic. Through this he can strike at the offending Edith, whose serenity under his hip-and-thigh smiting is an aggravation, however, and is put down as an evidence of her extreme duplicity.

(Poor child!) In fact, her manner he feels to be exceeding disrespectful. She spends part of the time the harangue is proceeding in rummaging in her chaotic bag, which she had been the first part of the time struggling to get off the rack. She extracts from it Henry James's "Europeans," which she proceeds to read in an unconcerned manner, felt by him to be ostentatiously superior and indifferent. It is, he considers, as much as to say, "Talk as much as you like, I shall go my own way."

The carriage is as warm as his temper. The sun had been on it, heating it almost to baking point before they got in. The windows next him are still absorbing the sun's fierce rays. It is stifling, unbearable. The sight of the lake, cool and refreshing in its blue limpid depths, where one would like to plunge and leave this intolerable heat behind one, gives him no pleasure, not even scenic, but is to his heated self like the sight the cup of cold water must have been to Dives, when he saw it in his mind's eye. He might have been on the lake had he been so minded; all the arrangements were made solely by him. It does not improve matters when his wife innocently remarks—

"We might easily have gone to Geneva by boat at noon, as we do not go to Aix to-day."

Then he tries to make it appear that all this purgatorial heat he is in is out of deference to his wife's wishes, who has always made so many objections whenever he has proposed an excursion on the lake.

"I have only asked to be left at Ouchy when it has not been quite smooth ; but it is smooth to-day, and you gave me no choice in the matter, John," she argues.

"How could I? How did I know last night if the lake would be smooth enough to-day to suit your fancies? Arrangements have to be made beforehand, and can't depend at the last moment on a woman's caprice," etc. etc.

After shutting his wife up, and riding this invented grievance to death, he subsides for a time, perhaps feeling that he has been a little hard on her ; but then women provoke one so.

Presently Miss M'Arthur asks him, as a favour to herself, to exchange seats with her. She would like a last look at the places on the lake, and will not mind the sun at all.

He accedes to this little ruse to put him in a cooler spot, not graciously — graciousness is a quality of delicacy—but with condescension, as if conferring a favour.

Then they all subside into books and newspapers, except Maggie, who indulges in thoughts of *him*.

Is he looking on these same distant mountain peaks, that seem to draw one's vision ever away to them in their mysterious attitude, as if, Sphinx-like, they do nothing, divulge nothing, but invite and fascinate by their mystery, while yet repelling?

Is he thinking of her to the exclusion of other thoughts save as subordinate to them? She hopes so. Yet do men fill their minds with another as

women do? Hardly. And women, she supposes, differ. Capacities in them are so unequal. She and Edith, though so different in most things, are yet alike in this. Then, perhaps, all women who truly love are like this, receptive and retentive ever. Come what may, the love she has for him has taken too deep a root in her being to be ever driven out; and then she almost shudders. Why or wherefore comes the connection of ideas, she does not know, but a vision comes before her of a poor woman she used to go and see, who was slowly dying of cancer, and she talked much of her sufferings, dilating on it, and suffering over again, one would say, if sensitive. Part of the time she was attended by a quack, and she was constantly quoting what this wise woman said about rooting out, and, at last, that it was too deeply rooted before she began her treatment for her to make a cure. And in her mind Maggie connects a cancer with a blighted love. Poor things, how dreadful! Then she dismisses Mrs. Foord and the blighted ones from her mind, and falls again to speculating on what may be in this letter that she has in her pocket. She will write to him to-night, and make him laugh at Mr. Scott's little trick to show to himself and them that he is absolute. To see into the thoughts of another, what a wondrous power that would be! Just for five minutes she would like it. He might see into hers. How delightful if they could live in one of these picturesque cottages, and he never to go away far! She could be happy—so happy; but then men are different, and, of course,

a man should have a career. She had always felt that, and she would never spoil that for him. He doesn't seem much to care for soldiering, as he calls it ; but then, what else would suit him ? And so her fancy runs, picturing different careers for him, but placing him nowhere satisfactorily. Although he is her hero, and she worships blindly, she has enough sense to see that he could never set the Thames on fire, or even light a beacon-light with gathered wood. But she would not have him changed one bit, although she had always dreamt of loving a great man, one of the world's giants ; but by the side of him she would not look at an intellectual giant, not if he were as high as two Changs, one on the top of the other.

When a woman's thoughts are wholly pleasant, no day's journey would seem tedious, but all are not occupied aerially. They stop at every station, which is always a trial, even in going through a new and beautiful country, to those spoiled children of fortune who think that everything for them in this life, from trains to people, should be express.

Mrs. Scott, having no temptation to talk to her husband, only wakes up from her book as they stop at the different stations on their route. At Rolle she looks about her with more interest, the interest of her novel having gone down somewhat. She disengages her thoughts enough from it to indulge in one of her regular little panics about the luggage. It is a standing joke of her girls against her, that she never goes on a journey, no matter how short, without one of these panics. This time there is more than

the usual excuse for her. She remembers that all the luggage is addressed for Aix, while they are to stop at Geneva; to arrive there without luggage, and the next day Sunday, will be dreadful. She wonders why her husband has a half-smile on his face, he who is so ready to make or join in a fussation.

“You will inquire about it at the next station, John,” is her concluding remark.

Then Mr. Scott is able in his own person to exalt the superior forethought of his sex. He says in an offhand way that it will be all right; he has seen to that. After this he feels more comfortable in himself, and by the end of the journey he is expatiating on the superior comforts and many advantages of the Hôtel de la Paix, and has announced his intention, if possible, to secure the same set of rooms they had when they were there before. None of his party like Geneva; but Mrs. Scott, with her “peace-at-any-price” notions, which sometimes cause Edith to accuse her wrongfully of running with the hare and hunting with the hounds, tries to say something in agreement.

CHAPTER XV.

ONE would have thought that, to a portly, irascible man like Mr. Scott, a fortnight at Geneva in summer, when it is hot, glaring, and relaxing, would have been the slow martyrdom of the grill ; but it is unsafe to predict anything. Nothing is more sure than the unexpected.

Oddly enough, his temper thermometer was not once at blood heat, however near his body might have been to it. The rest fumed and fretted in a mild, helpless kind of storm-in-a-teacup way. They all loved the country, with the love of minds at peace with themselves. To sit for hours in a *dolce farniente* state in the garden at Beau Rivage had been Mrs. Scott's delight. To all of them the garden had been a pleasure ; and to feel that the lake was for *them*, not for business and bustle, as it seemed here, had been charming.

Now, at the caprice of an autocrat—for they can see no motive in it—all that is exchanged for dragging, straggling walks over this city that they had seen

before, and had not appreciated. Then this keeping trunks half packed, in the delusion always of perhaps starting the very next day to Aix, is exceedingly trying to all. This indecision is specially trying to Maggie and Captain Munro, who lingers on at Ouchy from day to day, thinking, "Surely that brute will have made up his mind to go away somewhere out of that hot hole by to-morrow."

Letters do not come to Maggie with the frequency she would like. She told him *poste restante* in her first letter, thinking there would only be one to come, and it never seems worth while to alter the address for probably one day ; besides, she does not wish Mr. Scott to know about the letters. Her visits to the post-office are difficult.

The girls are scarcely allowed to go out without Mr. Scott. They are much in the hotel, as it is too hot, Mr. Scott says, to be out in the sun. They have perfectly engraven on their memories the figure and features of the eccentric Duke of Brunswick, who left his fortune to the city, and who, with a gallant array of ancestors, guards his own mausoleum on the Quai du Mont Blanc. It is sufficiently new to attract numbers of the country-people, coming with baskets on their arms for shopping, who take a delight in going up the steps on to what may be intended to represent a portion of the duke's ancestral, terrestrial castle. All this may be seen at any minute of the day from the Scotts' salon, also Mont Blanc, clouds permitting ; yet they are not happy, not even content. Certainly they leave the duke one or two days in the week

to make excursions on the lake. One day they go to Vevay, and Mr. Price and Frank are taken, by appointment from the Ouchy pier. How Maggie gazes at every inch of Ouchy, palpitating at the thought of catching a glimpse of *him*, which she does not get, as he, having no idea of her neighbourhood, has gone into the interior.

There is not much time at Vevay, and that is mostly occupied by eating and drinking. To Mr. Scott the loveliest spot in creation would be chiefly remembered for its wine or feeding, good or bad. To-day the others would remember luncheon, because with Mr. Price and Frank it is a bright reunion, standing out in memory with distinctness from among the late exclusively family feeds.

They have spoken to no one at the Hôtel de la Paix. Nearly all are American birds of passage; who but Mr. Scott would spend an hour unnecessarily in Geneva at this season, with so many exquisite places scattered invitingly around? Mr. Price amuses them by telling how Meinhertz, to the evident disappointment of those Germans, had started for Aix on Tuesday. "I didn't tell him you might not have got there. He announced his intention to me in such an exceedingly self-sufficient manner, that I thought it would do him good to wait for you there."

Boats do not go and return to Vevay in one day from Geneva, and a very long, tedious railway journey is the end of that day's pleasure.

Another day they go to Evian, and there they have more time with Frank and his father. There is time

enough here for Mary and Frank to get into a hot argument, which ends in a quarrel, over Charles I. and Cromwell. Mary takes the tender, sentimental view of Charles's character cast over by pity at his end. She hates Cromwell. Frank exalts him into a godly, single-minded patriot and hero, and hotly denounces Charles as a weak, perjured man. So fiercely partisan were the two children that, when they had partly exhausted their invectives and themselves, they could not bring themselves to speak to each other for full ten minutes after.

Mr. Price scarcely gets any private talk with Maggie, for the very good reason she does not wish it. In the sight of the opposite shore, where John is, she has almost a dislike to good, agreeable Mr. Price, now that his attentions seem to threaten to be particular. She keeps as much as possible by Frank. Surely, she thinks, if anything would restrain a man, it would be his own child within earshot. He manages in course of conversation, however, to ask, in a manner and tone of voice she does not appreciate, if she agrees with the advice a friend gave Emerson, and which he took, "That in marriage one should seek a soul that came into the world about the same time as one's own. I think," he added, "that community of soul is more important and entirely independent of age. What say you?"

"I think," she said, "that marriage is like those Hamburg lotteries—always prizes to be drawn, but one never heard of any one having drawn one. What do you say Edith?"—raising her voice a little in her

answer to include Edith, who is standing a little apart, in the conversation.

Thus, by the help of mother-wit, Maggie ambles lightly over the soft ground a less delicate treading might have floundered in. She takes Edith's arm, that a third person may be kept near to ward off the looming declaration that she scents in the air.

At parting he had said, and ostensibly to Mr. and Mrs. Scott, "I am only waiting at Ouchy until you leave for Aix; then we go there, and very glad we shall be—eh, Frank?"

But he was reckoning without Mr. Scott, who has no intention of putting any more miles between himself and his beloved city, and who, at the end of a fortnight, in which his chief pleasure has been making up at night with dinner for what he had lost in the day, suddenly gives orders for return to Paris and home.

Mrs. Scott and Edith are glad, Maggie and Mary sorry, the former unutterably sorry. Indeed, so vexed is she that, in the hasty note that want of time obliges her to send to John to stop further letters and apprise him of this totally unexpected turn of plans, she is almost abrupt. She does not know it; she is vexed and hurried, and the sweetness and lovingness of tone to which he has become accustomed is almost entirely missing.

He in turn is exceedingly angry. He storms inwardly at Mr. Scott. He is not pleased with his letter, or anything, or any one for a long time after receiving it, and has a half-formed desire to pay Maggie out a little for her want of sympathy with him. Why, he

came out here to see her, and after being kept for a fortnight shilly-shallying, she starts off home with a few bare words of regret ; no consideration for him and his annoyance, evidently.

A man of many friends, he has not far to look for some. Just now an old friend, with two handsome daughters, are in Germany, and she has asked him to go home *via* Germany, and he will. How will she like that? She could hardly expect him to throw up his leave after that cool letter. He looks out a train to Bâle, where he will stop a day or two ; and he writes at once to Mrs. Millard, telling her when he thinks of being at Frankfort and where a letter will reach him there. No use writing to Maggie yet, he tells himself ; he does not know where to write.

When at Paris, where they stop only one night, Mr. Scott informs his wife that as, while that fellow is in Ware, it is out of the question, their going home, he has decided they shall go to Westgate-on-Sea ; that surely will be quiet enough to please her. He can go to and fro to town from there. Mary's lessons can go on. They none of them know Westgate and the do-nothing capabilities of the place, so don't shudder at the name, as they might have done had they known.

CHAPTER XVI.

A T flat, half-created, wholly uninteresting Westgate, whose only *raison d'être* is that it was an unproductive stretch of land, with sea on one side of it and the railway on the other, offering traffic facilities, and that some enterprising utilitarian mind said, "Here shall houses crop up, and there shall be work for the builder."

And the builder and the landowner have benefited more than any one else by Westgate. It has not the slightest claim to beauty. Our people who came to it from one of the loveliest nests of scenery in Europe compare them mentally and orally every day, for the two weary months they stagnate here, with the thick masses of seaweed washed up and left to decay.

If it were not for the accumulated seaweed, Westgate might be perhaps a child's paradise, with its stretch of sands between tides; but for people whose spade and sandheap days are past, and who have no duty towards little ones, it is altogether unreconcilable.

Lessons go on for Mary; that is a great boon to her

and Maggie, who has been in these early Westgate days slowly emerging from a thick fog of doubt and disquiet.

Letters to and from John have miscarried, and hers to him seem to have been touring on their own account through Germany, to his disgust and her misery.

As a rule in these days—for lucifer-match attentions to pillar-boxes are fortunately rare—letters come in due course without let or hindrance; therefore when a hitch does occur in the clock-work regularity of the machinery, it comes as a quite uncalculated misfortune.

In due course, which is slow—Love's messenger should fly—the letter complication rights itself, but not directly. In his first letter there is uncomfortable praise of the Miss Millards; but when direct explanations are possible, the lovers' epistolary correspondence resumes its usual satisfactory tone. He understands, and fumes at it, that they are to remain at Westgate till his regiment has left for India. Then he proposes she should go on a visit to her old schoolmistress. He will have to be in town looking out his Indian kit, and they can meet more than once surely. The time he must of course leave to her, but it must not be later than the first of September.

At once Maggie puts this delightful prospect of meeting him again in train. It is not difficult. Mrs. Scott quite falls into her suggestion, that at the end of August she shall go to spend a few days with Miss Gore. When that is settled, Westgate becomes tolerable. Edith, for her part, has been laboriously

employed over the working of a most elaborate and complicated pair of slippers, nothing less than the newest and most intricate slippers the School of Art could supply, satisfying her notion of what would be worthy of Cecil. She is not an accomplished or quick needlewoman, and her time, while she is at Westgate, is nearly filled by this work, that is to her a labour of love.

When they had complained of the dullness of the place, Mr. Scott had suggested their joining the tennis club; but as they did not know any one, and probably they might not care for the people they would meet, that proposal came to nothing, and the summer passed tennis-less for them. The one redeeming feature of their stay by the sea, but *not* due to the place, is their peacefulness as a household. Mr. Scott is much in town, to make up for lost time, and, having wider occupations just now, does not worry so much about little things. He is still anxious Fairbrace, who was put off joining them in Switzerland by their hasty return, should come to them; his wife suggests that he will not care to come to such an unfashionable place as this is.

“That’s nonsense,” he says. “I don’t see that this place isn’t as good as any other” (“Yes, to sleep in, perhaps,” she felt inclined to say, but did not); “and as to not being fashionable, I don’t see it at all. There are some very good people staying here, though you and the girls don’t think so, or you would have joined the tennis club. No one confounds this with Margate, and I wish you to write to him at once.”

“Very well, dear; but it is not likely Edith will think of him in the way you wish just now, when the other young fellow has not even left England; and I am sure I don’t know what we shall do with Fairbrace if he comes here. He will be weary of us and the place in a day. Now, at home in October, with the shooting and a dinner or two, we might make it pleasant to him. Don’t you think so?”

“You have all set your faces against this place, and I can’t think why. He will expect to hear further from us about our summer arrangements, and I wish you to write to him to-day. He can come to Oaklands for the shooting as well.” This is said while he is dressing preparatory to breakfast and the express.

When he is gone, it is all reported to Edith, and received with her usual feeling of resentment against her father.

“I wish I had some money of my own; I would take myself away, and not be subjected to this, until he comes back.”

“My dear child, don’t talk like that. What would you do on your own resources? I shall not write a very pressing note; at least, I can’t be uncivil, but I shall tell him what a stupid kind of place this is, and that there is ‘no one’ here, and then he can please himself about coming. I don’t think he will come.”

“And then father will ask to look at your note.”

“I will write it at once, and get it posted.”

“I don’t much think he will come myself. There are none of his sort here; no one to see him in attendance on ‘elegantly dressed’ ladies. He likes to be before

his world. I suppose they would forget him if he were not a constant reminder of his own existence."

"You are getting quite caustic, Edie ; the last thing I should have expected from you. I don't like it, dear."

"It is my father's fault ; he makes me bitter."

Mr. Fairbrace thinks he rather likes Edith Scott, but is not in love with her (it is an unsolved problem if he be in love with any one but himself) ; therefore he is not tempted, by Mrs. Scott's invitation, to judge of Westgate personally. He thinks that Oaklands in the shooting season, although he is not a sportsman by nature, only by conviction that it is the right thing to be, will suit him and his plans better than this dull little seaside place off Margate, which everybody knows is full at this season with fat Jewesses and 'Arrys ; and people might ask you if you had been to the Hall-by-the-sea. No, it won't do at all.

He makes profusely polite excuses to Mrs. Scott, in a long letter composed of titbits of gossip, something like those that used to get into some "society papers" before actions for libel taught the editors that they must not rely on the *on dits* sent to them for publication.

Every one bore the disappointment well. Mr. Scott had thought over what his wife had said about the uselessness of it, as the other young fellow had not yet left the country, and he can detect a little wisdom in that remark, although it came from his wife. Another thing helps him to see the undesirability of Fairbrace's coming here : the place is not attractive. This is Sunday No. 3 that has been spent in West-

gate, and if he were in the Palace of Truth, he would say, "and a wretched dull hole it is to spend Sunday in." The church is only a stone's throw from the house they occupy, so going to and fro to it does not make off with time in any appreciable degree. There are the same walks to be taken that seemed inviting when they were first taken in the spirit of exploration, with the contingency, perhaps, of being warned off some one's land as trespassers; but they invite him no longer. No one in their senses, if in search of the picturesque, would tramp the dusty, chalky, winding, greenless high-road that leads past a few hopelessly uninteresting houses Margate-wards. He shudders at the glare everywhere on this hot Sunday in August. If it were not for getting an appetite for luncheon, he would not stir out of the house, but as that must be considered, he goes down to the parade by the sea, pleasant enough when the water laps the side with a plashing cool sound. To-day, at noon, the tide is low, very low, and the Parade has no charm.

They soon go back to the house; but there is nothing to be done there. There is no pleasure in projecting improvements in a place you only occupy for two months, so Mr. Scott is cut off from that method of using up some part of his day of rest. Mary coaxes him to take a stroll with her as far as Dert de Lion, when the sun has lost a little of its power; but no ruins or fragments of architecture interest him. He likes everything modern and new-looking; his daughter, anything quaint or ancient.

While they are walking together, if there is anything she wants of her father, that is the time she chooses for her request; but the one she makes to-day is unheard of, her father tells her directly he hears it. But that is a way of his, and she does not entirely despair yet. Frank and his father have seen the continent of Europe, and are on the point of coming to England, and she would so like Frank to see Oaklands. Would her father be such a dear as to let them go home when they have been here another week? A month, surely, is long enough for Westgate; besides—and she lowers her voice sadly, and her hand steals coaxingly into his—she wants *so much*, more than anything in the world, to see the poor boy who caught cold through her and is still an invalid. “I don’t *say* much about him,” she adds, “but I *think* of him much.”

To do Mr. Scott justice, if he could have pleased his daughter in this, he would. He actually condescends to explain, to take her into his confidence, as it were, in the matter.

“It can’t be done, child. I am sorry, as sorry as you, that we can’t go home. You don’t suppose it’s any pleasure to me to go all the way to town and back from here every day, and put up with inferior cooking, all at a great expense, or that I should do it if we *could* go home? Don’t mention it to your sister—at least, I don’t care; let her know what an annoyance this folly of hers is to me—but the fact is, we can’t go back to Oaklands till that young fool Fielding and his regiment have left Ware, which

will be in another month, I hear. Then we will go home, and Mr. Price and Frank shall come, and it will be a long time before we leave it again, depend upon it."

Mary is disappointed, although she had not felt very sanguine of success. She manages, however, before their walk is ended, to extract a promise that Mr. Price and Frank shall be at once asked to come down to Westgate while Miss M'Arthur is away, because she will miss her so dreadfully when she is gone. And what fun to ask Agatha! Mr. Price fancies he would not like her, but he would.

That off her mind, she flits about gathering poppies, ox-eyed daisies, and grasses, and she coaxes her father to let her put just one or two in his coat. He stands out against poppies, but at last admits a marguerite. She finds a pin, and he has to stop to have his decoration pinned securely on. "There!" she says, going back a step to look at him critically, "that looks nice for entering the town, or whatever you call it. It never seems like a town to me, and it isn't an overgrown village, because there isn't a genuine cottage in it. But never mind that now. I was going to remark, that if I were a fascinating stranger at a bazaar, instead of your own daughter, you would give a shilling for that with your choicest smile, and a whole guinea—though people don't spend their guineas now; a sovereign I mean—if a kiss went with it, sir."

The father's fancy is tickled. "I declare," he says, feeling in his pocket for a coin of some sort, "that

if you wheedled money out of strangers at a bazaar as you do out of me, you would be invaluable at them." He offers her a shilling. "Will that do, puss?"

"Well, as you ask me, sir, I expect *you* don't think a shilling *enough* for two large mar——. No, why should I call this wild English daisy by a foreign name? I am much too patriotic, like my father, to approve of a French invasion, but the money—— I don't think—do you?—that half a crown is too much for *two* daisies and a half. I get so hungry between this cook and the sea-air that it will all have been exchanged into confectioners' buns and tarts before half the week is out. So, you see, as you do provision me when I eat in the house, it is only giving you credit for wishing to pay entirely for my food when I hint at half a crown."

Of course she gets her half-crown, her father making his usual remark, but good-temperedly enough, as it is to his favourite daughter. Children seem to think their fathers are all money, a sort of bank that they can draw on at any time and to any amount. "You don't know the value of money."

"Well, you see, dear, you are the only money establishment where your children have credit. Pay something to my account at Brown and Co.'s—isn't that the right term?—and then I won't ask you to give me your own pocket-money. When I write a cheque, it will be the proudest moment of my life;" and she gives her head a slight toss back to suit action to words.

“You will have to wait for the ‘proudest moment in your life,’ child, till you are of age.”

“What, shall I have money of my own then?”

Mr. Scott frowns and coughs to hide a little passing confusion, and says hurriedly, and in a different tone to that he has lately used, “Children can’t—minors, I mean, can’t write cheques. Of course, I don’t suppose you will write a cheque till I am dead or you are married. Don’t, dear; that spoils these flowers to me.”

She gives his hand a little squeeze; more demonstration is not possible, as those of their Westgate neighbours not in church may be observing them. The taking observation of neighbours is the one deadly lively amusement of the place.

CHAPTER XVII.

IT is high noon at Westgate, but it is noon tempered by a thin haze of clouds, interposed between the sun and Westgate-on-the-Sands. It is low tide, and every one is on the sands this morning ; but they are wide and broad, and the children dotted about at play, and their seniors reading, working, or strolling about, look nearly lost upon them—waifs of humanity on the vast battle-ground of the ocean. The bathing machine in use seems quite a dangerous distance from the shore, should help be needed ; and mermaiden antics are no part to-day of Westgate morning amusement, save to those with glasses.

The sands are firm and pleasant, and Mrs. Scott, her daughters, and Miss M'Arthur have come out to walk on them before lunch.

It is a day or two before the visit of the Prices to Westgate and the governess' departure for London. Mrs. Scott has told the girls that she has something to say to Miss M'Arthur, and they have taken themselves off together pretty amicably.

Maggie wonders what is coming.

Mrs. Scott begins by taking out her purse. "I want you," she says, "to buy a present for Miss Gore from me." She takes a five-pound note out and hands it to Miss M'Arthur. I know the dear old soul likes a nice black dress, and, in the way you would manage it, would not feel offended at my giving it to her. Take her with you to choose it; she loves shopping as much as any woman, and with her small means seldom gets the gratification of buying something nice for herself."

Miss M'Arthur promises to do as Mrs. Scott wishes. "I shall enjoy it too," she says. "I remember vividly the days when she used to take me with her, when she bought my poor dresses; how she used to look at the stuffs, and feel them, and ponder on them, till I used to wonder at the patience of the shopman; only that she had such a pleasant way with her. No one, unless quite twisted in disposition, but would have sympathized in her evident enjoyment, and would have been amused at her feeling of importance. I am not sure that this new dress will get bought in the week, though."

"Then I am afraid," said Mrs. Scott, laughing at the picture drawn of Miss Gore, "that you won't bless me for the task I have given you."

"I think it is awfully good of you, and I shall enjoy going with her. She will ask advice constantly, but won't attach any importance to it. I had not thought of it before, Mrs. Scott, but do you think I ought not to stay there, because of the additional expense, I mean?"

“That will be all right; I have given directions for a hamper to be sent from Oaklands. But how do you feel about being away all the while the Prices are here? It is not my arrangement at all. Mary and her father managed it. I should have arranged differently if I had had a voice in the matter.”

“I think it a very good arrangement. Mary would not have done any lessons with the boy here.”

“Oh, I didn’t mean that, and I am sure Mr. Price will be sadly disappointed. Do you know, Miss M’Arthur”—she looks curiously at her, and Maggie’s colour comes—“I fancied at Ouchy that he was very much interested in you, and that opportunities of meeting more would have brought it on—you know what I mean. I think he would like to ask you to go back to America. Of course we should all be awfully sorry to lose you, and I don’t know what Mary would do. Still I feel you have no mother, no real home; although,” she adds hastily, seeing a pained look on Maggie’s face, “you have always a home with us. Still I feel I ought to point out to you that in keeping away all the week you are losing a good chance. You don’t like that term, I see. But, understand me, I don’t mean from a money point of view; but he is a good man, I am sure, and would make a good husband, which is a great thing. Why should you not come back just a day even before he leaves? They may be able to come to Oaklands, but it is uncertain, and I really think you will be standing in your own light if you do not come back before they leave.”

“You are awfully good to me, Mrs. Scott,” says Maggie, touched by her evident wish to be of service to her, “but I will be quite open with you about this. I had fancied something the same thing myself, and am really glad to be going away now on that account. I do like him exceedingly, but I *could not* marry him.”

“I hardly thought you were in love with him—that said love gets terribly in the way sometimes, and at others stays away when it is wanted, it seems to me—but won’t you think over what I have said? I suppose it is of no use my suggesting that you should talk to Miss Gore about it, and keep open your coming back till after that. I am sure I am right about it, and if you come back he will ask you to marry him.”

“Which I do not wish him to do. I have quite made up my mind; it would be ‘No, no, no,’ however many times he might ask me. I will never marry a man unless I love him beyond all the world.”

Maggie is at this moment, with her rapt look, her heightened colour and enthusiasm, an unexpected revelation to Mrs. Scott, who somehow, although she is of a romantic nature, had got a half-defined notion that governesses could hardly afford themselves that creed; at least, not as a rule of action.

“If you feel like that,” she said, “perhaps you had better stay away the week, as arranged; but although I am exceedingly glad for our sake that we are not to lose you, still I can’t help thinking that it is a ‘pity you can’t see your way to being Mrs. Price. Three-

fourths of the matches made have not so much chance of being happy, or turning out fairly well, as this would." She can't help feeling a little astonished when she comes to think of it. She doesn't understand it. "You don't object to his being a widower, do you? One child, and that a son, is nothing."

"Indeed, no ; it is not that at all. Don't you think, Mrs. Scott, that if Agatha were here Mr. Price would be amused, and not miss me?" she asks, anxious to turn the subject.

Mrs. Scott smiles. "You think I am a match-maker, I see. I am not that exactly, but when I see a man who is really worthy unmarried, in the interest of my sex I wish to find him a wife. Perhaps I will ask Agatha—she will make the time pass better for him ; she is so bright, but I am sure he will be disappointed. I like people to enjoy themselves when they come to us. I shall hint to Mary to tell Frank you won't be here ; then he will know what to expect before he comes."

On Saturday, a day or two after this conversation, Maggie is *en route* by the early express for Victoria Station, where she is to meet Captain Munro, after a separation of nearly two months. She is glad not to have, as she half feared, Mr. Scott's society on the journey. He has stayed down to welcome Mr. Price to-day. The dreariness of two days with nothing to do has driven him to town on the other Saturdays. It has been arranged by letter that Maggie was to tell Miss Gore she would be at her house a little before nine o'clock in the evening, so that she need know

nothing of this first meeting. She is to meet him again the day she leaves."

"If I can get a day between—but I have had a good spell of leave lately, and so many of ours are away—I shall ask you, if you can manage, to give me a day; but you will quite understand—won't you, dear?—if I can't manage it," he had said in his letter.

The luggage is booked, and Maggie has gone to her wait-till-called-for post in the ladies' waiting-room at the Victoria Station.

There she has to wait what seems to her a long time. She has seated herself favourably for watching the door, and many times it opens, and heads are sometimes furtively popped in, while a glance sweeps round for the deposit. Bolder men stand revealed in the doorway while they make their search, but the head only is the most popular appearance Maggie finds. She wonders which are lovers, which husbands or brothers that come there; and she looks round at those who are waiting, guessing a little about them. Then, as the minutes pass, she feels disquieted. Is this the right waiting-room? She takes out her last little note of instructions. "Waiting-room, ladies, main line." Yes this must be right. She puts it by and takes to watching the door again. Presently it is slowly, very slowly opening, and then, in a languid way, a face with a solemn expression on it just shows itself in the doorway. She smiles her glad recognition and goes at once to him.

He is standing with the door in his hand, looking hot and not very pleased, she thinks. A vague

feeling of disappointment takes the place of all her bright picturing ; but it soon vanishes when she finds that he is really feeling so dreadfully annoyed at having kept her waiting, that he can't recover his equanimity.

"Those fools at the stores kept me waiting about such a time. I wish I could report them. It is shameful ; they ought to have more hands to wait upon people. I wouldn't have waited, dear, only you know I have driven off ordering some of the things I must have for India quite long enough as it is ; and they were so slow and inattentive, I haven't ordered all the things I ought this morning. I went there quite early too, so that I might get here in time."

"It is vexing," says Maggie, soothingly. "But can't you go now and see about some of the things ? Don't mind me ; I can amuse myself here till you come back, or I can come with you, if you like. Could I help you there ?"

"Oh, would you, dearie ? Are you *sure* you wouldn't mind coming with me to the stores ? You could help me, you know ; help me to choose some things."

Delightful, Maggie thinks, to help him ; and off they start, she in high good-humour, he calmed on the surface, which disguises the ground swell from the storm.

At the "Army and Navy" they are in all the hurly-burly of a huge machine at its highest working pressure. It is a short day, and the assistants, never overpoweringly attentive, would evidently rather not

attend to you at all this morning, for fear of being kept in. There is hurry and confusion all round, on the part principally of the customers.

Maggie helps him to choose handkerchiefs and many other things. While he has left her at that department to pay for them, she buys, on her own account, some handkerchiefs to embroider his monogram on.

Then he takes her up a story to the comparatively deserted department for military tailoring and accoutrements. "Those badges were an awful bother," he explains to her, "when the regiments had to adopt one badge, you know. Each wanted their own to be most prominent, and there were no end of consultations over them, and a lot of correspondence, and then they had to be approved by the authorities. It was a great bother. Do you like ours?" showing it to her.

She expresses her approval. "Which way are we going now? Portmanteau Place?" she asks.

"Nowhere else here to-day. We have been here long enough bothering about these stupid things; I want to hear about you and what you have been doing. But tell me first," he says, "what is the *latest* time for you to arrive at your friend's to-night?"

"I must not be a minute later than nine."

"Very well. I looked out some trains while I was at breakfast this morning, so you see how busy I have been, and I thought that if you liked Kew, we could go there; but we had better, to save time, get some lunch here, and then we will dine at Kew, and I will

see you within a street of Miss Gore's by nine o'clock. Will that do, dear?"

"That will be delightful," Maggie answers. "I want to see Kew and Miss North's paintings. You like paintings, don't you?"

"Yes, when I've time for them." She smiled. "But on a day like this I think sitting in the open preferable. Those places are lighted at the top usually, and they are hot."

They have hurried lunch to catch the train, but when they have arrived at the platform, Captain Munro seems in no hurry to get into it, but walks all the way past the carriages. Finally, seeing some one in the second carriage, he comes back a little and gazes about, and they are only just seated when the train is signalled to start.

"Why didn't you take the first carriage?" asks Maggie.

"Because I didn't want people getting in after we were seated. We have so much to say to each other after two months' absence, and with I don't know how many months before us in which we shan't meet, child."

"Yes, and I want to hear about those handsome girls—those Miss Millards."

But the station and the signal boxes are past, and he puts his arm round her and draws her to him. "Never mind those girls," he said; "I have pretty well forgotten what they are like."

And until the train seemed approaching at the next station, which happens all too soon—the stations are

many on the road to Kew—they forget to talk of the Miss Millards.

With the quickness of the Westinghouse brake, they pull themselves into propriety attitudes as the train draws up to the platform.

“Tell me about those girls,” she says. “That youngest one, who tried to teach you German—she must have been very fascinating to induce you to learn anything in your holidays.”

He made a grimace like a child at the sight of its physic. “Didn’t I tell you” (he knew he didn’t) “that she was a child, a mere child?”

“No, you certainly did not. I have your letters. You were having a very *pleasant* time. Mrs. Millard and her daughters—two uncommonly handsome daughters—were most civil and kind to you; and the youngest—by far the nicer of the two, you thought—was teaching you German. Sir, we all know what that means.”

“But she was a child, I tell you.”

“Yes, an infant, under twenty-one, I suppose?”

He can’t help smiling at Maggie’s ready answer. “Yes, she was under twenty-one,” he says. Then, as the train gets into motion, his arm comes stealing round her; but she sits bolt upright now, stiffened by the youngest Miss Millard.

He does not withdraw his arm. He gives her a little shake with it. “You silly child! she was only thirteen; and this journey is all too short for wrangling.”

But Maggie is not to be appeased so easily. She

remembers the misery that letter caused her. It was wicked of him to play her such a trick. She still tries to keep her unyielding attitude. "I have not had time to tell you," she says in an indifferent tone, "that the Prices are going to Westgate, and that Mrs. Scott wishes me to go back before Saturday on their account."

Now it is his turn to look indignant, and he does. His arm drops from her, and soon his hand has taken up his dog-skin glove, and is flipping it savagely against his own knee.

"You are going, I suppose?" he growls out from under his moustache.

"Mrs. Scott said the last thing to me, 'Write to tell us how you get up, and when you come back. The Prices will be so disappointed if they don't see you.'"

She waits for a remark, but none comes. The glove flicks the knee more savagely than before.

She steals a glance at him under her long lashes. He is staring morosely out of the window, looking a picture of sulky discontent.

"Won't you hurt your knee?" she asks demurely.

No answer. They both remain mute. She wonders which will speak first. Steals another glance at his half-averted face, and is convinced that he won't; then she must. But what shall she say? It would be easier if she were opposite to him.

Just as the train jerks to a standstill, she gets up, and appears to be going to get out. He turns quickly round to look at her. She has trouble to conceal

a smile. She knows what he is thinking she will do. She stands in front of him, looking out of the door, as if undecided, until the train moves off; then she drops into the seat opposite to him and says, "How many stations before Kew?"

"Three or four," he says, not raising his eyes to hers, but constrained by politeness to answer a direct question.

"This doesn't come under the head of wrangling. There is time for this, I suppose?" she says, looking up at him with what she intends to be a conciliatory smile.

He does not respond to the remark.

"John," she says decisively—it is the first time she has called him John, and he looks at her now full in the face, as she intended—"you made me *miserable* over that child of thirteen, intentionally, I believe, and you can't take a little joke from me. What I told you was perfectly true about Mrs. Scott wishing me to be back to see the Prices, the father. I don't prevaricate; but if you had shown any interest in the conclusion of the subject, I would have told you that I said, 'I will make no change in my plans, thank you, but come back by the last train on Saturday night.'"

"John" is a very fair man. There was a true ring about his name as she used it for the first time in appeal to him that moved him. When her tones were tragically pathetic in "you made me miserable," he was more than half melted; at "intentionally," his conscience kicked; and by the time she had finished

her little speech, he could have gone down on his knees if his pardon depended on it.

The rest of the journey to Kew is occupied in the reconciliation, retrospective and present. Everything explained amidst wooing and cooing and stoppages, when they talked quite rationally, and as if they were acquaintances, almost wondering at themselves the while ; and then taking up the cooing with the speed of the train when it cleared the station. If the journey to Kew was too short for wrangling in, they most certainly found it all too short for that and the after-glow of reconciliation.

CHAPTER XVIII.

K EW is new to Maggie, and seems to her altogether charming. I won't say that the after-glow of the reconciliation beautified the railway station, but the bridge and the river, and even the little tea gardens by the river, and the green with its venerable church, all looked charming to her, and all fitted into her mood, and made an indelible picture in her mind. Then when they entered the gardens, just the one touch of humour came, to make the *chiaroscuro* of to-day's picture perfect. Being Saturday, there are a good many people seeking admission to the grounds. The custodians are lynx-eyed in enforcing the rule that sundry things, such as baskets, certain to contain provisions and any quantity of paper to be left strewn on the well-kept sward, and cricket bats, etc., etc., shall not be admitted.

A party of choir boys, probably, are waiting with a personable-looking parson, a man of chest and presence, who carries his head boldly, to pass muster of the keeper. He looks them up and down, and nothing suspicious being detected, they pass slowly on, Captain Munro just behind them with Maggie.

“How close those boys keep together,” she remarks. “They don’t run about and enjoy themselves like boys.”

“Yes, I have noticed that. One or two cripples, I fancy.”

When the group of boys are well out of sight of the lodge, they break into uncontrollable laughter.

“It will serve you boys right if you are caught,” says Parson Head-in-the-air:

“He does not look one of those meek fellows who skulk about and look as if hearty laughter were a sin,” remarks Captain Munro. “I can’t stand those fellows, and they are every bit as bad as any one else, when you find them out.”

“Look,” says Maggie.

And then the joke is revealed. Two of the boys had brought their cricket bats with them to Kew, in view of cricket on the green. Whether it was fear of the keepers playing with them, or losing them, or giving them up to some other boys, I know not; but to avoid either or all of these contingencies, the two bats had been concealed up the legs of the two devoted owners’, or joint owners’, or perhaps the first boys’-to-go-to-the-wicket trousers; and now they, tired of the slow wooden-leg movement, are trying their best to foist them on their companions, who skip away and are up to all conceivable boys’ antics.

Then when this has gone on long enough, Head-in-the-air speaks again with his rather stern voice of authority. “You boys will find in a minute to your cost that those bats will be forfeited. As you have

concocted this between you, you must all do penance equally for your foolish trick. Here"—naming two boys—"you take the bats now for five minutes." He takes out his watch, and the two boys meekly take up their burdens.

"That parson's a martinet. I don't dislike that fellow," says Munro, as they turn off from the group.

"Is that high praise, dear?" asks Maggie. "Would you say you didn't dislike me, for instance, if you were asked about me?"

"Perhaps I might not say that much," he says, smiling; "it would depend on who asked me. I don't choose to answer impertinent questions, and I let people see it."

"But Fielding, for instance, he knows me, and he might chance to say—you know, it's not quite impossible—'That Miss M'Arthur isn't a bad sort,' or, 'That little governess'—men like to talk in that condescending way, I have noticed—'is rather a nice little girl;' and then I picture your saying to him, 'Ye-as, she's not bad.' Why do you drawl, dear, sometimes? with strangers especially you do, I have noticed."

"It's such a bother to talk to some people, and if one encouraged those people they would never leave one any peace. But I don't with you, child, do I? You ought not to mind my doing it with other women."

"Did you learn German so?"

"Hush; we won't talk about that again, will we?"

"No. Tell me about Cecil now. There is an idea

that Agatha may be induced to go to Westgate, for a day or two this week. It isn't decided. She does not much like to leave her mother. Won't Edith question her if she goes? But tell me about him."

"What shall I tell you? Won't it be better for you to ask questions?"

"That you may just say 'Yes' or 'No.' That is lazy. But I don't mind. I dare say I shall hear more that way."

"Well, you haven't asked anything yet."

"I am wondering where I shall begin. Did he ask many questions about seeing us in Switzerland?"

"Yes; but there was scarcely anything I could tell, you know. I only saw his Edith once, you know, and you twice, to tell him."

"And did he want to know just how she was looking?"

"Yes; but I couldn't tell him half enough. I said she looked very well and—nice."

"And did he ask how Mr. Scott was behaving?"

"Yes, of course he asked that."

"And what did you say?"

"Oh, I found plenty to say there. Quite eloquent, I assure you. We did abuse old Scott between us, depend upon it."

"And Cecil is quite as much in love as ever?"

"He seems so."

"Can't you say, 'Yes, he is,' in a decisive tone, as if you believed it? You almost take away his character for constancy by the way you say that! Don't men ever believe in each other?"

"I think I could manage it to oblige you, if we were to sit down—shall we, here?"

"Yes, if you like; but we are to see Miss North's paintings, are we not?"

"Certainly, as you wish it. I will ask the way again presently. Cecil and Agatha Browne are great friends, you know. You should ask her about him."

"Yes; she tells us without asking. That reminds me—has your regimental friend got back yet? I am not jealous of her, you know."

"She's in town."

"And you will go to see her?"

"If I had had time, I should have gone. She will know I am in town to-day, from her husband—some men talk so!—but of course I am busy to-day, very busy. What a happy family we shall be if we get sent to some little station where we shall run over each other! But I hope to goodness I shall be out of it before then."

"I hope so, dear. Where do you go first? You will see a lot of each other, and the princesses, you know, on the voyage. One of you will have proposed to Plain before the voyage is over."

"We shall all be sick of each other in a week, or before that. We go to Calcutta. What a horrible bore it is! I wish I wasn't going."

"So do I"—with a sigh.

"You will stay with the Scotts till I come back? He doesn't really worry you much in an ordinary way, does he, child? You think you can put up with him?"

“Oh yes ; when one feels it isn't for always, one doesn't mind so much.”

And in such talk—every word and pause full of meaning to them—the afternoon runs on.

They see the pictures. Maggie is delighted with them. “How I should like to see every place!” she says. “You may see some, perhaps ; that thought will console you.”

“I know I shall hate the gorgeous East. But what a lot of work there is in all these ! She is never still except when she is painting, I should say. She seems to have been everywhere.”

“And is still going. It is a magnificent gift ; and I am as proud of Miss North as she must be of these.”

“She must be one of those awfully clever, strong-minded women to go globe-trotting like this,” he remarks, when they have come to an end of their inspection.

Maggie has been, and is, in a state of wonder, admiration, and longing to see such exquisite things and places for herself ; but has not stopped long anywhere, from a feeling that he is only looking at the pictures to please her, and is not enjoying them as she is.

“She must be clever, and nice too,” she answers. “Don't you like clever women ? your tone sounded doubtful, as if you did not. You see, I am getting to know you quite well already ; and I criticise so freely, don't I ? But it is so nice to me, who am expected to be careful when I am at the Scotts' as to what I say.”

"*You* may say what you like to me ; and I want you to know me well. You are quite right too. I don't care for clever women ; do you ?"—said in his most insinuating manner, as he looks into her face.

She is standing for a moment at the top of the flight of steps leading up to the gallery, to take the extended view of the gardens her position gives her. He is just a step lower, and is looking round at her, waiting.

"I like Agatha, and she is clever. I don't know another clever woman. But"—with a little deprecatory smile—"I should like to be clever myself, immensely."

"Don't wish that, child ;" and he shakes his head at her, with a comical look of doubt on his face. "You are quite clever enough. I like you just as you are—lovable. I could never care for museums and those places, you know." And he looks as much as to say, "Please don't expect it of me."

They stroll next to the large tropical house, because Maggie desires to see it. After that he says, "I vote we do no more sightseeing to-day ; and we shan't get any dinner if we stay here too long. I have to see that you are deposited punctually at Miss Gore's at nine. I am afraid it wouldn't look well for you to arrive later, would it ?"

When they leave the gardens, they have their dinner at an old-fashioned hotel overlooking the green. It is all delightful to Maggie, from the way in which he consults as to what they shall have for dinner to the eating of the same dinner by his side. It is an old-

fashioned place in everything. The furniture is none of it under fifty years of age, and that is not an age of beauty.

They sit in the bay-window while the cloth is being laid, a little fagged with their day's exertion ; at least Maggie is, and she is quietly enjoying the sense of rest, and even the murmur of voices from the men and boys at play on the green. She closes her eyes for a moment in thought-laden rest. She feels a hand on hers.

"You are tired, child. I ought not to have let you do so much walking, although you did want to see everything."

"I am not too tired, dear," she answers ; "only just the right degree of tiredness, without which one can't appreciate rest."

"But you look fagged. I wish they would bring dinner ; that will set you up."

"I am so afraid you may take a prejudice against me for being knowing, which is much worse, sir, than being a clever woman, I assure you," she answers, rousing herself to talk, that he may not worry about her. "But medical authorities—I won't quote names to frighten you—say that you should rest before taking a heavy meal, when you are tired."

"I think I remember hearing something about it ; and didn't one fellow say two raisins possessed wonderful pick-me-up powers ? I don't suppose any one has ever tried it."

Whether the hotel was full, or whether the waiter thought himself altogether *de trop* at a *tête-à-tête* din-

ner was not known, but he certainly stayed away so long between rendering his services, that at last, with the delay of getting the bill and the change, they have to hurry to the station, Captain Munro's impatient bullying making no visible impression on the case-hardened, smug-looking old waiter, who got his tip after all, though, as Captain Munro said, "the fool of a man did *not* deserve it."

Then there was more train, and the luggage to be recovered ; and train again for a short distance, till Wandsworth is reached. And there would have been a journey together in a growler had not the Wandsworth cabby, blue-red of face, when asked the distance to Melton Road, said, "Jest by here, sir."

"I'll shut the door." So cabby discreetly mounts his box, and there is a farewell inside his cab, and then the door is shut. But Captain Munro leans over it and says, "Write me a *long* letter to-morrow, and tell me if you think you can give me Wednesday afternoon. But I am not dead-sure if I shall be able to get away yet."

Cabby looks round—for instructions, of course. Cabbies never are inquisitive. Men and women are fares, good or bad, according to their liberality.

A last word at the window—a last hurried kiss.

"All right," says Captain Munro, stepping back ; and the day for Maggie is ended.

A perfect day was that day at Kew, one of the days in our life marked out by circumstances as never to be forgotten. Perfect harmony succeeding a painful discord, there was not the monotony of unison.

Each voice in the duet has its part, and when an untrained ear might fear discord, it is but a variation that will work presently into a passage of pure unison. As an accompaniment to the duet is a wail of the coming separation, the strings of love and trust have soon to bear a long strain—the strain of time and distance, and the change time works in all. Parting—ah yes! But now to enjoy, if possible, with all the intensity with which one would enjoy moments to be followed by their grave. And when are moments filled with such perfect ecstatic bliss as when they are filled with love? What else, while it lasts, so transforms and beatifies mortals as this subtle elixir—Love?

CHAPTER XIX.

MISS GORE and her late partner in school-keeping, Miss Thompson, live together in a tiny little house in a labyrinth of streets of little houses, all remarkable for the abnormal size of the one ground-floor window, a bay, and for the ornaments displayed on it. The architect—I suppose even the smallest houses have had an architect—seems to have concentrated all his inventive powers on the development of this particular feature, with the result of its appearing to have outgrown the house of which it seems a half. In truth, this bay window is a projection of nearly the whole of one side of the drawing-room, of which it increases the size one-fourth.

If it be other than a state-room in an establishment where state-rooms are seldom used, it must be a very public room, a sun-trap in summer, and uncomfortably draughty and cold in winter. The owner of one of these houses would do well to impress early on his boys the proverb relating to glass houses.

There is usually much ornamental stucco or stonework used in the beautifying of these pretentious little domiciles. Fortunately one design is usually

confined to one street, or where would the owners be in those fogs that are now surely extending their arms to enfold the suburbs in their murky, choking embrace? On some houses the ornamental design is in low relief, or rather graven in stucco, in that case the embellishment is freely used; in others, a rougher earlier style is employed, smooth and rough blocks of stone alternate in the construction of the drawing-room window ornamentation; and then changes are rung from these different styles. A safe rule for the date of these little mushroom abodes is the size of this abnormal window—the bigger the window the newer the street. To name this nest of little streets after the celebrated poets of former ages had been a happy thought of some one, and side by side here we find Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton.

In Milton Street, in one of the bay-window drawing-rooms, the furniture of which consists of a couch, easy-chair, and six other chairs covered in faded emerald green damask, a piano, a small round table strewn thickly with books, photographs in frames, and innumerable ornaments—the top of the piano and the mantel-board are covered with them, presentations mostly from pupils of lang syne—Maggie spends Sunday afternoon, with the two elderly ladies whose guest she is.

It is a warm, drowsy afternoon. Round, comfortable-looking Miss Gore is forgetting herself—her term for napping—in the one easy-chair. Sitting very upright, with a quite unwinking alertness, Miss Thompson is catechizing Maggie. She asks innu-

merable questions about every member of the Scott family, and every detail of the household. She is even particular in her inquiries about the servants, their duties and failings, all of which is quite uninteresting to the cross-examined—she knows that idle curiosity prompts all these questions. Miss Thompson has at most seen Mrs. Scott twice, and cannot have any of the affectionate interest in her and her family that Miss Gore, who was her governess almost up to the time of her marriage, has. Besides, Maggie knows she will have again to go through all this questioning and more as soon as Miss Gore is awake, and probably the inquisition will not be over until tea-time, followed by church; and she has letters she wishes so much to write.

She has placed her writing-case on the top of the books on the table, and drawn her chair to it, but the hint has not been taken; and she sits there, not beginning any talk herself, waiting to take advantage of the very first symptoms Miss Thompson shows of flagging. But she shows none. At the end of one whole weary hour she is as bright and stiff and eager to ask questions as at the beginning.

Miss Thompson is a beauty personage, of the perfectly arranged arm's-length order. She has been a pattern of deportment and propriety to a large school for many years, and she has still a studied artificial manner, as if posing to her public, that she never loses. Her hair is perfectly white, and arranged with mathematical precision on her brow, and low enough at the side to fill in the failing contour of her cheeks.

Her complexion is still soft and fresh. Her teeth and mouth still under control—her mouth well may be as it is always, firmly closed. Her eyes are undimmed. With all these beauty attributes, her features, though good, are always too evidently arranged and kept on beauty lines to give one the pleasant sense of satisfaction to be derived from just a look at Miss Gore's happy, homely face.

"Surely she has nearly finished her questioning," thinks her poor victim, feeling that she has given a complete inventory of Oakland's live and dead stock, and not knowing what other information can be asked of her. But she has reckoned rashly. Miss Thompson is as great at talking and relating her experience as she is at questioning. She soon gets into a flow of retrospection, flattering to her own sense of importance, and at the same time, as she thinks, likely to be useful to her young companion.

"Ah!" she says with a sigh and a contemptuous look at the room and its green chairs, "I might, indeed, we both"—and she glances at the unconscious partner—"might have been presiding over establishments like Oaklands, if we had not thrown our opportunities recklessly away. But so it is with the young; they never know when the tide is at the flood. See what we have come down to;" and again she looks at the offending chairs, which certainly are not calculated to please an educated eye.

"But I thought," said Maggie, "that you and Miss Gore lost your money by Turkish bonds?"

"My dear child"—and Miss Thompson straightens

herself out of an upright, and looks with more disdain if possible than before on her surroundings—"we lost most of the money we *made* by the school that way; but I was speaking of a time when I little thought of being obliged to keep a school, and when she"—looking at Miss Gore and lowering her voice mysteriously—"might have been if she had liked, and he had not died when he did, Mrs. Scott's step-mother. Have you never heard that?"

At this moment, whether Miss Gore's forgetfulness left her naturally or was driven away by the lowering of the murmur that mingled with her dreams, I know not; but she awoke with a surprised, apologetic air, as of saying "Is it possible that I have been to sleep?" and Miss Thompson's confidences concerning her had to be retained for a future occasion.

"I must have forgotten myself, I think;" and good-tempered Miss Gore, who has awoke with a smile on her face, gets up from her chair with a busy air, as of general protest against sleepiness. "And how have you two been amused?" she asks, putting her fat, broad little hand caressingly on Maggie's shoulder. "I heard you talking away to each other while I was closing my eyes."

As Maggie does not hasten to answer, not knowing how to reconcile truth and politeness, Miss Thompson remarks that they have had a very pleasant talk together.

"And now, dear," says the plump little personage, seating herself on one of the high green chairs in the window, opposite her partner, "I want you to tell me

everything. Tell me about the Swiss tour ; that must have been delightful. But it was some love-affair of Edith's was it not, that made you leave England so early in the summer ? Tell us, dear, about that ;" and she prepares herself to listen with a look of almost excited enjoyment on her face.

These two more than middle-aged women, whose duty through the greater part of their lives has been to frown down and nip all budding sentiment in their pupils, actually take more delight in listening to a tale of romantic attachment than to any other form of gossip, although one of them, Miss Thompson, is quite awake to the advantages of an establishment like Oaklands, and in a broad way of money *versus* love. Still she thinks there are a few fortunate beings in the world who can afford to be romantic, such as this young girl, whose story she draws her chair a little nearer Maggie to hear. She would scorn the idea of being deaf, but the keen edge is certainly gone from her hearing.

Mary relates, amidst frequent ejaculations and questions from one or other of her auditors, the loves of Cecil and Edith. She becomes pathetic as she speaks of the long separation that his departure for India entails.

"Ah, poor child !" says little Miss Gore, with a tear in her eye and another in her voice, "that must remind her mother, too, of her young days and her lover's sad end."

Then it is Maggie's turn to listen, and hers to tell the tale. We already know of Mrs. Scott's youthful

love tragedy. Miss Thompson has much to say of a practical nature about the young people who are now playing their drama or tragedy of life, summing up thus: "Then, as I understand it, the gentleman has no prospects whatever, and the chance of this coming to a match depends on whether Edith has money when she comes of age; for, of course, a girl brought up in the lap of luxury, as she has been, would never be happy married to a poor man. That is out of the question."

Maggie's interest in the talk ended with Mrs. Scott's love story. Now that Miss Thompson is uttering platitudes which threaten to terminate in an argument between her and her more romantic friend, her desire to get to her writing increases. When she is in the presence of the two ex-mistresses, her schoolgirl feeling comes back to her, and she hesitates to clear away the books, and to draw towards her the little silver donkey, with its panniers containing ink-bottles—a presentation from pupils and ex-pupils to Miss Gore and Miss Thompson on their retirement from the arduous duties of school-keeping, which they had ceased efficiently to fill. The rapid whirligig of time had revolved in the matter of education too rapidly for these two middle-aged women to be able to keep up with it.

After a little while, her interest in the argument flagging, Miss Gore notices the writing-case and Maggie's distracted air. "My dear child," she says, "why did you not move those things before?" and up she gets to pile book upon book out of Maggie's way,

not sorry to retire thus from a discussion that had on one side been conducted with an acrimoniousness quite foreign to her own pleasant method of talking things over, and which wearies her all the more, since she knows it to be her friend's way, and inevitable.

Thereupon Miss Thompson retires to forget herself in the privacy of her own room, where her faultless cap can be removed without a descent in dignity or appearance.

When the door has closed on her, Miss Gore puts her hand on her old pupil's arm, saying mysteriously, "Have you never heard that Edith and Mary will have money when they come of age?"

"No; and I am sure they do not know of it."

"I did not wish to speak of it before Miss Thompson. She is a little curious, and would have started to-morrow to Doctors' Commons, perhaps, to look at Miss Cragie's will, if she had heard a word of this. She goes here, there, and everywhere. She is too quick for me. I shall be so glad of you to go with me to several places. I have planned somewhere for each day, dear." ("Oh!" thought Maggie, "then I cannot meet John on Wednesday. How vexing! But I am glad that I know.") "But, as I was saying, there is money to come to the children. As I heard of it, however, through the family solicitor, who pays me the little annuity left me by Mr. Cragie, I must ask you not to mention it to any one, as doubtless the children know nothing about it, because their parents think it best that they should not be told until they are actually of age. You won't speak of it, dear?"

"I can't if you ask me not. But it would make both Edith and Cecil much happier if they knew there would be no obstacle to their marriage when she is of age, and I should like to tell them very much."

"No, dear ; I can't give permission. If he is true to her, all will go well ; if he is not true at heart, it will be better that there should be no bought truth. That would not be worth much, would it ? But now you get to your letter. I have a great deal to talk about, but I won't say it now. I want to know a great deal about the *friend* whose letters I have sent to you. That is only natural, child, as you have no mother ; but I won't ask now."

Maggie bends down her head over her paper to hide the colour that is flushing into her face.

"The letters go out early, I expect, on Sunday," she says. "It will be best to write first and talk afterwards, as I must save the post. Will the letters be in time if we post as we go to church ?"

She is relieved to hear that that will do. She wishes herself to post the letter to Captain Munro for several reasons—she fears the quick-eyed Miss Thompson, and she has a slight feeling of superstition about posting to him with her own hand.

CHAPTER XX.

WHENEVER conversation flags at the home of these two middle-aged ladies in Milton Street during the week of Maggie's visit there, one or other of them always reverts to their favourite topic—Edith Scott and her unsanctioned engagement.

Miss Thompson may be said to worry this subject as a dog worries a toothsome bone that is almost beyond its crunching powers. That she has said the same thing about it in slightly different words several times before, seems to have escaped her memory, or to be unimportant to her. When she seems to have left it alone, back she goes to it soon with recovered zest.

During the week Maggie is somewhat bothered by the conflicting claims of the two ladies. Each has a strong desire for a new confidante, and is anxious to secure as much of her exclusive attention as she can. To divide her time impartially is difficult, and Miss Thompson in the end secures the lion's share by virtue of her exacting disposition.

Maggie is surprised to find that although Miss Gore cannot be brought to look on her clandestine corre-

spondence but with suspicions, she enjoys her own share of the secret as regards keeping it from her ex-partner, and, by her own account, has waited for the postman's coming, that she may be beforehand in getting the letters, with all the avidity of a young girl whose affections are deeply engaged in it; and she continues her watchfulness now on Maggie's account.

For many reasons, not the least of which is the meeting Saturday will bring, Maggie will not be sorry for the week to come to an end. Her two friends have been kindness itself, but they have wearied her. She has felt like a bird with a clipped wing, never able to soar away by herself, always some little thing planned for her. The lives of both her entertainers run in too circumscribed a groove to offer her any excitement. These latter days of Miss Gore may be described as remunerative. She lives over again her own past life, and ponders over and over all that she hears of the doings of her friends, of the people yet in the battle of life. Her reading consists principally of novels, which are also conducive to rumination rather than action.

As Saturday approaches, a difficulty looms large with it. Miss Thompson, the active, declares her intention of going to Victoria with their young friend, to see her into the train for Westgate. This intention is announced on Thursday morning over the breakfast-table, where she presides.

"Pray don't trouble to do that," said the affrighted Maggie. "We have been travelling so much lately,

that a journey and the care of luggage are small things to me. Besides, Mr. Scott goes down by the midday train on Saturday."

"I should like to see Mr. Scott again," says Miss Thompson, pluming herself, as one would say of a feathered creature.

Nothing more can be said. Maggie cudgels her mother-wit for some plan to stop this unlooked-for espionage. She feels that an opportune thunder-storm, which alarms Miss Thompson by tradition and slightly disturbs her nervous organization, is the only thing that will keep her at home now that she has a fancy to see Mr. Scott, or rather to be seen by Mr. Scott. She is as hungry for admiration as she was in her salad days; nay, more—when feathers are getting scarce, she would go far to get them to add to the plume already wearing away.

There is not overmuch time to consult Captain Munro on this difficulty, but Maggie does it; and when her letter is posted, she is more at ease, and accompanies Miss Gore with a lighter heart and step to her dressmaker's, there to be a kind of referee in this important new-dress question, the dress that required visits to four shops ere a decision could be arrived at.

Before starting, Miss Thompson, who in her own dress adopts most of the new fashions, and contrives to look so youthful behind that she is still occasionally followed for a sight of her face, which is a revelation to the persistent curious one, contrives to get a few minutes' private talk to Maggie.

“My dear,” she said, “Miss Gore, I am sorry to say, will not listen to me in the matter of dress, although she must see that I ought to be an authority on it, one would think ;” and she glances down at her dress admiringly. “She buys good materials, but she will have her dresses made always in the same antiquated style. Style!” she continues, with almost angry animation, “it does not deserve to be called style, or fashion either. It is a peculiar no-make of her own. Now I want you to persuade her to have this good dress made a little more fashionably. Why should she always wear those polonaises? It seems quite a sin, I consider, to cut up a handsome new dress into one of those things ; don’t you think so?”

“I have not much noticed the way Miss Gore’s dresses are made. She always looks nice, I think, in her unpretending black dresses,” Maggie replies.

“That is a matter of taste,” says Miss Thompson, somewhat huffily. “I get tired of seeing nothing but sombre black before mine eyes, from morning till night and from year’s end to year’s end. Black is very well for a change, and, of course, does not carry its date like colours. To dress well is a duty one owes to society, I consider ; but Miss Gore is certainly not of my opinion.”

“You, then, owe society nothing, Miss Thompson?” says Maggie, pleasantly, willing to gratify her greatest weakness—love of dress. Dress is the study of her life.

“It is a great mistake,” Maggie thinks, “for people to fancy that love of dress is in any way a monopoly of the people who are leaders of fashion and society,

and so are able to display their dresses. Those people love it for the effect it helps them to create ; this poor thing loves it as one loves a creature of one's own, the child of much thought and many plans. I believe she was thinking in church of how she would remodel a dress. She began it on Monday morning. Enforced stillness in church, with the stimulation of music, and the jog to the brain of getting up and sitting down again, dress ideas, set going by the people near, set her planning, I am sure. I know how my thoughts run riot on John when I am in church."

Vanity, the last of our early weaknesses to die, dies hard. If you want to gauge a woman's vanity, go with her to the milliner and dressmaker ; if you want to find out her temper weaknesses, see her fitting on her dress when it comes home. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, one would make an unexpected and startling discovery.

* * * * *

Late on Friday night, just as the three women have finished supper in the tiny Milton Street dining-room, the rat-tat of the postman's knock causes Maggie's heart to bound. "Shall I go?" she asks of Miss Gore.

"Certainly, child, if you like."

"Mary will be coming in a minute," interposes Miss Thompson. "It gets her into such bad habits this constant rushing to the letter-box ;" and she looks reprovingly at Miss Gore, who is certainly quite innocent of this charge of rushing.

Maggie is standing irresolute, with a pleading look at Miss Gore in her eyes.

"No, child," she says, "this one more rush won't spoil Mary; and when you are gone, she shall get back into her old ways." This she says to mollify Miss Thompson, who is not so easily to be appeased.

When Maggie comes back with a tiny note in her pocket and a letter in her hand, she is saying, "It is too bad, after the trouble I took to drill her into bringing the letters to us on the salver."

"Is that letter for me, dear?" asks Miss Gore.

"No; it is from Mrs. Scott to me. I wonder if she wants me to get her anything?"

"If she does, I can go with you, as early as you like, shopping," says Miss Thompson, who likes going to expensive shops, to see their newest things.

Maggie opens her letter, and begins to read it aloud; then stops in some confusion, as she discovers that the contents of her letter are not for the public ear.

"Is anything the matter?" asks Miss Gore anxiously, from the depths of her easy-chair, whither she had retired.

"No, nothing. It is a little matter that—is somebody's secret—not important; only I must not tell it," says Maggie, in a halting way.

Then Mary comes in to take away the supper-tray, and Maggie is left to finish her letter, which is of no great length, letter-writing not being one of Mrs. Scott's pastimes.

This is what she said :—

"MY DEAR MISS M'ARTHUR,

"I don't know if I am doing an unwise thing in writing to tell you that you will find the Prices here when you come back on Saturday. My husband has asked them to stay on with us until Monday. I am perfectly certain I was right in my *surmises*. They cannot come to Oaklands later, as first proposed. Some law business requires Mr. Price's presence in Boston, and they leave England almost immediately. If you candidly object to meet him for reasons that we have discussed, you had better telegraph to me, saying that you would like a day or two longer with Miss Gore. I leave it entirely to you to do as you think best. We shall all be pleased to see you whenever you come.

"Agatha left yesterday ; we could not persuade her to stay away longer from her mother, who I fear is in a very sad way, with no chance of getting better, poor thing! Kind remembrances to Miss Thompson, and much love to Miss Gore. Tell her I liked her letter very much, but that I wish she would not overwhelm me with thanks when I make her little presents that are not half equal to her deserts.

"Believe me, ever your sincere friend,

"J. L. SCOTT."

When the in-course-of-training Mary has finally whisked away with the last of the supper things, Maggie gives the messages.

"Just like her, sweet soul! to think little of all

she does for others, and to think much of any little thing people have ever done for her," says Miss Gore, blinking her eyelids quickly, to get rid of a tear.

"She is good," says Maggie, with emphasis, grateful for the trouble Mrs. Scott has taken for her, which, however, she is sure will not be of any avail on account of Captain Munro.

"Has it been fine at Westgate?" asks Miss Thompson, after the manner of inquisitive persons, when they are debarred from asking pertinent questions.

"Mrs. Scott does not say anything about the weather. She tells me Miss Browne left yesterday.

"Oh, indeed; she is the strong-minded young lady, I think. And the Americans, are they gone?"

"No; they stay till Monday."

"Ah, then you will see them again. That boy and Mary Scott will be fancying some nonsense next, if they are not careful; and the father, did he admire that Miss Browne? He is a widower, I think you said. Widowers are always ready to re-marry; and widows too, for that matter. I don't like them."

"Which don't you like?" asks Miss Gore, slyly. She remembers a widower Miss Thompson dressed at not so very long ago.

"Widows, of course," she answers shortly; "they are so designing."

"'Experienced' is a better word, is it not?" says Miss Gore. "This particular widower is nice, is he not, Maggie?"

"Yes, very," says Maggie, heartily.

“ Ah ! ” says Miss Thompson, knowingly, “ he will be wanting to take you back to America with him, I expect ; that will be the next thing that we shall hear. How would you like to go to America ? ”

“ Not at all, ” returns Maggie, ignoring the insinuation.

“ I thought, ” says Miss Thompson, “ that you were so fond of travelling, and would not mind where you went. ”

“ You would like ‘ Eastward Ho ! ’ the best, wouldn’t you, dear ? ” says Miss Gore, whose tongue her one glass of ale at supper has loosened.

“ ‘ Eastward Ho ! ’ ” repeats Miss Thompson, looking suspiciously from one to the other. “ And why Eastwards ? I hope, Maggie, your thoughts are not running on soldiers, who flirt with all the good-looking girls they come across in every garrison town. ‘ To love and ride away ’ is the soldier’s motto. Now a curate would be much more suitable, a vicar better still ; yes, or a bachelor too. ”

Maggie’s ire rises higher and higher as this speech goes on, which Miss Gore half sees, half guesses, and comes to the rescue with a little joke about curates not being able to afford horses to ride away on, and a diocese not being a very wide ground for disappearances. “ And really, ” she continues, “ while you were giving away your advice, you might have tried to impress your favourite theory on Maggie of the advantages of a rich husband. I am not depreciating curates, understand ; only as husbands for girls without money. I have a great respect for the Church and

the many estimable men in it, and I am sure that this archbishop and the last are men everybody must be proud of. I shall never forget the impressive service of the confirmation I told you I went to, I think. But we have so much to talk over, I may have forgotten it. It was about six weeks ago. The archbishop has such a good, massive, kindly face, and he called each child's name, that he or she might answer 'I do' for his or herself; and if a child did not answer, he would stop and say, 'Mary,' or whatever the name was, again in such a gentle encouraging way, it quite made the tears come to my eyes; and in his last address he gave them such good advice—spoke to them of the temptations they would meet, warned them among other things against evil-speaking and ill-natured gossip, and quoted General Gordon. Nothing could have been nicer, I am sure."

By the time Miss Gore has run down, Maggie has got the better of her vexation at Miss Thompson's ill-appreciated, meddlesome advice, and she is able, now Miss Gore has got them on to safe ground, to join in the conversation with her usual good-natured adaptability, although she is longing greatly to get to her room—her tiny half-attic among the chimney pots, with a whole vista of them in view from the window—that she may see what her instructions may be for the evasion on Saturday of the lynx-eyed Miss Thompson.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE bitter, sweet journey that is to end in tears begins with a hearty laugh that breaks from Maggie and her companion, as the train steams out of the Victoria Station. They laugh with the success of their little ruse, and at the remembrance of the scandalized face of Miss Thompson as she watched the departing train, that her putting Maggie into had proved no safeguard against men.

She had fussed about a great deal, and had secured for her, as she fondly imagined, a carriage to herself for the journey ; then she had planted herself duenna-wise in front of the door, to warn off intruders ; but at the last minute, just as she had stepped back, and the guard was shutting the door, a gentleman hurrying along to catch the train jumped into that particular carriage, only just in time to save himself from being left behind.

“ We did her cleverly, didn't we, dearie ? I had been watching my opportunity some time. It was a near thing, wasn't it ? ”

“ You want to be praised, I see, and I will praise .

you, dear ; but I confess I was beginning to get terribly frightened lest you should not come. I felt that I might not see you—before—you left”—with a little catching of breath between the last words, that might easily break into a sob.

“We won’t talk about that, child,” he says, caressing her. “I hate the thought of going.” Then, trying to speak cheerfully, he continues, “Let us try only to remember now that we have met ; and truly, child, I may be able to get down to Westgate.” Seeing her half-doubting, wholly wistful look, he says, “Really, I mean it ; I have been planning to come for an hour or so one day. I have consulted my friend ‘Bradshaw,’ and it only depends on my being able to screw out the time. So, anyhow, the intention is good, and we will try to think that I shall be able to carry it out ; so we won’t make ourselves miserable now, will we, eh?”

Thereat Maggie tries very much to brighten, and succeeds fairly well ; but in her laugh there is a slightly hysterical ring.

“Tell me more about your doings. It must have been awfully slow for you, mewed up with those two old ladies. I don’t know how you could have endured it, and yet you did not make any effort to get away for an hour or so to meet me. I was in London on Wednesday, getting things together ; nothing seemed to go right, though. All the people I had to do with were such confounded fools—wouldn’t understand what I wanted.”

“How tiresome !”

“Yes ; it quite upset me. I had just time for a

hasty dinner at my club, and out of that time I had serious thoughts of scribbling you a line or two of scolding, for not managing to spare me just one little hour, only——”

“Only what? You made such a good dinner you had not time, I suppose.”

“Wrong. I thought better of it. Our time isn't long enough to quarrel and make it up in, as I have said before. What a fool I was to say that!”—as Maggie shows signs here of breaking down. Then the soothing process goes on again.

“Will you bear this in mind, child,” he says presently, “that quarrelling by letter is the most unprofitable of all quarrelling, and that if I don't write sometimes when you expect to hear, you must trust me, you know?”

“I will, if possible. If one only knew when to trust and when to doubt all would be easy.”

“Yes; but remember that in nine cases out of ten your sex spoil everything by mistrust and jealousy. You will remember about the letters, dearie, won't you?”

“Yes; I know that quarrelling by letter is a mistake, if people want to make the quarrel up in the end.”

Here Captain Munro elevates his eyebrows in a distressed inquiring manner, as of saying, “Can it be possible you think I could feel so, or do you say it for yourself?”

In snatches of talk, and in long spells of silence, when the thought of being so near each other suffices,

and the delight is intensified by the shadow of the coming parting, all too quickly the train rushes them on to Westgate. Captain Munro has taken a ticket for Margate.

"I thought," he said, "that as I am coming down one of these days, you know, it would be best not to be seen here to-day, especially as it is Saturday, and Scott is as likely as not to be in this train. I thought of that when I was making my rush at Victoria. Did you?"

"No; I was wondering if you were prevented coming. But I haven't asked a word about Cecil. Tell me about him."

"There isn't much to tell. We haven't seen much of each other, you know—both so busy; and when he gets a minute, he is everlastingly dangling after that Miss Browne. By-the-bye, she has been down to Westgate, he tells me. He's awfully gone, you know. She has worked him some slippers or something, don't you know? and he's awfully elated."

"I am very glad to hear that he is so awfully gone, as you call it; I hate men who are only half-gone over one. Yes, I know. Wait a minute, I want to get something out of my bag that I have worked for you, up among the chimney-pots, dear"—as he gets her bag down. "I did them before breakfast, in my room, so that no one should see."

Then she shows him the handkerchiefs she has embroidered his monogram on for him.

"How awfully good of you! How clever of you to have done them so nicely! I am not much of a

judge of such things, but I can see how well these are done. Never mind the bag now. I want to thank you for these, you know. . . . Ah, I have just remembered! I want you to have a good photo taken, a cabinet, and quite a small one—you understand, quite small. Will you do this for me, darling? At once. It takes these people a long time to finish off sometimes.”

Maggie willingly promises, and then he in turn is asked for two of his.

“You will only want one,” he says, putting into her hand the locket he bought for her long ago. “I had thought,” he continues, “of stopping to-night at Margate. Not that I want to visit the Hall-by-the-Sea, but I thought perhaps you could manage, instead of going to church to-morrow, to meet me for a little stroll in the country; but I have an appointment in town that I must not miss this evening, so that falls through. You will think I am never satisfied; but give me,” he says pleadingly, “some little thing of your own that you have worn, will you?”

She thinks a minute, then draws off a little turquoise ring she has always worn, and gives it to him.

“Now we are quite near Westgate, and I suppose you would rather I did not help you out for the chance of being seen, so it must be good-bye here; now, good-bye for the present, I mean, child. I am coming down, you know, and you are going to indulge me—*promise*—with a letter nearly every day while I am in England; and then—I can’t write often here, you know, but my first and my longest letter on board

ship will be to you, to rub off the score? And I shall want to know how you manage to send that American fellow about his business, don't you know? Bothering you like this! Why can't a fellow take a plain hint? Mrs. Scott has given him one, you say. I hope it won't be an awful bother to you seeing him, because I feel your coming back to-day is all my doing, you know."

"As if anything could make me regret meeting you," she says, looking up at him with the pride of him, pained joy, and the fondness in her heart struggling for expression in her mobile face.

In three minutes more they are entering the Westgate Station. Maggie espies Mary and Frank.

"Sit well back, so that they don't see you as we pass"—are his instructions—"then you can be out of the carriage before they are up to it. If we are lucky, I will give a porter your bag."

And so it falls out. And the young people are too much occupied with Maggie to see beyond when Captain Munro appears for a second at the carriage door.

Maggie sends the children through the door of the station before her, then turns for a last look at the train; her reward is a kiss blown from the window of the carriage she has just left.

She has hardly time to think, so rapid is Mary's talk. She pours out questions and information in a string. "Father didn't go to town to-day. You looked for him, I expect? You missed your lunch, didn't you? How hungry you must be! Father and

Mr. Price have gone to Deal to-day. Isn't it a sell, Frank can't come to Oaklands? I wanted him to see Jack trot so much!"

"And feel the jolting?"

"Ah yes. I know you think he shakes one too much for enjoyment. Awfully glad to see you back, mum dear! but, thanks to Frank, I haven't missed you so dreadfully as I expected, and of course it was nice not having any lessons to do while he was here."

"But I hope you practised, dear."

"Yes; mother and Edith looked after that, or, to be quite truthful, it would have stood a poor chance. You are glad to get back to us, aren't you, and away from those two fidgety old ladies? I couldn't stay a week with two old ladies"—and so on.

The reception by Mrs. Scott and Edith is equally gratifying. They too have much to tell of what has happened in the week—of Agatha's visit and the home gossip she brought, which is all retailed to Maggie. When the novelty of her arrival has a little worn off, or perhaps more because the newly arrived is being monopolized by her mother and sister, Mary carries Frank off.

Then it is related that Mr. Price and Agatha did not get on together half as well as was expected. "Indeed," said Mrs. Scott, "their arguments made me a little nervous. You know Agatha's way of calling a spade a spade. Well, one day she told Mr. Price that he was certainly an Atheist. She said it seriously."

"What made her say that?" asks Maggie, who feels

that she is expected to take a lively interest in all this, while her thoughts will dwell on the minutest details of the journey that she has just come from.

“ I did not quite hear the beginning, but it was a discussion on books, some one’s life of some one ; perhaps Edith remembers. I was not following their argument, until I heard Agatha say, ‘ Mr. Price, you are an Atheist.’ I was so shocked, I said, “ My dear, Mr. Price is no more an Atheist than you or I. He went twice to church on Sunday.’ ”

“ Did he seem to mind ? ”

“ No. He looked quite serenely at her, and said, ‘ What’s in a name ? very little sometimes, although there’s a proverb, “ As well hang a dog as give it a bad name ; ” ’ or something like that, wasn’t it, dear ? ”—appealing to her daughter.

“ Yes. And then he said, ‘ I fancy we think very much alike in the main, only we have arrived there by a slightly different path of reasoning, and I am older, and have got further, that is all.’ ”

“ And there the matter rested. I told Mr. Price afterwards that I was so vexed about it ; but he did not seem in the least to mind. He is an even-tempered man”—and she looked meaningly at Maggie, who understands and blushes—“ one of a thousand.”

Maggie is anxious to get a few minutes alone with Mrs. Scott, to thank her for her letter, and explain that, although she has come back, she has in no way altered her mind about Mr. Price. It is some time before she gets a chance of private talk ; Edith is so anxious to secure her ear for what Agatha has told

her of Cecil, that she is loth to miss an opportunity by going away for a few minutes.

Presently Mrs. Scott asks Edie to ring for tea. "After that, if you are not too tired, Miss M'Arthur, we will have a little walk," she says.

Both confidences in the end get made, or partly made in Edith's case ; she has so much to tell.

The tourists do not get home till ten o'clock, and although they had dined at Deal at seven o'clock, Mr. Scott requires an ample supper, which requirement upsets all the servants, who consider the getting it as an encroachment on their time to be given to this their own favourite and hearty meal.

Both Mr. Scott and Mr. Price are evidently tired, after their long day's search of the picturesque ; and accounts of what they have seen or not seen—quite as much the latter as the former—are only drawn forth by great perseverance on the part of Mary.

Just as every one else wants to go to bed, Mr. Scott freshens and becomes both communicative and jocose, and distinguishes especially Miss M'Arthur with his attentions ; which makes her think, "It seems as if he, too, is pleased to see me back again."

Maggie has tried, and successfully, all through Sunday to keep out of a *tête-à-tête* with Mr. Price, but only to fall into it the next day, just as she was congratulating herself on the narrowing of the time of his visit. She was returning from the sands with the two children, when she saw Mr. Price's tall figure in the distance coming towards them. She took Mary's arm at once, to keep her near her, and engaged her

a little nervously, in conversation until the inevitable meeting.

"I came to look you up," is his greeting. "Much as we should like to miss the train—eh, Frank?—we dare not."

"It is so stupid to miss a train," says Maggie.

"Yes, when time is an object ; when one has put off starting to quite the last minute. Frank, you had better hurry on and get your things together ; they are all over the place."

Frank hesitates, and looks at Mary.

"I dare say Mary will go with you," says his father ; "and then on your way you can make up your last dispute, and be careful not to begin another. Part friends."

Maggie, who had counted on keeping Mary by her, can make no excuse to do so ; but as the child leaves her arm, she says, "We must all hurry. Mrs. Scott has ordered lunch to be ready for you before you go ;" and she hastens her steps.

"It is very good of Mrs. Scott ; she is a most amiable woman." He does not second Maggie in her haste, and politeness obliges her to walk more leisurely to hear what he is saying. "I feel that it was a most fortunate chance that made me finally fix on Ouchy instead of Vevay for our lake headquarters ; it was a toss up which it should be. Some people would call it Fate, but neither you nor I believe in Fate ; anyhow, I can answer for myself, that I don't ; and I have got into a habit of thinking that I know what you will feel on most subjects. I wish I could feel that we were in accord on *everything*."

“I certainly don’t believe in Fate,” says Maggie, hastily, catching at that as at a floating straw. He is so fond of discussion, she thinks, if only she can keep her wits about her, she may be able to float him and herself away from this pool that she dreads. “Can any thoughtful person,” she continues, looking steadily before her and not once at him, “with a conception of justice, the justice that even man accords to man in theory, believe in anything so unjust as Fate? We make our own futures our own fate.” She feels that she is getting into deep water here, and does not quite see anything to catch at to float her away; but anyhow, she had better not throw up her arms—if she does she sinks. “‘Man is man and master of his fate;’ who says that?” she asks. She knows perfectly well, but the question is safe, and in two minutes more the house will be in sight.

He also knows that his chance is slipping from him. He can’t let it go. He has stayed to the last moment at Westgate for a purpose. In furtherance of his purpose, he has come to meet her. He has only two clear minutes to ask this important question in, and he must get to it. It is not easy; it must seem abrupt, anyhow.

“I want to make *my* future, to make it sure, as far as one can make anything sure, before I go away. I am afraid I shall seem abrupt, but time, as you know, is very short; and as you also know I am obliged to go away—but before I go, I want you to give me some assurance that my coming back will not be a matter of indifference to you. That sounds conceited, but I am

not really conceited. I feel that my chance of obtaining a great good—your love—is a doubtful one; but poor as my chance is, I am too eager for the prize to throw even the poorest chance away. May I, dare I hope, that you will be pleased to see me again? not only as a friend—I want you to give me ever so little hope. My desire is, that when next I go back to Boston you”—they are turning a corner, and they come upon some people; and he has to stop a moment before adding—“will go back with me as my wife.”

It is out now, and Maggie's nervousness has left her. She does not think now of herself, but of giving a direct unmistakable answer to his question before they reach the house.

“That cannot be, Mr. Price, ever. I value you highly as a friend, but you can be nothing more to me. I am sorry that you should have thought of it. That does not sound nice, but you understand me, don't you?”—and now she looks into his face.

“I understand,” he says. “There is a question I ought not to ask, I know, but if you will answer it all false hopes will be crushed. May I ask it?”

“Yes,” she says in a low voice, looking down.

“Is there any one you care for in that other way?”

“Yes.”

“Thank you, for telling me. I shall not come back to England.”

They are at the gate. “Shake hands with me here,” he says.

She gives him her hand, saying, “You have my best wishes. Your future will be happy, I feel sure.”

You are so kind and good. In one's self is one's fate, you know."

"Thank you," he said. "I wish you much happiness. I should like to know the man, if he is worthy of you."

She can make no answer to that.

Then they passed in.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE parting in the train at Westgate was final. Captain Munro could not manage to spare enough time to go down to Westgate again. He half thought, too, that perhaps it was better so for Maggie. He was afraid the parting, when she knew it had come to that, would be too trying for her. Besides, even if he could have managed a whole day, he might not have seen her alone for many minutes, and that would have been a horrid sell, worse than not seeing her at all. He was in a fearful drive in these last days. He had left his preparations to the last. Tradesmen were dilatory, and everything all round seemed to him to be going wrong, and even his letters to Maggie partook a little of the temper that he was whisked into by these petty annoyances.

Maggie was sadly disappointed, and half inclined to resent his not coming and the tone of his letters; but she remembered what he had said about trust, and forbore to put any of her hurt-feelings into the last letter he got from her ere the troopship carried him away to what he called his exile.

Directly the regiment had left Ware, the Scotts' exile ended. All of them are glad to get back to "dear Oaklands, after staying at that one-eyed Westgate," as Mary puts it. But with the change, Mr. Scott's temper did not improve. He had grumbled hard every day at the lengthened railway journey this enforced stay at Westgate entailed; but now the grumbling and bad temper is as great in bulk as before, but it is aimed at other targets. The sight of Edith has become irritating to him, which she feels, and spends much of her time at Crinton. Lady Wade has taken up her cause strongly. Her not having drawn a matrimonial prize herself has not destroyed her belief that there are such things to be drawn, and between her and Agatha, Edith gets encouragement, which she does not need, to constancy.

Mr. Scott must have an inkling of the truth as regards Lady Wade's sudden taking up of his daughter. Anyhow, he grumbles to his wife about her being so much at Crinton, where so many loose men, Sir Percival's friends, have the run of the place; but secretly he is not displeased. Nay, more, he is really gratified that his daughter should be seen most days driving into Ware with Lady Wade.

If he knew that they had entered into so close an alliance, that Lady Wade had promised to monopolize Fairbrace when he comes down, Mr. Scott might perhaps think that the price of his gratification is a little too high.

* * * * *



The year had run its course, bringing few changes to any of our people since the *Serapis* sailed. Those of them who exist in the present and live in dreams of the future are happiest, though they do not know it, but think rather that the separation and uncertainty make their lot hard.

Edith, with Lady Wade's help, has come well out of the dreaded possibilities of Fairbrace's visit. He has not proposed. His inclination to do so has received a check.

If Lady Wade could have trusted to her husband's discretion in his cups, she would have let him into their little plot ; but his love of making every transaction the subject of a bet would have inevitably led to a bet with long odds against Edith, "no training, badly ridden, besides which she runs to lose."

Mr. Scott would have been angry in these his unprecedentedly bad times, even against his favourite, Lady Wade, had he not seen that through her the gates of the peerage may be opened to his daughter.

That very crude youth, Lord Wylie—to whom Lady Wade has given the sobriquet of "Night," from his reminding her, in the absence of all finish and expression in his features, of Michael Angelo's statue of "Night" in the Medici Chapel at Florence—is always hanging about the two women ; and when, as occasionally happens, Mr. Scott is present, it is easy to make it appear that Edith is the attraction.

* * * * *

That grand revival period, spring, comes round with its welling up of Nature's latent sources, called

forth by the warmth of its unveiled sun, awakening vegetation and its subtle memory-stirring scents, impelling to energy and song the birds, rousing all living things to conscious life, and bringing vividly back to two young girls all the thoughts and feelings of the previous spring, when their hearts had first beat, and their pulses had first throbbed to Love's all-powerful call.

The memory brings with it pain—the pain of a yearning that is infinite—and a half-defined fear that that perfect happiness which is the dream of all may never be attained by them. Happiness, of which God's glorious harmonious whole of nature, as seen in the spring-days, has given us a conception, an imperfect foretaste, never to be realized till we faulty creatures shall be wholly in our thoughts and aims, living in harmony with the spring aspect of Nature, and not with its storms and depressing clouds, that are even harder to bear up against than natural rain and tempest, or the excitement of a grand convulsion.

This spring is unusually dry, so dry that the roads are loose, and one or two unusually steep hills in the neighbourhood are dangerous in that way to horses, and especially bad for one horse. There is one such hill to come down both in going to and returning from Ware. The dip is down to where the river has to be crossed by an old massive stone bridge, with low parapet, dating, it is said, from Stephen's reign.

Sir Percival is reckless in all things; in his eyes to be careful is only one remove from being funky.

He has been playing cards, and losing, late into the night, and is returning home in the small hours of the morning. He is driving a fast-trotting, high-mettled cob in a light cart. He has been losing heavily, and even his devil-me-care temperament cannot, when he is alone, keep back from himself uncomfortable thoughts. He is driving now at a rate calculated to outrun thought, and to keep off reflections, if stir and excitement can do it.

Sir Percival is not so much a bad-tempered as a hasty-tempered man, and when his cob stumbled at a loose stone nearly at the top of the hill, although he has her well held up, and the stumble was but slight, he is very wrath with her, and administers a sharp cut with the whip to teach her better ; at the same time, to prevent her tearing off, he pulls her back on her haunches, so sharply that the shafts snap asunder, the groom takes a somersault on one side, and Sir Percival is jerked out on the other. But somehow he is entangled in the reins, and is so dragged by the terrified cob all down that fearful hill, zig-zagged by a water-course, rough with the stones washed from it, and on one side separated from the neighbouring fields by blocks of stone piled there when the road was cut.

The groom picks himself up. He is shaken, but not much hurt, he thinks. He looks round, and at once understands the situation. Then he proceeds hurriedly to knock up the people who live in the cottage midway down the hill. He shrinks from the thought of going alone to look for what was

once his master. He knows that he cannot be alive.

We who can be spared a shocking sight, who can do no good by looking on when the body is found at the foot of the hill, will turn from it to the widow, when in the morning dawn she has heard a cart drive by to the stables, and has listened for her husband's steps, and has become conscious of an unusual movement in the house, and at last, with a dread of the worst at her heart, she has learnt by degrees what the stricken servants dared not tell out to her.

At first she is stunned into calmness ; she cannot realize the truth. Then later on, when kind sympathizing Mrs. Scott comes to her, she is overwhelmed by grief, becomes hysterical, as she is by temperament, and is only calm again when exhausted nature has spent her force.

She alternates, until the trying time of the funeral is past, between outbreaks of hysterical grief, called forth by any appeal to her that brings the reality of her husband's death vividly before her, and fits of deep gloom. When she torments herself with the might-have-been, she reviews the past. She thinks that perhaps if she had been more forbearing on this and that occasion, she might have kept the influence she once—for a little while when first they were married—had over her husband, and that so she might have kept him, if not exactly straight, at least straighter.

She recalls hasty words of only the day before,

the last words spoken to him. Of late she had become altogether careless of pleasing him in anything, and now nothing can be done. If only he had been brought back to her alive, it would have been bearable. She could have atoned then for her work in the breach between them; she could have nursed him, and have shown him that she really cared for him through her petulance and in spite of his carelessness.

Sir Percival's violent death is the nine-days' talk of the neighbourhood, though everybody agrees with everybody that they always knew that some such end would be his one day; and most people within reach are drawn to look at the hill where the accident happened.

One sturdy old yeoman was heard saying to another, "Dang it, that warn't no accident; he jest brought it on himself;" and that speech embodies the actual notion of every one who looks at the place where Sir Percival had dared to give a lesson to the cob.

The last of his race, a man whose epitaph might be, "No man or woman was the better for the time he lived among them," and there, in pity for one who had missed his chance, who perhaps never saw it, stop. The last Wade for whom the family vault in the church will yawn joined his ancestors with a want of pomp and circumstance of woe that would have shamed them, so said the public opinion of the village, if they could have known. Every one had gathered to see the show, the last act but one in

the nine-days'-wonder play that absorbs the neighbourhood.

Sir Percival had always scoffed at ceremonial, and Lady Wade seeks in these little points in which she can carry out his wishes to do so. His own horses draw the car, as they are bay instead of black. The wise-acres of the village, on the female side, led by an old crone, who has been nurse "in the first families," whoever they may be, and who is acknowledged on the strength of that as an authority, freely express their disapprobation.

What they would have said if Lady Wade had carried out her idea that his favourite hunter should follow the car, it is impossible to conjecture. Miss Woolner would have said, "Heathenish." She is sore that Lady Wade admitted Mrs. Scott, and excused herself from seeing either her nephew the Vicar, or herself in the interval between her husband's death and funeral.

In no other day in the memory of man has the church had so many visitors. All day long people go in and out ; the taking up and laying down of the stones are closely watched as a work of the greatest importance. And the recumbent ancestor in stone, with a narrow face and pointed beard, that reminds one forcibly of Sir Percival, comes in for a large share of the public attention, although he and his two wives beneath him on the front of the tomb, each kneeling with her own progeny behind her—first the sons and then the daughters, those who died before the erection of the monument—holding

in their hands a scroll, have been familiar Sunday objects all their lives.

The children before the day is over become too much at home in church, and have to be hauled out by the shoulder, when their respective mothers are not too much engrossed to know of their misdeeds. The talk is carried on with curiously few words, although this death and burial cause every other death and burial any one in the village can remember to be much talked over.

The old nurse—who wears a cloak that she once had for a funeral procession, and a veil (all the other women wear shawls, black where they have them)—shakes her head and says, “These things”—(some people don’t like to mention death openly : is it that they fear to call the attention of the ever-busy reaper to themselves?)—“I have noticed, go in threes. We shall see. It mayn’t be long afore we hear of others.”

Thereat is a shaking of heads among the old, accompanied by a slow “Ah!” as if they are tasting the flavour of the interjection before parting with it.

One idea possesses Lady Wade, which she is feverish to carry out. It is to get away at once from Crinton.

“I can never see that hill again—never,” she says to Mrs. Scott; “and even the people about here—all but you and Edith—I do not wish to see. What can the vicar say to me if I do not see him?”

“My dear, I know how you feel, but I think you should see the vicar; he will be hurt if you do not,

and it might be a comfort to you. I know you did not feel that you could see him when he came before ; but if you could have got it over then, it would have been well."

"Perhaps ; but I could not. He is not a man one would expect help of any kind from—I mean comfort ; for he is kind-hearted, and would give money to the poor if he were not a parson. I can't see him. His horrid aunt, I won't see !"

"Well, dear, you must please yourself. But write him a letter of farewell, and say you could see nobody."

So it came to pass, and with only one day's interval between the funeral and her departure, Lady Wade sets out for Wales, to stay with a cousin, of whom the rich have a known legion, the poor an unknown quantity.

She gets through the summer as best she can. She does not stay very long with her relations. All their doors are open to her, but a few days here and there convince her that one can have more freedom in a house of one's own with visitors—she cannot bear to be a moment alone—than as a guest in the most obliging household. She sends for Edith—her old friend Miss Darville has married and gone to India—and together, in most erratic fashion, they go here and there in Wales, and then on to the English lakes, Lady Wade quickly tiring of everything. Her only satisfactory moments are when she is planning something fresh to do ; it is her only occupation.

"We will go to the south—to Cannes or Nice—

when the weather is cold," she promises Edith and herself.

She is a very striking object wherever she goes. The severity of outline and sombreness of her widow's dress are a vivid contrast to her fair complexion, and golden hair ; and if she were not known at the places where she stops to be Lady Wade, women might shrug their shoulders suggestively at sight of her. Nothing in her appearance but her *embonpoint* troubles her, which she forces herself to take exercise to keep down. She rather likes to shock women ; openly says that she does not like them, and does not want them to like her. She looks upon the favour of women as a poor compliment. " They never like a woman they are afraid of," she says.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MRS. BARTLETT, the old nurse, is looked upon as a seer when, in the summer following the spring in which she had oracularly remarked, "These things go in threes. We shall see," poor ailing Mrs. Browne, whose life for some time has been sustained only by the brandy that has sapped it, dies, and is buried.

By her daughter's wish she is buried simply; not in a vault or brick-grave, "comfortable-like, but in jest a grave such as the poorest among us would 'a had," in the churchyard, in the shadow of the wall of the church she never once entered.

The grave was lined with mosses ("but then moss costs nothing"), and Agatha herself strewed flowers thickly on the coffin; then the servants advanced and did likewise. It was their tribute to a mistress who to many of them was but a myth, but "Who never gave trouble, and was generous at Christmas and weddings," as said the chorus to this old, old play. That for her; but—"The master was right mean to give the poor lady such a shabby burying," said also the chorus; and, "She never shed one tear."

By the "she" was meant Agatha, who in these last days had nursed her mother with unprecedented devotion in her long and trying illness. She would have spent her life for her mother. She did truly give of her life in the long, patient watching. But who, knowing so well all the story, all the heaviness of the cross her mother's feebleness had made so crushing, could grieve that the poor, useless, wasted life had passed to its rest; that peace had come to the irritable nerves that latterly only opiates could soothe? How well Agatha knew the hopelessness of trying to bolster up that feeble will that would fall and fall again!

The next day, Mr. Browne goes away on one of his expeditions, without having spoken one word to his daughter or her mother. On their return from the churchyard he had kissed her, and then had gone to his own apartments. It was not until Agatha heard the next morning of her father's departure that she knew the kiss, which she had thought a token of sympathy, to be but the usual farewell form.

Mr. Browne is away two months. Once during the time his daughter receives a communication from him—a blank cheque; "For the usual expenses, J.B.," written inside the envelope.

Agatha feels very bitter against her father as she contemptuously tosses envelope and cheque on one side. Even the most self-sufficient natures, when a break has occurred in their routine, when one of the old landmarks has disappeared, look round for something to put in its place; and Agatha had thought that perhaps now her father might be, if not more of

a companion than hitherto, still an object of greater interest ; instead of which, had it not been for this cheque and the two or three bare words that accompany it, she would not have known whether or no she had a father.

She feels neglected, even she, the strong-minded Agatha ; but she does not neglect her human interests—her village work, the temperance club, and her general care of bodies,—the souls she leaves to the vicar, who speaks of them in church on Sunday,—but she throws herself more thoroughly into reading, and has notions of one day writing a book. But what sort of book ? As yet, her letters to Cecil Fielding, and a letter to the *Standard* advocating the extension of the franchise to women, which did not get into print, have been her sole literary efforts, and by them she can't gauge her power. Force of character she knows she has ; but what of her ideas, and force in expressing them ? Can she compel attention by making two and two into five ? Or can she invent some new symbols for the old numerals, to set some little portion of the world agog for five minutes—the lady's maid portion ? Froude was told by a publisher or bookseller, she forgets which, that to please the reading public, he must write down to the level of ladies' maids.

Two months have passed since Mrs. Browne's death. It is a sultry day, towards the end of August. Six hours at least of sunshine to be registered at Greenwich. But something other than sunshine to be registered in Agatha's memory—a shock, a moral

shock, which endures longer by far in the memory than any physical shock. Why, the Essex earthquake of 1884 has died down in the memory even of those who felt it ; but Agatha will never forget her feelings on this memorable day.

She had promised the Scotts that she will go to lunch with them—will spend a long day with them ; and when it is cooler, at the end of it, they will have tennis, the vicar to be invited to make up the set.

Before going there, however, she intends taking some grapes to that poor boy Furber, who lingers yet, suffering from weakness and weariness mostly, which he bears with much patience. She is looking out of the window with her hat on, to watch for the boy who goes into Ware for the second-post letters. He sees her, and brings them to her at the window, to save time.

She is methodical in her habits, and seats herself at her writing-table to open her letters, to be within reach of waste-paper basket and drawers. There is a letter from her father. "Another bank cheque," she thinks, as she is opening it, "and this time I dare say, as I know why it is sent, he will say nothing."

She opens, and finds this note :

"London, August 24th.

"DEAR AGATHA,

"I bring Mrs. Browne, my wife, home tomorrow evening (25th). Send carriage (brougham) to meet 6.48 train.

"Yours, etc.,

"J.B."

Agatha reads this note, and then sits for at least ten minutes staring at it, as it lay before her on the table, where she had dropped it, as if it had been a live coal.

"The last man in the world to have married again," she would have said, if the idea of marriage and her father could have got together in her brain.

"To-day is the 25th," she says to herself. Then she gets up and rings the bells, sits down again, and dashes off a few lines to Mrs. Scott, for a groom to take to Oaklands, to wait for an answer. It is to ask if she may stay the night there.

Agatha knows well the kind of woman Mrs. Browne number two must be to have married a man two months after his wife's death—perhaps sooner. She cannot meet her. That is out of the question. She hurriedly packs her clothes and belongings; but that takes time, and her messenger is back, long before she has finished, with a note, the pith of which is "Come, and stay as long as you will."

She goes to her mother's room and there lingers long. It is very much as when she occupied it, and it brings the weary time she dragged out there vividly to her mind; and it is very painful to Agatha to think of everything being overhauled by a coarse-minded stranger. But the things are not hers, and she does not like to take a single thing away. There, in that room, she makes up her mind what she will say to the housekeeper about the new mistress who is coming. She has never liked her; she has always felt that if she had not secretly fed her mother's craving, she might have been cured. The lady's-

maid-housekeeper had actually encouraged her mistress in drinking—for some purpose, perhaps; but what beyond money could be her motive?

She has ordered the carriage round at one, and she hears it coming. Then she goes down. She directs that her boxes shall be sent to Oaklands by the cart; then, standing in the hall, overlooking the placing in the carriage of some few things from her room—presents to her—she sends a summons to the housekeeper, not deigning to give her a private audience; she, knowing that something is up, hurries to hear what it is.

Her obsequious husband stops in his going to and fro and pretence of being busy, to hear what this grand turnout may mean.

Then Agatha feels that retribution has begun for this snug couple, who made a good thing of her mother's weakness.

In a cold, indifferent voice, as if she were giving an everyday order, she says, "I sent for you, Mrs. Power, to tell you that your master and new mistress will be home this evening by the train arriving at Ware at 6.48. You will know what preparations to make. I will order the carriage to meet the train." Then she says to the husband, who is looking aghast, "Power, are all the things that were on my writing-table put in the carriage?"

"Yes, miss," he answers, staring at her as if he is daft.

Then, without another word, she goes out from her father's house, and drives off; Power too much asto-

nished to remember to close the carriage door after her, or too anxious to hear what his wife says to the astounding news, to waste a moment on her. The only satisfaction to be got from this wretched business has been the sight of Mrs. Power's face when she heard the words, "Your new mistress."

"She helped to shorten my mother's days, and it is only right she should suffer. How she will hate this new woman!" thinks Agatha.

She is made very welcome at Oaklands, and that soothes her a little.

Mrs. Scott misses Edith greatly, and is glad at the prospect of keeping Agatha with her for a time; and she is as virtuously indignant at this unseemly haste on Mr. Browne's part as even his daughter could desire.

"I always thought those long visits to town very mysterious," said Mrs. Scott, when lunch was over and the two were alone together, "yet I did not dream of his *marrying*. I wonder what she can be like. Young, of course. Why, how old must your father be? Sixty at least, I should say."

"Yes, sixty, I know; but I don't know exactly his age. I wonder what she will think of the bird-homes and the high walls and the other little odd ways. But there, what do I care what she thinks of anything? I shall soon have to decide what I shall do with myself. I don't see that I can make a home for myself here, even if a suitable house could be found, which can't be; and yet I shall not like to leave my people."

“Of course not; they would miss you dreadfully. But don’t bother about making up your mind yet awhile; stay here, and see how things work. You are not likely to meet; she is sure not to go to church, and the village won’t interest such as her, you may be sure.”

“You are always kind; but what will Mr. Scott think?”

“Oh, he will be glad. He has not been well—not in good spirits lately; and your being here will rouse him. He can’t bear contradiction, and that makes talking to him difficult,” Mrs. Scott adds, just as a hint to her clever friend.

“I know,” says Agatha; and the first smile that has appeared to-day lights up her face, that is only plain in repose. “Thank you for the hint. I will tread gently, and sit at his feet about stocks and shares. I want to know more of the money market, and this will be a grand opportunity to learn. I shall kill two birds that way.”

“You are so clever! That will be just the thing for everybody. You stay here and see how things fall out. I don’t for one moment suppose that she will be content long in such a quiet place. The novelty of being mistress of a big house will soon wear off, and she will want your father to take her away.”

“I hope so, I am sure.”

“No one will call on her.”

“I should think not. Even in our decent days callers weren’t encouraged.”

“Only the vicar persevered. He may go still—his duty, perhaps; and he has a lot of curiosity, and of course, like all men, he will try to say the best he can of a pretty woman. She is certain to be that.”

“Yes. I have sometimes thought that men would have every ugly woman improved off the face of the earth.”

“My dear Agatha!”—in a shocked voice.

“One would think so, to hear them talk; and perhaps, if they could judge from quite young babes of the charms, or want of charm, of the adult woman, a new form of infanticide would be common in England. People could keep the pretty babies and let the ugly die. Baby-farming would be profitable that way, and in the course of a century, say, we English would be a handsome race, and not overdone with women. That is quite a utilitarian idea, I am sure.”

“I know it is all a joke, but I don’t like such a possibility talked of; some one might take it up.”

“They can’t, my dear madam. Pretty babies so frequently grow up plain, and the other way about. Stop, though; I have an idea. A registry of the father’s and mother’s good points might be kept and their photographs, and a council of beauty-experts might decide. They would be quite as likely to be right as other experts.”

“But, Agatha, handsome men frequently marry ugly women. How do you account for that?”

“Money, my dear madam—money in ninety-nine

cases out of the hundred ; and my plan would prevent that, because it stands to reason that if there were no plain women, the money would be in the hands of pretty women. Ah! I talk like this, but I almost hate beauty when it goes with bad morals and is a snare. Why are we such slaves to it? But men are worse than we are, that is some consolation. The plain vicar is as bad as any one, I believe."

"Would you like him better if he were handsome?" asks Mrs. Scott, innocently.

"You think you have caught me there. No, I should not ; he is so feeble, with his own face and features. If he had backbone and fibre, will and purpose in him, I should think him good-looking."

"You have all that."

"*Too* much of it for a woman, most people would say, and so I am not good-looking."

"Sometimes you are very good-looking, and if—you won't mind what I am going to say, dear, I hope—you dressed quite like the rest of us, you would be more attractive still."

"And get my reward in an offer of marriage—from the vicar, we will say."

"You would do him good, and the parish."

"No, thank you. Even the plainest women, when they are not clods, have conceptions of a love they would inspire if they could ; and since I shall never get the equivalent of what I have to give, I will try to spread it abroad among mankind. I think I should like to work under Miss Robinson, at Portsmouth ; I

like soldiers and sailors, that is—if I am driven away from my own work.”

“I hope you will not be. Here is the vicar coming for tennis; it is too hot yet. I may tell him, may I not?”

CHAPTER XXIV.

LADY WADE is at Nice. It is April. She is a bird of passage. She is thinking of taking wing, but can't decide where she will go; and she is feeling lonesome.

Most of the winter has been spent at Cannes with Edith, Fairbrace being in constant attendance. Edith was recalled a week ago. Then her relations with Fairbrace became a little awkward, but he soon brought matters to a crisis by proposing. She refused him; and now she is not exactly repenting, but has got as far as wishing that he had let things go on awhile as they were. It was very convenient, and his post can't be filled in a hurry, especially now she is alone. She must be careful.

After Edith had left, and Fairbrace had been dismissed, Lady Wade found Cannes dull, and decided to try Nice. She is staying at Hotel de la Grand Bretagne. It is facing the sea, with the Public Garden between. She has chosen this hotel that she may hear the band play in the gardens without the bother of going out. When she is walking alone, it is unpleasant to be stared at.

She is frightfully bored, though Nice and the Mediterranean are fair to look on, and the sun shines brightly on them, lighting up the beautiful panorama all day long ; and she has health, wealth, and liberty, within limits.

She dines at the *table d'hôte*, which gets thinner day by day, for amusement. She sits next a genial old English general, who is a sort of corner-stone of the hotel ; he is the first to come in the season, and the last to leave. He likes talking to the pretty, piquant woman, and since she has sat by him, he has not once forsaken the hotel dinner for those of the Cercle Méditerranée. Anything is better than nothing, and she wishes she could ask the general to come to her room after dinner. With Edith it would have been possible. How she wishes Edith was with her !

She goes slowly to her room after dinner, pondering over the people she can ask to bear her company. To be reduced to a paid companion would seem stupid, yet in some ways it might be nicer.

She is just gaining her room, when coming towards her she sees a figure that strikes her as familiar. The face at first she fails to recognize under the disguise of a thick black beard ; but when the eyes meet hers, there can be no mistake. It is Captain Munro.

She stops, holds out her hand quite eagerly, and, with a pleased look as of one meeting a friend in a desert, says, "How is this? I thought you were in India."

This is the first of his country-women he has spoken

with since he landed at Brindisi, and that puts a little more cordiality in his manner of answering than is customary from him, as he says, "I am invalided home, and not at all sorry, I assure you. I hate everything about that country."

"You don't look very seedy, as much as I can see of you" (he chuckles softly behind his beard); "but I dare say you are not as strong as that beard makes you look." She opens the door of her room. "Won't you come in and rest? You can't think how refreshing it is to me to see an old friend. I have just come here, and know no one."

He had hesitated what to say to her invitation; wanted so to say "No" civilly, until she added in a pathetic way, "I know no one."

"You must tell me about India," she says, when they are comfortably seated opposite each other at the open window overlooking the Public Gardens.

"Must I?" he asks, looking ruefully at her. "I am not good at descriptions; and besides, I didn't see much of the country. We were at Fort William, near Calcutta, you know, all the time. I shall have to learn off a description of Calcutta and the natives from some book, if people are going to ask me questions. It will save a lot of trouble, don't you think so?"

"Certainly, if you can manage to learn a whole page. Learn one to-night, and, as a punishment for your laziness, I shall expect you to say it to me to-morrow."

"Lend me the book, Lady Wade, and try me; but

not for to-morrow. I have promised myself Monte Carlo for to-morrow ; lovely scenery, you know. Been there ? ”

“ Not this time. When we were at Cannes—I have been there all the winter with Edith Scott ; you remember her, of course—we said it would be easier and pleasanter to go to Monte Carlo from Nice, you know ; and so it would be, only I have no one to go with. Edith was sent for home in a hurry last week. Some boy in the village died, and that upset Mary, and made her ill, and Mrs. Scott wished Edith to go home. I am awfully sorry for myself ; I miss her sadly. I have no one to go out with, no one to speak to.” This is said very pensively : she not looking at him as if she were appealing to his sympathy, but out into the distance, as if she is compelled to speak out, but cannot bear to look at any one, and as if a word or look of sympathy would upset her calmness.

Captain Munro intuitively feels this. He pities Lady Wade deeply—he always did pity her. Now he wishes to turn the current of her thoughts. He does not exactly fear a scene, but he makes one impossible by saying, “ Won’t you go to Monte Carlo to-morrow ? I shall be glad to take care of you there, and will bring you back safely if you will trust yourself to me, even if your pocket is a little lighter. Of course you will want to try your luck ; every one does when they go to Monte Carlo.”

Lady Wade would like it immensely, and the idea of a little excitement chases away the momentary sadness. After some more talk, they finally settle the

time for the start the next morning, and part at length, mutually pleased to have come across each other.

That is the feeling over-night. But by the next morning Captain Munro's sentiments on that point have completely veered round. He thinks going to Monte Carlo with her will be a bore ; he will have to be tied to her all day. Meeting last night was a great nuisance ; it has let him in for this.

He strolls out to the post-office—a good step from his hotel, and on the unfashionable side of the river. There he finds an affectionately anxious note from Maggie, sent *poste restante* to Nice, on the chance of his getting it. It is an answer to a few hurried lines from him by the previous mail, telling her he had been awfully queer, and was still very seedy ; but he hoped to get away by the next mail—that he should probably go round by Nice, as it would be well to be out of the east winds, that might give him too nipping a reception if he came on to England yet.

There is an undertone of gladness running through Maggie's note of sympathy and anxiety, which at the last breaks out boldly.

“ Words cannot tell for me, dear, how glad I feel at the thought of seeing you so much sooner than I had dared to hope ; for I could never have dreamt of hoping for anything so dreadful as illness to bring you back, could I ? But now the worst being over before I knew that you were ill, I can rejoice, and I do rejoice with my whole being, though I am still anxious, still fearful, fearful that so much good—seeing you again, dearest—can come to me untouched. Take care of

yourself, not only for yourself, but for *ME*, and believe in my unalterable love,

“Yours ever,

“MAGGIE.

“P.S.—Please don't go to that dreadful Monte Carlo, dear. I have just read of another suicide there.”

He reads the letter with gratification. “How fond the little thing is of me,” he thinks! He smiles in a superior way when he gets to the footnote. Does she think I should ever be such a fool—not half tired yet of life? He decides to answer the letter at once. No, he won't; if he waits till to-night and then writes, it will assure her that he is still in the flesh after Monte Carlo. Absurd child!

The letter has sent a glow over him, expanded him. He does not feel now half as much distaste of meeting Lady Wade. He supposes she will be at *déjeûner*.

She is, with her bonnet on ready for the excursion. She gives him a friendly nod as he enters, and he at once makes for a vacant chair by her side. There are more chairs vacant than occupied, and the two are cut off from the other people, who are chiefly Americans.

“It was so stupid sitting here with no one to talk to,” says Lady Wade.

“Yes; awkward for you. Isn't any one coming to stay with you?”

“I am reviewing my unattached relations and friends; but it seems hardly worth while sending for any one, as I shall soon leave here for somewhere nearer England—I don't know where yet. Can you

tell me of any place that I should like? Making up one's own mind is so difficult;" and she looks up at him in a charmingly helpless way, quite new in Lady Wade.

He had always thought her a shade too self-contained and dictatorial. "But a woman who has had a husband ever since she was out of the school-room must feel lost by herself, even if the man was a brute, like Sir Percival," he thinks.

They get on together capitally at *déjeuner*. He is beginning to feel quite at home with her. She has enlisted his sympathies entirely now. And when a woman gets that hold on Captain Munro, she is a good way on the road to empire.

They drive together to the station.

He goes the whole length of the train, peering into the carriages to find one without occupants.

"Pleasanter to get a carriage to ourselves this weather," he remarks to his companion.

When they are seated, their positions in the carriage are exactly the same as those they occupied that night when he came to her rescue at Victoria, when Sir Percival failed to keep his appointment.

They both recall that night. "He was awfully kind," thinks Lady Wade.

"I hope she will do better for herself next time," thinks Munro.

"Will you dine with me to-night, Captain Munro?" asks Lady Wade, to break the momentary silence incidental to taking possession of a carriage, when the appearance is slightly *tête-à-tête-ish* and suspicious.

“And will you choose the place? Monte Carlo or our Hotel—rather more fun, perhaps, at Monte Carlo. What do you think? If you vote for Monte Carlo, I must not empty my purse at the tables; so that you may be the means of saving me from a taste that would end me as the fortieth suicide this season.”

“Thanks; I shall be pleased to dine with you, and as I should not like *your* death at my door, I shall certainly say let it be at Monte Carlo. But I don't believe in all the papers say about suicides—trumped up.”

“Do you think so, really? I don't.”

“Worse gambling by far goes on at Nice and other places. You can't lose money you haven't got at Monte Carlo, you know, as you can at these other places.”

“But how, if Monte Carlo is the comparatively harmless place that you would make it seem, do you account for these numerous suicides?”

“Perhaps people go to Monte Carlo with borrowed money—money that no one has lent, you know—and losing that, make an end of themselves.”

“Ah, Fairbrace said the suicides were people of a lower rank, mostly the impulsive *canaille*. I suppose he would call it 'bad form.'”

“The fool! I beg your pardon.”

“Pray don't trouble.”

“Has he been at Cannes? I don't like that fellow.”

Somehow now Munro has taken Lady Wade under his charge, he resents the notion of that fool dancing attendance on her and trying to be civil to her.

Lady Wade, who is perfectly versed in male idiosyncrasies, is delighted at this symptom.

“He was there all the winter,” she says, “and really ministered to our amusement and comfort in an unusually selfish manner, never to be forgotten.

Munro makes no answer to this panegyric.

The train stops at Villefranche. He puts his head out of the window, not to look at the harbour, but on the platform, to prevent any one looking into the carriage to see if there is room in it for more passengers. The ruse succeeds, and the train moves off again.

“If I were to ask you,” says Lady Wade, after they have made some remarks in praise of the scenery, “how the Queen—your Queen—liked India, would you class that question under the head of information about India?” She is looking at him in a comic bantering manner, that is very fetching.

He smiled in spite of himself. He hasn’t quite forgiven her.

“I will answer any question,” he replies. “What I don’t like, don’t you know? is to be expected to be learned about India. I hate the country energetically and took not the slightest interest in anything in it, or in anything to do with it.”

“You have said good-bye to it, then, for ever, I suppose, with all the delight of a schoolboy leaving school for good. I should have done so, I know; but I forgot you were too seedy to be delighted then. I was half thinking of myself, and how I felt when I got away from some places last summer, where I had been paying duty visits. I hate duty visits.”

“Duty visits;” how he hates them too! He is in sympathy with her again now, and ready to be confidential up to a certain point; he never quite turns himself out to any one, not even to himself. “I am awfully afraid,” he says, looking full at her again, “that I shall have to go back. I can’t afford to give up my profession yet.”

“But, Captain Munro, India does not agree with you. Remember how ill you have been. Surely health is more than money; and if you lose your life, of what good is money?” and she looks at him with affectionate interest that is touching and flattering.

“It is true; but——,” then he stops.

“But what?” she asks, smiling sweetly on him.

He smiles faintly, and his wonderfully expressive eyes are saying much more than these words. “The ‘but’ simply means,” he explains, “that I really can’t afford to retire yet. My tastes are expensive, I know, and I don’t improve in that way as I grow older. I could not live on a small income, settle down in a cheap country village, and have to look at every penny before spending it. I should be driven to Monte Carlo for excitement at last, just as I seemed to be learning to live without it, you know.”

“That is a terrible picture. But why is that the alternative? People *sometimes* marry women who have money, you know?” she says lightly. But her colour will deepen, and, of course, she feels that it has.

“I can’t flatter myself that rich women would be ready to take me; besides, I couldn’t marry for money—alone.”

There that subject drops.

"It is a dangerous bit of line, and the tunnel is horrible," remarks Lady Wade, just as they are entering it.

Munro closes the window next them, then goes to the other side of the compartment to perform the same office there. Coming back, he seats himself by the side of Lady Wade, instead of going to his old position facing her. "You aren't nervous, are you?" he asks. "Why, this is nothing to the Monte Carlo tunnel. No chance of a collision here, don't you know? and it is that that makes the danger."

"I am very stupid sometimes, and am afraid without knowing why," she says in a low, awed tone, very different from her usual rather careless voice.

"It is really as safe here as anywhere else," he says persuasively, at the same time taking her hand in his in a protecting way, as one might do to give confidence in the dark to a frightened child.

She does not attempt to withdraw it.

When the light of day begins to come in upon them, she breathes a sigh of relief, and takes away her hand. He gets up, and goes to the far window to open it, saying as he comes back, "The heat is stifling, shut up in these tunnels." When he has ventilated the carriage, he reseats himself opposite to her, and makes a remark on the intense heat of last summer in India, etc.

* * * * *

In the most serenely smiling spot in all Europe, where the only fault the hypercritical can find is, that

it looks too well-cared for, owes too much to art where art is uncalled for—unassisted nature in these regions being boundlessly prodigal—Munro and Lady Wade wile away the day pleasantly enough.

They stroll about awhile, looking at this view and at that place ; then they go to the Casino.

After the usual slight preliminary forms, they are admitted to the privilege of gambling, if so disposed. In the spacious, lofty, handsome rooms there is a decorous, almost imposing silence, only broken by the click of the revolving wheels, the short sentences of the presiding croupiers, and their own foot-falls on the highly polished floor.

They stop a few minutes here to look at one or two of the tables, presided over by croupiers who look as if they never go to bed, but take the little sleep they get at the tables ; then they proceed to the inner sanctum, devoted to more serious play. There the perfect stillness, coupled with the dim light, is decidedly oppressive, especially to Lady Wade, who is brimming over with remarks, while she feels that the sound of her voice might act as an electric shock on those impassive votaries bending over their gold, and watching intently the cards.

Munro knows the game, and watches it. Then he sees the bored expression of his companion's face, smiles, and looks towards the door, as much as to say, "Have you had enough of this?" She bends her head, and they at once go back to the comparatively noisy, though really quiet, outer *salle* devoted to roulette.

There she becomes animated. "I am going to try my luck, you know. I wonder at which table there will be a vacant seat first? I should like to sit down and watch."

"The people in the seats are expected to play, you know. Shall we stop here? One table is as likely as the other. I dare say you will soon get a seat here."

This is said as a hint to any man seated who likes to take it. But money-making has driven out politeness, perhaps has even stopped the men's ears, as no one offers his seat to the lady.

Yet here no one looks especially intent on the game, no face wears an anxious look; but then, it is early in the day.

"Do you understand the game at all?" he asks. Then Munro explains it, and points out to her how some people take account of the numbers that turn up by pricking a card. There is a woman standing opposite them who is doing it.

They watch for a little while the revolving wheel; then they both fancy numbers, and stake on them. After a time she gets a vacated chair, and he bends over and places the five-franc pieces for both.

This goes on for some little time, neither of them doing much one way or the other. At last there is a run of luck against Lady Wade.

"You had better come away," he says.

"Oh, let me try once more; I won't be tempted any more then." She loses, looks up to him as much as to say, "Once more?"

"We haven't been into the concert-room—finest orchestra in the world, they say," is his answer to the look.

She sits a minute irresolute; then gets slowly up, and they walk away.

"If you lived at Monte Carlo, you would develop into an out-and-out gambler. I must not bring you again."

She laughs. "It is awfully fascinating, I must admit; and I felt as long as I went on there was a chance of getting my money back. I only wanted to get my money back. I am sure that is not gambling, but contrary to the spirit of it. It was my spirit of economy, you know, that held me in that chair."

"You are partly Irish, aren't you? That accounts for the favourable light you put on your actions. Now I consider that I have paid for a stall to hear the finest music in the world, don't you know?"

"Well, that is canny, certainly. You are Scotch, are you not—Lowland Scotch?"

"You would beat me at repartee."

"Thanks many; and nothing else?"

"Yes; you will know more about this music than I shall."

It is rather crowded. They have just entered the magnificent concert-room with its exquisite decorations. It is filled throughout with crimson-upholstered gilt fauteuils.

"We shall hear as well near the door, and it will be cooler. There are two seats," she says.

They seat themselves at the back, near the door. People coming in and out—and the audience is a shifting one—must needs pass in front of them.

They listen with enjoyment to the music, but neither of them bring great knowledge or critical appreciation to the hearing of it. If one is fairly sensitive, one may be powerfully acted on by music without knowing a note of it. So it is now with Captain Munro.

In the dangerous proximity of a fascinating woman, the music of the silvery-stringed band seems to touch chords of passion, and awake voluptuous sensations that give brilliancy to his eyes and quickness to his pulse. The whole atmosphere of the place is exciting and upsetting. The music ceases. He notices that a black-bearded, satyr-like foreigner — Italian or French, he can't tell which, they are so much alike here—turns round to stare impertinently at Lady Wade.

“Change seats with me?” he says.

They exchange seats. He is nearer the man now than she is, and his look is so black and fierce that the man ought to have taken warning, but did not. He still turns round and stares at her in a most offensive manner.

“Shall we go?” he asks.

“I should like to hear the next thing.”

“But that scoundrel is so offensive.”

She looks at his face, and sees how terribly wrath he is. “But in a minute the music will begin, and then it will be all right. I don't mind as *you* are

with me," she says. "If you talk to me, he will understand."

But Munro cannot take the impertinence coolly. He has just come from a country where Englishmen give themselves airs of superiority, where, if he has found himself in a crowd of natives, he has waved his cane to and fro in front of him to clear a passage, and has not yet found his level. Besides, there is this excuse for him. He knows the kind of sirens that haunt this concert-room, and he is burning with indignation that Lady Wade should be mistaken for one of them.

As he is too much upset to start small talk, she begins by remarking on the people near. "What a splendid creature that fair woman in black is? She seems to be alone. Not a lady, of course?"

"No"—sententiously.

"How that very French-looking little black woman looks at you!"

He can stand it no longer. "*This* isn't a fit place for you. It is all very well up there in front, but the people here don't come for music."

The orchestra strikes up. "We will go directly this is over," she says. Then they set themselves to listen, but he no longer enjoys the music. That black-looking man, who is constantly leering round, has put him out of harmony with it.

Directly the piece is over, almost before the last chord has died away, Munro rises, and hurries his charge away out of the building; but he does not recover his equanimity till they are well away from the place.

“Shall we dine here?” Lady Wade had asked as they were passing the Hotel de Londres, which is facing the Casino.

She is stout of figure, and not a great pedestrian.

“No; don’t go there. We will get further away from all the crew.”

“He was very horrid, certainly—very; but forget him now. Think of that vivacious black-eyed Frenchwoman, who made eyes at you, that will be far pleasanter.”

“I hate black eyes. The little——”

“Don’t use bad language, sir; and don’t tell fibs. Turn your thoughts to dinner. I am getting hungry—aren’t you? I suppose we are both too fastidious, or rather, you are too fastidious to take me to dine at *table d’hôte* in this wicked place.”

“I certainly am. I could not hear of your doing it.”

She likes these airs of proprietorship, from this now ultra-particular man, where she is concerned. When she knew him before, she had been piqued by his indifference, and had fancied he was spoons on that dark girl. She wonders if he really dislikes black eyes.

“Then we must have a private room, of course; but I must have a charming outlook if I am not to look on my fellow-creatures.”

“We will see to that. The room is my affair, you know.”

“Certainly not, Captain Munro. I invited you to dine with me. That assumes a house of some sort on my side. You accepted. Don’t you know that I am

quite a rich woman now? There is no big place to keep up. But, of course, you don't know that Crinton is let (he did know it from Mayer), and the people, rich dust-contractors, I think, want to buy. I can *never* go back. What would you do? Perhaps you think it strange I should ask you. To me sometimes it seems strange and unnatural that there are none of my own people whose advice I should care to ask."

All this is extremely flattering. Munro is not conceited, but such delicately scented incense is not disagreeable to his nostrils.

"I do not think it strange, and I shall be very glad to give you the best advice I can. Anyhow, if I can't give good advice, you can talk it over with me presently, and then you may find out yourself what you would like best. Will this hotel do? There is a pretty view the other side. I will ask for a room there. Of course you will have the whole *table d'hôte* dinner up."

Presently they are seated at a window commanding a more pleasing prospect than the sight of all the humanities of Monte Carlo put together. Their talk is desultory through dinner and its constant succession of plates. After it there is no time for their consultation.

"We must not stay for the last train," Captain Munro says. "There is always a queer lot by that—your friend, for instance—and a horrible crush, possibly."

At the station they find a tolerable crowd of people. They have scarcely a minute before the train comes

up. As luck would have it, the bearded foreigner has not waited for the last train, as Munro predicted.

He has been amusing himself peering into the faces and under the hats of every one on the platform. He must have seen Lady Wade as she came out. Absinthe, or some other doubtful deed-inspiring drink, had given him Dutch courage. Munro has not seen him.

"Keep *close* behind me. We shall get along better," so says Munro. So he goes on his empty carriage quest. He looks round once or twice and sees that she is near, then proceeds with his search. He finds an empty compartment near the engine, puts his hand on the door, then looks round for Lady Wade, expecting to find her at his elbow. She is not far off; but between them is the vile wretch of the Casino, who has planted himself in front of her, and is jabbering something she is too frightened to understand.

It is the work of a second only for Munro to push the fellow forcibly on one side, with an impetus that sends him reeling and for a moment damps his courage, and to hurry the terrified woman into the carriage, in the doorway of which he plants himself on guard. An official just strolls up in an indifferent manner. He gets a big tip, and is quite satisfied.

Rendered brave by fire-water and the conviction that he is a much more powerful man than his late opponent, who got his advantage by a surprise, the ruffian decides to force his way into the forbidden carriage to spoil sport. He looks daggers at Munro, screws up his courage, puts his foot on the step, and

tries to push Munro back and force himself in. Lady Wade screams. Munro plants a well-directed blow somewhere in the region of the third button of the obnoxious man's waistcoat, which sends the wearer trembling back on to the platform.

The train was on the point of starting. Apparently no thin-skinned citizen saw the fracas; only the not over-squeamish officials of the principality were witnesses, men who know full well their duty of hushing up all unpleasant business, and of being blind to things they are not forced to see. In this instance they carry out the policy of the Casino proprietor, by starting the train before rendering assistance to the floored man, whom Munro discerns furiously gesticulating as the train carries them away out of his reach.

His next task of soothing his alarmed companion is not uncongenial either. After he has got over the fear that her upset nerves may relieve themselves by a hysterical outburst, he finds the journey as pleasant as any part of the day has been.

She is so terribly afraid that the Monte Carlo people may telegraph a description of her friend and champion to Nice, and that he may be arrested when they alight there.

He tells her it is not likely; that the Monte Carlo people hush up all scandals. "Don't you know, dear"—the "dear" slips out unpremeditatedly, and his face flushes thereat, and he goes on rapidly with his speech—"that it would do them no end of harm if this fellow's scandalous behaviour to you got into the

papers? Why, the whole English colony of the South would resent it."

"How horrible if it should get into the papers! What would people think of me?"

"Don't make yourself unhappy about that, pray. We can easily stop that, don't you know?"

"I suppose it was indiscreet going with you to that place; but I looked on you as an old friend, you know."

"Of course; and will this ruffian's scandalous behaviour make you treat me differently?"

"Oh no! How can I think less of you? But it has frightened me dreadfully, and I don't quite know what I am saying, I think. What should I have done without you and your courage?"

"Oh, that was nothing!" He feels uncomfortable under this praise.

"You say you saw the man move? You are sure he isn't dead?"

"Quite sure. Why, he shook his fist at the train. It's not the first row he has been in, I wager."

"If you had killed him!" and Lady Wade again looks troubled.

"He isn't worth another thought. I shall be jealous, you know, if you say another word. I shall think you are afraid for him."

She laughs. "I am thinking of you. Had you not better leave me and get into another carriage at Villefranche?"

"And why, pray?"

"Don't you know? Why, if they have telegraphed

our description to Nice, and they are looking out for two people like us to step out of a carriage, they will be baffled, you know."

"Nonsense!"

"I don't think it is nonsense. I think it a clever idea. Won't you fall into it?"

"Certainly not. I am not going to leave you until you are at Number 90—isn't it?—Hotel de la Grand Bretagne. Is it likely I should trust you alone at a station at night after this? Ridiculous!"

"But if you are marched off to prison, I shall be left."

"Don't make too sure; you may be marched off with me; don't you know?"

"Oh!" and she looks unmistakably frightened.

He bends forward and takes her hand. "Forgive me; it was my nonsense."

She takes her hand away in pretended indignation, and then a small play follows, which ends in forgiveness.

CHAPTER XXV.

THERE is no sequel to the Monte Carlo fracas in the sense of incarceration and fines ; but for a day or two there is great fear in Lady Wade's mind, which requires much and constant driving out on the part of Captain Munro. She had proposed leaving Nice the next morning, but he had talked her out of that.

"We can make excursions by carriage for a few days, if you are afraid to walk out here," he said.

"That will really suit me best, after all. I haven't quite got up my strength yet, don't you know?"

And so it falls out. Each day for about a week they drive somewhere : one day to Mentone, another to Antibes ; they even ascend Mont Chauve. Lady Wade has never so thoroughly explored the neighbourhood of any of her abiding-places before. She is a piquant companion ; is never long in the same mood, and that divests these long *tête-à-tête* drives of even a suspicion of satiety, and Munro scarcely knows how he really stands with her.

Munro's letter to Maggie has not yet got itself written. He does not know what to say to her. He

must write soon, of course ; but she does not know for certain that he is in Europe, so there is not much harm done ; and indeed these drives, which he wouldn't take without a companion—they would be so stupid—are setting him up, and she ought to be glad of that. He has come home for his health. He blinds himself to the goal which he is nearing in many ways. His excuses are manifold. There is the absolute necessity of his staying to look after his friend, till some of her own people join her. Maggie is all right where she is—does not want looking after ; this friend does. He tries to include them both now equally under the generic term of "friend," and so shut his eyes to anything beyond. Of course he will write now very soon ; he always tells himself that. Since he went to India, he has used himself almost to confessing to Maggie ; by letter he has told her most things. She must be told something about Lady Wade. She won't like it. She would rather hear he had been losing money at Monte Carlo, which he would have been sure to do if he had not her to go out with. A man must do something ; but women are so unreasonable. So he argues, when he is alone, and reflection cannot be altogether put on one side.

* * * * *

In a way Captain Munro is saved what all through his life he has sought to avoid—a decision.

It is the third day after the Monte Carlo fracas, the family at Oaklands have just met for lunch. Agatha is there. Edith has just come in from riding to Ware.

She has a letter from her friend, Lady Wade, which she proceeds soon to read.

When she comes to the account of the day at Monte Carlo and the disturbance—the letter is written the morning after, when Lady Wade is still excited and anxious, and is full of it—she reads it aloud to her mother and the rest.

Poor Maggie! But fortunately no one notices her; they are all too much absorbed in the exciting news. Alas for poor Maggie, when the bomb explodes, shattering all her golden hopes, killing all the promise of her life, all that has made it fair to her! Could any one, before it came, have given her the choice between that and death, sharp and quick to the body by the explosion of a material bomb, not one half-second would she have hesitated, but would have welcomed death had she known it to be the alternative of, the safeguard from, this.

Every word of the letter is driven into her brain, never to fade from it. A weight presses on her heart that is sickening. She cannot eat another morsel.

As soon as possible she will take refuge in her own room, and try to think it over calmly. Now she must try to appear indifferent. No one must suspect her of caring. He is not worthy. She ought not to care, she tells herself; and at that thought a shadow of indignation stirs within her that tides her slightly over the shock now. When she is in her room, she does not give way to a storm of passionate weeping: she is trembling in every limb from the shock and from indignant grief. But she tries to think calmly

over what she has heard. She tries to be impartial in her mind's judgment of him, though her inmost feeling knows him to be false in spirit to her.

Yes, it is plain, quite plain ; he is too much wrapt up in Lady Wade to find time to write her just a few lines to tell her he has got so far on his way home, and say how he is feeling. And he knows—knows too well, alas !—how anxious she is about him. He does not write, because he dare not. While she has lived in the thought of soon seeing him, he has been losing all care for her. There is but one thing left to her—it will save her from utter humiliation—and she must do it—send him a complete release ; the breaking of the bonds shall come from her. She smiles bitterly as she thinks of that poor salve to her pride, when it is he who has actually stretched them so that they *must* break.

Then a hard expression comes into her face as she thinks. “ He wants me to do it, *the coward!* He knows that if he is silent, and I hear of this jaunt to Monte Carlo through others, that I shall write to him as I intend writing—as he wishes I should write.”

* * * * *

“ DEAR JOHN,

“ What am I to think of your silence ? If you have had time for a whole day at Monte Carlo with Lady Wade, you have had time to write to me in answer to my letter of anxious inquiries. There can be but one solution of this. You have ceased to care for me in the way that you once did ; not an easy

thing to tell a girl, I admit, but I have more than once begged you to tell me if you changed. Not long ago, at the new year, I wrote these words, you will remember, if you have any memory now for anything in the past—*my* past.

“‘I could forgive a man changing towards me so much better if he would candidly tell me of it at once. Indeed, I do not think I could ever forgive a man who sought me to feel the change by slow degrees. If time has worked a change in you, I offer you this way of telling it—put your initials to the letter you write me after you feel the change, I shall understand.’

“I felt that I could not live dragging a weight of doubt at my heels day by day. The weight is there; if you cannot entirely take it away, do not write to me again. *Friendship* is not possible between us. We will make no pretence.

“Yours, etc.

“MARGARET A. M‘ARTHUR.”

* * * * *

Even while finding excuses for himself, Captain Munro feels the truth of every word of this letter. But he thinks he has a right to be angry with the tone of it—it is a hard taking-to-task letter, not an affectionate word in it. Presently he tells himself that a woman who could write such a calm, dictatorial kind of letter about such a trifle is not the kind of woman that it would be pleasant to go through life with. But he is dissatisfied with himself and with her; dissatisfied with circumstances, with everything but Lady Wade.

Whoever may be in fault, she certainly is not. Nothing of this would have happened if Edith had not been recalled ; but she was recalled, and Lady Wade was left in a quite unprotected state ; and what could he do in the circumstances but look after her ? Any man not quite a brute would have done the same. She is really very much to be pitied. But women are always so confoundedly jealous of one another. Maggie ought to see it in its proper light. But he takes no steps towards showing it to her in that light.

He thinks that her letter requires consideration before he answers it—of course he intends to answer it. Very likely in a few days Maggie of herself will repent, and will write again. It will certainly be best to wait. She deserves to be punished for writing such a letter.

Lady Wade does not find him a very genial companion on the day of Maggie's letter. It is Sunday. They go to church together in the morning ; they have *table d'hôte déjeuner* side by side, where they discuss what they will do after.

He proposes that they shall go into the gardens, to hear the band instead of having their usual drive. He has a half-defined feeling in proposing this that he is acting meritoriously in trying to avoid a complete *tête-à-tête* with Lady Wade.

They go to the gardens ; but things don't please him there. The children are noisy, and the people not to his taste. Then they stroll on the Promenade des Anglais ; that is no better—" Just like a fair."

" As you don't like anything, we will go back to the

hotel," says Lady Wade, now decidedly piqued. "I have letters to write."

She goes to her room, and he, in a worse frame of mind than before, starts off for a quick walk by himself. An exceedingly unwise proceeding under a hot sun, as he ought to have remembered with his Eastern experience.

Old General Maberly, who has dined seldom at the hotel since Munro has monopolized Lady Wade, is dining to-night, and he has no cause to complain of being over looked by the younger man.

She is charming in her manner to him. There is just that shade of coquetry in it that is so especially flattering to an old man, telling him as it does that he is still worth a woman's wiles.

The old fellow does his best to improve his opportunity, and brings out some of his old rusting weapons to the encounter. She is much too practised a coquette to neglect Munro completely, that would look like pique; she only wishes to make him feel that he is not in the least indispensable to her. In fact, to-night she finds the general more interesting.

Dinner is nearly at an end, the ices are being handed round. Suddenly Munro rises from his chair. Lady Wade looks round, and is alarmed to see his pallid face; she also notices at a glance that his hand is grasping tightly the back of his chair for support.

"You are ill," she says in an alarmed tone, half rising from her seat to go to his assistance.

But he has taken the arm of a *garçon*, who had come to him.

"It isn't much," he says. "The heat;" and he has moved away before she can decide what to do.

"Is your friend subject to these attacks?" asks the general.

"He has not had one before to my knowledge." She does not wish him to discover how little she knows of her shadow, and feels tempted to copy the *Punch* cooks when the boots of a Guardsman are discovered under a table. If she had not been so worried, she would certainly make the old fellow believe him to be her cousin. "He has just come from India, invalided, you know; and the heat to-day has been too much for him," is what she actually says.

"Indeed? He should be cautious. Just come from India! I was in India ten years. Lucky fellow to have you to meet him here."

Lady Wade does not explain that the meeting is accidental; why should she? She only wishes that dinner would come to an end. She is most anxious about Munro, but her very anxiety makes her more careful than is usual with her of conventionalities.

As she leaves the *salle*, she meets Henri, the garçon, who tells her that Captain Munro is in his room. She goes to hers, finds her maid absent at dinner. Then she rings the bell, that ought to be answered by her maid, or *femme de chambre*.

No one comes. The bells are electric, and the servants have a trick of disconnecting them while they are at this their most important meal of the whole day. Lady Wade does not know this.



She rings once more ; waits a little while in a ferment of patience and anxiety.

She can wait no longer. He is ill, she knows. He may have fainted up there by himself. Why should she be debarred from an act of common humanity, by that bug-bear conventionality? She never has been its slave, and she never will be.

She takes a bottle of *eau de Cologne* and her dressing-bag flasks of *eau de vie*.

Thus appointed, she gives a very faint tap-tap, at his door.

No answer. She is exceedingly alarmed ; her volatile thoughts leap to the worst conclusion.

Rap-tap—louder this time.

“*Mi est la?*” comes from Munro, who does not speak French like a native.

“Are you better? Would you like some brandy?” reaches him faintly through the door.

“It is awfully good of you to take so much trouble,” says Munro, opening his door, “but I don’t know that I want brandy. It was only an attack of faintness. I am better now. Won’t you come in and rest a minute? The stairs are trying.”

“I was obliged to come up ; you frightened me so. I don’t like you to be up here alone, when you are ill, you know. Won’t you go down with me to the salon? I won’t rest, thanks.” There is a tender, almost piteous, look of entreaty in her face that he has never seen in it before, or would have thought possible in it.

“I am not ill, you know. The heat, coming on over-fatigue, did it. As you did not condescend to

amuse me, I had leisure to find it overpowering," he says lightly, but with a tender, reproachful look in his eyes. He is very much touched by her coming up to him, laden with her woman's remedies. "Certainly; I will come to your room," he adds. "One's own society is not always the most agreeable. Let me carry one bottle."

"Won't you let me leave them? Do. You may be glad of them in the night."

"What, take your *eau de Cologne*? I thought a lady never felt safe without it just under her hand."

"You are very clever and *experienced*, of course, but you don't know everything about us. I shall have to prove that you don't know me yet, by leaving this."

"Shall I ever?" he asks meaningly.

"Taking this"—she holds the silver-gilt stoppered bottle towards him—"may help you."

As he takes it, he says, "It will remind me, at least, that you can be very kind sometimes."

She turns from the door. In a second he overtakes her, and they go down together to her room.

There she makes him lie down on a couch. "I know that people should lie down for faintness," she had insisted.

"But I have got over the faint feeling now."

"You think so—I do not. You are to do as I tell you this evening. You are an invalid, and I am going to take care of you;" and she seats herself on a low chair by him.

The room is not lighted from within; there is sufficient light to talk by from the lamps of the square

and of the hotel entrance. They both like artificial twilight. A distant murmur of music comes from somewhere in the hotel ; it is sufficient to take from pauses any awkwardness. One might be supposed, and might fancy one's self, pausing to listen to it.

"Now, tell me," she says, "what induced you to do such a mad thing as go for that long walk—quick, too, you have owned—in the broiling sun? If you wanted particularly on this special afternoon to see any place, you should have driven."

"But driving alone is so stupid, when you are being driven, don't you know?"

"Is walking alone any better?"

"Much."

"But you have not answered me."

"I will answer you by a question. What made you shut yourself up to write letters on this special afternoon, eh?"

"Letters must be written some time."

"But why on this special afternoon? You see what has come of it."

"Don't be so unkind."

"I could never be unkind to *you*. We have never, don't you know, been able to settle on the best thing for you to do with yourself." He takes her hand. "Don't you think"—and he raises himself from the couch by his other hand, as he continues—"that the kindest thing you can do is to take care of me, and keep me from going back to that horrible country? You see I can't take care of myself."

"Indeed you can't. Of course, as you put it in

that way, I can't very well say 'no'—can I? Women are so unselfish, as you have often said."

Lytton somewhere says, speaking of widows, "There is no dainty so flavourless as a heart warmed up again." That depends; a *salmi* should be a most palate-tickling *plat*.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE Christian religion, taught by the Church, is a powerful auxiliary to the laws of gravitation. It often stops the miserable and the afflicted from taking the law into their own hand, and flying off into space, when they find the world too hot, or too cold, or too hard for them.

The demon of suicide hovers now over the outwardly smiling Oaklands, and tempts more than one inmate with its insidious whisperings.

The secret, guarded closely, of Mr. Scott's increasing irritability is losses—heavy and continued losses—by speculation.

Nothing that he has touched these last twelve months has prospered; and all day, and sometimes all night long, he sees ruin before him, and, what is far worse than ruin, disgrace.

His daughters, as Miss Gore had hinted to Maggie, are entitled to a sum approximating on £500 a year each, when they come of age. Their father is one trustee; the old family lawyer, Mr. Horsley, the other.

He (Mr. Horsley) is old and crotchety, and his business faculties are getting dim ; his partner has recently died, and he won't receive a successor. Consequently, when Mr. Scott, who has always been in favour with the old man, cleverly proposes that he shall transfer his trusteeship in his lifetime to an old friend of his, a retired officer, to save himself and his executors trouble, he willingly agrees to do so.

This friend is no other than Captain White, whom Australia and the Cape did not agree with. He has sneaked back to England, as soon as he could manage the passage-money, on seeing in a chance paper the announcement of his aunt's death. He dare not openly make inquiries for her family lawyers, so consults the will at Somerset House. Mr. Scott, who is passing, recognizes him as he comes out, looking exceedingly crestfallen by the discovery that sundry Homes benefit—the Home for Dogs and Cats largely—with her “cat of a maid,” in his aunt's property, to the exclusion of every one else. An unaccustomed feeling of pity for a poor “out-at-elbows devil” prompts Mr. Scott to speak to him. He gives him lunch, and while they are discussing it, and he is hearing an account more or less true of Captain White's colonial experiences, the idea comes into his head that this man may be useful to him. He does not lose sight of him metaphorically, and he helps him materially.

Captain White at once falls into the notion of becoming joint trustee with Mr. Scott. The fact is, Mr. Scott had said in proposing it, “My daughters, by their

aunt's will, are not to know anything of this until they, or at least the eldest, comes of age ; for of course her sister will make a shrewd guess then that she will get the same. Now, if I were to ask what one would call a family friend to act, this money would be likely to get wind through the wife or daughters, before the prescribed time."

In his interview with the old man, Captain White had pulled himself together, and had passed muster as a gentleman of position and integrity. In proper legal course he succeeds Mr. Horsley as trustee. That arranged, a transference of all moneys from the old legal securities set forth in the will to others "paying a better rate" of interest, as Mr. Scott explains, goes on briskly.

When Captain White has served his purpose, Mr. Scott, who has been preparing his mind for settling in Texas, delicately offers to find him a good sum of money for the venture. He is ostentatiously careful to have a perfectly legal acknowledgment of the loan from the captain, as he thinks that his holding such a document will deter him from ever looking him up, or even venturing back to England—"Where he has no ties *now*," as Captain White says, in a maudlin manner, at the end of a dinner at Liverpool, whither Mr. Scott has kindly accompanied him, to make sure of his leaving the country.

But with all Mr. Scott's mighty influx of funds, his financial prospects do not brighten. An odd kind of sentimental rectitude withholds him yet from touching what he calls "Mary's money." About Edith's

he had few twinges of compunction. She has not behaved as a daughter should.

It is a sultry, storm-brooding night. With Mr. Scott things are at their worst. To-morrow is settling day; to-night he must decide if he shall deposit the other securities—Mary's—or blow his brains out.

He has drunk much at dinner, and has managed to put off thought till the night. He cannot sleep a wink. At last he gets up, and goes to his dressing-room, but he fears if he paces there he may disturb his wife. Besides, in the library he will have writing materials and other things at hand. He gets into his dressing-gown and goes forth. To get to the staircase he has to pass his daughter Mary's room. He stops a minute to think of her with fondness—the one creature who really loves him, freshly and deeply, and who never shrinks from him as his wife sometimes does, he thinks bitterly. He does not remember that his wife sees him when he is far gone in drink, but that he saves his daughter the degrading sight.

No; he won't risk bringing his little daughter to beggary; but he must give her a last kiss, if possible.

He turns the handle softly; he is not sure if she locks her door at night. No; it opens and he creeps in, going on tiptoe, as well as a man in slippers can.

There is a night-light burning. Mary, who is awake, sees him, and says in some alarm, "Is anything the matter?"

Surprised, he has to invent an excuse—not a bad one as it chances. “It sounded, as I passed your door, as if you were ill,” he says.

Then she breaks out into bitter weeping, and in answer to his anxious questioning says, “Oh, it is so dreadful to wake in the night” —sob—“and think that by one’s own selfishness” —sob— “one has sacrificed life” —sob—“that poor boy’s.”

“My child, don’t cry so;” and he comes near and pats her on the shoulder, awkwardly enough, but with compassionate intent. “It can do no good, you know, and you did not think of what might follow; and *really*, if the boy had not been very delicate, it would not have followed. He was a good boy, and, as the vicar said, he is happy now.”

“But death to me is *so* dreadful. I saw him dead—his face shrunken, yet rigid—dead, not knowing anything. I see him every night, always with the same inscrutable look in his face; and I think if it had not been for my wanting those lilies, he would be alive now, well and warm, and happier far than I am.”

As she says this with awe-stricken accents, as if she sees that death that she describes, he pictures what this tender soul would feel by day as well as night, if she were to see, or even picture, her father like that—but worse—the mark of his own deed upon him. And his hereafter—what of that? and he trembles. There is not even Christian burial for the suicide—and Mr. Scott has always been a slave to forms—unless he be of unsound mind, and by no flimsy fiction can that be said of him.

His purpose, through his daughter's pictured anguish, is utterly shaken ; but what of the other course ?

Without a second's premeditation, he puts this question to her : " If you had money, Mary, and you thought that by giving it all away to some one you loved—we will say to me, for instance—that you could do a great service, what would you do ? "

" How can you ask ? " and the old bright Mary begins to revive. " Why, don't you know I should be delighted to give every farthing ? Why, dad dear, I think I could be happy again. If I had money and you wanted it, I would give the clothes off my back. "

" Thank you, darling. I am not joking when I tell you that in saying that so heartily, you have as good as given me thousands. Truly. Think of that when next you lie awake. But now sleep on it. Good-night, pet ; mind you sleep now. "

So there is no library tragedy, with illustrations in the penny dreadfuls. Settling day is well got over, and the face of the head of the family sometimes broadens into a smile now, as there are signs of the stock he has been persistently operating on with the other bear, who howled so long to no purpose, giving way before them.

Mary and her father keep the secret of the midnight conference. No more words pass between them on the subject ; both look happier, and frequently, when their eyes meet, they smile.

* * * * *

From Lady Wade to Edith has come the *secret* of

her engagement to Munro, which is to be exceedingly short. "He wishes that, and I feel that in my circumstances it will be best, as I have not you to chaperone me, dear," she had said. Of course this secret is told in strict confidence to all the home party, which still includes Agatha.

Even before this notification, Maggie has been through every phase of her malady, not omitting blame to herself for being hasty, and misjudging him perhaps. Hope has been her rarest symptom; yet, till the complete death-blow to it of this announcement, which comes soon, four days, after the note of warning struck in the Monte Carlo recital—yet to her it has seemed a lifetime—she has had hope. One lives in experiences, vegetates without them. There must have been some misty, undefined, unrecognized hope, deep down, underlying her misery, or why, when she hears that he is actually to be married soon, does she feel her pain and hopelessness tenfold increased?

How she shames herself by it, only herself can tell. No one even guesses that anything beyond neuralgia keeps her awake at night and makes her quiet by day. She hates to be weak. "He is not worthy," is the text from which she preaches to herself; but there is no consolation to be got from that, when the man is imprinted in her, enthroned as if he were the most worthy. She has bathed in her love, sunned herself in it, and at last has become so deeply entangled in its meshes that, struggle and will as she may, she cannot get from it.

Her love! It has been but a toy to amuse him till

he should see something better worth his serious thought. Hateful! But she cannot cast off her lover as a snake casts off its skin when it is worthless. Over and over in her brain, till she thinks, "If one-ideal people go mad, I shall go mad," go all her reminiscences of him—the times they met, the things he said, the things he looked and wrote; but she remembers now that, though his letters from beginning to end were affectionate—very affectionate—there was nothing definite in them.

Directly she had written to him after hearing that he was at Nice, she had taken off his locket and the ring, which had not left her finger since she put it on the day of their return from Westgate. She had found it in a parcel, containing also his photograph, in her room on her return to Oaklands. How she had treasured these love tokens!

On the hand of the cabinet photograph of him, she had recognized the ring she gave him, squeezed on to his little finger as a token, she thought. Now she does the photograph up securely, and the ring and locket, to return to him.

Toothache was Benedict's excuse for a woe-begone countenance. Benedict with real neuralgia added to love-sickness would have been a pitiable object indeed, as truly is Maggie at this time.

Sometimes she feels she cannot bear the double pain longer. Dr. Mainwaring has been sent for to see her. He is a cheery man, bronzed from much driving in an open vehicle, and is inclined to take a cheerful view of people's aches and pains; not seeking to

heighten the effect of their cure by him by having made the patients and friends believe that they have been in a very serious state indeed, almost at death's door.

"You have got low," he says, as Maggie flushes when he feels her pulse—he adheres to that old preliminary—"but we"—himself and drugs presumably—"can soon put you right. Neuralgia comes on worse at night, eh? Can't sleep?"

"Could you not send something to make her sleep?" asks Mrs. Scott.

Every one is most kind to her, and would do anything in their power to give her ease.

"Yes, yes; we can do that." Dr. Mainwaring does not resent suggestions as presumption. "We can do that till this specific has had time to work. Certainly; I will send enough of the sleeping draught and specific to last two days. I will look in the day after to-morrow; that will save your groom coming in every day for medicine."

Then the professional part of the visit is over, and a little gossip succeeds. Maggie has left the room.

"I hear, Dr. Mainwaring," says Mrs. Scott, "that you were called in to Mrs. Browne the other day."

"Eh, you heard that?"

"Nothing serious, I suppose?"

"No and yes;" and Dr. Mainwaring, who is a cautious man, goes through a pantomime of lifting an imaginary glass to his lips.

"Really?" said Mrs. Scott. "That accounts for everything. All the old servants have left, or are

leaving, I hear. What is the woman like? Report says she is handsome."

"Well, that depends on taste. Coarse and flashy, some would say." Dr. Mainwaring never praises one woman's beauty to another. "The new people at Crinton keep a large establishment, I hear; drive first-rate cattle." He is always chopping and changing his own horses, and believes himself to be a high authority in horseflesh and woman. "Every one has called, I believe. A niceish woman."

"Yes, every one. They had the Percy Marshams down on a visit almost directly they came, and that decided the wavering. He is an educated man, in a sense; has been to Cambridge. It was the father who made this dust business, they say. 'Dust' sounds unpleasant."

Dr. Mainwaring does not respond to the last remark. He is cautious. He hopes to be called in to the Paston-Drews. He has always had Crinton. There is much rivalry among the doctors at Ware, and no one thinks highly of the skill of any of his professional brethren. Hitherto Dr. Mainwaring has had almost the monopoly of Otham. The families have led the village. Miss Woolner is the exception. She has not been able to swallow his drugs, because his church views are broad—if he has any.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AGATHA had been sitting with Maggie a little while before going to her room for the night. They have been discussing a book they both have been reading, in which there is an account of Emerson. There have been no lessons since Maggie has been suffering. She has been trying to read much to drive out thoughts that she cannot exercise.

“Buddha and Emerson,” continues Agatha, “seem to me wonderfully alike in their ideas. The men and women in the world will never become spiritualized to the extent Emerson was ; that is a comfort. I should not like to live in a world of contemplation. There would be nothing stirring, nothing to do ; and we should all live contented lives, waiting in mud huts. I don’t suppose there would be a working mason in picturesque places, to be absorbed again into the Eternal Spirit.”

“Oh, Agatha !” says Maggie, on whom Emerson’s life and thoughts have made a serious impression, but who has not the spirit in her now for argument. “I

admire him awfully. Don't make a mistake. Only, you see, I am so opposite to you in every way."

"You use different expressions of the same idea—humanity—that is all.

"I thought he especially was the perfect expression of the Spirit. Well, anyhow, the Arctic regions and the tropics are different expressions of the same mother earth. Do you remember what he says?—'A little heat—that is, a little motion—is all that differences the bald, dazzling white and deadly poles of the earth from the prolific tropical climates.' Don't you see, I represent heat and motion, he the dazzling white—may I say '*deadly* poles' without hurting your feelings?—of calm and absence of motion."

Soon after Agatha has left, Maggie's neuralgic pains give her warning of a bad night. She has become cowardly now she is weak, and she shrinks from the prospect of another night of pain and weariness and misery. Her draughts have been of very little use to her. The chloral—Dr. Mainwaring said it was chloral—had not been powerful enough to give much relief. She told him so this morning, and he promised to increase the dose, but here is just the same-sized bottle as he sent before for two draughts. Surely it would not hurt her to take it all?

"What would I not give for a good night's rest, and for rest for ever? But for that one must wait nature's time—God's."

She recalls that Emerson's end was rendered painless by an anæsthetic. She used to be dreadfully prejudiced against those things. Not so bad, though, as

Miss Gore's friend, who considered it wrong, viz. a sin, to take them. She could never have had neuralgia. That has quite driven her prejudice away.

Thank God, her occasional temptation to take something to lull her into a sleep that has no waking has died out. That temptation is finally conquered, the hopes driven out at every point.

What! desert a world that every one may help to make a better world before one has done work in it?

"What have I done as yet? I have tried to influence Mary for good; I have taught her to love noble deeds and thought; and I had dared to think of undoing even that one work by a cowardly, wicked act. Never that."

Everything can be lived down in time, surely. Some day she will come out of this wretched state of body and mind. But not yet awhile. The cure has not even begun. Oh for rest!

She ought not to have taken those solitary walks towards the river so late in the evening. The damp must have helped on this neuralgia. But at that time—that terrible time when strong doubt grew to certainty—she could not sleep.

Then she goes to her window, and looks towards the long walk, her dream path; looks across the shadowy lawn into the weird darkness of the trees that fringe her old pacing-ground. She remembers the perfume of sweet night-scented plants there. Ah! and the dreams they mingled in. She must not think of them. Must not? Why, they are

always asserting their sway; in every unoccupied moment they come. In the day she can sometimes beat them back, but at night it is their turn, and they seem to take revenge then for being barred out in the day. It is like the parable of the woman who swept out her house, and then had it occupied more fully than ever. Every night her pillow is watered with bitter tears.

She will be quick to take the draught. Too bad of Dr. Mainwaring not to have remembered her request. But there, he was too excited by Mrs. Browne's last escapade—tumbling downstairs.

She pours out all the draught and drinks it, believing it to be sufficiently harmless; but Dr. Mainwaring had considerably added to the strength of it without increasing the quantity.

Soon painless peace wraps Maggie in its sweet embrace—the peace she had so longed for.

But it does not come after months of weary battling as she had pictured—the reward at last of a pure heart, striving fervently—but at the end of a few moments of—Eternity's expression—time. Maggie sleeps never to wake again.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THERE are sundry proverbs to the effect that it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting; but inclination points the other way. In deference to that natural inclination, Oaklands shall be avoided until the middle of September in the year we have been recording.

At Otham, on this 20th of September, overpowering excitement is visible everywhere. Triumphal arches are being erected at three points, so there is much for the village to watch and criticise, and every one, besides, is busy with public and private preparations for the morrow.

The good folk of Otham never remember a wedding such as this is to be; every one will come in for feasting under some head. There is to be a table for the old men and women, where the women will certainly look after their own husbands strictly. Another for the school children—all school children. So in these compulsory education days only tiny tots will be excluded, and they will mostly get under their mother's wing, into the tent that will be crammed with the rest of the villagers. Mr. Scott, having

come round in the matter of his daughter's choice of a husband a little to her way of thinking, now that he cannot stop the marriage, is determined to do nothing by halves. He is partly spurred to that by a feeling of rivalry with the dust people, as he calls the Paston-Drews. And he is in a swim of luck just now, and when he is, he loves to spend money freely.

Every one is stirring on the eve of the wedding. It is a matter of emulation as to who can cut down the largest quantity of evergreen for the village arch—the centre one; that at the entrance of Oaklands, and the one at the church gates, are being supplied by the Scotts' gardeners. But their own arch shall outdo both, they are determined, and they hack and hew to much purpose. When it is explained that they are in most instances robbing their own gardens, which poor people prize highly, of these things, the all-prevailing enthusiasm will be appreciated.

In Oaklands the confusion is great, throughout the height and breadth of the house. Seldom-used rooms are being prepared for the coming guests, who have already begun their invasion. Wedding presents are still coming in. Three of Edith's bridesmaids arrive, and want to be shown the dress, as an excuse for getting possession of her. Mary as a substitute won't do at all; every one appeals to the bride-elect, and she scarcely knows if she is standing on her head or her heels.

Mary, elated at the idea of reigning in her father's house unchecked by Edith, is exceedingly busy everywhere. Every one tries to help, but there are things

Edith must be the principal in. She must be fitted for her own dresses, and she must write herself to thank people for their presents, which are costly and numerous.

Cecil's coming home three days ago was a tremendous excitement for her. She received from him, at the period of her coming of age, a letter renewing his proposal, and begging her, if she is still in the same mind, to come out to him, as he fears he has no chance of being sent to the depôt for three or four years. "Agatha Browne is such a good friend, I am sure she will bring you out. I could not dream of you coming alone."

She at once answers in the affirmative, in a sweet letter, the happiest letter any girl could have to write; for she not only assures her constant lover of her constancy with her own hand, instead of by proxy—one can't write love-letters by proxy—but she has the delightful surprise of her fortune to give him, and she gives him a little bit of advice, which is at second-hand from Agatha. "Why not, dearest, confide this secret to the Queen? She never thought of you, because you were not rich enough for the princesses; and see if through her you can get sent home. Women, they say, like to be taken into any one's confidence."

The good advice had been acted on with happy results. Three days before the 21st, the day fixed for the wedding, Cecil arrives, not a bit spoilt by India and time—just the same buoyant, frank creature, pleasing every one by being pleased.

The only thing he grumbles at is the way in which his Edith is dragged into the general vortex, so that he can get few chances of that lover's delight, *tête-à-tête* interviews.

The only slight drawback to the happy flow of everything is that Lady Wade and Munro, who were married quietly in Nice, almost directly after their engagement, have sent excuses.

Cecil and Edith are both hurt thereat.

"I can't quite make it out," he says; "we were such good friends, and he took a lot of interest in me. He was as good as a father to me, and better; for fellows wouldn't take good advice about things from their fathers, even if they could give it—at least, precious few."

"Very likely," answers Edith. She has got a few minutes to herself and him; and as the house is overflowing with guests and servants, they have fled to the long walk for privacy.

"And you and his wife are such great friends;" and he looks at his Edith, as if in that Lady Wade has a great blessing.

"Yes, very great; but she, I *know*, is very much disappointed they are not coming. I am sure of it."

"Ah!"

"Why do you say 'Ah' in that knowing way? Tell me."

"I have just guessed something. It is a secret, mind, pet."

"But you are to tell me your secrets after to-morrow at twelve o'clock. Tell me this now, do."

"You won't tell even your mother, or Agatha."

"No, honour bright."

"Well, I found out quite by accident that Munro and that good-looking dark-eyed, governess of Mary's wrote to each other a good deal."

"Did they? I am surprised."

"Don't you think, now, that perhaps he does not care for coming here?"

"I should not wonder, poor thing!"

"Which, darling?"

"Can you ask? Do you think I would pity him? Why, he must have married within ten days of the news of her death. I see it all now. She was well until she heard from me what Lady Wade said about meeting him at Nice, and then she heard of their engagement. Poor thing! Oh, Cecil, if you had treated me like that!"

"But I could not."

"I am glad he is not coming to our wedding, bird of ill-omen. I should hate him to come. I never much liked him, and now I shall hate him."

"Don't do that, darling?" he asks very pleadingly. "He is a good sort of fellow on the whole. Women, you know, mostly like him. That is a sign a man isn't bad, isn't it?"

"I don't know, but for my own part in future I shall avoid men whom women make much of. But I will *try* to be civil to him for your sake."

"Sweetheart, you are a trump!"

THE END.

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