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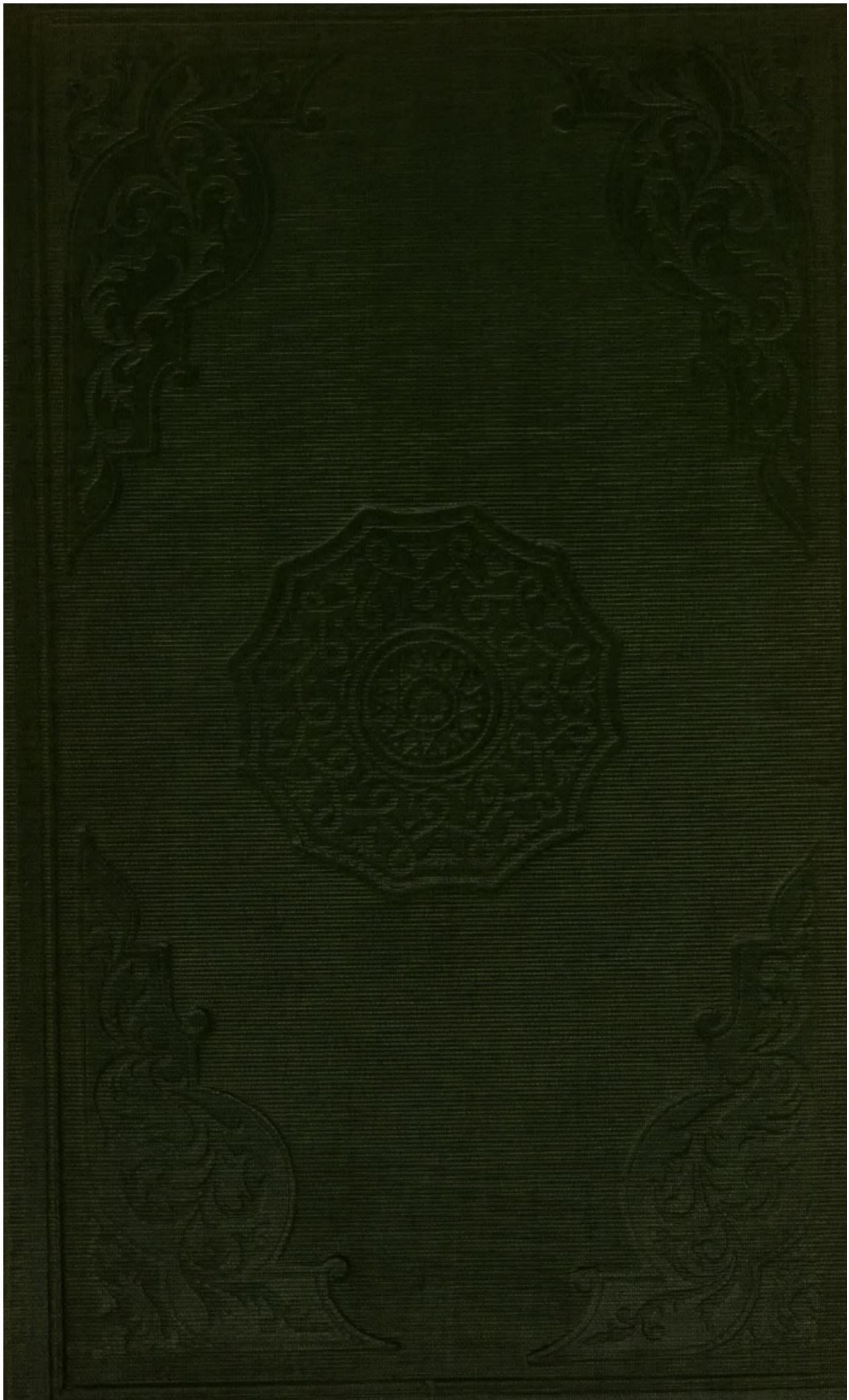
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MR. DALTON'S LEGATEE,

A VERY NICE WOMAN.

A Nobel

BY

Mrs. STONE.



AUTHOR OF

“THE ART OF NEEDLEWORK,” “THE COTTON
LORD,” “CHRONICLES OF FASHION,”
“THE YOUNG MILLINER,” ETC.

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MR. DALTON'S LEGATEE.

CHAPTER I.

“WELL, there’s an end of that,” said Augustus De Snobyn, as he nestled his head back in the corner of the carriage—folded his arms, and stretched his legs out to the fullest extent, “and a prosy piece of work it has been to be sure.”

“It has, indeed,” said Evelina, yawning.

“ Well, my dears,” said Mrs. De Snobyn, “ I can hardly say I agree with you ; the evening has not been one exactly to my taste.” (Augustus gave Evelina a significant nudge with his elbow), “ but I should hardly characterise it as prosy.”

“ Perhaps not, ma'am ; for it was your cue to be pleased ; but as I had no especial object to obtain, I really could not help being pretty considerably bored. I hardly know which was most tiresome, the old-fashioned *bonhommie* of the elderly baronet, or the pious twaddle of the hopeful son and heir.”

“ Pious twaddle,” reiterated Evelina, “ what do you mean ? he appears to me as spirited as gentlemanly.”

“ Oh, my dear, he is a very pattern card for marriageable daughters and manœuvring mothers—I know all that ; but I did but whisper to him about a quiet little matter of my own—just to try his mettle, and whether he really was the starch he

seemed — and didn't he funk like a bishop."

"Funk, Augustus, what do you mean?"

"Oh! my dear, polite mamma, don't you comprehend? why, he started back aghast, like a saint in lawn."

"What have you been saying, Augustus? I shall, indeed, be very angry if you interrupt my harmonious intercourse with my relations by your ill-timed levities."

"Oh, ma'am, don't be afraid, I'm far too dutiful a son; and if all our intercourse be like that this evening, you will certainly have enough to do."

Evelina hastened to interrupt her brother, for she saw the rising flush on Mrs. de Snobyn's brow. It was seldom, indeed, that these young people ventured on inuendo to their mother, of whom they were very fond, though their education was not of that high stamp, which should teach them, quick and shrewd as they were, to repel it in her absence.

“Tell me, mamma, were you not surprised at Maude?”

“Very much indeed.”

“A little chit—a little, forward, provoking chit—I have no patience with her,” said Helena, from her corner, where she had thrown herself, apparently, in supreme ill-temper.

“And Sir Charles Marchmont and Abel are greater fools than she is,” said Augustus.

“They make a fool of her, there is no doubt,” said Evelina.

“My dears, you are all a little unjust, a little uncharitable. Abel, you know, is privileged; Maude has been his pet and darling, the very joy and sunshine of his life, from the hour of her birth. Affection so placed and bestowed, by a man of reclusive habits like himself, cannot invariably be judiciously displayed. As to my cousin, it is evident that they have been accustomed to make a little pet of Maude. This appears to me the whole of the matter.”

“They certainly made a great fuss with her, mamma.”

“No, no,” answered Mrs. de Snobyn, good humouredly, “they had not seen her for a long time, that was all.”

“Nelly’s jealous,” said Augustus.

“Jealous !” said Helena, scornfully, “and of that little chit.”

“I don’t wonder at your repelling your brother’s assertion somewhat warmly, my dear, for it was vulgar and uncalled for. Nor, indeed, can your career be in any way affected by Maude.”

“I don’t exactly know that, mamma ; but let the matter rest.”

“Why let it rest, Helena,” said her sister, “when you are evidently uncomfortable, and that from a false impression too ? It is quite plain that Mr. Redwald Marchmont admires you exceedingly.”

“I thought so, certainly,” said Helena ; “but I must have been mistaken, and it is of no consequence—”

“Yes, but it is of consequence,” con-

tinued Evelina. "He is one of the very most attractive and most gentlemanly young men we have seen ; everybody admires him—everybody speaks highly of him—and everybody observed his devoted attention to you at our house the other night ; and at the concert yesterday he hardly quitted your side ; and to-night he was as attentive as the nature of the party allowed."

Helena shook her head, and as the light from a street lamp flashed on her face, something like a tear might be seen glistening in her dark eyelash.

"I am pleased with you, Evelina," said Mrs. de Snobyn, "much pleased with your affectionate and unselfish interest in your sister : but you must beware, my dear girl, of treating probabilities as certainties, you must beware of misleading her to her own after regret ?"

"Then, mamma, you really think there is nothing ?" said Helena, almost in tears.

"Nay, Helena, I said not so. It was my opinion, which I gave you candidly,

that Mr. Marchmont was much enchanted with you the other evening. We have yet to see whether the impression will be confirmed ; you must do your part, which this evening you have not."

" How so, mamma ?"

" There is nothing in the world to which young men are so quick sighted, as the jealousy of one pretty young woman towards another. You have shewn this very openly to-night ; you have in several instances been captious and pettish with Maude, which was both injudicious and unnecessary. Injudicious, because it has the inevitable effect of drawing attention towards the woman who annoys you, and, moreover, may not improbably give a suspicion of those feelings which above all things you would wish to conceal from their inspirer : and on this evening it was most unnecessary, for whatever they may think of Maude now and hereafter, they have hitherto considered her, and were prepared to meet her to-night, only as a childish pet, a plaything."

“But they will not continue to think so.”

“No, my dear, of course they will not. But what then? I do not wish you to underrate Maude, it would lead to an error in conduct. Maude is an intelligent girl; though not fashionably, she has been exceedingly well educated, and Abel has done and will do all that mortal man may for her advantage. From this connection with the Marchmonts, she will at once step into an excellent circle. Moreover, her appearance is rapidly improving, she will be a superior-looking girl.”

“Well, mamma,” almost sobbed Helena, “is all this to comfort me?”

“‘All this’ is the truth, Helena, and therefore will be looked in the face, and fairly met, by any but a child or a fool.”

Mrs. de Snobyn's tone, which was stern—a very unusual thing with her—struck her daughter.

“I have displeased you, mamma,” said she almost humbly.

“ No, my dear,” replied her mother, with even more than her usual kindness, “ I am not displeased, but I wish you to be true to yourself and me. I approve your views and will do my utmost to forward them, but I charge you, Helena, for your own sake, to guard and control your feelings. Do not be weak, do not suffer them to get the mastery over you, or you at once become the slave of circumstances, and dependent on the liking of this young man ; and that would I never have daughters of mine, were he the very acme of attraction.”

“ I will be implicitly guided by you, mama.”

“ Then, my dear, my whole advice may be concentrated in one word—*self-control*. Above all things keep your heart free, your feelings untouched ; let your intellect—you have a very clear one—be ever awake, ever active, ever ready to seize advantages as they arise. Circumstances cannot be controlled, but it is seldom indeed

that they may not be moulded in some measure, to suit the purposes of one who is ever on the *qui vive* to turn every event as it arises, to the furtherance of some especial object."

"For the rest, my dear, I do not see that you have any occasion *as yet* to apprehend a rival in Maude. Her personal attractions are not and will not be to compare with yours : you have infinitely the advantage of her in the tone and style of fashionable society ; I am vain enough to consider that my own *chaperonship* may not be disadvantageous to you, and you have also the advantage of Redwald's very unsentimental impressions of Maude in your favour, for you know he remembered her as his 'little dumpling of a play-fellow.' She, at any rate, has not forestalled his heart. *You* have made a favorable, perhaps a striking impression on him ; we must hope it will become an enduring one."

They were now at home, but had some

difficulty in wakening Augustus, who had sunk into a profound sleep. Had it been otherwise perhaps his mother and sister would hardly have entered into so complete an *exposé* of their plans and projects. Not that he was a whit more elevated in his ideas, or at all more scrupulous in working out his own ends than were they: but in a family of manœuvrers all whose plans are selfish, and all whose conduct uninfluenced by any high and abiding principle, interests will clash: and many of Augustus de Snobyn's private plans and projects were of a kind diametrically opposed to what his mother could wish.

Helena who had entered the carriage cross and dispirited, stepped from it as light as a fairy, and tripped up stairs with a countenance beaming with animation and happiness.

CHAPTER II.

A few days afterwards Augustus went to keep his first term at Oxford, but he had not been gone above a fortnight, when his sisters were astonished to see him burst into the little boudoir which had been tastefully fitted up for their especial use, and where they were now engaged in embroidering a pair of hand-screens, as an offering to Lady Marchmont on her entering, as she was almost immediately to do, an elegant house in Eaton Square.

Augustus looked heated and flurried, as if he had travelled not only in haste, but on the spur of some pressing emergency. So it proved.

Hardly replying to his sister's hurried salutations, and postponing *sinê die*, and with no superfluous elegance of diction their eager inquiries, he asked, "What sort of a temper madam was in this morning."

"Much as usual—very good : mamma's seldom out of temper."

"Oh ! twaddle that ; mamma never forgets her politeness, so the Brummagem all passes current for the solid with you. You are as innocent as babies, all of you."

"I fear not," said Helena, laughing ; "but without arrogating to myself mamma's claim to universal politeness, I must plead guilty to some of her ignorance of your language : you really should bring a dictionary with you."

"Nonsense, Nell : don't be a fool ; it don't become you ; and ape your fine lady

airs to please Mrs. de Snobyn, they are lost on me."

"You are rude, Augustus, as well as cross ; but these manners and your sudden irruption lead me to suppose that you want more money. I have generally observed this amiable temper to be a prelude to your petitions for money."

"Spoken like an oracle, Nelly : and now, tell me what chance I have of getting it ; or, rather, of getting it easily, for have it I must."

"If you *must* have it, I should hope you have calculated on the means of obtaining it."

"I have no means of obtaining it, but from my mother."

"I do fear you are come at an unpropitious moment then, for mamma has refused a little petition of Evelyn's and mine this morning, on the plea of unnecessary expense."

"And what was the little petition ?"

"Merely for a mantelet a-piece, of a

sort that bewitched us at Miss Duff's yesterday."

"And the costs?"

"Oh, nothing—we didn't even ask the price—ten or fifteen pounds, or some such matter."

"Ten pounds! and I want a hundred or two; aye, and I must have them too, by Jupiter,"

And the young man strode up and down the little chamber, in undeniable perturbation.

The sisters laid down their needles, and looked at him in amazement and horror.

"A hundred or two! Augustus, are you mad? and moreover, mamma paid all your debts too, when you went to College, two weeks since."

"Did she," said Augustus, bitterly.

"Mamma said so, only this morning. That she wished you to go to College quite clear and unembarrassed, though your debts were heavier than she expected, or

than she had any right to anticipate : that it had inconvenienced her, but she had paid them all."

" I don't wish to misrepresent my mother ; she did pay all—that she knew of."

" Oh, Augustus, then you have deceived her : she only desired you to be candid, and still you deceived her."

" What the devil, girls—" began Augustus, who was now pacing about like a chafed tiger in his den, but he was interrupted by Charlotte, hitherto quietly occupied by a novel in a corner, who darted forward, and placed her hand firmly on his mouth.

" For shame, Augustus, for shame : you ought to be ashamed to speak in such a tone to the sisters who love you dearly, and whom you are injuring."

" Injuring, Lotty ? Me injuring them ?"

" Yes," said Lotty, " you are. Mamma refused them a trumpery mantelet this morning, because you had drained so

much money: and now you are come for more. A paltry mantelet may not signify—and does not—they have finery enough—but you may hereafter rob them of something that does.”

“Rob, Lotty? these are hard words,” said the young man, colouring crimson, “but I know you don’t mind trifles, in advocating a friend.”

“I have not minded trifles in advocating you, before this, Guss, as you ought to remember.”

“I do remember, my little Lotty, I do remember, so kiss and be friends.”

Charlotte gave the desired kiss, and the young man sate down more composed.

“Girls, what I deprive you of now, I will repay tenfold hereafter, you may rely upon it—” and he felt and believed at the moment what he spoke, for he was not naturally bad-hearted, though an irresponsible education had made him intensely selfish—“but now, if you can help me, you must. This money I *must* have, somehow

or other : if I have not, and the thing gets blazoned, I may, like the well-behaved dog, walk from College to save being kicked out. How would Mrs. de Snobyn like that ?”

“ Augustus, don't speak in that tone ; we will do what we can to help you—but hardly, unless you behave in a more Christian-like manner to us.”

“ I will be meek as a kitten in your hands, Evelina ; mould me as you will—only advise me.”

“ Well, my advice is, decidedly,” said Evelina, with spirit, “ that you speak to Abel. Mamma is not, nor is likely to be propitious at present. I advise you to make a friend of Abel : he is an oddity, but he is no niggard.”

“ No, he is no niggard, but I can—can—not speak—to—Abel.”

“ Why not ?”

“ I will tell you why not,” he said suddenly raising himself, while a flush of generous feeling for once superseded the usual

expression of his countenance; "you know Abel was here a night or two before I went to college, and more cynical than ever, I thought."

"We all thought so."

"Well, as he went he gave me a look to follow him; I couldn't well refuse, though I quitted the room with a bad grace enough. But just outside the door he took hold of my hand, and said, in *his* way,

"My lad, 'credit keeps the crown of the causeway;' but 'credit lost is like a Venice glass broken;' but boys will be boys. Very likely you may have some debts you would as soon not tell your mother of—pay 'em, boy, pay 'em, and be a wiser man in future. Take that, say not a word to anybody; *I never shall.*'

"He was gone before I could thank him or even speak, but he'd left a fifty pound bank-note in my hand."

"Dear Abel! how good of him," exclaimed all the sisters. "And is that all gone too, Augustus?"

“Of course it is,” said he.

“Well, then appealing to Abel is entirely out of the question.”

“Of course it is,” said he, haughtily. “Besides, if it were not, Abel’s ideas are as antiquated as himself; and he would be struck with pious horror at the bare mention of what any young man of spirit must spend now-a-days. His idea of fifty pounds for my debts showed that.”

“No; it only showed he had not been accustomed to extravagance himself,” said Charlotte.

“None of the Snobbinses, of Budge Row, ever were, that I heard of,” sneered Augustus. “Well were it if the pettifogging spirit were kept in that delectable locality. But there’s your precious *parti* that you are making such a fuss to entrap—your young Squire Marchmont; he’s of a style, and an age, and a station that might be supposed likely for good-will and sympathy to help a fellow out of a scrape, but—”

“You have not applied to him, I do

hope?" said Helena, with a face like crimson.

"No, Lady Helena, I have not," sneered he; "your precious fancy man is safe for me. I am not yet so desperately pushed as to commit myself to such a precious piece of puritanism—a milksop who starts in horror if one ventures to intimate a spree to him; a—"

"Augustus, be quiet," said Evelina, with spirit, for she felt for her sister; "it were as well for you to remember that you are here on your own affairs, not ours; we did not seek your company, and we never shall seek it, if our friends are not respected."

"I stand reprov'd, my pretty sister; but all this is waste of time, and I *must* return to Oxford to-night. Do you think it would be any good to speak to the governor?—he is a kind-hearted old fellow, when my mother lets him alone."

"No use at all: in the first place, it would be unkind to annoy him."

Augustus gave an almost inaudible whistle.

“In the next, he could not assist you, without applying to mamma, for she manages all the money concerns.”

“So she does—I forgot that.”

“And lastly, he would be quite sure to tell Abel, though he would mean no unkindness.”

“True again.”

“But what is it all for,” said Charlotte, “because, though mamma might be vexed, I’m sure she won’t be very hard with you, if it is for any proper object.”

“Charlotte is right,” said Evelina, “what is it for?”

Augustus turned, for a moment, to the window, then again facing his sisters and coloring a good deal, he said,

“Girls, I must not tell you what it is for, and you must not ask me.”

Instantaneously each fair cheek was flushed—the conviction of each was instan-

taneous ; that intuitive feeling, which nature and providence implant in each female heart, to preserve its native innocence from the breath—the very idea of aught less pure than itself. The mimosa which shrinks even at the approach of an adverse element, is not more sensitive than a youthful girl whose natural feelings have not been hardened or corrupted by commerce with the world. The Miss De Snobyns had been educated for the world—but they were not yet of it—and their native feminine purity was unsullied by a breath. Most solicitous had Mrs. De Snobyn been on this point.

“ I think,” said Helena, as she rose with all her mother’s haughtiness, and more than her mother’s dignity—for Mrs. De Snobyn’s was that of form, manner, and society, Helena’s the sudden and irrepressible emanation of wounded pride and delicacy. “ I think it is time this conversation should be put a stop to. I will seek mam-

ma, and tell her you are here and why you are here."

"Bless you, Nelly, if you will but break the ice for me."

"I will do that," said Helena, coldly.

We shall not follow Augustus to his mother's dressing-room, to which he was shortly summoned. His best chance with her, in the present case, was to tell her the plain truth, which he did at once. A pretty young actress, one holding a respectable caste at one of the minor theatres, had just made him a father. Her father was prosecuting him for damages on the plea of the loss to him of his daughter's services. He threatened public exposure if sufficient compensation were not immediately made ; but perfect unobtrusive quiet if it were. Augustus knew and his mother knew how this public exposure would injure him in the eyes of the heads of his college. Hence his application for aid.

We need enter into no further detail ;

Augustus returned to college that afternoon. He took an affectionate leave of his sisters, but did not give any account of his interview with his mother, save that she had relieved him.

He looked grave and subdued—certainly not triumphant.

Mrs. De Snobyn did not join her family that day ; she sent an excuse at luncheon, another at dinner. Her daughters pleaded for admission to her in vain.

The next morning she appeared as usual, save, perhaps, a little more care-worn in appearance. Perhaps she had not managed her rouge well. She made no allusion to her son's visit. She had business of importance in the city, which would detain her some hours ; but she wished her daughters to meet her at Lewis and Allenby's at half after three.

They did so, and she bought Charlotte a very tasty and elegant home dinner dress, to that young lady's great satisfaction. She then drove to Miss Duff's, and ordered

for Helena and Evelina, such a mantelet each as they had coveted a day or two before, and a bonnet of according materials.

They warmly thanked her.

“ It is no pleasure to me, my dears, to refuse your requests at any time. I have always pleasure in gratifying your wishes when I can do so. You deserve these *douceurs* for your conduct to your imprudent brother yesterday. He did you justice. Now let us refer to the subject no more.”

CHAPTER III.

WE must now return to poor Mrs. Meredith whom we left on a sick bed prostrated in body and mind by her own illness, and by grief for her father's sudden death. No alleviation which her husband's kindest thought and care could procure for her was wanting, and he almost lost the memory of his late painful journey, and the humiliation it had caused him, in the delight he felt in being able to tempt her sickly appetite by fruit and other delicacies heretofore quite out of his power to procure.

She improved slowly indeed, but continuously, and day by day he had the happiness of seeing some slight but cheering token of renovation. The power too of liquidating their debt to their kind-hearted landlady had a beneficial influence on her spirits, for they had been sorely weighed down by this humiliating obligation. She never inquired of Meredith how he had procured the money, a circumstance on which he heartily congratulated himself. It was evident she thought it some little bequest arising in some way from her father's death, and he thought it best to leave her in her error. Of the reference in the will to the legatee regarding herself she knew nothing, and he told her nothing.

Once only had she made any reference to that journey. It was thus,

“ Henry, dear, what sort of a person is the one in possession of my fath—of Beechwood. Mrs. de Snobyn I think you called her ?”

“ A very lady-like person, indeed, I should say a very nice woman,” replied Meredith, forcing himself to speak firmly, though he winced internally.

“ I am very glad to hear that,” said Emily, quietly, and she never again referred to the subject.

But though Mrs. Meredith daily gained some portion of bodily strength, it was longer, much longer, ere her mind recovered its wonted elasticity. The shock had been too violent, too sudden ; and combined as it was with the stings of a reproving conscience, its effects were not only most poignant, but in some respects seemed irremediable.

But this very poignancy of affliction was the precursor of good : the exciting cause of a more healthy tone of mind and feeling. It led her to strict self-examination and impartial judgment on her own past conduct and its motives, and the result had a happy influence on her after life.

The agony of her grief subsided of

course with time, though she felt naturally as if her sorrow could never leave her, as if she must "go down to her grave mourning." We all feel so in early life. Still the poignant edge of her affliction became more and more blunted day by day, and during the long hours that her weakness and her very slow recovery compelled her to lie on the sofa, free from bodily pain, and emerging from the first overwhelming torrent of her grief—she had sufficient freedom both from mental and bodily suffering, to enable her to think calmly on her position, and sufficient good sense to feel, that earnest reflection and stern self-examination had become her paramount duty.

She did not at all seek to palliate her transgression even to herself by laying any, the least share of it on her father's severity, or her lover's blandishments.

She might have done so formerly, but that time was past. Her father had not been severe until she had been rebellious ;

he had early warned her of his wishes, and his resolve ; and instead of showing that patient obedience by which she might have hoped ultimately to soften his stern purpose, she had, at once, on the instant almost, entered into a clandestine correspondence with her lover.

“Honour thy father and mother,” had been a formula in her mouth from her earliest childhood ; she now felt how mere a formula. For, on the first, the very first occasion, that her duty became hard and painful—she broke the commandment. Her lips had repeated—“Honour thy father—” in her practice she had added the corollary—“so long as he pleases thee.”

This bare-faced truth Emily did now, even thus undisguisedly, place before the eye of her mind, and dwell upon in her secret thoughts. “She sought a place for repentance even with tears ;” and even more bitterly did they flow at the re-

newed thought, that though she might repent, and did repent, for her there was no atonement—she could make none—her father was dead.

An ardent and generous spirit when self-convicted of fault, always grasps eagerly at some practical means of reparation and atonement ; and Emily, unable to atone for filial errors by a more zealous and conscientious discharge of filial duties, felt some comfort in the idea that in those which now exclusively devolved upon her, those of a wife, she would be constant, truthful, zealous, and affectionate even beyond the usual standard of a high-minded woman. She would lavish on her husband all that excess of affection and obedience with which her heart was now overflowing, and no portion of which, alas ! she could now lay at her father's feet. To him she would look as husband, father, brother, everything ; and her whole life should be one offering of unselfish devotedness to

his comfort. Thus her heart swelled to bursting within her, as she yet lay prostrate and powerless on the sofa.

For never, for one moment, did she implicate her husband in her error, not for one.

“What right have I,” murmured she, “self-convicted as I am of filial ingratitude and undutifulness to judge him? Did I not, at least, meet him half way—nay, more than that, when I stole out in the dusk, evening after evening—*stole* out—I—my father’s daughter, to give him the meeting. And would he—could he—have persuaded me to an elopement, if I had not cherished traitorous thoughts in my own bosom. No—let me acquit *him*!”

And thus no feeling disparaging to him, was suffered to mingle with her mental renewal of her vows of faith and allegiance to him.

Having thus, not briefly and imperfectly, as we have pourtrayed it, but hour by hour, and day by day, schooled her own

heart, until she had fully convicted herself, and convinced herself that her present position, if one of hardship was still induced by her own conduct, and that her present punishment was but a just retribution for her fault, she set herself, her mind now fully and for ever awakened, to reflect on the realities of her position : the necessity for exerting every energy to obtain the everyday decencies of existence. It was palpably now her duty to unite her personal exertions to those of her husband, for the attainment of this peremptory object.

In her sensitive state of mind, and the highly wrought tone of her feelings, she hardly felt free from self reproach, even in these matters. She was aware, she had had occasion painfully to become so, in consequence of one of Mr. Meredith's applications for a curacy being unsuccessful on that very account—she was aware that most clergymen prefer their curates to be unmarried. Why, she knew not, but of the fact generally there was and is no question.

She almost felt for a moment that she was in the way: but her good sense, and a just however modest appreciation of herself, made her quickly repel this idea. Still she could not quite forget that her father had the power to forward a young man's views in the church, and she felt that when Mr. Meredith so unexpectedly lost his situation at W—— Mr. Dalton would most probably have befriended him, had she not been his wife. These reflections, as I have said, she did not dwell upon, still they served as an additional stimulus to her new resolutions.

After turning over in her mind the various ways and means which her very limited experience of life suggested to her, she at length decided that the position for which she was most fitted by circumstances and best qualified by education was that of a daily governess. This line she was fully resolved to attempt as soon as her strength should be sufficiently renovated to admit of the requisite exertion.

Opposition from her husband she expected, but her innate and convinced sense that the step was right and proper, assured her that she should be able to overcome his arguments by his representations. Still, feeling for the pain which she knew would sting him so keenly at the idea of her labouring for her own bread, she resolved not to tell him of her determination until she was in a fit state of health to put it in practice.

But every moment of her time was now employed—so far as her weakened state would admit of its occupation, and her limited access to books and other materials allowed her the means, in recalling the acquisitions of her school days, and in renewing her practice in and extending her knowledge of those acquirements, which she was so soon to put to a practical use.

CHAPTER IV.

MRS. MEREDITH was now tolerably well, and the extreme lassitude which had succeeded absolute illness was so far overcome as to allow her, she thought, to undertake the new duties which she had proposed to herself. Sore was the task of telling Henry her resolution ; she thought the actual labour of her new existence would be more endurable than that task. But it proved easier, or at least not more difficult than she had expected. Mr. Mere-

dith though a man of deep feeling was also a man of sense. He had obtained no curacy, he saw no prospect of one ; he had done nothing to any advantageous result, though he had spared no possible pains in the endeavour ; and his few guineas were again gliding perceptibly from his grasp ; those guineas, the obtaining of which had cost him a humiliation such as he hoped never to endure again. He felt it impossible to appeal again to Mrs. de Snobyn, even had it been reasonable to suppose, which he knew it was not, that she should be looked to to support the disinherited daughter.

So he could not but feel Emily's proposal justifiable, prudent, and even under the circumstances, called for ; and though it cut him to the heart, he gave his full sanction.

Emily had some time before this, communicated her intentions to her landlady, and through her she had heard of two or three ladies in the immediate neighbourhood, or

at no great distance, who were in search of governesses. These wants are always matter of gossip among the servants and tradespeople of the families.

Emily tried all ; her first call was upon Mrs. Armitage, of Balfour Place.

Mrs. Armitage was a tall, rather masculine-looking woman, with an intelligent countenance, with hard features and a stern eye. Her face was red, not the red of intemperance, but of much exposure and robust health. She fixed her searching eye on Emily.

“So, young lady, you are come to enquire after the situation of governess in my family.”

“That is my errand, ma'am.”

“Is it for yourself you enquire?”

“For myself.”

“Have you been in your last situation long?”

“I have never been a governess, this would be my first attempt, but,” continued Emily hurriedly, fearing she had made an

injudicious admission, "I have been well educated."

"You look far too delicate for a governess."

"I am not naturally delicate, ma'am, but I have had a severe illness."

"You look like a ghost; and you are very thin and slight—very—I'm sure you haven't strength for a governess, at least not for my governess. I can't do with invalids in my house."

Emily could say no more—she rose and curtsied her farewell. Mrs. Armitage was not unkind, at least not intentionally unkind. She asked her, nay, pressed her to take a glass of wine, to stay and rest; but Emily's heart was almost bursting and she made her escape as fast as she could.

She hastened home, resolved to stay there quietly for a few days until she was really stronger, and to do her utmost to get a robust look in the mean time.

Her husband knew that it was her intention to make her first experiment as to

her new vocation that day, for full of heart and hope she had not hesitated to name it to him. When he came home, he cast a quick glance over her face, but asked her not a question—not one; there was no need. Emily's face was like an open book at all times. And she made no reference to the subject. And on the occasion of her next expedition she did not even name it to him.

This was to the house of a Mrs. Melland, the lady of a wealthy barrister who lived some half mile from Mr. Meredith's lodging.

Mrs. Melland was a genteel, pretty looking woman, and received Emily with a gentle kindness of manner which raised her spirits at once.

“I am very sorry to have made you wait,” said she, after kindly motioning her visitor to a seat on her couch, “but I was most particularly engaged. I believe you wish to take the charge of my little girls.”

“I should be very happy to do so.”

“Have you been accustomed to tuition?”

“Not at all.”

“Indeed! I am sorry to hear that.”

“I am aware the admission is against me, madam; but I think candour indispensable.”

“You will lose nothing, with me, by being candid,” said Mrs. Melland, with increased kindness.

“Let me hope then, madam, that my want of practical experience will not influence you against me. Believe me, it shall be atoned for by energy and increased exertion.”

“On your part I doubt it not,” said Mrs Melland, gently; “still, I cannot but feel that it would be a disadvantage to my children. But let us talk a little of other matters. What references have you?”

“None, madam.”

“None!”

“I told you, madam, I had not been a governess before.”

“Precisely; but you must have some references as to qualifications, position, character?”

“None,” said Emily, drooping visibly.

“Have you no friend to speak for you?—no private acquaintance—no family connexion?”

“I have none—to speak for me.”

Mrs. Melland's first impulse was to rise haughtily, but a glance at Emily's pale face and dejected attitude restrained her.

“I hardly know how to understand this, Mrs. Meredith. I should not hire a girl to assist in the scullery without a reference—far less the guardian and guide of my children. May I ask—who are you?”

“I am the wife of a clergyman.”

“A clergyman of the Church of England?”

“Yes.”

“Come, come, this looks better. He must be known—he must have references.”

Emily did not speak; her head drooped lower and lower.

“Where does he officiate?”

“Nowhere.”

“Surely he must have some duty!”

“He has none—he can obtain none.”

“Where has he officiated?”

“In the country, with a gentleman who is now dead.”

“How long have you been in London?”

“Several months—nearly a year.”

“Several months! nearly a year! and not one reference!”

Mrs. Melland rose.

“I fear, Mrs. Meredith, that it is but wasting your time and my own to prolong this conversation.”

Emily burst into tears.

Mrs. Melland was preparing to leave the room, but as Emily also rose, she said, with much gentleness,

“I told you, Mrs. Meredith, that I was particularly engaged; pray sit down again

and rest—remain here until you are quite recovered; no one will interrupt you.”

Emily curtsied—she could not speak—and as Mrs. Melland left the room, sank down again in a paroxysm of grief. That lady sought her husband.

“ Well, Julia, what success now?”

“ Oh, none,” said she, pettishly, as she threw her reticule on the table. “ What a nuisance it is.”

“ What, the reticule?”

“ Pshaw!”

“ The governess, then?”

“ Yes, the governess. Any one would have thought that my advertisement, which you penned, was sufficiently explicit as to testimonials and all that, and yet, here comes a person who has never been a governess, and who has not a single reference!”

“ Oh, well, she would have her labour for her pains, that's all. It is more trouble to her than to you. Of course you dismissed her at once.”

“ I left her, as you see : there was something about her I could not *dismiss* at once.”

“ Why so ?”

“ I don't know—she's a perfect lady.”

“ So are all accomplished cheats.”

“ And she is in such deep, deep mourning.”

“ Of course she is. Why what a little fool you are, Julia. Isn't a deep, deep mourning garb assumed at once by all ' amiable heroines ' who wish to make a favorable impression.”

“ You are too sceptical, Philip, you are indeed. I shan't soon forget her pale face and her mournful, humble look.”

“ Take a glass of wine with me, Julia ; you're becoming romantic.”

“ No wine for me ; but I should like to send her a glass.”

“ A dozen, with all my heart : so that you ultimately send her away.”

“ I have done that in effect, Philip ;

though I desired her to rest awhile, for she was crying bitterly."

"My dear wife, I love your womanly heart after all; but make yourself easy; if in these proper days we do not feel justified in giving a sixpence to a pauper until we are assured by references and enquiries without end that he is all but free from the frailties of humanity, nor admit a rheumatized widow into an almshouse until she is worn almost into her coffin in endeavouring to satisfy us that she is almost worthy of a palace, shall we take for the guide and companion of our precious children one of whom we know nothing, and who can give no satisfactory account of herself. Rely upon it that when a young and pretty woman, of very "interesting" appearance, perfectly lady-like manners, in "deep, deep mourning," and with tears at command, can give no rational account of herself, depend upon it there's "something rotten in the state of Denmark." Still, she may be tired with

her walk : and I know no solid and substantial reason against giving a weary woman a glass of wine. So send her one."

So the bell was rung, and wine and sandwiches were ordered into the back drawing-room ; but Mrs Melland with womanly delicacy ordered that not the man, but her own maid should take them.

She did : but Emily was gone.

Her next application was still more briefly negatived.

It was to Mrs. Granelle in Belvoir-street.

We do not say the Duchess of S—— could not, but we are quite sure she *would* not assume the state and hauteur on any every-day-world occasion that this lady assumed on entering her back drawing-room to speak to her daily governess *in prospectu*.

She glanced at Emily from head to foot, and did not ask her to sit down—but then to be sure she did not take a seat herself.

“ You wish to be my governess, young lady ?”

“ I should be happy,” faltered Emily, feeling at the moment very particularly the reverse.

“ Of course you have brought your testimonials with you ?”

“ No, ma'am, I—I have none.”

“ You have no testimonials ?”

“ No, ma'am, I—”

“ Oh, dear, young woman,”—(reaching her hand to the bell as she spoke)—“ you have made a great mistake in coming here.”

“ Allow me to explain, ma'am.”

“ Not a word—not a syllable—Thomas,” (for the bell had been rung and the footman had appeared—the footmen of such people are always ‘ at hand, ’)—“ Thomas shew this person out.”

We pass over—for every reader will imagine them—the deep humiliation and the bitter bursts of grief which overwhelmed Emily at each of these failures.

For hours she would weep uncontrolledly, but true to her text as the sunflower to the sun, she would ever arrange her dress, braid her hair, bathe her eyes, and endeavour to assume at least the semblance of cheerfulness ere her husband's return. And he, more abstracted, more and more lost in thought, and care, and misery, hardly observed her so closely as he was wont to do, and so all passed off tolerably well.

At length she heard of a lady in the immediate neighbourhood who wanted a daily governess—the wife of a gentleman who had retired from business on an enormous property, quickly acquired in a manufacturing concern. She knew the family well, for they were in the habit on a Sunday morning of attending the church which she frequented, as being nearest to her lodging. That they were not gentlefolks she was sure : the excessive dash and *eclat* in their appearance quite prohibited such an idea. Late in church, conspicuous when there, driving about on Sunday expeditions,

these things Emily had been accustomed to consider quite incompatible with the habits of a true gentlewoman. But strange to say, these tokens which formerly would have inspired her with distaste and aversion, she now hailed with delight. "For perhaps," thought she, "they will be less specific and particular about references than real gentlefolks."

And in that one point she was right—they were never asked for. But poor thing! she was yet to learn that there are other hindrances in the way of a destitute woman, than a pale face or the want of influential friends.

After waiting some time in a sort of anti-room leading out of the hall, her anticipations and conjectures were interrupted by the entrance—not of the mistress—but of the master of the mansion, a rather square looking gentleman.

"So—you're come to see after my daughters?"

"Yes sir, I understand you want a daily

governess, and I shall be happy to take the situation."

"Well, now, what can you teach? Everything, I expect, because I mean my girls to be very clever."

"I have had a good education, sir: I can teach French, Italian, drawing and music."

"Can you sing?"

"Yes; I have not a powerful voice, but I have had the best instruction, and I am very fond of music?"

"Can you teach German?"

"I cannot."

"That's a pity, for my girls must be German scholars. Well now, I like your look; how much of other things d'ye know—how far, for instance, can you take them in Italian?"

"I think, sir," said Emily, modestly, "I could introduce them fairly to Dante."

The gentleman looked puzzled—he changed the conversation.

“ Well now—what will you do it all for ?”

“ My attendance will be required every day, sir.”

“ Every day and all day, pretty near.”

“ Will you think forty pounds a year too much ?”

“ Too much by half—too much by half. I'm not going to give no such terms as them.”

“ You forget, sir, I think, the number of hours I am to be here ; the variety of things I am teach—and that I am to have no aid from masters.”

“ That's not the point—that's neither here nor there, it isn't,” and the gentleman took a pen which had hitherto, reposed behind his ear, and tattooed on the table, to emphasize the energetic words of his remarks.

“ It isn't what you are to do, or what you are not to do. The question is *can I* get it for LESS. That's our rule in business—that's the way we sell and buy cotton ;

that's the way I made my money. How much can I get for my money ; one man's cotton is p'raps as good as another's. I buy from him as'll give most. Your teaching may be very good ; but, if I can get it for less, I shall do it."

" Sick at heart, but determined not to be quelled by difficulties, Emily said :—

" Perhaps, you will think about it, sir ?"

" Oh, you'll come down, I know you will—you'll take less. People always ask more than they intend to take ; it's the rule of business to allow for bating down. But can I see some of your drawings ?"

" Certainly, sir, if you wish it."

" Very well—send them down, will you, and I'll talk it over with Mrs. Herriot."

Mrs. Meredith sent her portfolio that evening, paying a boy to carry it, and waited for its return week after week—in vain. At length, her landlady having oc-

casion to pass the house, offered to call for it for her, and Emily wrote a respectful note by her requesting the return of the portfolio, and also begging to know whether her services would be required in Mrs. Herriot's family.

She received her portfolio with a verbal message, that—

“Her drawings were only waiting until she sent for them ; that they had told her in the first instance, her terms were too high—and that, if they had wanted her, they should have sent for her.

Emily made one more active attempt at governessing before she quite resigned herself for that miserable passive endurance of waiting for something to turn up ;” that *point d'appui* of the weary and unbefriended. She heard of a widow lady respectably situated, though humbly, compared with those to whom she had heretofore applied, who was in search of a daily governess.

The requirements seemed but simple, as the eldest child was only just nine years old, and the terms were specific—the attendance of three hours a day on three little girls—the eldest of whom, as we have said, had but just entered her tenth year, and the terms twenty pounds a-year. The greatest drawback seemed to be the distance—it was between two and three miles from the point where Emily resided—a weary distance in bad weather, and through London mud, for a delicate female. But Emily would not be disheartened. She could walk it she was sure, extremely well.

She applied personally ; and a respectable, genteelish sort of person, received her with attention and courtesy.

“ You do not seem very young, ma'am ?”

This was a new sort of opening, but Emily was learning to be armed at all points.

“ At present, I look older than I really

am, for I am scarcely quite recovered from a very severe illness ; but I am certainly not very old."

" But you are married, ma'am ?"

" Yes."

" It must be some years since you were at school."

" Why, yes, undoubtedly: some four years."

" Yes, it must be ; and you see, ma'am, every thing changes so fast now. I dare say there's a new system since you were at school. I would rather have somebody for my children that's quite up to it, ma'am."

Emily could not help smiling.

" I think, if you would venture to try me, you would find that I should soon be " up " to any thing that may have been introduced since I left school."

" Perhaps so, ma'am, perhaps so: I wouldn't wish to contradict you. I am sure, I'm very much obliged to you for wishing to take the situation, and very sorry you've had the trouble of coming so

far for nothing : but we are bound to do the best for one's own, ma'am, and I would rather have somebody for my children, just fresh, hot, as one may say, from school."

So Emily made her courtsey, and trapsed her weary way home again.

CHAPTER V.

LIKE most fashionably educated young ladies, Mrs. Meredith had been taught to fabricate a variety of those elegant and useless trifles, in the construction of which young ladies are accustomed to kill ennui, look occupied, and waste some of the most valuable hours of existence. Yes, the *most* valuable; for there is an inspiration, an energy, a spring, in the mind of youth, which inevitably passes away as life advances; and which is irrecoverable, totally

unattainable, even by those who have been habitually the most unwearying in keeping their faculties vigorous and alert, by assiduous culture and constant exercise. The powers of discrimination, and judgment, of combination and arrangement, are doubtless strengthened and improved by time and experience ; the faculty of concentration of thought, the ability to analyze ideas, to trace the luxuriant growth of thought, back through all its various ramifications, to its insignificant germ—all these mental powers may, year by year, be invigorated, refined, and improved, by any one who cherishes and cultivates his intellects, suffering them not to rust in indolence, or become heavy by self-indulgence. But that ardour, that energy, that overpowering impulse, which seems as if it could hew down mountains in its onward path—this evaporates with the early prime of life, never, never to return.

It grieves us often to see young women who have minds far above mediocrity, and

talents capable of high cultivation, frittering away their *morning* hours—the prime of the day, as youth is of life—and this not occasionally, as a relaxation—but habitually—in the fabrication of fanciful little matters, of which the highest ultimate object is that they should sparkle two or three months on a drawing-room litter table, and then be swept away by the housemaid, with other “rubbish.” Surely it is a less useful preparation for the practical duties of married life, than the “learned” education, which gentlemen used to hold in so much horror. Those times are passed ; it is happily no longer a distinction, a mark of separation in a woman, to have passed the Pons Asinorum, or read Virgil : and it has been proved now, by a widely-extended experience, that a woman may translate an ode of Horace, or even explore the intricacies of a Greek verb, and yet be an affectionate and self-denying wife, a devoted mother,

and an intelligent and competent mistress of a household.

It must, indeed, we should think, be at once granted, that pursuits which strengthen the reasoning faculties and enlarge the mind, must better prepare a young woman for the performance of practical duties, even distasteful ones, than those dawdling and frivolous occupations, of which the very tendency is to indispose a person for definite, practical, and useful employment.

Were this skill in trifling manufactures convertible to any useful purpose under unforeseen necessity, it would be stamped with a much higher value ; but such is now—in the excess of their production—hardly the case. Poor Mrs. Meredith soon found this. More as a *passe-temps* during the weary and protracted hours of her recovery, than with any definite object, she had made a variety of pretty things ; pin-cushion harps, needle-case lyres, character dolls, stands for flower-glasses, bead embroidered pen-wipers &c. ; and afterwards,

during the intervals of her unsuccessful, and at length hopeless attempts to obtain a situation as governess, she from some impulse she hardly dared inquire into, some feeling she ventured not to define, applied herself assiduously to the manufacture of things of a more useful character. She felt, rather than knew, that they again wanted money.

“Anything,” breathed she, to herself, “anything rather than that.”

White knitting cotton was very cheap, she bought a quantity ; and the impulse having seized her, she hardly relaxed in her industry until she had completed some dozens of d'oyleys, knitted, netted, and crochet-work, some pretty pin-cushion covers, and several anti-macassars. She had a neat hand, a quick and alert finger, and a pretty fancy in such matters ; her productions were therefore unimpeachable in point of taste and execution. She was a clever *artiste* in German wool, and wished much to have produced a specimen of her

skill in that manufacture, but the price of the wools deterred her. She had learnt from painful necessity, and practised from a sense of duty, the most extreme and minute economy. So, though she thought some little matter in radiant colours would have made her store far more attractive, she determined to wait until she had an opening for the sale of them. For this, the sale of fancy articles, had suggested itself to her mind as the next most probable mode of obtaining, by her own exertions, some small portion of "that precious drudge twixt man and man"—money.

With a beating heart, beating until its palpitations almost disabled her, a parched mouth, and a flushed brow, Emily, during her husband's absence, stole out—for she had the feelings of a culprit, she hardly dared to step out boldly—to a fancy shop which she had seen in the neighbourhood, and casting a furtive glance around, withdrew to the darkest corner of it. Thither she was immediately followed by a shop

girl, who asked what she could have the pleasure of showing her. Emily's throat and lips were so parched with agitation and suspense that it was with the utmost difficulty she articulated,

“ I should wish to speak with the master or mistress of the shop.”

“ Mrs. Tapetwine is particularly engaged.”

“ I will wait, if you will allow me.”

“ Oh, certainly ;” and the young lady walked off, not thinking it necessary to ask a person who came with a bundle in her hand, to take a seat.

Emily took one nevertheless ; and having by this opportune delay recovered her self-possession, she looked round the shop and saw the person whom she took to be Mrs. Tapetwine, assiduously sorting shades in wools, in several colours, for two young ladies, who could not decide whether they would work a large centre lily of their pattern, white, scarlet, or lilac.

Each colour was in turn laid by the

patient shop-mistress, in the centre of those which were to go round it, and one was changed, and another was changed, just as fancy might suggest at the moment, until at length, when from twenty minutes to half an hour had elapsed in these alterations and arrangements, the ladies thought that, after all, they would not have flowers, they would have a figure piece. The obsequious shopkeeper instantly swept away all that it had taken her perhaps near an hour to arrange, and which it would take a not much less time to replace, and covered the counter with new patterns and materials. A glance at her shop-girl, and an almost imperceptible shrug of the shoulders showed, however, to Emily, who was earnestly watching, a real vexation and weariness which were carefully concealed from the customers. In this look Mrs. Tapetwine caught a glance at Mrs. Meredith and turned with an enquiring look to her assistant, who was at her elbow in an instant.

"She wishes to speak to you; I think she has some work."

"Oh, very well—let her wait."

At length the ladies, not finding a figure pattern to suit their fancy, reverted to the original flower one, and after a little further consideration, took it with them, and as soon as Mrs. Tapetwine had made her last curtsy on their lingering departure, she came round to the dark corner where Mrs. Meredith was seated.

Emily drew a long breath, and began,

"I have brought a little fancy work with me, for which I am anxious to obtain a purchaser."

"I am sorry to say I can do nothing for you; I am overstocked already."

"Allow me to show it you."

"It is useless to give you the trouble—I employ regular hands, and want no more."

The tears started to Emily's eyes, but she compelled herself to make one more effort.

"I did not for a moment imagine that

you wanted supplies, but I thought perhaps you would do me the favour to look at what I have brought."

Something in Emily's soft, sad tone, and manner, for she had not yet laid a finger on the parcel to open it—so unlike a hack-nied bargainer, who has her wares spread out before you have time to forbid her—struck Mrs. Tapetwine, for she cast a hasty glance over her visitor's person, and then said, kindly,

"I fear, young lady, I can do nothing for you; still, if you wish to show me your work, I shall be glad to look at it."

The harps, and dolls, and penwipers, and those things she discarded at once; they were not in her way; it was useless to take up time in examining them.

"Can you tell me where I shall have a chance of disposing of them?"

"Indeed, I cannot, unless at the bazaars; you may have a chance there, though but a chance—all these things are drugs now, they are in such plenty. These are more

likely," continued she, taking up one of the crochet D'oyleys, "and they are nicely done—very nicely done; but these—these netted and knitted ones are as old as Adam—they are quite gone out."

"Can you give me no hope?—none!" said Emily, a tear, in spite of herself, dropping on the counter.

Perhaps Mrs. Tapetwine saw it, for after a moment or two of hesitation, she said,

"I'll tell you what, young lady—I'll take the whole lot—that is, the D'oyleys and anti-macassars; the other gew-gaws I can do nothing with; they are pretty, too, but they are not in my line. But these other things I will take—not because I want them, for I do not want them—but you seem to be in trouble, and it will perhaps give you a lift. I suppose you will sell them on the usual trade terms?"

"Certainly," said Emily, "and I am very greatly obliged to you."

"Mrs. Tapetwine then proceeded to examine the articles, count and separate

them. She then made a calculation, and told Emily the sum she could give her for them. Mrs. Meredith quite started.

“Is that all?” why it will do little more than repay my outlay for materials”

“It is all I can give you, ma'am, if you are not satisfied, I—”

“Do not mistake me; pray do not mistake me,” said Emily; “but this is my very first attempt at selling these things, and I had no idea they were rated at so low a price.”

“I assure you, young lady, I am offering you what is rather above the mark than below it; I assure you I could have my shop filled very rapidly with crochet work, at the price I am offering you: and as to the others, as I tell you, their day is past, and very possibly I may not be able to sell them at all.”

“It would be impossible to make a subsistence by such work then,” said Emily.

“Next door to it, I assure you; if you were to sell your things amongst your own

friends, it might be something better, because, you see, I have to make my own profit out of them over and above what I give you ; but even then it is very bad, very bad, and to look at you, I shouldn't think you have strength for such close sitting. I should advise you to try something else."

Emily sighed heavily, and thanked Mrs. Tapetwine for her advice and sympathy, and took leave. Her first impulse was to get home as quickly as possible, but then came a determination to conclude the matter, cost her in feeling what it might.

So she went to one of the bazaars, sauntered around until she reached a stall suited to her purpose, and then loitered until all but the owner of it seemed to be out of hearing. She then opened her little packet of ornaments, and expressed her wish to sell them.

" Oh dear no, we want nothing of the kind."

" But will you not look at them ?" mildly remonstrated Emily.

“ Do not be importunate : we have our own regular hands, and never employ strangers ; we are abundantly supplied.”

Emily shrank away : gladly would she have shrunk into nothing, if she could ; for the person's loud and peremptory tone had excited gazers all round. She moved away as hastily as she could, but she was upstairs, and it so happened that after descending the stairs she made a different turn from that which she had taken in going up, and so came upon a stall in the same style as that which she had just quitted ; but her attention was attracted by seeing on it a little blue satin embroidered slipper pincushion, so exactly the model of one she had in her hand, that she could not refrain an exclamation of surprise. The owner of the stall immediately took up the ornament, and began to set forth its beauties in the usual way.

“ No,” said Emily, “ I am no purchaser ; my object here is to sell, if possible ;” and encouraged by the gentle, obliging tones of

the person, so unlike the one above stairs, she displayed some of the little matters she had brought. But the dealer shook her head in the most discouraging way possible, and merely saying, "Look here, ma'am," she opened a large box under the counter, and showed that it was quite filled with articles of the same description.

"You see I am quite overstocked; I have little hope of selling half of these."

"And is everybody so abundantly supplied," said Emily.

"It seems so, for we all refuse, at least, as much as we buy."

So Emily thanked her, wished her good morning, and walked home.

CHAPTER VI.

DISCOURAGED and dispirited, but not yet utterly disheartened, Emily made one more attempt to turn her lighter accomplishments to account. She had considerable talent for drawing, and was exceedingly fond of the art: her sketches she had been accustomed to hear immensely admired, and though she was quite aware that her heiress-ship might give warmth and animation to the tones of admiration which echoed on every side, still she had

too just a knowledge of her own productions as compared with those of her acquaintance, not to be assured that they were far superior to the usual style of young ladies' drawings. So she prepared two pretty sketches in water-colour, executed in her very best way, and neatly finished off the edges, and mounted them in the usual manner, on drab paper or board, and these she took to a favorite printshop in the Strand.

The shopman shook his head at once when she named her errand.

"But permit me to show you my drawings," said Emily.

"I shall look at them with pleasure, ma'am ; but that must not lead you to suppose that I can take them."

"They are very pretty indeed," he said, "they show taste and talent both ; they are certainly above the ordinary run of these things."

"Then I may hope, sir, that you will take them—may I not ?"

Again the ominous shake of the head.

“I cautioned you,” he said, “against hoping that. I told you I could not take them : the fact is, that I am compelled to refuse as many offerings here as would abundantly supply two shops. Perhaps, you will be more successful elsewhere—I hope you will.”

Emily shook her head dejectedly ; she could try no further.

“I am sorry,” said the shopman, kindly, “that I cannot purchase them ; but if you do not like to take them elsewhere, I will do what I can. I will place them in the window, perhaps they will attract some passer-by, and I shall have much pleasure in handing over to you whatever I may receive for them.”

Emily could only be thankful and leave them.

All this was done unknown to Henry, “poor fellow ! it would hurt his feelings so sadly ;” and he, on his part, was making many parallel and unsuccessful trials un-

known to her; and thus were this fondly attached husband and wife, from the kindest of motives, practising a system of concealment, it might be almost said of deceit towards each other. It is a great mistake.

Though Mr. Meredith was a sad absentee during the day, and always parried her enquiries, he yet returned regularly as clock-work to take her a walk of an evening; and she, without seeming to do it, contrived always that their course should pass along the Strand. He wondered much, because her cuckoo note had hitherto been, almost from the first week of their arrival in London.

“ Anywhere, Henry—anywhere, so that we escape this miserable crowd.”

Little understood he the eagerness of spirit which caused the elasticity of her step, as they approached the Strand, or that sickness of heart—the consequence of hope deferred, which made her drag on heavily homeward.

Our readers know :—here was the print shop, and here, day after day, she hoped to *miss* her own drawing.

One evening she did miss it, and she turned with an eager impulse towards the window, while her husband, supposing she wished to look at some thing exhibited there, insinuated a way for her through the crowd of gazers. In one instant she was satisfied, but was glad to remain still for a minute. Her sick eye saw her drawing fallen to one side and partly hidden behind others, and a closer view of it than she had hitherto obtained shewed her it covered and quite disfigured with dust and fly dirt.

Emily's resources seemed now at an end, and she passed some days spiritless, hopeless, and almost unoccupied. She loathed her accomplishments, her drawing, her fancy work, her crochet and embroidery ; for she had proved their inutility as realities for life, and she had no part now in its mere relaxations or superficial amusements. She felt more real comfort just

now in renovating some of her husband's garments, which seemed almost past hope, than she had heretofore done in the exercise of any of her fashionable accomplishments.

Still her earnest desire to obtain some certain remunerative occupation was no whit deadened. Though a well taught and correct musician as far as her skill went, having some execution, much taste, and a correct ear, she was not by any means what is now considered an accomplished player ; moreover, she had had no piano since she married, and was of course now too much out of practice to have given any favourable impression of her skill : it was not therefore until everything else seemed to fail, that she thought that teaching music might be a resource : but ere the passing thought had had time to fix itself in her mind, she learnt on unquestionable authority, that a respectable young lady, whose musical capabilities far ex-

ceeded her own, was giving lessons at a shilling an hour !

One only resource was now open to her, one from which she would have shrunk a few months ago : but she was now learning to shrink from nothing.

She saw occasionally modern novels and fashionable and favourite magazines, and in the latter, in the most popular and most successful of them, she read constantly, amongst others of marked talent, many tales, essays, and sketches, which she judged and judged correctly were very common-place.

“I really do think,” she said to her husband, after he had read to her a sketch by Lady —— . “I really do think I could write as well as that.”

“Better I should hope,” said he.

“Are you in earnest, Henry,” said she, her face flushing with surprise and pleasure, “are you really in earnest ?”

“Certainly, Emily ; why should you doubt it.”

“ Because that lady is one of the most favourite authors.”

“ One of the most fashionable—there *is* some difference. She has a title which would at once give her a name; and ‘a name,’ I have learnt to know, is a *sine qua non*, or rather it is the one thing needful with publishers. Moreover, her writings are light and graceful—they give nobody the trouble of thinking twice—or rather, perhaps of thinking at all, which is a decided passport to the favour of the multitude of novel, and light magazine readers. But I have seen many pages of this and other fashionable writers, of such mawkish inanity and frivolity, that let them be popular as they may, I would have been very sorry to see your name appended to.”

“ But you have no objection to my trying, Henry. Perhaps I only show my presumption in thinking of it—but you do not object to my making the attempt?”

“ Certainly not, love; there is no *presumption* in the idea; and the occupation

may beguile your mind and relieve some of your lonely hours. But I advise you not to build your hopes on success."

"You think I shall fail, then? You dishearten me."

"I don't wish to do that, my dear wife; but having my own disappointments vividly before me, I cannot feel very sanguine for you; but make the attempt, by all means—the occupation itself will be beneficial to you. It will bring its own reward."

CHAPTER VIII.

I WONDER, if the conscript fathers of our land were to turn their attention for a moment from the Duc de Montpensier's marriage, and the cession of Cracow, to the necessities of the myriads at their elbow, what plan of relief would be proposed for them. I do not mean of the very poor, who can "dig," and are not "ashamed to beg;" but of a higher class—the respectably born, decently nurtured, nay, in many instances, the highly educated, who crowd

the metropolis, unable to obtain that bread for which they cannot dig nor beg, even were begging a hopeful pursuit. For every opening that occurs, there are scores, hundreds of applicants. We speak literally—and what we know. Two or three years ago, a friend, who was in London for a few days, advertized for a governess, appointing two certain days, between twelve and three o'clock, for receiving applications, at her hotel. On the first day she had fifty-two applications. Those on the second day were not accurately numbered, for, to use the lady's own expression, "she made her escape from the scene." And this is no unfair sample of the "superabundance of hands," to speak in trade-like fashion, to be found in every calling or department a little elevated above the pursuits of the *canaille*. When the Bank of England takes in clerks, which at intervals it does, perhaps thirty or forty at a time, you would think from the absolute inundation of applicants, that every son and heir

throughout the length and breadth of the metropolis, was peculiarly qualified to uphold the monetary system of the country.

For these—in all the matters—whether it be the admission of a poor widow to an almshouse, a young lady to the benefits of the new society for governesses, a respectable youth to a clerkship in a government office, or the son of an impoverished peer as *attaché* to an embassy—interest carries the day, in most instances; and too frequently to the exclusion of the more deserving. “Pity ’tis ’tis true, true ’tis pity.” It seems to be in the “nature of things,” and everybody knows it is much easier to see a fault, than to point out a remedy.

That our country is too full of people is generally admitted; the surest evidence of the fact is in the number of emigrations that are perpetually occurring. Nor can those who are, from birth and habit, “hewers of wood and drawers of water,” do better. Let us not be misunderstood; we mean, we think, nothing disrespectful of

the British peasantry—the great bulwark of our country after all—but be it remembered that he only goes to follow that occupation in another country to which he has been habituated here, and which, failing him here, he is sure to obtain yonder, in a more fertile soil, and with every hope of abundant success; but to those who have not been accustomed to manual labor for daily bread, the case is very different. A resolute mind may, and doubtless, does achieve wonders; but all are not gifted either with mental energy or physical strength to undergo the necessary seasoning. Many die—and many return, in far worse plight than they went.

The other day—only the other day—a busy commercial house in the city, was suddenly involved, and broke up the concern.

There had been attached to it from very childhood, a youth of respectable birth, gentle manners, and unimpeachable character. He was now a favorite clerk look-

ing forward to a junior partnership. He was thirty-five to forty years old, with a pretty, lady-like wife, and six or eight small children. His knowledge was confined, almost exclusively, to the details of his business—he was no reader—no traveller. He had hardly been out of London in his life ; and never remembered, from his boyhood, to have missed his daily attendance at the city office, save from illness. His character, as we have said, was irreproachable.

But thus thrown by fortune from the situation in which, as he had begun, so he hoped to end his commercial life ; he found it impossible to procure another clerkship. For every vacancy there were swarms of applicants ; and even, with the most favorable testimonial of his late employer in his hand, he did not succeed. To speak commercially, the market was overstocked, and clerks were at a discount.

He lowered his ideas—he sought for any thing—he would have done any thing re-

spectable ; for he had his little children, his aged mother, and his sick father (who had preceded him in the same situation in the same firm) to provide for. He had lingered, hoping, many months. In vain—he earned not one guinea.

At length, old friends undertook the care of his parents, and furnished means for him, his wife, and his little children, to emigrate. He had hopes of at once, turning to something feasible ; and she, having a pretty fancy and neat finger in the work—thought she might obtain something by making up tasty caps and collars—in the back woods of Canada!

Poor thing !

In China, it seems they have a very summary way of getting rid of the superfluous population. People we know will quarrel—that is human nature, But, in England, our natural impulses are “cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd,” by the terrors of the law ; the fiat of the magistrate—to say nothing of the strong hand of the police, or the

attractions of the next station house, do sadly cow and subdue the fire of martial deeds that burns within us. Now, in China it is not so ; people are allowed to "fight it out," provided the subject of contention be private and domestic, not political. Thus the Brothers of the Sun, the sole deity upon earth, who knows well that his empire is too throngly peopled, disposes of upward of one hundred and thirty thousand of his "superfluous population" without annoyance to himself, or discontent them—for his most celestial majesty must naturally suppose that his people wouldn't fight to death unless they liked it ! Long live the celestial Emperor ! "One God in heaven, one Ta-whang-te on earth !"*

But we can't do so here ; unplaced curates, pining governesses, reduced gentlewomen, and failing gentlemen who have survived their interest in the long annuities

* See the newspapers of May 1847.

are not usually a pugnacious race—and if they were, their valorous propensities would, as we have intimated, receive a check from the law, ere they had attained “the end of all things.”

To revert to our story.

Mr. Meredith had, during all this time, been unwearying, unremitting in his exertions to obtain some appointment for himself, but as yet utterly without success. He met with much courtesy, much verbal consideration—but no effectual assistance. He was become sufficiently known now by his continuous enquiries, and by his constant appearance at the Chapter Coffee House—a usual lounge for such members of the clerical profession as are not enrolled members of the University Clubs, to obtain occasionally a day's duty, and the stipend of even that was now becoming of the utmost importance. But it was terrible that these chance offerings should be his only resource.

Though he had both perseverance and

industry when there was a little, however little a point of hope for him in the distance, when this seemed to fail, his energies failed likewise ; they were not of the undying, ever reviving, ever striving, and ever hoping nature of his wife's. This was the difference in their physical constitution.

This wife was, all unknowingly, his very guardian angel now. The thought of her nerved him far beyond the natural powers of his mind. Should he blench whilst she was dependent on him ? whilst he had her comfort to provide for?—Never ! But for her he would ere this have sunk into apathetic indifference, seeing, as he did, the utter futility of his utmost exertions, unaided by influence, or by those personal belongings, which might have pointed him out to observers as the respectable gentleman which in heart and mind, and conduct, he really was. But his coat was becoming rusty, and his hat rather worn. Could he help it—Yes,

perhaps, by running up a tailor's bill which he had no prospect of paying—but this he did not do.

As his hopes of a curacy declined, he enquired for other occupation, and he would have taken anything—no matter what—that was respectable, and did not absolutely militate against the custom and habitual of the profession to which, however unsuccessful in it, he was fondly attached. But for a long while his efforts seemed as unavailing in this as in other things. At length, one day, by a mere chance, he saw an advertisement of a tutor wanted by a gentleman in Russell Square, or its immediate vicinity, and thither he went; the requirements were specific—a graduate of the University—a Clergyman of the Church of England.

He went.

He was ushered through the hall of an elegant and spacious mansion into a richly furnished drawing-room, and thither, after the delay of a few moments, came to him

the splendidly-attired lady of the house. She saluted him with great courtesy, with a winning politeness; she was evidently a lady-like accomplished woman.

He opened his errand, and she at once entered into business details. They had seven children of various ages—from fourteen years to four—boys and girls, and the tutor was required to take the entire tuition of all. The younger children of course did not require much, and the young ladies might learn Latin or not, as they pleased; but of course they required tuition in grammar, geography, history, writing, arithmetic, and French; the father was particularly anxious about the progress in the classics of the two eldest boys, and of course he required that they should at the same time make progress in general knowledge.

“And the hours of attendance you would require, madam?” questioned Meredith.

“Our hours, sir, are from half past nine

until one, and from two until four. We are very particular as to the hours, Mr. Meredith. The gentleman who has been in attendance some time, has given us the highest satisfaction in all other matters, but we have declined his further services only because he was not so punctual in a morning as Mr. D—— wished. I name this that you may fully understand the matter. He is a clergyman, residing at Kentish Town, and I fancy is in very delicate health. Perhaps the two-mile walk was too much for him. I am certainly very sorry to lose him—but our rules are peremptory.”

“ And the salary ?”

“ Is forty pounds a year.”

Meredith's lip curled a little, and the lady saw it.

“ This would hardly satisfy you, Mr. Meredith ?”

“ I did not say that, madam : it *may* be what is usual.”

“ Yes, indeed, I assure you, our terms

are fully equivalent to those given by other people in our station. Living is now so very expensive, and Mr. D. must keep up a certain style—that we are obliged, of course, to manage as well as we can in other matters.”

Meredith's eye glanced round the gorgeous room, but of course he said nothing.

The lady seemed rather struck with Mr. Meredith's manners and appearance, and rather anxious he should call again and have some conversation with Mr. D. Mr. Meredith promised to do so ; appointed a time when that gentleman was likely to be at home, and took his leave.

He returned and told Emily of his expedition, and of what, we suppose, must be called his *hopes*—for certainly he did not feel justified in declining the situation, should it be placed in his option, how unattractive soever it might be in itself. Emily of course thought as he did, but could not help expressing her regrets.

“ To drudge all day—for it will consume

your entire day, the distance is so great—to drudge all day with several children for forty pounds a year—you, a scholar and a clergyman—my father's butler had more."

"No doubt of it, love ; but if clergymen are to be estimated according to the salaries they obtain, they are a very inferior race indeed to most gentlemen's servants."

CHAPTER IX.

THE Marchmonts were no sooner established in their new house, than Mrs. de Snobyn and her daughters paid their compliments. They were most cordially welcomed by Sir Charles, who was a good-tempered man, of cheerful and social habits. He was fond of ladies' society, he had the predilection of early regard for Mrs. de Snobyn, and her present style, appearance, and manners were, according to the fiat of the world, unexceptionable. Her daughters,

too, were handsome, intelligent, lady-like girls, evidently much attached to their mother—a circumstance which in itself would have been a passport to Sir Charles's regard—even if their marked—yet delicate and not too strongly marked—deference to himself and Lady Marchmont had not almost insensibly won upon him.

Open and unsuspecting himself, almost even to a fault, it never entered his mind to ascribe policy, art, and manœuvring, to these young girls. He himself dearly loved and respected his wife, he knew her to be richly deserving of his utmost respect and affection ; but he was also aware that her extreme quietness, and her undemonstrative ways, whether the result of illness, indolence, or negligence, caused her to be of little consequence in society ; little noted when there, little missed when away. He was quite accustomed to see her passed over, unnoticed, especially by gay young people. The attention, delicate and unobtrusive, yet continued, which

the Miss de Snobyns paid to her, was therefore as new to him as delightful to witness. That their mother, his cousin, might have suggested this course originally, might be true, and was all right and proper. The warm and ingenuous feelings of youth had led them not merely to obey, but to adopt the course as their own. He was much pleased with them.

That this warm-hearted conduct was the result of the coldest calculation, of a deliberate plot between mother and daughters, was an idea that never entered his head. How should it ?

Perhaps Lady Marchmont, quiet as she was, saw or suspected more : but as yet, she had not spoken of it.

So it was with the most cordial feelings, uninfluenced by a single doubt or misgiving, that Sir Charles, followed by his son, hastened into the drawing-room to welcome his cousins, and to thank them for their early call.

“ I am truly glad to see you,” said he,

to Mrs. de Snobyn, "and you, sir," added he, passing hastily from the lady to Mr. de Snobyn, "this is an unexpected pleasure, and a very great one : I understood, from my cousin, that you never made calls."

"Very seldom, sir, very seldom, indeed : it don't suit me ; I've not been used to it ; but I did wish to pay my respects to the friend of my good son, Abel, and—(recollecting himself,) of Mrs. S."

"And putting the claims of cousinship to one side—if I may do so ungallant a thing"—and he bowed kindly to Mrs. de Snobyn—"we have a strong bond of union in your son, Abel : we *must* be friends for his sake ; I hardly know any man—I am not sure that I know one, whom I esteem altogether so highly as Mr. Snobbins."

The poor old man's eyes were brimfull of tears ; he seized Sir Charles's hand, and was beginning something almost inaudible, about "both his boys, Abel and Jack," when, fortunately for Mrs. de Snobyn's equanimity, Lady Marchmont entered.

She received her visitors complacently, and with lady-like acknowledgments of "this early attention," but to Mr. de Snobyn her manner was even cordial, and his wife saw at once that she was correct in her idea, that her best policy with regard to the Marchmonts, would be to make her husband of consequence, instead of (as she had originally intended,) keeping him as much as possible in the background. It was a shrewd suspicion of this, which had led her at breakfast, at once to acquiesce in Mr. de Snobyn's hint—he dared not venture on more—"that he would like to pay his respects to the good gentleman, Abel and little Maude thought so much of." His wife at once begged him to accompany them in a tone so cordial, it did his very heart good; and moreover, she proposed to take Charlotte also, which pleased him still more.

"I have come down upon you in great force, Lady Marchmont; I have brought my whole family—yes all: for my sons

are away—Augustus at Oxford, Octavius at Eton ; and Charlotte begged me not to leave her behind.”

“I am very glad to see, Miss Charlotte, and shall be so at all times,” said Lady Marchmont, kindly ; “come here, Miss Charlotte, my dear : your eyes are younger than mine, can you see to take up this stitch for me ?”

Charlotte succeeded in the operation, more quickly than the old lady would have done, and was rewarded by a nod, and a kind pit-pat on the cheek.

“You have done Charlotte a favor in making her useful, my elder girls have also a little boon to prefer.”

“What is it, young ladies ; what can I do for you,” said Lady Marchmont, with a tone and manner perfectly unimpeachable, yet so different from the one in which she had addressed Charlotte, that Evelina bit her lip with vexation, though in almost the same instant she remembered herself, and

composed her countenance to smiles for Helena's sake.

"What is it?" reiterated Sir Charles and his son in the same breath, one eagerly volunteering for his wife, the other for his mother, a good deal more interest than the lady herself had evinced.

"Oh, dear," said Helena, "you alarm us: for our request is the most trifling possible: it is only, dear madam, that until you have arranged the minor decorations of your drawing-room to better advantage, you would allow these screens a place there. We know they are not worthy of a permanent one; but my sister and I have embroidered them in the hope that they may be temporarily useful."

"Of more than temporary use," said Lady Marchmont, "for they are very beautiful;" so, in truth, they were. "Young ladies, I am very much obliged to you: I shall not forget the obligation."

"Do not speak of it as an obligation,

Lady Marchmont, I beg : I assure you, my daughters have been most happily occupied in preparing this little token of their respectful regard for you. Your kind acceptance far more than repays their trouble."

The screens were passed round, and Mr. de Snobyn looked at them.

"They are pretty—they are indeed very pretty," said he ; they were evidently as new to him as to the donee.

"You have not seen them, Mr. de Snobyn," asked Lady Marchmont.

"No, my lady, never before ; never before, my lady," said he, totally unaware of the mischief he was doing.

"Yet you like to see the pretty things they can do," pursued the usually passive but now relentless Lady Marchmont.

"Yes, that I do, dearly," he said, looking fondly at his girls.

Mrs. de Snobyn came to the rescue.

"The fact is, both papa and I have been

kept in the dark, in this matter. My daughters knew that the attention to you, trifling as it is, would be highly gratifying to me, and, I suppose, meant to give me a little surprise. Their father happened to be not in the room this morning when they showed them to me, and begged my influence with your ladyship for their acceptance."

Lady Marchmont bowed—just one of those bows, that Mrs. de Snobyn did not like.

It can be hardly necessary now to tell our readers that this lady was never at a loss for a delicate invention—*anglicé*—a fib—which might suit the nonce; nor was she ever deterred by any scruples of conscience from displaying it to the best possible advantage. Poor Mr. de Snobyn looked bewildered, for though he had not seen the screens he had heard them talked of at home, openly and frequently, during the past month; but he was often mystified by his wife's speeches, and had ex-

perience enough to know that silence was his safest course.

He had lost none of his own reverence for truth, and though not always able to reconcile his wife's actions and professions, he had not, even yet, any idea of the extent of her habitual irreverence for and practical disregard of that great virtue.

The visitors took leave, the ladies being escorted to their carriage by Redwald Marchmont ; Mr. de Snobyn taking a cab to his son's in the City.

"What a sleepy, prosy, old body that Lady Marchmont is," said Helena.

"She's not very alert, Helena, to be sure ; but I think she's *very* kind," said Charlotte.

"Do you," said Helena, tartly.

"And Maude says that she's goodness itself, in reality ; and that she loves her dearly," continued Charlotte.

"Does she," rejoined Helena, still more tartly.

"I have little doubt that Maude is cor-

rect," said Mrs. de Snobyn : "there appears to me to be a fund of goodness in Lady Marchmont."

"And of wit and intellect, mama—pray do continue," sneered Helena.

Mrs. de Snobyn made no reply : she did not think it necessary at this moment to enlighten her less experienced daughter, but she began to *feel*, in a way, perhaps, that she would have had some difficulty to explain, that indolent and stupid as that lady appeared, she had a quickness of perception and shrewdness of intellect, that might interfere seriously with her (Mrs. de Snobyn's) plan in petto ; to say nothing of her very occasional but most awkward references to the past, bearing as these references did upon circumstances which Mrs de Snobyn had hitherto kept, and evermore wished to keep closely locked in her own bosom.

She therefore gave some accidental turn to the conversation, instead of directly re-

replying to Helena's scornful insinuation regarding Lady Marchmont's intellect.

Would she not have shrunk into her innermost self had she heard the conversation which ensued in Eaton-square on her departure thence.

"What a very nice woman that Mrs. de Snobyn is," said Redwald, as he returned to the drawing-room ; "really, sir, I think my mother and I are indebted to you for introducing us to such a relative."

"I doubt whether your mother thinks so highly of the obligation as you appear to do," said Sir Charles, laughing.

"My dear mother, what can you possibly object to in Mrs. de Snobyn?"

"I made no objection, Redwald."

"You *spoke* none, mother mine : but is she not really a lady-like person."

"Undoubtedly she is."

Redwald thanked his mother with more eagerness than the boon seemed to require.

“ And her daughters are very like her ?”

“ Very like her, indeed—too like her.”

“ Too like her, my dear mother, when she is such a very charming woman !”

“ I did not allow that she was a very charming woman : I said she was a lady-like person.”

“ My dear Cecilia,” said Sir Charles, “ you are really too oracular : you puzzle me as much as you do poor Redwald : pray speak out what you have to say against Mrs. de Snobyn.”

“ I cannot speak out, because I really have nothing to say against her—nothing, however that I can specify.”

“ I do not like you, Dr. Fell.
The reason why I cannot tell ;
But this I know full well,
I do not like you, Dr. Fell.”

sang Sir Charles.

“ Redwald, your mother is but a homely

sort of person, in this world of new fashions, but I think you both love and respect her."

"My dear mother," said Redwald, taking her hand, "you cannot doubt it."

"I do not doubt it, you have never given me cause; and may a blessing attend you for it. Now, my boy, for the sake of the mother's love and care with which I have watched you when I have cared not for all the world besides, promise me, promise me, that you will not commit yourself to Helena de Snobyn until we know fully her mother's past career."

"Dear mother," said Redwald, coloring violently, "you are alarming yourself unnecessarily; I have no thought or intention of committing myself to Helena de Snobyn."

"I am quite aware that you have no 'thought or intention' of doing it; but there is the very danger. You would not be the first young man by thousands who found that he had gone further without

'thought or intention' than he could in honour recede."

"Well, mother," said he, evidently annoyed, "what is it you wish me to do."

"You are our only son; the last of your father's honourable name, and the sole representative of my family, the honour of which has been untarnished by a single *mésalliance* from the days of Redwald, the Saxon, in the Confessor's time. Such a name you ought to consider as the most sacred bequest you can have."

"And so I do, mother."

"I believe you, my son, I believe you fully. I do not ask you to seek for rank or honour; if you bring a milk-maid home, she shall be as a daughter to me, provided she be of pure and unstained parentage. My boy, there is too much *seeming* about Mrs. de Snobyn; there appears to me something kept back. I *may be* quite wrong: I prohibit nothing, I require nothing; but I entreat you so far to give way to my

prejudices as to be cautious and prudent."

"My dear mother, I will be so, you may rely on it. You may trust me."

"I do trust you."

He pressed her hand affectionately, and left the room. The lady felt for her smelling bottle which had slipped down quite unheeded during her late unwonted excitement, and her husband remained in a brown study by the fire. At length he roused himself.

"I cannot account, Cecilia, for the antipathy you have to Mrs. de Snobyn."

"I hope it does not amount to antipathy, indeed, I am sure it does not; if it had not been for Redwald I should not have expressed any dislike. I shouldn't have taken the trouble."

Her husband smiled—the reply was characteristic; but she had rather excited his anxiety by her unusual earnestness, and he resumed,

“ But what has caused this strong impression on your mind ?”

“ I don't know, I'm sure ; I've always a horror of deceit and seeming.”

“ Ah, it was that change of name, which as I have learnt from Mr. Abel Snobbins—for I asked him the question plainly—was entirely her doing, and against his father's wishes.”

“ That was merely a very contemptible act, and of no moment except as an indication of character.”

“ Yet,” said he, good-humouredly, “ we must not think too hardly of her for that—foolish it might be—but it was hard for a handsome woman to change her name to Snobbins.”

“ She ought not to have accepted the husband if she was ashamed of his name. But, my dear Sir Charles, I am very tired.”

“ I dare say you are, my good wife ; here, let me raise this cushion up for your head, and now take a little nap.”

Sir Charles helped her to nestle herself in her shawl and cushion, kissed her withered cheek as kindly as ever he had had done when it was fresh and blooming, and stole softly out of the room.

CHAPTER X.

IT may easily be supposed that Miss Prabble's volunteer promise soon to revisit her old friend, Mr. Snobbins, was not forgotten—Mrs. de Snobyn received her with courtesy—and the old gentleman with marked pleasure. The young people, too—especially the giddy Charlotte and Octavius, found their own peculiar amusement in her visits ; and she was soon a recognised and frequent visitor—in a private way. For Miss Prabble had good sense ; and she was as far

from wishing to intrude on Mrs. De Snobyn's fashionable coteries, as that lady would have been to introduce her to them. But it gratified her palate to make her dinner at Mrs. de Snobyn's dainty luncheon table, and it suited her tastes and her habits, to trot about Regent Street and Oxford Street for half a day together, matching lace, or buying mittens or gloves, or suiting ribbons, for Mrs. de Snobyn and her daughters. It really made her quite happy to be thus employed; and the young ladies found her so very good-natured and so very useful, that, although at first they had welcomed her merely for the fun of quizzing her—a circumstance of which she was fully aware, and to which she was perfectly indifferent—they now always—or almost always—hailed her cordially, when they heard her pitter-pattering steps approaching their own especial morning room—for to this now she had free access. For their “dear old Prabble was the best creature in the world;” she was always

ready, always handy, and always came in at the very moment she was wanted—and that was pretty frequently. She was always ready to draw up a loop in a mitten, or a sudden fracture in a new glove—which new gloves *will* have—or remove a soil from a worn one, so neatly and so quickly; or she would arrange a refractory curl, or re-model an ill-sitting *berthe*, better than any lady's maid in the world. And she would look as pleased, when they were *mises a perfection*, as if she were to have a personal participation in their conquests: and not unfrequently, when their hearts were set on some ornamental article, about which mamma demurred, they would apply to her; and usually, most usually, at the very moment when most desired, she would enter their dressing-room with it, looking as pleased and as happy, as if she herself were benefitted by it.

“Certainly.” would the girls frequently remark; “that dear old Prabble has wonderful influence with mamma.”

Charlotte, her especial favourite, would sometimes remark it to her.

“ How is it, Prabby, that you can make mamma do any thing ?”

“ Ah, my dear, old friends—old friends—old friends,” would she reply, nodding her little head very quietly, and pattering one foot, and winking both eyes in unison, and then, pattering off on both feet, she would add—“ but I must go and see after papa—see after papa, my dear.”

And so she did ; and here was the genuine worth and goodness of Miss Prabble's character best displayed : here were her valuable ministrations in Mrs. de Snobyn's house. Whatever might be the cause of the lady's ill-concealed mortification at her humble friend's first visit, it quickly gave way to a cheerful and general welcome, when she saw how valuable an acquisition Miss Prabble became, as a companion to Mr. de Snobyn. He was always delighted to see her, and he would sit for an hour or two at her side, gossiping of

old times and old ways, she having indeed, all the talk to herself, but he listening with a pleased and happy countenance, ever and anon, at intervals, making a remark, or asking a question, but invariably, when she rose, to go, begging her not to be "in such a hurry."

And she was always ready to have "a snug cup of tea" with him early, and make it for him, when he was not disposed to wait for, or to join, the drawing-room circle; and these times came faster and oftener, the result of increasing feebleness, added to original distaste. Mrs. de Snobyn no longer disguised from herself that he did seem gradually to become more feeble; but so gradually, and so entirely unattended by any pain or complaint that she felt no alarm about the circumstance. She was much pleased at the prestige he shewed for Miss Prabble, as she could leave him without the hesitation which possibly the scruples of her own conscience, but most certainly the sarcasms of her step-son

Abel, would have induced otherwise. Now while she was doing the honours of her splendid drawing-room, or escorting her daughters to ball or opera, she knew that her husband was happy in his own way, playing tric-trac or cribbage, or a hit at back-gammon with Miss Prabble, in a quiet snugger of a room, apart from the bustle of the drawing-room. If the thought ever struck her, she did not indulge it, that though pleased with Miss Prabble and happy, he would have been more pleased, more happy, to see the beaming faces of his "bonny children," as he called them around him, if he could do so without encountering the fashionable crowd by whom they were surrounded.

However that was not to be, and Miss Prabble was always ready to come when sent for, or to stay when she happened to call, if requested to do so. And then they had their snug cup of tea, their cosy chat, and quiet game: and then punctual as clock work, came the tray with a delicate

sweetbread, or a slice of cold chicken; and then the old friends shook hands kindly with mutual thanks for their pleasant evening, and Mr. de Snobyn took his bible to read his chapter—his last employment before retiring to rest: and Miss Prabble pattered down stairs, chattering familiarly to the footman all the way, as he lighted her to the cab, which Mrs. de Snobyn had given orders should always be in waiting for her, when she spent the evening there.

CHAPTER X.

SATISFIED that the earnest caution she had given to her son would be respected, that his promise to her would not be forgotten, Lady Marchmont no longer sought to throw any check on the intercourse of the two families. It was as frequent as might be supposed from the relationship and the mutual liking of its members. It opened a new and a charming world to the De Snobyns. Sir Charles Marchmont's old friends, and the widely spread family con-

nections of Lady Marchmont, gathered round them, as well as many new ones they had formed abroad ; and they were the centre of a circle combining rank, wealth, fashion, and intellect, to which any one might be pleased to gain admission. What a field it opened to Mrs. de Snobyn for the exercise of her tactics and the display of her pretensions.

Her daughters, " his young cousins," as he called them, were always cordially welcomed by Sir Charles ; Mrs. de Snobyn added many valuable, and to her, most acceptable names to her visiting list from her introduction at her cousin's, her own house became a most attractive place of meeting—everything was done in the best style—with perfect taste. Her new mansion and its belongings gave ample scope for this, and most heartily did she congratulate herself, now that no paltry and short-sighted economy had caused her to mar the perfection and completeness of Mr. Veneer's arrangements.

Not neglecting the heavy battery of fashionable social life, the elaborate dinners and formal balls, Mrs. de Snobyn was more especially happy in its light artillery. Unpremeditated musical *soirées*, unformal carpet dances, followed each other in quick succession ; and it was seldom indeed that some arrangement was not made for meeting the ensuing morning, or some early morning—to practise some new music, or arrange some fancy costumes, or go to some fashionable exhibition ; or better still, to examine at home specimens of the drawings of some forlorn artist, who sought the patronage of the rich Mrs. de Snobyn. (Mrs. de Snobyn encouraged all people of this kind—she liked the *eclât* of patronage.) Then, of course, *vice versâ*, these morning meetings led to further evening appointments.

The Miss de Snobyns, all three of them, for Charlotte was now “ out,” were to the very acme of their mother’s wishes, the fashion. They were amongst the hand-

somest, and were decidedly the very best dressed girls—as to style—of the circle in which they moved : and it was one in which their education had particularly formed them to shine—all their accomplishments told. They were always in request—their waltzing was inimitable : they sang and played well, and were generally good-naturedly ready to do either, they did not give themselves airs ; they could assist well in a group of *tableaux vivants* and they acted proverbs admirably.

All Mrs. de Snobyn's plans and projects seemed to answer, nay, fortune and circumstances seemed in every way propitious to her ; for her grand-daughter, whom she could not, and durst not have overlooked during this season of gaiety and anticipated triumph—Maude Snobbins was in the country, in attendance on her Godmother, Mrs. Villiers, who was in declining health.

Yes, all seemed prosperous : everything went “ merry as a marriage bell,” save that—Redwald did not speak.

No, he did not speak. Perhaps respect for his mother's doubts, unfounded though he considered them to be, had hitherto deterred him, or perhaps his own mind was hardly resolved. There seemed little doubt that he had a preference for Miss de Snobyn; still his attentions to her were not so marked as to have been observed by any less interested in his conduct than the parties themselves. Helena began to be a little petulant under the pressure of "hope deferred," and she was again warned by her mother of the impolicy of such demonstrations.

"Your own good sense must tell you, Helena, that if a young man is undecided whether or not to take an important step, the very way to deter him is to exhibit petulance."

"Dear mama, I was not aware that I exhibited any petulance; but I am tired of playing fast and loose to Mr. Redwald Marchmont's caprices. There are others to be had, I fancy, as good as he!"

Mrs. De Snobyn smiled.

“I might point out to you, Helena, that you are petulant now ; that you are unjust, yourself must feel, for the young man has shewn no caprice ; but I would rather learn from you—for I must confess my utter ignorance of the fact, to whom, amongst all our circle, you can point as a *parti* so perfectly unexceptionable, so exceedingly desirable, as Redwald Marchmont, or to repeat, in your own expressive language, (the very slightest possible sneer curled Mrs. De Snobyn's lip), where ‘another is to be had as good as he ?’ ”

A deep flush passed over Helena's face ; the tears rushed to her eyes, and her vexation was very evident in the look she turned on her sister, but she did not speak. Evelina did.

“Mama, I think you are a little too hard upon Helena.”

“I am sure, my dear, I do not wish to be so.”

“We are both sure of that, mama ; we

well know that ; but you see Helena has no idea whether Mr. Marchmont means to speak or not, and you must allow that suspense is very harassing."

" I do allow it—nevertheless, it must be borne ; it is a trial that every young woman has to encounter in a greater or less degree."

" I suppose so ; but I think it is very ungenerous in a man to go on without letting a girl know his intentions."

" ' Go on ' what, Evelina—be more explicit."

" Why, mama, go on paying particular attentions."

" So do I ; but to whom do you refer ?"

" To Mr. Marchmont, to be sure, mama !"

" He has not paid any ' particular attentions ' that I have seen, to any one."

" Oh ! mama, don't, don't say that," exclaimed Evelina, now almost crying in her turn, as her sister had been for some mi-

notes. "Don't say that, for we have all thought he admired Helena so much, and you thought so once, mama."

"I think so still ; but that does not alter the fact that he has shown her no particular attentions. I think that Redwald was much struck with your sister on their first acquaintance ; and I will confess that, at that time, I was in hopes the impression might not only be permanent, but that it might quickly be brought to a happy result. In that I was mistaken. Whether warned by his mother—with whom I *feel* we are not favorites—or whether it be the result of his own unbiassed judgment, I know not ; but it is quite evident to me now that he is a young man, whose fancy will not be allowed to blind his discretion !"

"But what should Lady Marchmont *warn* him about, mama ; surely, Helena is a match for him ?"

"I do not underrate my daughters, Evelina ; but I can fully justify Lady March-

mont in looking higher for her son than the daughter of a London tradesman. I have told you before, that it is not by shutting our eyes to fact—how adverse soever to our wishes, that we are likely to attain those wishes—but by carefully adjusting our own conduct to suit circumstances which we cannot alter.”

“But surely, mamma, you would not have Helena reserve herself for Mr. Marchmont, until the gentleman may see proper to conclude his deliberations?”

“You cannot of course, Evelina, ask such a question seriously. My utmost energies, you are well aware, are devoted to the attainment of suitable establishments for yourself and your sisters. It will not be my fault if they be not brilliant ones. You must see that I spare no cost, no labour, to display you to the best possible advantage. Far from wishing any of you to wait the ‘deliberations’ of any man, you must remember that I cautioned Helena long ago to correct and subdue her

naturally warm impulses, to keep herself free—absolutely free in mind and heart, that she might at once avail herself of any advantageous circumstance that arose—whether in the shape of an offer from him or another. Now if Helena can point out to me any prospect opening before her brighter, or so brightly, as that of an offer ultimately from Redwald Marchmont, I am quite willing to further her views as far as in my power.”

“Then mamma,” interrupted Helena, “you still think he may make me an offer.”

“Undoubtedly, I do, Helena ; though I am sorry to see you ask the question so eagerly. It looks as if you had not kept your feelings quite so much under control as I could have wished.”

“I cannot help it : indeed, indeed mamma I cannot help it,” said Helena, again bursting into tears.

Mrs. de Snobyn about to speak, checked herself, and took two or three turns up and down the room in evident vexation, if

not displeasure. At last after a pause of some minutes she resumed her seat, and spoke to her daughter with unusual gravity though also with much kindness :

“I am grieved, my dear Helena, grieved and shocked, more than I can well explain to you, at these unequivocal tokens of what I fear I must call—pre-occupied affection. I feared this from your petulance—had your fancy been free you would have been cool, possibly contemptuous—but not petulant. Yet I am deeply grieved to find my surmises confirmed by your own confession. But, my dear, I trust it is not too late to overcome this penchant ; I am very sure it is not to rule and regulate it, for you must feel, Helena, you *must* feel that far from being a furtherance, it would be, in its slightest display, an obstacle to your wishes. No man likes a cherry so ripe that it drops into his mouth—least of all a man so sensitive about feminine delicacy as Redwald Marchmont. I do not doubt that he much admires you—likes you—a

bystander sees most of the game, and I see many tokens of this which are lost on you—”

Helena, started, coloured, and raised her brilliant dark eyes, now flashing with delight to her mother's face.

“Nay Helena, do not rejoice too soon—I tell you this now, more as a matter of warning than of gratulation ; though it may become so if you are prudent. Redwald is watching you, Helena—watching you closely—studying you—and it is this very scrutiny which convinces me that he is not indifferent to you. He chatters with Evelina, flirts with Charlotte, but he *watches* you. Let him not suppose that unsought you are won. Exhibit no levity, no flirtation, no fickleness in an ostentatious indifference—beware of that : at the same time do not let him, by any inconsiderate prestige on your part, suppose that unwooded you have given your heart to him. Be careful and the game may yet be in

your own hands. But if otherwise, remember Helena, I consider it as due to yourself and to me that you quench, resolutely, quench and annihilate this unhappy preference; and that you hold yourself ready, —ready not merely in word and action, but in heart and spirit, to accept the first advantageous match that may present itself. It is impossible in my position, and with your natural and acquired advantages that my daughters should not have suitable offers: but the hopes and exertions of my whole life will fail if they do not marry early and well.”

Mrs. de Snobyn rose and quitted the room before her daughters, awed somewhat by her grave demeanour, and more than monitory tone, had ventured to reply to her.

Helena leaned back in her chair and gave herself up to the luxury of weeping, not as before, hot, passionate tears, but that still, quiet weeping which does relieve an op-

pressed heart or a fevered spirit, even as the soft falling dew of an evening shower will revive the plants which have been withering beneath the fervid heats of a noonday sun. We are no friends to the petty artifices of woman's tears, so sneered at by cynical manhood, and the tears shed *for a purpose*, must soon fail of any effect; but few women have passed through the brunt of the world without feeling, at times, the absolute luxury of a burst of tears as a relief to the overcharged heart, to the overwrought brain, the oppressed feelings; but it is only when the burst comes thus spontaneously, naturally; that it is found a relief: tears *indulged* very soon deteriorate into mere hysterical weaknesses, a bane—not a relief to woman, and a very abomination in the sight of man.

But far from philosophically discussing the merits and demerits of tears, Helena had seldom shed tears in her life, was scarcely aware they were falling now,

but was roused by her sister Evelina, putting her arm round her neck, and gently drawing her handkerchief from her eyes.

“Come, come, Nelly, don't cry so—all will go well, you'll see.”

A shake of the head, with a renewed burst of tears was Helena's reply.

“Nay, Nelly, nay—this is foolish; mamma was rather awful, I allow, and rather cross, but—”

“Oh, Lina, it isn't that—not that; but mamma talks so coolly about this possibly failing, and then taking another—making marriage merely a matter of establishment.”

“Well, and what would you make it?” said Evelina, very coolly.

Helena looked up.

“Why, Lina, do you think there is nothing else to be considered?”

“I think it is the *first* thing, and so did you, three months ago; it was Redwald

Marchmont's position, and not himself, that *you* first fell in love with, Nelly."

Helena's eyes dropped again, but she did not reply.

Evelina continued.

"It is not for us to say that mamma is wrong—though sometimes—sometimes—but never mind that: you must feel, Helena, that it is perfectly consistent with her character to look to establishment the first thing—you must feel—you must have felt a hundred times—" and here Evelina involuntarily spoke in a lower tone—"that nothing else could have induced mamma to marry my father."

"I cannot see," said Helena, resuming something of her haughty way as the weight on her spirits relaxed, "what particular inducement an oil and tallow establishment in Budge Row could offer to the handsome and dashing and much-courted Miss Brooke, for all these Sir Charles says mamma was."

"Do you suppose, then, that my father

was the attraction; can you look at him now, after upwards of twenty years association with mamma, and watching her every look as he does—and can you picture to yourself what he must have been twenty years ago—and yet imagine mamma married him for love.”

“ Well, I don't know—it is a mystery.”

“ To me it is a great one, and I have thought about it a good deal lately. I never, you know, *quite* believed all mamma's assertions about family and so on—till this bequest from Mr. Dalton, a man we know of high family, and as it seems a blood-relation—and then these Marchmonts—it became evident I had done mamma injustice on that point; but then again came this mystery—why did she marry my father?”

“ The little blind god,” began Helena.

“ Pshaw!” interrupted Evelina, “mamma ever in love—the idea is absurd. Not that I wish to say a disrespectful word of papa—he has been all indulgence to us—but

still no one can be in the same room with them without feeling that he and mamma never were, never could have been, suited to each other."

"Well, I don't see what that matters to us."

"Why nothing, except that as mamma, in spite of an obvious *mésalliance*, seems 'monarch of all she surveys', or wishes, her whole life is a practical illustration of, and encomium on, her advice to us in the article of matrimony."

"And you mean to follow it?"

"Undoubtedly, I do."

"And marry Sir Gabriel Burford?"

"And marry Sir Gabriel Burford—if he offers."

"Evelina can you—for he *is* a soft, and I think, a selfish fool—almost an idiot?"

"Helena, I can—for he has a mansion, a carriage, and an opera-box."

* * * * *

And these were offered to her acceptance earlier than even in her most sanguine moments she had dared to hope.

CHAPTER XII.

SIR Gabriel Burford was looked on with desiring eyes by young ladies of much higher pretension as to family and fortune, than the Misses de Snobyn. For not only had he “a mansion, a carriage, and an opera-box,” those three endowments to which Evelina de Snobyn had referred with such earnest regard, but he was a baronet of a good family, and of large, unincumbered fortune. He might indeed be little better than a fool—he “had been writ down—an ass!” but what signified that. When

weighed against the baronetcy and the opera-box, the donkey-ship kicked the beam at once. In fact, managing dowagers on limited annuities, feeling no objection to an influential supervision of an inexperienced daughter's household, thought this amiable softness in the character of the Strephon *desiré* rather perhaps an advantage than otherwise. And it may be that certain high-spirited young ladies, whose ideas of the claims, duties, and advantages of matrimony were all concentrated in that one idea of "establishment", which as we have seen Mrs. de Snobyn had so carefully instilled into her daughters, and one of them, at least, Evelina, had so successfully imbibed—it may be that such young ladies thought that in marrying a man accounted a little "soft", something of a fool, what they sacrificed in one respect would be more than fully atoned by the increase of authority which might, with good management, be made to accrue therefrom. It is certain that Evelina Marchmont thought so.

Poor girl! a sad mistake. Her half-brother Abel's proverbial philosophy might have told her that "a fool is ever headstrong"—that "fools tie knots which wise men cannot loose"—the "Mrs. Snobbins of proverbial memory" as the good angel of Mr. de Snobyn's earlier days was usually characterised or stigmatised by her successor, would have said—Oh! how truly—"It is a sad house where the hen crows louder than the cock". But Evelina heard none of these sayings, and would have sneered at them if she had.

But there had been as yet one appendage to Sir Gabriel Burford's establishment which had kept manœuvring mothers at bay, and held unportioned, ambitioned misses in awe. That was Sir Gabriel's mother, the Dowager-Lady Burford. How well I remember her—rather tall she was, and very portly; so upright in person that I always regarded her with awe, for the one irremediable habit of my youth-hood was a habit of stooping, or "poking,"

as it was then called, and the perpetual lectures and reprimands on this evil habitude—which, after a lapse of half a century, I have never found myself able to amend—formed the very bane of my childhood, and I held in awe and almost in dread a person who never seemed to stoop.

And certainly the Dowager Lady Burford never did stoop—there could be no question about that. She stood usually with her hands crossed on her front, quite easily ; she often walked about in the same position. She wore, usually, black satin, on extra occasions, or in very cold weather, black velvet. I never saw her in any other dress. She exhibited no profusion of lace, but that which she did wear was of the richest and finest and best. Ornaments she wore none. Her caps were always white—lace, gauze, satin, and flowers, never anything but pure white, and their ample borders shaded a face which had in earlier years boasted no mean share of

beauty. Even now it was striking and attractive.

Her own dark hair was plainly braided over a well-formed brow, beneath which shone two dark eyes, whose lustre was but little diminished, shaded by long, rich, dark eyebrows—her nose was Roman—her lips full and firmly set—her teeth apparently white and uninjured—but that might be the dentist—I can't tell.

In Sir Gabriel, a general look of his mother might be traced, but he fell sadly short of her in the *tout ensemble*, and not less in the minute examination of the features. Probably, he took more of his father, the late Sir Simeon Burford. Sir Gabriel was rather short, and decidedly stout—alas! young ladies! but then—he was a baronet; his clumsiness was strength—his heaviness dignity. His nose was faultless, as handsome as his mother's, and his chin, though somewhat receding, was not ill-formed; but his eyes were light, vague and wandering, shadowed by lashes

and eyebrows of a very pale colour ; his hair receded very much from his temples and forehead, and was combed back behind his ears, leaving fully exposed to view a brow which, from its smooth roundness, was pronounced decidedly musical. True enough, he was decidedly musical ; was no mean performer on various instruments, and was considered a great authority in all musical matters. Of course, music was the one thing desirable, and to be desired, with all the young ladies, when Sir Gabriel Burford was in company.

Lady Burford became a widow in the very early years of her marriage ; her only child, the present baronet, being in his cradle, when Sir Simeon was carried home so fearfully injured by a fall from his horse in hunting, that he lingered but a few hours. Though suffering intense bodily agony, his mind was clear and collected ; and he signed a will, drawn up hastily from his own dictation, in which he appointed his wife guardian of his son and heir. The

confidence was worthily placed. Lady Burford was unwearying in the care of her son—unremitting in her attention to his interests.

His estates, carefully put to nurse for a period of upwards of twenty years, returned golden interest for the attention bestowed on them. Her energy, prudence, and activity, on these matters, were regarded with praise and admiration. Not so her care of his person. Nothing, indeed, could be more unremitting and more affectionate—but, at the same time, nothing could be more selfish and injudicious. Doting on her son, she could hardly bear him out of her sight ; to use a homely, but expressive phrase, “he was pinned to her apron string,” long after the age when most boys fearlessly and effectually, assert freedom of will.

Every home recreation, which did not imply much association, was procured for him freely, without regard to expense or difficulty ; but he was allowed few, if any,

companions of his own age and sex, for fear of the wish to leave home being excited in his own, hitherto, contented breast. He grew up shy and sensitive. He was sent to no public school ; a clergyman of excellent character and cultivated mind, but shy and reserved as himself, being engaged, at a very liberal salary, to reside in the Hall and superintend his education. It could not escape the keen penetration of Lady Burford that her son, as he advanced towards manhood, shewed a certain feebleness of mind ; which, if it did not absolutely amount to deficiency of intellect, had certainly much the same results in his general conduct. Whether from the idea that this mental deficiency might render him an easy prey at college to those seductions by which so many a life of fair, youthful hope and promise is shattered at its outset, or whether—as was currently reported amongst her neighbours and acquaintance—she was jealous of her authority and power, and fearful that the inevit-

able independence of a college career might lead him to become restive under her authority, instead of yielding to it as heretofore, the most unquestioning obedience—whether acting on a selfish and unworthy motive, or on the influence solely of a mistaken judgment, it is certain that she suffered him not to attend the university—a fatal error.

He, however, thought it not so—he was easy, and indifferent ; very good-natured, very indolent. He occupied himself with a variety of small pursuits, the only one in which he evinced any particular interest or any particular talent being music. He generally occupied some hours every forenoon with his piano and violin, whilst his mother negotiated all his important business with his bailiff, steward, and tenantry. He never dreamt of interfering with her or questioning her proceedings in any way. In the afternoon he took a nap, and in the evening he strolled out accompanied usually by Lady Burford. He had a good deal of

correspondence it is true ; but it was with musical connoisseurs and amateurs, by whom he was often gulled in a somewhat costly way. As to musical instruments he had specimens sent him at the first prices of every invention and improvement under the sun ; and every available nook, corner, and cranny of his library ; his dressing-room, and even his sleeping chamber, was crammed with busts, casts, etchings, and engravings of musical amateurs, and professors, vocal and instrumental.

But time passed on—his twenty-first birth-day arrived, and his mother tendered a solemn and formal resignation of her office as trustee of his estates, and gover- nante of his person. It was quite requisite and proper that this should be done, but it may be surmised that the Dowager Lady had calculated on some such effect as should ensue, when she adopted such a formal solemnity of manner, and entered his library in solemn dignity, and with a kind of processional state, followed by his

late clerical tutor, his legal adviser, his chief bailiff, his house steward, and two elderly servants who had been witnesses to his father's will. *Il fanatico per la Musica* had but two moments before opened a parcel, express from London, containing a new opera, by a celebrated German composer, which he had been for some days on thorns to obtain. It was shrewdly hinted that my lady had embezzled the packet the day before, and contrived that it should reach his hands at this important and propitious moment.

Propitious indeed it proved to her very heart's wish. Sir Gabriel looked half alarmed at the assemblage collocated thus suddenly before him, and especially at the grave and solemn aspect of his mother. But when the business was opened, he disposed of it very summarily.

“ He was quite aware that his position was altered by his coming of age, but he surely trusted he might count on his mother's affection not to let him feel the dif-

ference. Anything that was to be signed—as he supposed there were some formalities—he would sign at once: there could be no need for him to look at them if his mother had seen them.”

So all went off well: the mother retired in intense, though “sober suited” joy to give some further directions about the feasting of the tenantry, and the baronet soon forgot his new honours in his new Opera, and remained utterly absorbed in his crotchets and quavers until he was summoned to hear his own health proposed, and to return thanks for the uproarious plaudits of his people.

Very shortly after this event, another happened, which had a much more influencing effect on his career. This was his being called on to represent the borough Parliament, for which his father had sat many years, and which had for a long time previously been held by a member of the family, if not by the head of a house himself. There was no opposition; and

an inevitable consequence of his being returned, was the necessity of an annual residence in London. Thither, however, his mother accompanied him : he had no wish it should be otherwise, for if she ruled him implicitly he had no suspicion of the fact. She consulted his tastes, wishes, and even whims, with so much tact, relieved his indolence in so many ways, that she became indispensable to his comfort ; and they returned to Burford Hall at the close of the session, even more firmly united by the very circumstance which had threatened to alienate them.

Duly this winter she had accompanied him to town, but was suddenly summoned to the north by the dangerous illness of her sister, her own near surviving relative, to whom she was warmly attached.

CHAPTER XII.

“Is it possible, Miss de Snobyn, that *you* are disengaged?” said Sir Gabriel to Evelina, as insinuating his way through a crowd of dancers and and lookers on, he found her seated alone, at a corner table, with a book in her hand.

“I declined dancing because I heard there was to be music in another room,” said Evelina, looking down on her book with *apparent* diffidence. We say *apparent*, for in fact the music room was an

invention of her own, as she caught a glimpse of Sir Gabriel's form in the doorway, some little time before, when she was on the very point of starting up to dance. Sir Gabriel never danced.

"I think, I fear, you are mistaken; I had no intimation given to me of music this evening."

"Doubtless I am mistaken," said Evelina—it was a passing rumour which I hailed too readily."

"But I had no idea, Miss Evelina, that you were sufficiently fond of music to sacrifice dancing to it—you too who waltz with such elegance."

"My practical knowledge of the science bears little or no analogy to my intense love for it; and much greater proficient than I am might hesitate to display their little skill before Sir Gabriel Burford."

"You are too modest, you depreciate yourself, I am sure, as much as you overrate me."

Sir Gabriel squeezed his substantial per-

son, not without some little difficulty between the table and the wall, and finally ensconced what Sir Walter Scott would call "his hinder end" on the most uncomfortable little seat imaginable, placed as it seemed for the purpose of tantalization, in the very corner. This brought him in very close and affectionate proximity to Evelina, who on her part contrived by the merest accident to give the table a slight push one way, and her own seat a little shove the other, so as to give rather more ease and breathing room to her swain. A cramped position is a great foe to the sentimental.

"If you have such a love for music, Miss Evelina, there can be no reason why you should not be a proficient in the science. The very love itself is half the battle."

Evelina half sighed and shook her head.

"I have heard you sing and play with great taste and expression—trifling matters, the *petits riens* of society; of course in

your private practice you occupy yourself with things of more worth?"

"I am sorry to say," said Evelina, "that though I have often wished to do so I have never yet had courage to make the attempt."

"Dear Miss de Snobyn, it requires no courage, it is merely an amusement, a recreation, a lady-like, and elegant one, not the less valuable I trust from its being intellectual also."

"Certainly not; quite otherwise. I only wish I could believe you. To you indeed I can conceive it may be merely the recreation you call it, but to a less gifted mind a severe study."

"Quite a mistake—quite a mistake: let me convince you how simple the foundation rules really are," Sir Gabriel drew from his pocket a folded sheet of music paper. "I was dreaming last night about—no matter what—something or nothing, but there was music in what Byron would call the 'spirit of my dream', and I awoke at

midnight with my head full of an air which I instantly jotted down, for I always have writing materials at my bed side—I have found inspiration, that is, musical inspiration, in dreams. I forgot all about it this morning, and hurried to the House where I was kept all day in one of their stupid Committees, in which I became myself as stupid as they proverbially are. I was tired and heated, and, my head ached when I entered my dressing-room and saw the music scrawl on the table, I sat down, and, almost unawares, began to amuse myself with varying it, here is the score," he opened the sheet and disclosed all the four sides blotted with clusters of figures, varied here and there by a note of music, "and I do assure you, Miss de Snobyn, I rose from my writing-table perfectly refreshed and well. Judge then if it be not a recreation."

"To you, as I said before, I doubt not—but to me—"

“ Well, and you, now look, just look here—this chord you see—’

Evelina laid her small and delicately gloved hand on the manuscript.

“ I was sure, I was quite sure, you could hardly comprehend my extreme ignorance; I know nothing of all this.”

“ You surely are acquainted with the common chord and its inversions,” with as much surprise as though the real rudiments of music formed a component part of the fashionable music teaching of the day.

Evelina's heart quailed a little at the unmistakable tone of vexed surprise, she did not at once speak but turned her beautiful, dark, liquid eyes on his with a deprecatory glance, and instantly dropped them.

But the glance did the work.

“ What a sweet face she has,” thought Sir Gabriel, and I do believe it was the very first time that a thought of a woman's

beauty or want of it had ever passed his mind.

Evelina could not possibly tell his very thoughts at the moment, or she might not have ventured to interrupt them. However she did herself no disservice.

“I fear,” she said, half raising those bright eyes for whose glances he was now eagerly looking, “I fear you will now cast me off entirely.”

“Not if you wish to learn.”

“I do wish it most earnestly,” said Evelina, now turning her whole face unreservedly towards him as if to enforce her petition.

Again he caught the glance of those dark eyes, that speaking countenance, again his spirit did homage to her beauty.

“Just look here one moment,” and he drew another scrap of music paper from his pocket, and began rapidly to mark it with his pencil.

“This you see, Miss Evelina, is C the

key-note ; E its third ; G its fifth, and C. again its octave ; this common chord, with its three inversions, and the chord of the seventh with its four inversions—all which I will presently explain to you—for they are very simple, are the foundation of all music from the loftiest and sublimest strains of Handel and Mendelsohn, to the lightest airs of Mozart and Rossini. It is very wonderful, very.”

“It is, indeed,” meekly responded Evelina.

“This common chord, C, E. G., has you will perceive, three positions, thus—and—”

We will spare our readers the details of the lessons. Evelina had a quick perception, and Evelina had a point to gain. She was never dull of comprehension ; but when, as in this case, her natural faculties were sharpened by her most earnest wishes, she was quick-witted indeed. She seemed to learn as if by intuition. Sir Gabriel was delighted with his pupil.

In the mean time, Mrs. de Snobyn, an ever watchful mother, who had overheard, and was surprised at her daughter's refusal to dance, was at little difficulty to comprehend the manœuvre, when she saw Evelina *tête-à-tête* with Sir Gabriel in a retired, and when the dances were proceeding, an almost inaccessible corner of the room. It was then her task, one which practice rendered quite facile to her, so to place herself as to be able, quite casually as it would seem, to prevent any interruption to the *tête-à-tête* until circumstances seemed to render it desirable. Her own fascinating manners and fluent conversation enabled her to waylay stragglers as much to their own satisfaction as her convenience. But she began to think the snugery had been uninvaded long enough—it was no part of her system to have her daughters made remarkable—moreover, one or two quick glances from Evelina, who fully understood all her mother's manœuvres, intimated

that she wanted support, or desired release. Mrs. de Snobyn approached the table.

“ Good even to you, Sir Gabriel ; what a sad monopolizer you are to keep my daughter from the dancers all this time ! ”

Sir Gabriel was constitutionally and habitually shy ; and was, moreover, rather in awe of Mrs. de Snobyn. He colored scarlet, a color which shewed, unrelieved on his bare, round forehead, and stammered that he—

“ He must beg ten thousand pardons for having, in his own satisfaction, forgotten Miss de Snobyn's wishes. ”

“ By no means, ” said Evelina, instantly, and with the most cheerful frankness. “ I have been most happily engaged, and had quite forgotten the waltzing. Do you know, mama, Sir Gabriel has been so very good as to explain to me some of the first principles of thorough bass : and he almost persuades me that I could make some pro-

gress in the science which you know I have long had such an earnest wish to become acquainted with."

This was the first intimation Mrs. de Snobyn ever had had of the fact ; but she took the cue admirably, she understood her part *instanter*.

" You know, Evelina, I have often told you your timidity and diffidence in this point was misplaced ; your peculiar talent for music has long been obvious to me. But I suppose you were foolishly afraid of the silly title of *bas bleu*, or perhaps, the forbidding sternness of poor Signor Minim, deterred you. Which was it ? speak, fair culprit, on pain of our displeasure."

" Perhaps a little of both, mamma," replied Evelina, with correspondent gaiety ; " but it is sad to have a stern teacher ; it makes a thing doubly difficult."

" So it does ; but it is a great pity, because Signor Minim is professor of undeniable talent. However, we must look elsewhere. Perhaps, as Sir Gabriel Bur-

ford has so kindly taken an interest in your commencement, he would add to our obligations by giving us his advice as to a teacher.

“I should be very happy—I shall be very happy when—but—by—” stammered Sir Gabriel, blushing with bashfulness, and with hesitation, as he, at length, spoke his wishes.

“I shall be most happy to make every enquiry, and render you every assistance in obtaining an efficient guide for Miss de Snobyn ; but if, in the mean time, till such a one be found, she would allow me to assist her.”

“Oh, you are too kind, too good,” said Mrs. de Snobyn, whilst Evelina kept her dark eyes absolutely cast down now, lest they should betray too much ; “but Evelina will be ashamed to give you so much trouble.”

“Do not think of it as trouble, Miss Evelina ; I assure you I shall consider it

quite a recreation. You have begun charmingly ; pray allow me to be your tutor for a little while."

Evelina smiled winningly on him, but turned in reference, as it were, to her mother. Mrs. de Snobyn answered—

"Well, well, Sir Gabriel we must see about this, as you are so very kind, and Evelina seems so desirous to avail herself of your offer. Perhaps, you will do us the favor to call some morning, and then we can talk further."

"Thank you, dear Mrs. de Snobyn ; when may I call ?" for Sir Gabriel, like all exceeding supine folks, was, when excited, particularly in earnest.

"Whenever you are in our neighbourhood we shall be exceedingly proud to see you."

"Oh, I will come without delay—you live in Connaught Place, I believe, indeed I know you do. May I call to-morrow ?"

“Most certainly ; we shall be very happy.”

“Well then to-morrow ; but I forgot—I have a stupid committee of the House to attend at twelve o'clock—how very provoking. Might I, dear Mrs. de Snobyn, might I hope to be admitted at eleven ?”

“That is a very early hour.”

“Yes ; but an excellent one for study, and by the time I am released from the committee, you will probably be involved in a fashionable crowd. I shall have no chance with my pupil.”

“That argument is unanswerable,” laughed Mrs. de Snobyn ; “you shall be admitted at eleven.”

* * * * *

And so he was, and found Helena and Evelina in elegant and simple attire, both engaged in some small matter of needlework—quite domestic looking. Mrs. de

Snobyn was reading a novel. She knew that the young man's forte did not lie in conversation ; therefore, with her usual tact, she drew him off as quickly as possible to talk of his crotchets and quavers ; the transition from them to a little writing table in a recess—just fitted for two—and where, by good chance, there lay some blank sheets of music paper, was very easy.

Evelina and he took their places at it, Mrs. de Snobyn resumed her novel, Helena continued her stitchery ; and it was not till the melodious time-piece on the chimney-piece told, in its musical chimes, the hour of one, that the musical Baronet remembered he was engaged to a committee at twelve.

The lessons progressed charmingly, for Evelina, quite in earnest in her ultimate object, which was *not* the learning of thorough bass, refreshed her memory after the Baronet's visits with a matter-of-fact lesson from a professional man, which thus

enabled her to keep up the appearance of musical intellect as well as interest before Sir Gabriel, which otherwise her extreme weariness of the occupation would hardly have enabled her to do.

CHAPTER XIII

“WHAT’S the matter, Evelina, you look quite puzzled.”

“And so I am, Helena, and *no mistake*, as Otty would say.”

“Nay, if you quote Octavius, you will become classical as well as musical.”

“I beg your pardon,” said Charlotte, “not in the present instance ; *nullus error* is the classical reading, as given by the Duke, at Oxford ; *no mistake* is only the House of Lords’ version.”

“Well, Charlotte,” laughed Evelina, “if

I am not classical, you are certainly critical. Where did you gain your information ?”

“ From Octavius, of course. But, Lina, you really do look puzzled ; I fear it is not possible that we can help you, but, at least, we may sympathize. What do you want ?”

“ I want to know how the ⁹₇₅₃ is a suspension of the chord of the flat ninth with the bass, ascending or descending to the dominant.”

“ Enough, enough, I ‘ seek to know no more,’ ” exclaimed Charlotte, covering her ears with her hands.

“ I think you’re very foolish,” said Helena, “ to give yourself so much trouble : why don’t you make Minim write you a sort of clear sketch of these things, that you might just learn by heart, without puzzling your brain ?”

“ Ah, Helena ! I wish I could ; but you don’t understand how impossible it is :

moreover, Minim says I go on far too fast, to be able really to understand, or rather, to digest—that's his beautiful word—what I do."

"Why do you go on so fast then?"

"Why, my dearest Nelly, can't you comprehend that it pleases my most worshipful master—I wish I could say lord and master—Sir Gabriel Burford, the lode-star of my hopes—whom, hereafter, I trust it may be my duty to please, whatever my inclination may be on that point."

Helena laughed.

"I really don't think you deserve him Linny," said Charlotte, "for I don't think you care one pin for him."

"Never mind that, Lotty, you're too young to judge of those matters."

"Perhaps not," said Charlotte, quietly, "but I want to know whether you think you're likely to secure him soon."

"As to *soon*, I cannot tell, he is somewhat sluggish in his own progression, how-

ever rapid in that of musical notes. But secure him I am certain I shall ultimately, if I can keep up this farce of musical mania long enough."

"I suppose 'slow and sure' is the fashion of the day," said Helena; "deliberation the watchword of the times. We may shake hands on the prudence of our respective swains, Lina; I trust we may not have to wear the willow together."

"I'll wear the willow for no man," said Evelina, "but at least we must do Redwald Marchmont the justice to say, that he never paid you the marked attention that Sir Gabriel does me."

"He never taught me thorough bass, to be sure."

"Nor sought any pretext to call on you—you alone—almost every day."

"No, certainly: but without wishing to hurt you, Evelina, it does appear to me that Sir Gabriel thinks quite as much of the lesson as the pupil."

"I know that: I am fully aware of

of that," said Evelina, laughing, "but what then? if I can make his monomania serve my purpose, it is sufficient for me. But here's Prabby; not a word before her."

Pitter-patter, pitter-patter, all along the corridor, and then a shake of the door handle instead of a knock, and almost before the ready and unanimous "Come in" of the sisters had escaped their lips, in pattered Miss Prabble.

"Well, my dears, and how do you do? how do *you* do? how do you *all* do?" as she pattered round, shaking hands with one and another, for none rose from their seats for her, and finally settled herself in her usual seat—a snug rocking-chair in the corner.

How a rocking chair found its way into that boudoir I never could imagine,—it was the best mahogany and very handsome no doubt—but that so exceedingly comforting and enjoyable a piece of furniture—the very thing to soothe you in melan-

choly, and quiet you in mirth, and comfort you at all seasons—the very solace of life under many circumstances—how that article so old fashioned and homely in its character, whatever its *materiel*—how a rocking chair should have found its way into Connaught Place I cannot tell. In the northern counties you hardly ever see a domestic parlour or boudoir without one; they are not utterly unknown even in a splendid drawing-room; but in London they are inadmissable. How this found its way into the girls' morning room at Connaught Place, I never heard: but I fancy perhaps it may have been for the convenience of Mr. de Snobyn, whom nothing delighted more, than to be invited to spend an hour with them in their own especial sanctum.

However to Miss Prabble it was evidently no unaccustomed seat.

“Well, my dears, and so you are all very busy and very happy as usual. I don't know for very busy either, now I look

again, for Miss Helena, my dear, you were at that crochet collar which you are taking off, a week ago, and it seemed just finished then."

"You were mistaken, Prabby; that collar was finished; and this is another—for you."

"For me, Miss Nelly, you are joking, my dear."

"Not at all," said Helena, as she drew the thread through the last stitch, "there it is, if you choose to accept it."

Miss Prabble coloured with surprise and pleasure.

"I'm sure, my dear, I don't know how to thank you; but I shall never wear it, I shall keep it for your sake."

"Nonsense," said Helena.

"Nonsense, I say," reiterated Charlotte. "Prabby, 'take the goods the Gods provide you,' and be thankful. Look here, what do you think of this."

She displayed a flaring netted purse of green and orange and scarlet interwoven,

or rather, we should say, internetted with gilt and steel beads, with gilt rings, and gilt and steel tassels.

“Now Prabby, what do you say to that.”

“Oh, my dear, it is most beautiful: it is most tasteful and elegant.”

“I knew I should hit your taste to a T, I knew I should,” said Charlotte, triumphantly, “though Nelly and Linny both laughed at me. Now Prabby dear, I’ve netted this for you out of sheer revenge, because the other day you called me an idle puss.”

“Oh, my dear Miss Lotty, you know I didn’t mean—”

“It is impossible I can tell what you did or did not mean, Miss Prabble,” said Charlotte, with mock gravity: “but all you have now to do is graciously to accept this, and to behave better in future.”

“Ah, my dear, I shall lay it bye very carefully with your sister’s collar.”

“ And what will you say to me Prabby, for I have done nothing for you ? ”

“ Ah, my dear Miss Evelina, I think nothing of that, for you are so very much occupied with your music lessons.”

“ Yes, that is it,” said Charlotte ; but added she, half mirthfully, half maliciously, “ she will give you a loving kiss, Prabby, and that will do as well.”

“ A great deal better : a—great deal—better,” re-iterated Miss Prabble, and drawing forth from one of her capacious pockets a large pocket-handkerchief of strong Irish lawn, she wiped not only her lips but all the environing district, as zealously as a Mahomedan performing his ablutions before the hour of prayer. She then pattered across the room, and Evelina quietly received—it could not be said she gave—the promised salute, darting at the same time a laughing look at Charlotte which promised revenge at no distant period.

Miss Prabble did not return to her rock-

ing chair, but seated herself on the little couch by Evelina's side, and glanced at her papers.

“ So, my dear, working very hard still.”

“ Yes, Prabby ; proving the truth of what you so often say, that we poor women are born to toil and trouble.”

“ Ah, my dear, my dear, you are laughing at me as usual. Never mind. I wish you all well, my dears, all well, all very well, and that you will know some day. But, my dear,” Miss Prabble was sitting cross-legged, beating one little cork-soled shoe—the foot in it—over the other in a rapid and almost indescribable manner ; but my readers will know what I mean, for many fidgetty ladies have the habit, and churlish husbands call it ‘the devil's tattoo ;’ her right hand held her gloves, which on first coming in she had taken off and carefully straightened in the fingers, and was beating them on the left hand, her head raised, her bonnet jerked back, displaying to the best or worst advantage,

the top of her 'front,' and her eyes fixed on the opposite wall with as much earnestness as if she were bent on seeing through it.

"My dear, will the lessons go on as readily, think you, when my Lady Burford comes to town?"

The girls exchanged glances, Miss Prabble was looking at the opposite wall, she might or might not see those glances, I cannot tell. Evelina's was tinged with a smile of contempt: she thought "Prabby" was what Octavius would have called "pumping." She was mistaken.

"I should think so, of course," said Helena, more prudently than truthfully; "but why do you ask? Is Lady Burford coming soon?"

"In a week or two, my dears—in a week or two at farthest."

Evelina turned very pale, and I think Miss Prabble saw it from the kind and pitying expression that passed over her

face, though she still looked at the opposite wall.

“Then it is all over, Nelly,” whispered Evelina.

“Perhaps not,” said Helena in the same tone, both hoping that Miss Prabble didn't hear them. But she did.

“How do you know, Miss Prabble?” said Helena.

“Why, my dear, I'll tell you how it was. You see your mamma wanted me to go to Veneer's about that easy chair for papa. Poor dear man! poor dear Mr. Snobbins, its little he thought about such a chair when he lived in Budge Row, I fancy. But, however, it's quite right he should have it if he fancies it—quite right: and it's quite right too, that your mamma should humour him—quite right—if you knew all, my dears, which—but where was I—oh, I went to Mr. Veneer's and saw him himself, and a nice, pleasant spoken gentleman he is too, as ever I came across: and as civil to me as if I was a duchess, though I

looked no great shakes either, for I had my second bonnet on, I thought the third was hardly good enough for that place ; and my pattens on, and my cotton umbrella, for it threatened rain, and I never take my silk one in the wet—what's the good of wearing it out for nothing—and as the pattens, one always wants them in this nasty London, for I do declare the streets are cleaner in wet weather than in dry, they water them so infamously—flooding them from the water-carts, that I do declare you walk shoe-top deep in mud on the finest days—and—”

“ Well, but Prabby, Lady Burford—”

“ Ah well, my dear, yes. Well, but, as I was saying, Mr. Veneer was so very complaisant, that after I had finished about papa's chair—I always finish business first, my dears—I make a point of that—and a very cosey, easy, nice chair it will be, I can tell you, my dears, and Mr. Snobbins *will* be pleased, or I mistake him.”

“ But, dear Prabby, Lady Burford.”

“Yes, my dear, yes; but you are always in a hurry, Miss Lotty. Well, as I was saying, Mr. Veneer was so civil that when I had done all mamma wanted, I thought I would take advantage and ask to walk through his show-rooms—one may always pick up an idea, you know, not that I shall ever have a house to furnish, or ever wish to have—but that’s neither here nor there. Your mamma’s house, my dears, has cost a trifle, I fancy,” (here she nodded her head very fast) “and I suppose too, from something Mr. Veneer let drop,—not that he meant anything, either, I suppose—that something, *not a trifle*,” (and here she nodded her head very fast indeed, and looked vastly mysterious) “is yet on his books. However, my dears, you’ve nothing to do with that, only I hear what I hear, and see what I see. So, my dears, as I was saying, he begged me to go where I pleased, and stay as long as I pleased, but he had a very particular and important engagement if I would do him

the very great favour to excuse his attendance. *His attendance*, my dears, on me, when his watch chain and seals would almost buy me up. And, in fact, I was a great deal happier without him, but it was very civil of him—very. So I went along through room after room, and *to be sure*, the sight of beautiful things I did see—and no end of them. Such ottomans, such couches, such fancy tables, and chairs, and mirrors, and—”

Evelina sank back on the sofa, in despair, and the other sisters looked undeniably cross.

“ Well, my dears, well; you have these fine things about you all day long, and every day, and so think nothing about them; but if you could once see *my* little lodging! However, I went through more rooms than I can tell you—for I was determined to miss nothing—and nobody said a word to me, but just civilly made room for me to pass, till at length I got to a kind of warehouse, or packing-room, which opened

from one of the show-rooms, and there were many men packing as it seemed, but one close to me was unpacking, and had nearly finished unpacking one of the most beautiful inlaid tables I ever saw in my life, with gold cornice and gold feet, like lions' heads. Well, I could not help speaking to him about it, and he said it was just come back from Burford Hall, to be altered.

“ ‘ From Burford Hall?’ says I.

“ ‘ Yes, ma'am,’ says he, ‘ from the Dowager Lady Burford, the barrownight's mother.’

“ That's the way he pronounced it, my dears.

“ ‘ And what,’ says I, ‘ wants altering?’

“ ‘ Can't tell, ma'am,’ says he, ‘ something in the ornaments; but my lady said she should be in town in a week or two, and could more easily explain in person than by writing.’

“ So, my dears, my heart was in my mouth, for I know what I know, and see

what I see; so I slipped away as quick as I could, and came here."

"It was very good of you to come," said Evelina, for Miss Prabble's long-winded story had given her time to recover her equanimity, "as you thought it was a matter of interest to us, though why you should think so I cannot tell."

"Ah, my dear, I know what I know, and see what I see. I say nothing; but I know that fashionable and bright-eyed young ladies like you, don't pore hour after hour over those stupid notes and figures for love of *them*. That's all, my dear—that's all."

And Miss Prabble nodded her head indefatigably, and winked with both eyes to the same measure. Charlotte laughed as usual.

"Ah, my dear Miss Lotty, you've a merry heart; but your time will come, my dear, yet."

"Do you speak from experience, Prabby?"

“You’re saucy, my dear, very saucy; but never mind. But tell me, Miss Charlotte, my dear, have you heard from your brother, Mr. Augustus, lately?”

“No, I have not; Guss is infamously idle.”

Miss Prabble shook her head, shut her eyes, and emitted a sigh which almost reached the dignity of a groan.

“What’s the matter, Miss Prabble?” said Helena; “nothing wrong with Augustus, I hope?”

“I fear he’s very far from right, but I can’t tell.”

“Oh,” said Evelina, crossly, “nothing new, I dare say. He’s a little extravagant we know, but what’s that! Who expects a young man to be a saint, now-a-days!”

“But that’s not all, I’m sure,” said Charlotte, whose warm-hearted affection made her more quick-sighted than her more selfishly disposed sisters; “what is it, Prabby—speak out.”

“Nay, my dear, I don’t know that

there's anything to speak out; but was he here two or three days ago?"

"Here—no."

"Ah, well, I was afraid not; but he was in London, for I saw him; he didn't see me."

"Oh, a mere frolic," said Helena, petulantly; "don't make mountains out of mole-hills, Prabby."

"Well, my dear, I've done, I've done. I see what I see, and know what I know; and I hope there may not be heavy trouble brewing up for you there, my dears. But I can be silent—I can. And don't alarm mamma, my dears, until we know more."

"Assuredly we shall not," said Helena, haughtily, as Miss Prabble, hearing Mr. de Snobyn's voice on the stairs, pattered out of the room.

CHAPTER XV.

MISS PRABBLE'S information was quite correct; Lady Burford was coming to town; though it was not wonderful that Evelina de Snobyn should be ignorant of the fact, seeing that the person most interested in her movements, and for whose behoof, indeed, those movements were chiefly regulated—her own son—was not aware of the circumstance, though his own letters had brought it about.

Lady Burford was a watchful mother,

and a shrewd woman. "A fellow feeling makes us wondrous '*cute*.'" None of the wiles and devices of manœuvring mothers seeking husbands for their daughters were lost upon her, and the shallow devices of the aspirant daughters themselves she laughed to scorn. But it also happened, as is often the case with your very acute people, that she imagined manœuvring where it did not exist, and ascribed to design what was the mere effect of accident.

We cannot say, however, that her quick tact misled her, when from a reiterated mention of the De Snobyns in her son's letters to her, she at once recognised the existence of a well-laid design on his heart and hand, or rather on his title and purse. She said not a word to her son, not a syllable. It was no part of her tactics to alarm his pride, or to startle him into an assertion of his own independence. She rather trusted, by her presence, to win him back to herself without any shock or startle to his own feelings, or any offensive

demonstration of or to the De Snobyns. She would sedulously avoid any *esclandre*, any scene, anything that could afford theme for conversation. Herself in presence, she thought and believed matters would fall almost imperceptibly into their usual course.

So she at once resolved to return to town, and that with as little delay as circumstances permitted. But she was inevitably detained some days by the requirements of her invalid sister. Meantime, she gave no hint of her intention to her son. The table to the upholsterer's, she had sent as a mere matter of business, little anticipating anything from such a matter-of-fact circumstance. Yet was it fraught with the overthrow of her whole plan.

Evelina prepared for her music lesson, as usual, on the morning of Miss Prabble's unwelcome announcement, and, as usual, Sir Gabriel Burford waited on his fair pupil. But he found her absent, *distracte*,

out of spirits, and, he feared, out of health. He enquired kindly, very kindly, what was the matter with her, and when she raised her brilliant eyes, not flashing and sparkling with happiness as usual, but softened and dimmed with gathering tears, and dropt them as suddenly as if not daring to trust herself to look at him—then his kindness assumed a tone of tenderness, nay, even of affectionate solicitude.

“What is it that troubles you? speak to me, dear Evelina—to your friend.”

“Nothing,” faltered Evelina; “I am rather nervous this morning,” and a large tear rolled down her downcast cheek, and fell on her hand.

Sir Gabriel raised the small, white hand in his, and kissed the tear away.

It was a real tear, a real heart-felt tear; Evelina's agitation was intense, for she felt that the crisis of her fate was come.

At this moment, Mrs. de Snobyn entered the room.

“Evelina, my dear, your father is

anxious and impatient to see you ; Sir Gabriel, you will, I am quite sure, excuse my daughter, for her father is far from well this morning."

Sir Gabriel bowed low, and, opening the door as Evelina glided out, saw that her cheek was pale, and the tears were fast falling over it.

He returned to his chair. Mrs. de Snobyn seated herself, apparently unconsciously, and with a look of anxious thought.

"I am sorry to find that Miss Evelina is not well," said he.

Mrs. de Snobyn sighed deeply.

He felt nervous and uncomfortable.

Evelina's manner was very unusual, her mother's still more so ; he could not make it out. He was about to adventure another remark, some desperate assertion about the weather, probably, when the sound of his own name, as Mrs. de Snobyn addressed him, almost startled him.

“ Sir Gabriel,” she said, and he looked all attention.

Again she sighed and hesitated.

“ Sir Gabriel,” she repeated at length, as if nerving herself to the extremity.

“ Sir Gabriel I have a painful task to perform.”

He looked at her with a countenance of concern and enquiry: but the shrewd woman observed with delight, albeit she hardly raised her eyes, the colour suffuse his face, as if he had some presentiment of what was to follow.

“ I have been very much to blame ; I have been culpably negligent : I have countenanced your daily attentions to my daughter now for a considerable time, thinking only of your kind motive, and of the pleasure which the poor girl had in your instructions. Aware myself, of course, that you could have no ulterior motives, I forgot that such would be attributed by others to your continued visits. I have

been cruelly awakened, and my poor girl's delicacy has suffered a terrible shock. Poor thing! poor Evelina! she little deserves the aspersion. However you will feel, my dear Sir Gabriel, that but one course, remains to me."

Sir Gabriel went red and white—red and white during this extraordinary address; at length he found voice to say:

"But what reflection, what aspersion do you allude to? Who dare asperse Miss de Snobyn, and for what? I don't understand you, Mrs. de Snobyn."

"Oh, Sir Gabriel, you must excuse my detailing the matter chapter and verse. Suffice it that allusions were made in society to the motives of your visits here which cruelly hurt my daughter, and which more than justify me in saying explicitly—however painful the task is to my feelings—that until your own matrimonial engagement is completed, we must only

see you here with other friends. When you are a married man indeed," continued Mrs. de Snobyn with one of her most winning smiles ; " if you will then condescend to return to us."

" ' When I am married ! '—' my matrimonial engagement ! ' what in the world do you mean, Mrs. de Snobyn ?"

Mrs. de Snobyn looked him in amazement.

" Are you not shortly to be married to Miss Dovely, the heiress ?"

" Certainly not."

" We fully understood that you were engaged when you came to town this season, and were to be married at its close."

" Nothing of the sort : my mother may have thought of such a marriage, but I never did."

Mrs. de Snobyn walked about the room in great agitation, apparently.

" You cannot suppose, Sir Gabriel, that I should have countenanced your daily

visits here, and at an unusual hour, if I had known this. I have exposed my poor girl to misapprehension. But I had no doubt of the truth of the report from seeing the young lady last season so constantly with the Dowager Lady Burford."

"She is the Dowager Lady Burford's next neighbour, dearest friend, and moreover an orphan."

"Yes, yes: I have been foolishly credulous—sadly to blame."

"Why so, dear Mrs. de Snobyn? what is there to blame? let me see Evelina."

"For what purpose, sir?" asked Mrs. de Snobyn, in a rather haughty and peremptory tone, though every nerve within her was thrilling with delight.

"Can you need to ask the purpose? Can you suppose that I have been so much in Evelina's company, and been insensible to her grace and beauty? Rather, dear Mrs. de Snobyn, give me your influence

with her : persuade her that the surest check to all impertinent and meddling remarks will be an engagement with me. Persuade her to this, dear Mrs. de Snobyn ; or at least say that you will sanction my suit."

" But your mother—" hesitated Mrs. de Snobyn ; " will she—"

" Oh, my mother !" interrupted he, for his inert spirit was now roused to its highest state of excitement—" do you, like other people, suppose my mother holds me in leading strings, because we do not arrange our family concerns according to the cut and dried system of the world in general ? Be assured, Mrs. de Snobyn, that the wife I may choose will be received as a daughter by my mother. And now, will you not let me see Evelina ?"

He did see Evelina, and she blushed a timid acceptance of his suit ; and he was enraptured. He was of course engaged to return in the afternoon to dinner.

There—for it was a family dinner—he found Mr. de Snobyn feeble, apparently, but his wife said he was nervous and out of spirits, and so indeed he was.

He tottered across the room to meet his guest, and pressed the warm, full, healthy hand, in both his own withered, thin, cold, shaking ones.

“ They tell me, sir, that you are going to take my child away from me. I would rather cut off my right hand than part with any one of them. But it must be so, of course it must be so—it is all right, and her mother is satisfied. But, sir,” continued he, raising his quivering face and fixing his tear-swollen eyes on the young man’s countenance, “ as you value an old man’s blessing, as you wish for a happy life, or hope for a peaceful age, be kind to my child.”

“ I will Mr. de Snobyn,” said Sir Gabriel, as he kindly and respectfully supported the old man back to his seat, “ I will be kind to her, for I love her.”

“Then may God Almighty bless you both together,” said the good father, as he sank into his arm-chair, exhausted by the excitement of his feelings.

CHAPTER XVI.

It was Sir Gabriel Burford's wish that his marriage should take place very shortly, that is at the close of the season which was just at hand. Evelina modestly referred to her mamma, and the good mother at once acquiesced in the lover's wishes.

“ It would be, come when it might, it would be a sad day which should take Evelina away from the home of her childhood, from the society of her sister—a sad day indeed for those whom she left. But

trusting as she did that the change would be for her daughter's happiness, she would not be so selfish as to wish to detain her longer."

So the intended marriage was duly announced, congratulations were exchanged, the social carpet dances and gay *petites réunions* were resumed with more spirit than ever, and lawyers and milliners were worked to death. Yes, all went merry as a marriage bell."

For the dowager Lady Burford had too much pride and too much good taste, to *appear* as a mar-plot, when she could not, by so doing, obtain any advantageous result. It was a severe blow, a deep shock to her, when, on the evening of her arrival in town, her son informed her, not without very apparent hesitation and confusion, of his engagement to Evelina.

"It cannot be," she said, almost appalled, "you cannot have absolutely committed yourself."

“ You speak in warmth, mother, as if I had committed a crime.”

“ No, my son, I speak in deep grief, knowing that such a marriage will be the death blow to your own happiness.’

Sir Gabriel was about to say something about his being the best judge of that, when, looking at his mother, he saw her deadly pale, and her features quivering with emotion. He dearly loved and respected her, and his whole filial affection was aroused.

“ My mother, my dearest mother, do not agitate yourself unnecessarily. The only difference to you, I hope, will be an increase to your comforts. I shall bring you a daughter who will make your home more cheerful : and she will in no way interfere with your usual arrangements ; for like myself, she is devoted to music, and will, I am sure, be glad to leave all household regulations in your hands.”

“ Will she ?” said Lady Burford, with a tone of sarcastic disbelief :—“ Gabriel, at

this moment I am not thinking of myself, but of you. Can you have been so gulled, as really to think that Evelina de Snobyn marries you for the sake of a quiet domestic life, such as you, I know, always contemplate ?”

“ Gulled, mother !” repeated the young man, more confused, as it seemed, than angry.

“ Has she really been so artful, as to make you believe that she has any inclination to learn, or any talent to acquire, the abstruse theories which you are so fond of—far less pursue them, as the occupation of her married life ?”

“ Mother !”

“ Take counsel with your own good sense, my son. Look at the habits and tastes of the whole family—look at her mother—look at her sisters—that flippant coxcomb and roué, her brother—look at herself heretofore—and ask yourself how this sudden passion for thorough bass originated—and make sure that, during its

pursuit, she has not taken private means more effectually to deceive you."

"Mother," said the young man, much agitated, for his confidence in her was unbounded, "mother, you have no right to say such things on mere supposition."

"Nor do I say them on mere supposition; but I know that, for some time past, Signor Minim has been attending her daily, to cram her—that was his expression—to 'cram' her for some exhibition that she had daily to make."

"Mother," said the baronet, turning very pale, "how do you know this, and why do you not tell me before?"

"Your last question first: I did not tell you before, because I did not see that it concerned us. You used to tell me all your proceedings, therefore I had no idea that you were visiting daily at the De Snobyns', as I heard nothing of it."

"I had no intention of secrecy, I assure you."

"I quite believe you: I heard of it

from Emily Dovely, for whom, as you know, I have recently engaged Signor Minim's services. It seems he proceeded direct from her to Miss de Snobyn, or from Miss de Snobyn to her—it matters not which. What so natural, as that he should talk of one pupil to the other ?”

Sir Gabriel bowed his head over the table, and buried his face in his hands. He felt crushed. A thousand trifling incidents which he had not noticed, at the moment of their occurrence, now rushed to his mind, bearing full confirmation, even to him, of his mother's assertion, that he was gulled—the victim of a well-laid scheme—the dupe of his own vanity. For some moments, he felt well nigh overwhelmed ; but then a thought of comfort beamed on his mind, for he was sure that Evelina loved him. She might have begun by plotting for his hand—she might originally have been a partner in a well-laid scheme for his hand, and baronetcy ; but she had ended by loving him for himself alone.

She might or might not like thorough bass ; but most surely she loved him ; he could not remember her pale face and gushing tears, on that memorable day, and think otherwise. And then again, was there any scheme at all ? Had not Mrs. de Snobyn said she believed him to be engaged to Miss Dovelv ; yes, she certainly had said so—but—but—the Baronet felt a misgiving—his heart had no trust in Mrs. de Snobyn—he would pass that point. Then again, as this well-laid scheme—as to the manœuvring for his hand—why, disgusting as it was, was it not the practice of the universal world of managing mammas and marriageable daughters. A thought struck him. He raised his head.

“ Mother, did you mean that Emily Dovelv is studying thorough bass ? ”

“ Yes : she has been studying it for several months at home ; and I wished her, of course, to have the best assistance in town.”

Sir Gabriel was indescribably comforted :

here was his own mother plotting and manœuvring against him—he felt sure of it. He knew perfectly well, that poor Emily Dovelv would as soon think of studying Sanscrit as thorough bass, if the idea had not been instilled into her mind by Lady Burford, as to whose hopes and wishes, regarding the young lady, he was no stranger. So he might forgive the De Snobyns.

Discomfited, chagrined, he undoubtedly was ; and certain misgivings of a very uncomfortable nature, and which he could by no means repel, passed ever and anon athwart his mind. But Evelina loved him ; that was now the sheet-anchor of his hopes.

“Mother, I am sorry, for I feel I have done foolishly in concluding this matter without consulting you ; but it is concluded ; my marriage is to take place very shortly. You will receive Evelina kindly.”

“Indeed I will.”

“And you will call on Mrs. de Snobyn?”

“Certainly.”

And thanking his mother as warmly as if she had conferred on him some undeserved favor, instead of merely acquiescing in those courtesies he had a right to require from her, he kissed her hand, and quitted the room.

Lady Burford was quite satisfied with the impression she had made on her son. She knew that, like many shy and indolent men, he was very sensitive, and she knew her warnings would not fall to the ground. It was a sad check to her secret hopes that the marriage was appointed to take place so soon. Still she *did* hope.

In the meantime, she was scrupulous in the fulfilment of every usual courtesy towards the De Snobyns. It might importantly affect her influence hereafter in her son's household, that she should have betrayed no chagrin or jealousy on the entrance of its new mistress.

Mrs. de Snobyn was not to be deceived by Lady Burford's perfect politeness, mingled as it was with something of warmer kindness towards Evelina. She knew beforehand, and she felt now, that her son's choice was not agreeable to the dowager, but that, though she might doubtless have preferred it otherwise, did not affect Mrs. de Snobyn's complacency at all.

She might have felt more alarmed, had she known all the thoughts and feelings which passed through the mind of her son-in-law elect.

———"Trifles light as air,
Are to the jealous confirmations strong
As proofs of Holy Writ."

When Sir Gabriel first approached his betrothed, with his heart full of his mother's warnings, he was jealously alive to indications, which heretofore he had hardly observed. Evelina, feeling herself quite secure since his mother's acquiescence, and

in her own speedy marriage, had hardly patience to maintain a decent portion of her former deep disguise. And he saw, with keenly awakened vision, her ill-disguised weariness when he discussed musical matters : her languid acceptance of his gift of a new opera, magnificently bound, when, almost before the common courtesy of thanks had passed her lips, and certainly before he had half said what he meant to say about the books, she turned eagerly round, and discussed, with the greatest animation, the merits of some trifling bijouterie, which had just been brought in.

“ My mother was undoubtedly right,” thought he, after one of these trifling occurrences ; “ Evelina has no real taste for music : but I think she loves me.”

He *thought* so : ten days earlier, when his mother first enlightened him, he felt *sure* that she did.

Among the various congratulations offered to Mrs. de Snobyn, on the auspicious prospects of her daughter, none were

offered with more heartfelt cordiality and sincerity, than those of her cousin, Sir Charles Marchmont. Nay, even Lady Marchmont's usual frigidity seemed to be thawed by the sunshine around.

“ I consider you a very fortunate young lady, Miss Evelina : not because your husband is a wealthy baronet, but because he is a good son, a kind landlord, and a worthy man. I hope, Miss Evelina, that you will make him a good wife, and that you will be very happy together. I hope, my dear, you will not object to wear this now and then—”

And the old lady handed her a very handsome pearl necklace, a token, she said, from Sir Charles.

Thus more cordially than ever associated with her cousin, it was a very small tax on Mrs. de Snobyn's diplomatic talents, so to contrive, that Redwald Marchmont should be asked to be first bridesman ; an office which he gaily and courteously accepted ; and as Helena was, of

course, to be first bridesmaid, Mrs. de Snobyn secretly entertained most sanguine hopes, of a propitious result from their more intimate association.

Besides, in the very nature of things, such a result was almost inevitable. Every body knows that. It is next to impossible, for a gay bridesman to avoid falling in love with a pretty bridesmaid, and quite impossible, we all know, for the pretty bridesmaid to avoid smiling acceptance of his suit. Nay, it is all but inevitable, even if the bridesman be not gay, the bridesmaid not pretty. It is a most dangerous propinquity. Avoid it, young ladies, as ye would the plague! unless ye be right willing to brave the result to which it so directly tends.

We knew a young lady about to be married, a cheerful, warm-hearted, happy girl, and her brother who was the *Fidus Achates* of her bridegroom, was quickly pledged to attend him to the altar. The bridesmaid for Miss Merriman aped no style, she had

only one—the bridesmaid was yet to be selected.

“My dear,” said Mrs. Merriman, “I am puzzled about your bridesmaid.”

Why so, mamma? Surely Kate Trevor—”

“No, no, no, my dear; no, no, no; Kate Trevor is a very nice girl—a very sweet girl, and as your most intimate friend, ought, perhaps, to be asked. But nice girl, as she is, and much as I really do like her, she is not just exactly the person I would wish your brother Harry to marry.”

“No, mamma—but why should Harry marry her; he does not seem to think of it now.”

“Very likely not; but he would, then.”

“Inevitably, mamma.”

“Almost so, I believe.”

Mrs. Merriman remained for some minutes in profound cogitation; at last, she raised her head suddenly, and a

gleam of light seemed to pass across her features."

"I have it, Harriet, I have it. Amelia Belford shall be your bridesmaid."

"Amelia Belford:" echoed Miss Merriman, in amazement; "dear mamma, could you wish Harry to marry *her*?"

"No, my dear, not exactly," laughed Mrs. Merriman; "but she is so ugly, so unattractive, quite portionless, and so utterly disagreeable, that no man in his senses could ever think of marrying her. So Harry will be safe."

"I should think so," replied Miss Merriman, sighing at the thought that she should have her own very aversion tacked to her side for six weeks.

Miss Merriman's marriage took place under the happiest auspices; and precisely three months from the day thereof the Walbrook papers, announced the marriage of—

"Henry Merriman, Esq., Junior, to Miss Amelia Belford, daughter, &c."

Certainly not dreading, if anticipating, any such calamity, Mr. Redwald Marchmont took a very energetic interest in the domestic preparations now making for the wedding, and really his officious zeal about satins and trinkets, and his merry dissertations on ribbons and gauzes, formed a very striking contrast to the apathetic insouciance of the bridegroom. But it was not the cue of the bride's family to notice his want of energy, his flagging interest in the scene around. In ten days the papers were to be signed, in fourteen, the marriage was to take place. All would be safe then.

But an unforeseen calamity intervened.

CHAPTER XVII.

ON returning home one night with her three daughters from an opera, which had been, in every respect, a charming one, Mrs. de Snobyn was startled on entering her drawing-room to see Miss Prabble seated by the fire. She had observed, on entering, that the man who attended, looked very grave and made some attempt to speak to her, but she, supposing it was some common domestic grievance, had hastily passed

him. Now she at once knew something was wrong.

“ My dear Miss Prabble, Mr. de Snobyn—”

“ Yes, my good lady, yes, that's it, poor gentleman ! poor Mr. Snobbins ! many and many a pleasant hour I've spent with him, to be sure.”

Mrs. de Snobyn leaned against a chair too much agitated to interrupt Miss Prabble's loquacity : but the girls at once did :

“ Is papa very ill, Miss Prabble.”

“ Very ill, my dear : very ill indeed. But he is asleep now, Mrs. Snobbins, very comfortably asleep : I stayed with him till he fell asleep, and I fancied he knew me, and liked it, poor old gentleman. And I sent for my bits of traps here to stay all night ; for I thought perhaps I could be of some use.”

“ It was very good of you : I am very much obliged to you indeed,” said Mrs. de

Snobyn, as she sank down in her chair, for once in her life utterly subdued.

For she felt all that was coming upon her—all John's kindly expostulations, all Abel's bitter reproofs about their father's decline which she had hardly heeded, not indeed fully believed, all now rushed across her mind, and with them the bitter conviction that all was true, that all was too certain, and that now, even at this moment, when every star shone brightly on her fortunes, even now the blow was to come which might shadow them all with deepest gloom.

The girls hung over her crying bitterly, those profuse gushing tears warm from the heart, which yet lie so near the eyes of youth, those tears which people twenty years their senior in life and its bitter experience, would so thankfully have the relief of shedding. As the scars of sorrow deepen, the source of tears, heart-relieving tears, dries up.

The girls had not been much alarmed by Miss Prabble's words : their father had been often ill : it was the way in which their mother took the information that shocked them. They saw by that how it was.

Mrs. de Snobyn had not been unaware for some days past of a change in her husband's usual aspect and health, but she had hoped to keep him up for a few days longer, and then—her own purposes accomplished—she would devote the summer months entirely to his restoration. It was this secret knowledge which caused her such fatal enlightenment as to the extremity of Mr. de Snobyn's illness.

She recovered her self-command in a few moments, and held out her hand to Miss Prabble with a real cordiality which she had never done before.

“ God bless you, dear Miss Prabble : the kindest thing you can do now is to see these poor girls to bed.”

And then, not trusting herself to look at her daughters, Mrs. de Snobyn quitted the room.

Fain would the girls have gone to their father, but Miss Prabble, now crying too, dissuaded them. She literally fulfilled their mother's request : for nothing could induce her to seek her own apartment until she had seen them all in bed.

John and Abel were summoned with the morning's light, Augustus was written for from Oxford and Octavius from Eton. Mr. John Snobbins was affectionately attentive, but Abel never quitted his father's pillow until he had closed his eyes.

For Mr. de Snobyn did not linger long. Decay had been quietly doing its work for years, and the vital powers were exhausted. He seemed to suffer no pain, his family were spared the anguish of beholding that, and he dozed quietly away. He never spoke, and his children were not certain whether he knew them or not. At one time he opened his eyes and glanced from

one to another round the bed, and at length rested upon Abel who close by his pillow held his father's hand. Abel loved to think that there was intelligence in that glance, and that he felt at the moment a feeble pressure of the hand, and that the good old man was conscious of the presence of the darling son of his beloved Madge. It might be so ; but in another moment the eye was fixed, the hand powerless.

Who so happy now as Miss Prabble, happy in the midst of most true and unfeigned grief. Pattering from one room to another to exhort the various mourners to be comforted and not "fret so," and invariably ending her consolations by crying heartily with those whom she had earnestly conjured to abstain from such a useless demonstration.

And about the mourning, too, how happy and how miserable she was : untiring in her exertions, energetic in her grief. Now carefully shaping some crape, and anon jerking it hastily away, lest a sudden gush

of tears should stain its beauty : now stitching seams most laboriously amid the domestic sempstresses, and then laying her work down for the avowed purpose of having " a good cry." Poor Miss Prabble!

And when attired for the first time in the very handsome mourning which Mrs. de Snobyn had begged her to accept as " a trifling token of remembrance for him whom they all lamented," she could not forbear going to the girls' room, not, as usual, to solace and assist them, but to exhibit herself.

" My dears, I can't help shewing you : it's a great grief to us all to be sure," and here, to dry her fast falling tears, Miss Prabble applied a pocket-handkerchief which undoubtedly had been used before : " but of course I don't like to trouble your mama and yet I thought it only genteel to her to let some of you see her handsome present before it had a spot, or any chance of a mishap. Look, my dears—don't it look well—I hardly know myself. I've never

had such a gown on, my dears, never since we lost my poor dear young lady, poor Miss Juliana, Lady Marchmont's sister, you know, my dears : her I've often told you about. Aye, my mourning was very beautiful then, very ; Lady Marchmont did everything very liberal—she's always generous. But then to be sure fashions and stuffs were so different then, and though Lady Marchmont and my dear Miss Juliana did treat me more like a friend than a servant, still you know of course I wasn't drest just like them. But you see your mama 's ordered my things just as good as yours—every bit : and indeed poor dear Mr Snobbins and me was—but my dear Miss Charlotte, my dear child, don't weep like that—we must all die you know ; and your good father was ready for it if ever man was—poor dear—”

But Miss Prabble turned away suddenly, and pattered out of the room, sobbing aloud.

On one occasion her usual loquacity en-

tirely deserted her, and that was when Abel called upon her at her own lodgings, to give her a handsome mourning ring, containing his father's hair, not as Mrs. de de Snobyn would have elegantly expressed it as "a trifling token of esteem for him whom they all mourned," but as he said, "an offering of friendship from his brother John and himself : a memorial of their gratitude for her attention and kindness to their good father."

By a will dated many years before Mrs. de Snobyn was appointed sole legatee, sole executrix. To his two eldest sons Mr. de Snobyn left each a very trifling legacy, "only," so ran the bequest, "as a last assurance of their father's dear love : " for of course they were amply provided for, John by the business, Abel by his private fortune. To Maude, his blessing and a mourning ring. These were all the particulars. For his younger family the testator said he could not do better than leave them in the hands of their fond mother, more es-

pecially as a considerable portion of their property being hers in her own right, he had no power over the disposal of it.

Little did Mr. de Snobyn imagine at the time of signing the will, how few of his own hard-earned guineas there would be left to bequeath, when the time came, for the execution of its enactments.

John and Abel made prompt and kind offers of service to their step-mother, which were, however, peremptorily though most courteously declined.

“ I should hardly feel comfortable, Abel, in troubling you and your brother so much ; that you would perform the labour as one of love, I doubt not : but *I* should feel that I was laying an onerous burthen upon you.”

“ My brother John and I have no wish to intrude our services, or even to press them : our only wish was to save trouble to my father's widow, to be of service to our young brothers and sisters.”

“ Such I feel and know was your motive,

and I thank you from my heart. But my son Augustus is now of an age to undertake those matters which require, perforce, a manly interpreter, and it is for his advantage—I am sure you will agree with me in that, my dear Abel—it will be for his advantage to have some practical knowledge of business, perhaps not the less so that the details are of an afflictive character.”

Abel made his bow and retired.

So Mrs. de Snobyn performed her duties of executorship unchecked by any surveillance, unembarrassed by any comment which might have run counter to her own opinion ; for it may readily be supposed that she did not call Augustus to her aid. Notwithstanding her own favorite maxim, often impressed by her on her daughters' minds, always to look evils in the face, and her off-quoted opinion that it was only the act of a child or an idiot to endeavour cheat yourself, she had to tax all the firmness of which she was mistress, in order

to do justice to her own favourite precepts, when she made for the first time a complete examination of her resources and her liabilities. Most supremely did she now congratulate herself, on her foresight, in persuading the old man, her husband, to forego his wish of placing John or Abel in trust jointly with her. How could she have borne now Abel's sarcastic smile, or even John's more undisguised look of wonder. For some time she sat with her eyes closed, her forehead shaded with her hand, as if she would hide, even from her own sight, the startling array of figures which glared on the table before her.

But before a very long time had elapsed Mr. de Snobyn recovered all her firmness, all her self-control ; applied herself to the task before her, arranged her plans, and formed her resolution.

"It was her intention," she said, "to retire with her family, and to live in the most complete seclusion, until time had in

some degree softened the bitterness of their deprivation."

John was astonished and delighted ; he had not expected her to pay such a tribute—though it was only a just one—to the memory of his dear father. Abel said nothing.

When a few days after it was publicly known that the Connaught Place Mansion and its superb furniture were to be let *in statu quo* for six months, and it was whispered amongst her friends that the widow's grief was so intense, that she could not be induced at present even to remain in the house she had occupied with so much *eclât*, many were heard to declare—

"I had no idea during his life-time that she was so fond of Mr. de Snobyn : but there is really no judging from appearances ; and certainly I always thought her a very nice woman."

CHAPTER XVIII.

OUR readers have probably not forgotten that Mr. Meredith, when we last saw him, had been learning some particulars of the services required from him as tutor to a large family in the neighbourhood of Russell Square. Hopeless as seemed to be the undertaking and harassing as were the duties, he had no alternative but to accept them: what power of selection or what right of choice had a man in his position. He was in the very act

of writing to accept the appointment when he was redeemed from it in a manner as unexpected as it then appeared hopeful.

Hitherto, as our readers have seen, he had not been so fortunate as to obtain any appointment to regular clerical duty, but he had occasionally, indeed rather frequently officiated here and there on accidental calls of temporary emergency. Now he was informed of a gentleman who wanted assistance for three months, and as a matter of course he made application, and against his expectations, almost against his belief, he obtained the appointment. For hope had almost deserted him. He hastened home to Emily with the good tidings.

Did not their humble tea taste like nectar on that evening of hope and thankfulness.

She, in the mean time, had been exerting her energies in another way. She at-

tempted original composition and with more success than she had ventured to expect. Yet she was not an indulgent self-judge : she knew that would be a fatal error and she strenuously endeavoured to avoid it. With a quick and intelligent mind, a good education, and some knowledge of life and society, she was well able to form a tolerably correct judgment of the comparative merits of the various articles in those magazines which are more especially devoted to light literature, and she could not but feel that her own attempts, though wanting the fluent ease of a practised pen, were yet integrally of a superior stamp to many which bearing the ciphers of established favourites, met with general approbation and support. Unenlightened by her husband's experience—for indeed to save her mortification at the moment, he had concealed from her many of his checks, she had yet to learn that very respectable or even somewhat superior

talent may not itself suffice to its own introduction.

Having finished a slight graphic sketch with her utmost care she forwarded it to the editor of a popular magazine, and waited, day after day, in some anxiety, hoping, in her inexperience, that each succeeding day would bring an answer. But week after week elapsed—several weeks, and then she ventured to write a timid note of enquiry. By return of post, she received back her M.S., with a brief, gentlemanly note of thanks for the offer of it ; but from a certain disposition of the leaves, she had a shrewd suspicion that her manuscript had not been opened, or, if opened, certainly not read. Very probably she was right.

Disappointed, but not disheartened, she forwarded the same sketch to another magazine, with a private appeal to the editor, whom she knew, by common report, to be a man of a kind heart, and of

generous and considerate conduct to young aspirants in the line in which he had obtained so high a position. This time her sketch was accepted, quickly published, and much commended in the papers. The editor wrote kindly to her ; and, in reply, to her solicitation for his advice, recommended her to write a novel.

This proposition startled Emily on many accounts. Though well aware that some of the noblest and best books in English literature are now worked up into the form of novels, she yet felt some hesitation, in adventuring in that line, the more especially as a natural mistrust of her own powers made her doubt whether she could impart to it that high tone which would justify her attempt to herself. She took a middle course—she compromised matters—and wrote a small, unpretending work. Her friend, as she was wont to call him, the editor, was dead, carried off by a sudden illness ; again unaided, unsupported,

she forwarded her M.S. to a publisher, and after the lapse of a very considerable time, she called upon him.

He received her with great politeness—spoke of her work in terms which she, poor thing, in her ignorance, thought hopeful ; but regretted that it was not in his power to become the publisher of it.

“ Why not ?” faltered she.

“ My hands are, at present, quite full.”

She smiled—a melancholy smile though.

“ I cannot suppose that to be the only reason, Mr. Z—, in a business so extensive as yours, a small work like mine would not be considered *de trop*, did *you like it ?*”

The publisher was too well bred to acquiesce in this depreciation, save by silence.

She continued—

“ I flattered myself that the work was well written.”

“ It is so.”

“That the information engrafted in it is authentic and correct.”

“Undoubtedly it is so.”

“The conversations are apposite and spirited.”

“I can't deny it.”

“Then why,” pursued Emily, her hopes reviving, “why can you not publish it?”

The man of types hesitated a little.

“I fear it would not be a profitable speculation—I fear it would not *take*. You see, madam, you have no name; you are not known.”

“How can I be, sir, until I have published?”

“Very true; very true; but—” he hesitated, and she proceeded—

“How am I to acquire a name? You allow that I have talent; I *know* I have unwearied application, unflinching industry—will you point out a subject to me which may be likely to ‘take.’”

“Really *we* are not accustomed

to do that ; we are generally over supplied."

So with

"Congees, and submissive congees,"

Mr. Z— bowed his fair applicant out.

Manuscript in hand, she went at once to another highly respectable publisher, who received her with a kindness in his courtesy, which emboldened her at once to open her business. But he did not even enquire into the subject of her book ; he did not so much as ask the title. She had no *name*, and it was the rule of their house to deal with none but well-known and favorite authors.

Utterly dispirited, at length, she went home, and throwing herself on the sofa, cried bitterly—bitterly.

Thus her husband found her, but he brought unwonted consolation, for it was on that day that his appointment to duty was decided as named at the commencement of this chapter. Warned by his suc-

cessive and repeated failures, he had not told Emily of his application. True, his services were only required for three months, but there was remuneration, there was position, and there was the hope of what in three months might "turn up".

Said I not truth that their meagre tea that evening tasted like nectar, and that no earthly ambrosia was ever more keenly and thankfully relished than their dry toast, though, lodging-house-like, one side seemed to have been contented with looking at the fire, certainly had not felt it, and the other, in addition to being very brown had imbibed no inconsiderable portion of soot from the bars of the grate. It mattered not—all was very good, and they were very happy.

It was not though without a keen pang that Mrs. Meredith brought to her husband this evening her gold watch and chain—the gift of her father—to be sold to provide the wherewithal for their removal. All her trinkets and jewellery, all his books,

his watch, had been sold one after the other to provide them with the necessaries of life. But this—her father's last gift—this indeed nothing should induce them to part with—never, never, had he said again and again should she be robbed of that. And now with a smile on her face, though tears were gushing from her heart, she brought it to him—and he took it—for what could he do !

He took it, but not to sell, for he had not forgotten anything that had passed heretofore regarding it. He did not sell it, though Emily thought he did, for he could not bear to inflict on her at that moment the additional pang of telling her *how* he had disposed of it, though the arrangement was made only with a view to her future repossession of the precious token.

Under the excitement of their renewed hopes, Emily's despondency soon passed away, she recovered all and more than all her usual energy, and scarcely had they arranged themselves in their new apart-

ments, which were taken necessarily near the church at which Mr. Meredith was to officiate, than she commenced, (with more zeal it may be than discretion), a novel ; lamenting that any misplaced scruples had prevented her from earlier following the advice of the friendly editor.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE only one of Mr. de Snobyn's family who testified any disapprobation of the terms of his will, leaving the interests of his children entirely in the hands of their mother, was Augustus ; and even he, subdued in some degree by the solemnity of the occasion, and the grieving faces of those around him, ventured not during the first weeks of mourning to obtrude his dissatisfactions on others. For Mr. de Snobyn was truly wept : his young daughters were

utterly overcome. When the eye was for ever closed which had never beamed on them but kindly, when the voice was for ever silent which they had never listened to but in tones of blessing, then the memory of what their father had been *to them* passed across their minds ; and ten thousand thousand instances of disobedience, carelessness, and pique displayed to him, little thought of or cared for at the time, now struck them with remorse. And bitterly indeed, under the first impulsion of these feelings, did they weep. That their sorrow, though violent, was short-lived—was but natural. There was no wise and gentle monitor at hand to turn these awakening impulses to a holy purpose. While, unhappily, worldly and deteriorating influences were all around, and of course were embraced, almost unawares, by those whose whole course of life had been guided by such. Moreover, their grief was painful, for it was mingled with much self-reproach ; they were but too glad

to have their thoughts recalled to other things.

Knowing their mother as they did, *they* were quite aware that her motive for retirement was not grief for their father's death, nor respect for his memory, however their open-hearted but rather obtuse brother John might be imposed upon. They were not, indeed, admitted by their mamma into her confidence, but they had seen clearly enough that though she remained much alone, and her countenance looked full of care—it was the care of anxiety, not of grief. Ill at ease as they were, they had hardly forborne a smile at her pompous presentation of mourning to Miss Prabble; and the smile and glance were *not* withheld when she led her stepsons to suppose that her abrupt retirement was a testimony of respect and affection to her father's memory. They were not deceived: what her motive might be they knew not, but that it was one of policy they had no doubt. Thus was the world-

liness of their mother the first circumstance to deteriorate the holiness of their grief.

Nor were their quickly-evaporating sentiments towards their father destined to any recal or support from their brother Augustus. He had uttered the word "humbug" so very emphatically on one occasion, even before his father's remains were laid in the grave, that his sisters felt in one moment that their grief, real as it was, would meet with no sympathy from him, if it were suffered to interfere in the least with his own plans and projects. He had not concealed from them, even at that moment, his "disgust at the old man's will," though he had been withheld, partly by shame, partly by a transient fit of better feeling, from annoying his mother at that time. His necessities, however, did not allow him to wait long.

Hardly were Mrs. de Snobyn and her daughters settled in a cottage in a pretty, retired and rural village, a few miles from London, ere Augustus again made his ap-

pearance from Oxford ; and scarcely was the meal concluded at which he found them engaged, than he requested a private conference with his mother, with certainly somewhat less of deference, than had been his wont when addressing her. She led the way into the other small parlour.

“ Now, Augustus, what is it you want, and what has caused you so soon to quit your studies again ?”

Augustus played a tattoo on the table with his knuckles, examined his nails very accurately, recommenced his tattoo, and as suddenly breaking off, with a half-uttered exclamation of “ D——n it,” he said, with very praiseworthy articulateness—

“ I came to ask, ma'am, if you don't intend to remedy the injustice my father has done me ?”

“ ‘ The injustice your father has done you ?’ forgive me for repeating your words, Augustus, but I really am totally at a loss to comprehend their meaning.”

“ It is not difficult to guess, I should think, ma'am. Why am I, his eldest son, left as dependent as a babe in a cradle.”

“ His eldest son, Augustus ?”

“ Well—your eldest son ; and I should think there's little need to keep up the farce with the Budge Row concern any longer.”

“ I should advise you to treat your elder brothers with respect, Augustus : they deserve it, and you will, moreover, find your own account in it.”

“ You should have taught me the lesson a little earlier, I fancy,” said Augustus, with a sneer.”

His mother rose to quit the room : he started up.

“ My dear mother, forgive me : I was very wrong, pray forgive me.”

“ You were, indeed, very wrong,” said she, resuming her seat “ Do not distress me, Augustus, by any more remarks, which are alike unbecoming to you to make, and

painful to me to hear, but say at once what it is you want."

"Money, mother, of course."

"Money, again, and so soon?"

"Yes, indeed, ma'am," said Augustus, with some return of insolence to his manner: "*that*, I should think, under the circumstances cannot surprise even you, slight as is your knowledge of college expenses."

"What are the circumstances you refer to?"

"My father's death."

"I hardly understand, Augustus—"

"Surely, ma'am, you must understand, that my father was known to be a wealthy old fellow, and I passed for his eldest son, there—so, of course, now the fellows are all looking for their money."

"What fellows?"

"Why, the good fellows who accommodated me, to be sure, knowing my father was old, felt, of course, that they were sure of their money soon."

“Speculating on your kind father's death, Augustus?”

“No, mother, not so. Money I was obliged to have, and when enquiries were made as to my means of repayment, of course, I said that my father was an old man, and that I should have means on his death. If it be not so, it *ought* to have been,” added he, bitterly.

“I think otherwise : I never felt so entirely, the prudence of your father's arrangements, as at this moment. Had you a gold mine, Augustus, you would squander it.”

“I'm sure, ma'am, I don't know what you have to complain of : I only do as other gentlemen do, and not having a sufficient allowance, I am now, of course, beset with duns.”

“Which shows you have not done as other *gentlemen* do, or you would not be so beset : the respectable tradesmen of Oxford never dun a student : I know that much.

Your debts are not to them, or, at least, your annoyance is not from them."

"I never said it was," said Augustus sullenly; "but you seem to think a gentleman can have no wants but those of coats, boots, and bread and butter."

"No," replied his mother, shaking her head, "I do not think so: I know that the needs of a spendthrift are infinite. But speak, Augustus, what are these debts? what money do you want?"

"The tradesmen may wait; I only want money for my debts of honor."

"Debts of honor! you have then been gambling again, after your solemn promise to the contrary."

"It is possible to have debts without having gambled," said Augustus, evading the question. "I suppose, of course, even *you* would wish Burford to be paid."

"Burford!"

"Yes; he lent me three hundred pounds."

“ Augustus, you will drive me mad. When was this ? and why was it ? ”

“ You take it too seriously, mother, a great deal. What is there so very miraculous in one good-hearted young fellow helping another out of a scrape. If it had been your saint, young Marchmont, indeed—but I knew better than to apply to him.”

Mrs. de Snobyn's lips were pale with suppressed anger.

“ Tell me instantly, heartless boy, without further equivocation or delay, when this was, and why it was.”

“ The when,” said Augustus, in a tone as peremptory as her own, for intercourse with the worst society of college life, had quite dissipated his former wholesome awe of his mother; and he was also harassed by debts and difficulties, and stung by the feeling of what he considered his father's injustice to him; “ the when, was of course when Burford was so remarkably

sweet on Evelina—a young fellow must be even a greater sappey than himself if he can't take a hint at that time : the why was because—because—” and Augustus stopped.

“ Well, sir,” said his mother haughtily, “ the why ?”

“ The why, was because my wife was in distress and wanted money.”

His mother turned upon him a countenance of almost agonised enquiry.

He felt rebuked ; he felt some shame ; for he muttered :

“ I did not mean to tell you, but you provoked me.”

“ But who ? who ?” gasped his mother.

“ Nay, mother, there is but one ; if you say I'm a spendthrift, I am no libertine. It is Violet Melraye of course.”

Mrs. de Snobyn's head sank lower and lower, until at length it was fairly buried in her arms on the table. Her son heard no sound, no sobs, but he saw her bosom heave convulsively, so convulsively that

he was almost alarmed. He spoke to her—

“Mother, it's not so bad as you think ; Violet *is* a modest, good girl, and she has been true and faithful to me.”

Mrs. de Snobyn seemed to shrink even more within herself ; the idea of a minor theatre sylph, seduced without much difficulty by her son, being “modest,” to say nothing of “good,” “true,” and “faithful.” Mrs. de Snobyn could not imagine it true, and therefore could not believe it at all. Nevertheless it was true ; Augustus was the sinner, not the poor sylph.

Augustus, however—braggarts are always cowards at heart—was completely nonplussed. He endeavoured to take his mother's hand—she withdrew it as if a serpent had stung her : he endeavoured to speak, she motioned him off.

“Leave me, leave me,” she faintly articulated ; and as it was about the only thing, which at that moment, he knew exactly how to do—he obeyed.

CHAPTER XX.

THE contiguity of the parlour in Mrs. de Snobyn's temporary country retreat, had forced upon the unwilling ears of the sisters, not, indeed, the words of the foregoing conference, but sufficient of its tone, to be fully aware that it was not an amicable one. They felt no surprise, therefore, when Augustus, rushing in, flushed, heated, and in a towering passion, flung himself on the little black horsehair sofa, with an eja-

culuation of anger, and a force which had evidently no reference to the probable strength of the lodging-house furniture. His sisters, not totally unaccustomed to his ebullitions of passion, took no notice of him, but pursued their crochet work with their usual equanimity.

“ You’re amazingly philosophical, girls,” said he, at length, “ is this your most cheerful greeting to a brother who has ferreted you out in this Robinson-Crusoe-like solitude ?”

“ What sort of greeting do you expect ?” said Helena, “ what have you been annoying mamma about ?”

“ Annoying mamma about !” said he, mimicking the tones, “ why, Miss Nelly, to tell you the truth, I have been referring to a subject which somehow is universally annoying to elderly ladies and gentlemen—videlicet money.”

“ Money,” exclaimed Charlotte, “ oh, Augustus, you cannot possibly want money again.”

“ Speak of what you know, Charlotte ; but whether I do or do not, I have no notion of submitting quietly to the sneaking, absurd will of my father’s.”

“ ‘ Sneaking !’ ‘ absurd !’ how unjust you are. Can we have a better friend than mamma ?”

“ You—you girls—no—perhaps not ; but I am different.”

“ Why so ?”

“ Oh—the difference between a dashing young fellow who knows the world, and wants to *live*, and a bread-and-butter young lady in the market and hardly out of her teens, is tolerably perceptible to most folks ; but you are—considering your training—remarkably innocent.”

“ Leave off sneering, and tell us what you want.”

“ I want—for as I’ve blabbed to the old lady, there is no good in making a mystery to you—I want means to support my wife like a lady, and to bring up my child—

children I may almost say—as they ought to be.”

“ Augustus !” exclaimed the three young ladies at once, in varied tones, but all expressive of the utmost amazement, “ Augustus what *do* you mean ?”

For not the most distant allusion to their brother's disgraceful amour had ever reached their ears ; their mother had been peremptory on this point, as the only terms on which she would afford aid to her son. He was therefore somewhat overwhelmed by, and most certainly excessively puzzled to answer his three sisters' multitudinous questions of the who, the when, the where, and the how ; and almost felt it a relief to be again summoned by the lady's-maid to his mother's apartment.

The eager remarks of the sisters when again left together, their sudden hopes, and vivid fears may be easily imagined, or rather those of Charlotte, for it was her warm heart which chiefly suggested them ;

Helena more clear-sighted from pride, Evelina from her own peculiar position, soon settled the premises.

“ It can be no very auspicious connection, or the marriage would not have been smuggled over so secretly.”

Mrs. de Snobyn's usually prompt and energetic nature did not fail her even under the heavy blow she had just received ; for though she had but too abundant cause to believe that her son was engaged in a career of low profligacy, disgraceful to himself, and most annoying and inconvenient to her, she was still utterly unprepared for the stunning shock of his marriage. This almost quenched her hopes for him. Many a dissipated youth she knew became in after life a useful and honourable member of society, and this she trusted would be the case with her son when he should have sown all his wild oats. But from the evil influences of a low marriage she believed nothing could extricate a young man ; and

her son's was vile as well as low. He had not only married a young person whom he should never have thought of, never have been acquainted with, but he had married her even after she had utterly disgraced herself—after she was about to publish to the world her own shame in order to obtain money—after she had literally been bought off by his family. What hope could there be for a young man so circumstanced? Mrs. de Snobyn thought none.

It never entered her head to reflect that the young woman, though culpably weak, might not necessarily be depraved, and that in her apparently eager and degrading pursuit of her seducer she was rather the unwilling instrument than the active instigator.

Mrs. de Snobyn knew not, nor indeed was Augustus yet fully aware, though his eyes were beginning to be opened, that throughout he had been the catspaw of a profligate and licentious man,

who had placed his pretty daughter in the way, foreseeing the probable result, and furthering it to his own ends, as hitherto he had done most successfully. The money which Mrs. de Snobyn had forwarded, upwards of a twelvemonth before, to purchase his silence, he had given up to Augustus to liquidate some of his debts of profligacy which were pressing hard upon him, on condition that Augustus should marry the mother of his newly-born son ; promising on his own and his daughter's part, that they would require no acknowledgment of the marriage until his father's death made him his own master, and put him in possession of his property. Augustus, harassed by debt, seeing present relief, shutting his eyes to future ill-consequences—a “distant future,” as his inclination led him to think of it ; incited, moreover, to a touch of somewhat more tender feeling as he saw his *chère amie* nursing his new-born babe, and looking prettier than ever from the

tinge of weakness and delicacy which overspread the fair features shaded by a slight lace morning cap. Tempted and subdued thus, Augustus sacrificed future respectability to present ease, and sold his birth-right for a mess of pottage.

Had he been led to this act by any compunction for the gentle girl whose fair fame and happiness he had wantonly destroyed, then indeed all rightly thinking persons would have honoured him for the act; but such was not the case.

However, he married Violet, and for a little while his perplexities were set at rest by the funds which his father-in-law honourably made over to him, according to agreement. But it was for a short time only that the relief was efficacious. His habits were now absolutely profligate, and he had a too willing coadjutor in his wife's father.

The latter, therefore, looked with no little anxiety at the period of Mr. de Sno-

byn's death, to the letters promised by Augustus as to his fortune and inheritance. But none such came. Mr. Mellraye haunted his daughter's apartment to learn the particulars from her as soon as she received them—but she received none. He wrote twice, indeed, but his letters were so common-place, and so utterly devoid of any expression of personal affection or spousal sympathy, that Violet had no hesitation in at once passing them over to her father, who almost devoured the words in his haste to read what was not there.

At length, these words occurred, at the close of a common-place letter announcing his return :

“ It must out at last ; therefore, I may as well tell you at first, that my old dad has made the most absurd will possible, absolutely leaving his whole property to my mother, and not a shilling to me to bless myself with. Of course, it must

come to me ultimately—but what to do in the mean time ! It's certainly a bore. Just break it to your father, Vi ; he will tell us what he thinks should be done. There's no chance, I fear, of setting aside the will ; old Lawyer Fastentight is known to be too safe. Perhaps, it may be desirable that you should go on the boards again, (under another name, of course ;) but we shall see. Kiss the boy for me.

“ Yours,

“ A. DE SNOBYN.”

It was *not* Mr. Mellraye's opinion that his daughter should go on the boards again, neither was it his opinion that her marriage should be any longer concealed. After various warm and very unsatisfactory discussions, Mr. Mellraye consented to wave, for some short time longer, his

daughter's claims to be acknowledged by her husband's family, provided Augustus would undertake, in the interim, to procure a handsome advance on his "future property" from Mrs. de Snobyn.

CHAPTER XXI.

“ I hardly know, Augustus,” said Mrs. de Snobyn, “ you have proved yourself so utterly thoughtless and presumptuous as well as profligate, I hardly know how to impress you forcibly enough with the fact, that after this cheque which I am now drawing for you, and after liquidating your ill-advised obligation to Sir Gabriel Burford—a matter which I take into my own hands—I will *not* honour your bills—I will *not* attend to your further petitions

for money—I will *not* suffer your sisters to be fleeced, to supply means for your wanton extravagance.”

“What am I to do?” said Augustus, sulkily; “my allowance is not sufficient.”

“It is amply sufficient to maintain you as a gentleman, and even to justify some follies and extravagancies; for, as you well know, I am no straight-laced mother, and I did not expect or wish you to be nicknamed as a puritan. At the same time, I little thought that son of mine would so soon degenerate into a low-thoughted spendthrift. However, I am too painfully aware that my opinion and advice are now of little worth to you, and that your necessities alone, and your dependence on me, bring you to me. I am not going to trouble you with admonition. Considering, probably, that you have, however foolishly, still, perhaps, not quite unfairly, reckoned upon some independent means at your father's death, I give you this cheque,

which otherwise I should not have done, and I will increase your allowance—”

“My dear mother—”

“Silence : I will increase your allowance two hundred pounds a year.”

His countenance so suddenly elated as suddenly fell.

“Only two hundred, ma'am ?”

“No more, Augustus. Are you so utterly enslaved by your own selfishness as to forget that your three sisters have to be provided for—your younger brother educated ; or would you really—I sometimes fear it—sacrifice them all to your own licentious pleasures.”

“There is no need even to refer to such an idea—all I seek is my right and lawful share of property.”

“Be content, Augustus, you have more than your share. I have not forgotten that you are my eldest son, though I have well nigh ceased to hope that you will ever prove a credit to your family.”

“Take this,” she continued, as Augustus sat sulkily silent ; putting a cheque into his hand, “it is for two hundred pounds, and three hundred more I shall remit to Sir Gabriel Burford to-day. The addition to your allowance, fifty pounds per quarter, you will find duly arranged ; and understand, Augustus, once for all, no more will I do.”

“You forget, ma'am, the additional claims upon me—my wife—”

“How, sir ?” interrupted Mrs. De Snobyn, with a face like scarlet, “do you presume to name her to me a second time ? Leave me instantly !”

He did so ; and for the few remaining hours he passed in the cottage, until the evening mail took him up—hours, during which, his mother kept herself secluded, he contrived, by his sulky ill-temper, to render himself as disagreeable to his sisters as he well could be. Once Charlotte asked about his wife, but received, metaphorically speaking, a rap on the knuckles

for her curiosity, which offended even her. So she remained hurt and silent ; Helena and Evelina shrouded themselves in scornful reserve—each taking a book ; and thus passed the meeting of the sisters and brother, the first, after the awful occupation of their father's funeral.

To abstain from all enquiry of their mother as to a subject in which they felt so deep an interest, was, however, too great a tax on their forbearance ; though Mrs. De Snobyn's pale and anxious face, when she joined them in the evening, after her son's departure, looked anything but propitious Helena made the inquiry.

“ Augustus said something to us, mama, about being married ; I suppose it was only an ill-timed pleasantry.”

“ Too surely, matter of fact, I grieve to say,” replied Mrs. de Snobyn, in a tone of voice much deeper, as it seemed, than usual—the effect no doubt of internal agitation. She continued, “ How deeply I grieve my dears, you may suppose, when I tell you

that the person your misled brother has made his wife, is one that cannot be introduced to you, that must not be named by you."

True to her habits of promptitude, Mrs. De Snobyn had already posted a letter to Sir Gabriel Burford, which ran as follows :—

"I have been more annoyed, dear Sir Gabriel, than I can express, at the knowledge, which I only obtained to-day, of my thoughtless boy's application to you for pecuniary assistance. He ought not to have required it ; and you, dear Sir Gabriel, ought not—if I may be permitted thus to assume a tone of maternal exhortation—ought not to have granted it ; though it ill-becomes me to censure that kindness of feeling—the existence of which, forms my dearest hope, when I reflect on the future prospects of my daughter, Evelina.

"She, dear girl, was so delighted at this

token of your kindness to her fondly-loved brother, that she insisted upon my according him my unconditional forgiveness. You, who know so well Evelina's power over my affections, will hardly wonder that I acceded to her request.

“Enclosing a cheque for the sum you advanced (for the kindness which prompted it I must remain your debtor), I will detain you no longer than to beg my respectful compliments to Lady Burford, and to yourself, dear Sir, every kind and cordial wish.

“I scarcely presume to be the expositor to you of Evelina's compliments ; my other daughters are not aware that I am writing, or, doubtless, they would overwhelm me with reminiscences to the friend they regard so cordially.

“Believe me,

“Dear Sir Gabriel,

“Ever truthfully yours,

“HELENA DE SNOBYN.”

In due course of post, an answer came as follows :—

“DEAR MRS. DE SNOBYN,

“I am very sorry you should have troubled yourself about the little pecuniary transaction between me and Mr. Augustus. I assure you, it was a great pleasure to me to accommodate him ; and the matter might very well have rested until it was quite convenient to him to repay me himself.

“My mother thanks you for your remembrance, which she begs to reciprocate. She is tolerably well, but much shaken by grief for her sister, my good aunt's death.

“ With all good wishes,

“ Believe me, Mrs. de Snobyn,

“ Very truly yours,

“ GABRIEL BURFORD.”

Poor Mrs. de Snobyn's blood ran cold as she glanced over this frigid epistle. Not one word—not one—which he might not have written to any indifferent person upon any indifferent topic. Not one syllable of recollection of her daughter, of recognisance of his own peculiar position regarding her ; not one reference to the feelings, interests, or pursuits, of any of the family to whom he was soon to be so closely allied. Mrs. de Snobyn dreaded more than she ventured to allow, even to herself.

For she well knew—who so well!—the systematic trap which had been laid for Sir Gabriel. It had been planned by herself and her daughter ; and clever as that daughter was, and worthy of her mother, little could she have carried that plan successfully through, without Mrs. de Snobyn's very efficient help and quick-sighted readiness in support. Well she knew—who better—the docile weakness of Sir Gabriel's constitution, the very foible, indeed, of

which she had made a handle. And well she knew—too well—the almost masculine vigour of the Dowager Lady Burford's character, and the complete and powerful, yet withal the kind and conciliating sway she had held over her son. So well did Mrs. de Snobyn know this, that had not Lady Burford been absent, she would not have given her sanction to Evelina's plot—for *she* had the merit of originating it—for captivating or rather capturing the baronet. But she had assisted in the plot—it had succeeded—it was on the very point of being crowned with triumphant success, when Mr. de Snobyn's death intervened.

Mrs. de Snobyn's head drooped, and she shed some tears—bitter tears; but it was not grief for her husband that caused them.

None knew better than herself the ascendancy of a strong mind over a weak one; for had she not, through that, obtained her own marriage, originally, and

from the hour of that event, the domestic supremacy which she had ever since maintained! Understanding all this so well, could she otherwise than feel assured that Lady Burford, in the privacy of their own domain, would quickly resume all and more than all her former influence over the unstable mind of her son. Did she not feel also, with that sort of clairvoyance with which one mind reads another, somewhat similarly constituted—did she not feel that Lady Burford saw clearly through her manœuvring, and regarded it with contempt! She had indeed felt this many weeks before; but the wedding-day was close at hand, and Lady Burford impotent. She had not then cared.

Now the case was very different; and Mrs. de Snobyn shrank in her inmost heart—shrank for herself and her daughter.

“Poor Evelina!” ejaculated she; “but it may not come—it *may* not; I may be harassing myself unnecessarily. God

grant it! But, at all events, I will not disquiet her, poor thing!"

So Mrs. de Snobyn kept her own letter to Sir Gabriel, and the reply it elicited, a profound secret; for, as may be supposed, all the sentimentalism expressed in her own about Evelina, was what Augustus would pithily have termed—"gammon."

CHAPTER XXII.

THREE or four months elapsed quietly enough—so quietly that even Mrs. de Snobyn became anxious to return to the world; her fears on financial matters being outweighed by those of being utterly forgotten by that fashionable circle, in which she had laboured so hard to obtain a prominent position. After having conducted her daughters to the very verge of matrimonial success, it were too hard to lose the gold—at the very moment of projection; it were

false prudence to re-commence, within the very touch of that goal, to attain which all the outlay had been made.

Every one knows how the mind becomes gradually habituated to regard with nonchalance circumstances, which when novel were startling, possibly abhorrent. On the complete examination of her circumstances consequent on her husband's death, Mrs. de Snobyn had been startled, shocked, even alarmed. From familiar and constant consideration of these circumstances, her alarm subsided, nay she began to feel that it had been exaggerated if not unnecessary ; and though retrenchment was most desirable, she determined it should not be strictly enforced until after Evelina's marriage, which she could not but hope might involve that of Helena. If a misgiving of the bridegroom elect would now and then cross her mind, it only seemed to strengthen the necessity of resuming as quickly as it was decorous to do, her former position in society.

To this end she considered that a return to London was desirable, prior to any arrangement she might make for the autumn ; and, as if indeed her every wish was to be successful, she received a letter from the gentleman to whom she had let her house, expressing a desire to resign it before the time agreed upon, if matters could be satisfactorily arranged. Where both parties had formed the same wish, such an arrangement was easily completed, and Mrs. de Snobyn quickly found herself re-established with her daughters in Connaught Place.

She was not destined however to possess her soul in peace there long. Her increasing but silent disquietudes regarding the constancy of her son-in-law elect—for though she did not choose to alarm her daughter, and Evelina was too haughty to confide her misgivings even to her mother—still Mrs. de Snobyn could not but perceive that Evelina looked dispirited, and she knew that the baronet's letters were

becoming more and more "like angel's visits—few and far between;" these passive disquietudes were varied by others of a more active nature, caused by the sudden reappearance of Augustus—Augustus, not gay, spruce, fashionable and insolent, but Augustus dull, shabby, seedy and sullen. They hardly knew him.

The very sound of his footstep in the hall sent a pang to the heart of his mother—she felt that all was wrong.

All was indeed wrong. Augustus had left College, in consequence of the pressure of debt and the indisposition of his wife. Mrs. Augustus de Snobyn and her child were now in lodgings with her father in some obscure street near the scene of her former labours. The hopeful young husband came to his mother for means to support them there. The interview was short and peremptory. Mrs. de Snobyn refused to advance a single sovereign, and Augustus left the house with a curse in his heart.

Folly now to attempt any farther concealment from her daughters ; and the three girls wept tears of bitter vexation on learning that Augustus had formed a *liaison* with a low girl attached to one of the minor theatres ; that he had ultimately, after his mother had gone to a heavy expense to prevent such a consummation,—married her ; and that he was now residing with her, her illegitimate child and her father, in some vulgar quarter of the town, with which they were unacquainted.

“ It is necessary, my dears, that you should be acquainted with these circumstances, or I should not have shocked your ears by the recountal. We will never refer to them again. Any sort or degree of association between you is of course utterly impossible—not to be thought of ; and I have, for a while, peremptorily forbidden your brother the house.”

Miss Prabble, however, expressed a very different opinion, when a few days after-

wards she called as mediator ; Augustus having earnestly begged her intercession with his mother.

For he was really in necessity ; his wife, now close on her confinement, had not the decencies, far less the comforts of that trying time ; and Augustus found, too late, how completely he had been gulled—that his father-in-law was a low-lived, selfish man of the very lowest standard, who finding no further money was to be obtained from the young man, cared little to what degradation he subjected him, or with what low-lived abuse he overwhelmed him—that the plea on which he seduced him to London, of having friends there through whom he could obtain assistance, was all a mull ; his real object in fact being, (supposing De Snobyn's friends to be no further gullible,) to render the young man, through his utter helplessness and wretchedness, a useful tool in his own secret plans and pursuits.

All this Augustus found—too late.

Though all but utterly wrapt up in self and selfishness, there were yet some sparkles of better spirit remaining, and these caused him to recoil with disgust and loathing from the plans which his father-in-law, having now no further measures to keep—suggested to him. So the poor, sinking wife and daughter, in addition to her own wretched cares, was now almost borne to the earth by the incessant altercations of her father and husband.

Under these circumstances it will be easily supposed that far from merely acquiescing in, Augustus most thankfully and joyfully acceded to, his mother's proposal, made through Miss Prabble, that he should at once separate his wife from her father. This separation effected, and maintained in letter and spirit, Mrs. de Snobyn consented to make them a small periodical allowance for a few weeks; until the young mother should be recovered from her ac-

couchement, and some proper plan be adopted for the completion of his career at Oxford.

This, however, though it satisfied her for the present, was by no means what Miss Prabble intended to be the ultimatum of her negotiation.

“So, my dears,” said she, as a few weeks later she pattered into their morning room, her bonnet-strings flying back, her neck-tie and gloves dangling in her hand, for, as she said, “the heat was past bearing”—“so, my dears, here you are altogether again in your pretty room, and very pretty it is, and very nice you look—ah! it looks like old times—yet not altogether so either—for I see you’ve moved ~~the~~ poor old gentleman’s arm chair—poor, dear man! however, let him rest—that’s not what I came about—but I’m thinking, my dears, that comfortable as you are, you’d be none the worse of a little company now and then.”

“Why, dear Prabby,” said Charlotte,

“ you used to scold us because we had too much company—don't you remember how you used to shake your head and sermonise, and tell us we were acquiring terrible habits, for that we should not be able to live without racketing.”

“ Ah, so I did, my dear, so I did ; and I thought so too, and think so still, Miss Lotty ; but it's not that kind of company I'm thinking of just now. But don't you think, my dears, a nice, quiet, modest young lady would be an acquisition to you sometimes ?”

“ No, question of it,” said Helena, laughing ; “ nice, quiet, modest young ladies, are always an acquisition ; but who is the particular one, Prabble, for whom you are so deeply interested ?”

“ Ah, well, there it is, my dears ; you see mamma's a little averse at present ; but she'll soon come round, my dears, soon, soon come round.”

“ But, Prabby, the lady.”

“ Ah, she is a lady, I assure you ; what I call a lady ; not dashing, like yourselves, my dears—you are ladies, but rather dashing ones—don’t laugh, Miss Charlotte—it’s quite true, laugh how you may. But she’s very quiet and gentle, and very pretty, too—very pretty ; and if she had your advantages of dress, my dears—but she’s very clever, very, and very industrious, and does put her things to the very best advantage—that she does, certainly. And her little things are beautiful, that they really are ; nobody would think they are all the work of her own little fingers, and cut out from the things your mamma sent her.”

The sisters exchanged looks, they seldom took the trouble to listen to Miss Prabble’s long-winded exordiums, but now the same idea seemed to strike them all.

“ A nice, modest young lady, with little things ?” enquired Charlotte, laughing.

“ Ah, my dears, you know very well

whom I mean—your sister, Mrs. Augustus.”

“This is too bad,” interrupted Helena, with a face like scarlet; “I could not have supposed you would take such a liberty, Miss Prabble, as to presume to name that person to us.”

Miss Prabble looked all amazement.

“I don't understand you, Miss Helena, my dear, indeed I don't. It is, of course, for you to choose whether you will treat her like a sister; but what possible wrong can there be in naming your brother's wife?”

“I am sure,” interposed Charlotte, “Prabby did not mean to offend us, did you Prabby?”

“Of course not,” replied Miss Prabble, looking herself pretty considerably offended; “and I don't know yet why you are offended.”

“Nor are we, Miss Prabble,” said Evelina; “as we are quite sure you meant no

offence. But you must be aware that the unhappy person Augustus has made his wife can never associate with us, and ought not to be named before us."

Miss Prabble looked astonished.

"Pray, my dear, who told you so?"

"Mamma."

"Impossible," rejoined Miss Prabble, hastily.

The girls looked at her in surprise.

"What I mean, my dears, is—I know Mrs. Snob—Mrs. de Snobyn does not like Mr. Augustus's marriage—and small blame to her for that—she had a right to expect him to marry higher. But it's done and can't be undone, and it's wise to make the best of it; and what I want you, my dear young ladies, is not to oppose the poor young lady's coming amongst you, but rather to help to win mamma round to it. It will only be kind and becoming in you to do so."

" 'Kind and becoming,' " repeated Helena, with the utmost scorn, " kind and be-

coming in us to lower ourselves to the refuse of the sex ! kind ! becoming ! to forget our own position, our own characters, to associate with a wanton ! kind and becoming ! pray, Miss Prabble, when did you see us so *very* kind as to suppose it would pleasure us to associate with, or gratify mamma to introduce us to, a 'light o' love.' ”

“ Let me tell you, Miss de Snobyn, that *you* at least have little right—but no, no, no, no,” ejaculated Miss Prabble, interrupting herself, while a scarlet spot glowed on each cheek : “ I will not be provoked into—I will not—I will not—” and she pattered up and down the room at an immense speed, fanning herself with a pocket-handerchief.

Charlotte looked concerned and uncomfortable : Helena looked the picture of incarnate pride : Evelina had thrown herself carelessly on a couch, the usual sneer on her features, which she could at this moment hardly compose to gravity, so much

was she amused at Miss Prabble. They had never seen her very angry before, and her appearance just then, Evelina afterwards said, was exactly that of a puddle in a storm.

Miss Prabble's agitation was of a more dignified nature than the young ladies supposed, but chafed she certainly was. At length, however, her pattering became a little more subdued, and Evelina said :

“I think, Helena, that you and our good friend here are exciting each other very unnecessarily ; why not leave this matter in mamma's hands ?”

“Of course,” replied Helena scornfully, “that would be easy enough, but I would rather shield mamma from further annoyance on the subject.”

“But that, unhappily, is impossible,” rejoined Evelina ; “mamma must be annoyed, I fear continuously, whatever trouble we may take to prevent it. Prefer your request to her, Prabby.”

“ I mean to do so, my dear ; I mean to do so ; that is all I want—at least not quite all—but, Miss Helena, my dear, I’m very sorry I vexed you—very sorry—and I was a fool to take offence at what you said—a great fool, my dear—for how should you know—so shake hands and be friends—pray do, my dear—” (Helena coldly suffered Miss Prabble to take her hand, shake it, and lay it down again) : “ so, my dears, that’s all well again,—now you know all I wanted to beg from you at first was, that when your mamma invites this poor young lady here, you will be kind to her.”

“ Why did you not say so at first, Prabby ? we are not in the habit of behaving ill to mamma’s visitors.”

“ Behaving ill ! no, my dear, who ever heard of such a thing : but there’s a difference. You see your mamma’s so high and so grand, that even when she is pleased, her manner sometimes cowers a timid young girl—”

“ ‘ Timid ! ’ ” ejaculated Evelina, *sotto voce*.

“ And you see on this occasion, we can hardly expect her to feel pleased.”

“ Hardly ! ” again, *sotto voce*, Evelina loquitur.

“ So I thought, my dears, if you young ladies would put on your kindly looks—and I know nobody who can look more kindly than you can—why I thought it would cheer the poor young creature a little.”

“ Well but, Prabby, had you not better settle preliminaries with mamma first, and then it will be time enough to read us lectures on our deportment.

“ Lectures, my dear ! Ah, Miss Charlotte, I don't take the liberty, but,” (shaking her finger at her and nodding her head—with a wink or two *ad libitum*)—
“ I know who never stops at giving me a lecture. However, my dears, never mind now ; I will go to mamma, and trust to

your own kind, young hearts for the rest."

So nodding and winking all round, she pattered away.

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