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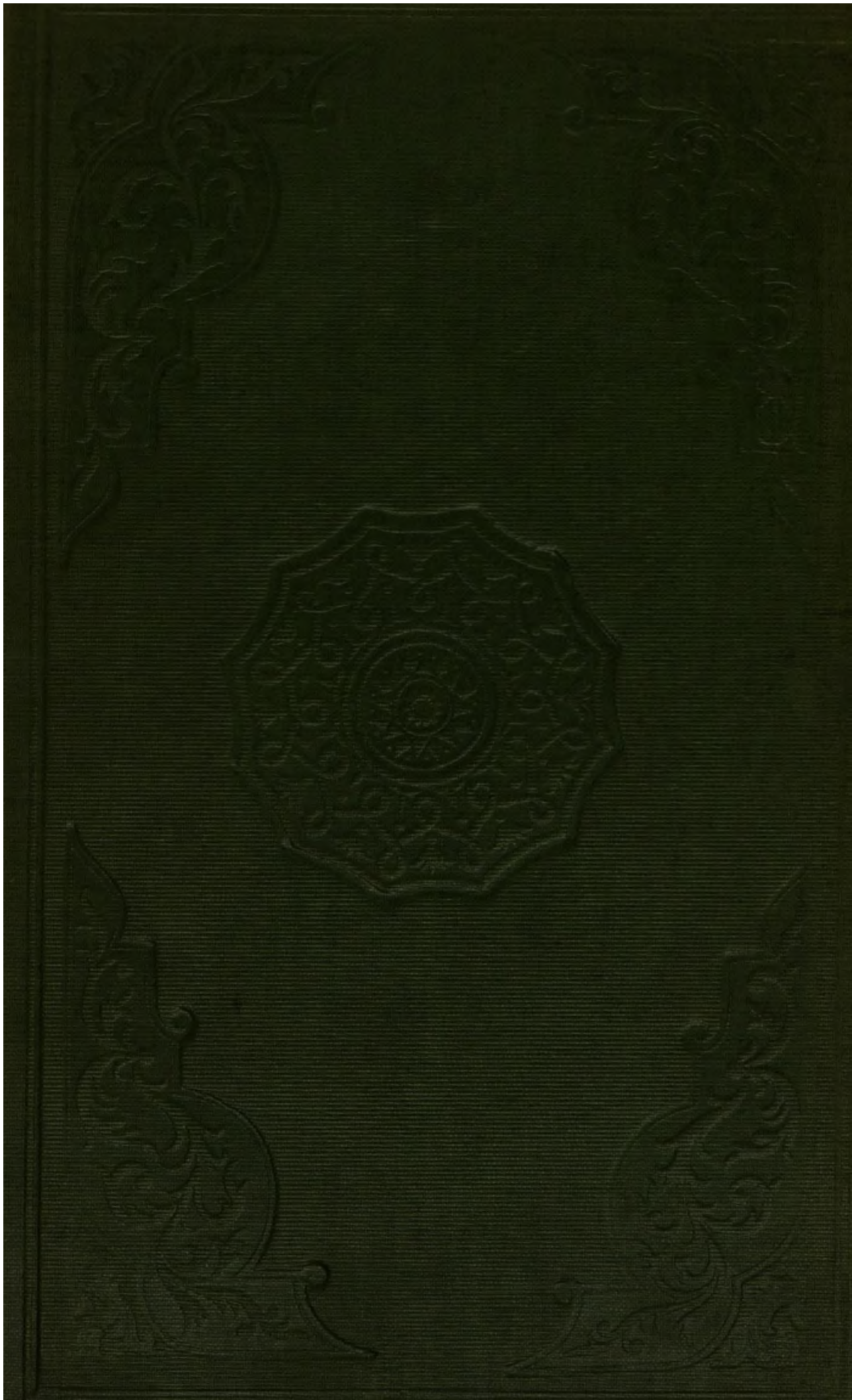
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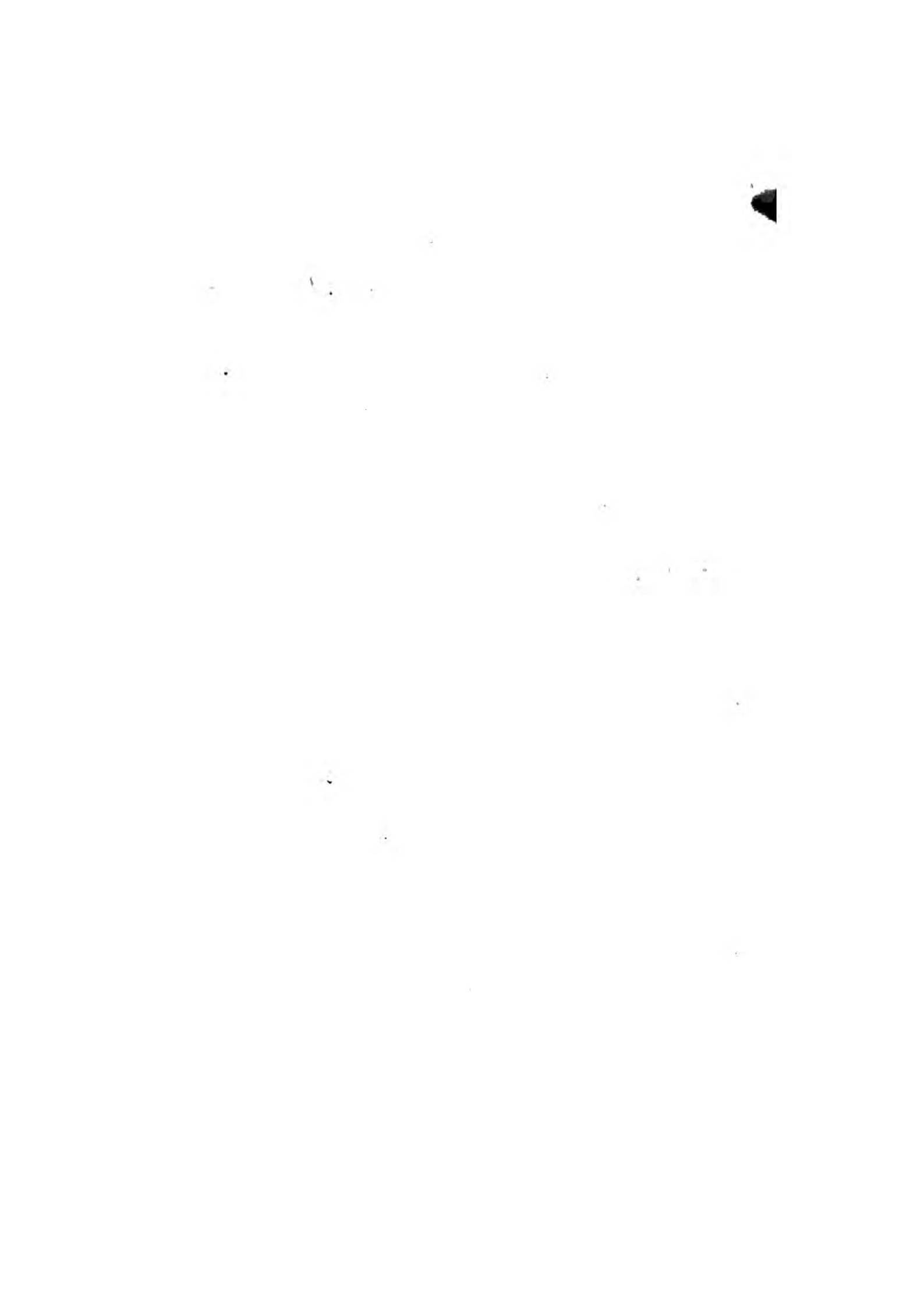
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MR. DALTON'S LEGATEE,

A VERY NICE WÖMAN.

A Nobel

BY

MRS. STONE.

AUTHOR OF

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

IN THREE VOLUMES.—VOL. I.

LONDON:

THOMAS CAUTLEY NEWBY, PUBLISHER,
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1850.

MR. DALTON'S LEGATEE.

CHAPTER I.

“How late the post is this morning,” soliloquised Mr. Dalton, as he buttered the second slice of his French roll, and covered it with the thinnest possible modicum of ham ; “it is very provoking ; I really do not relish my breakfast at all. What can be the reason it is so late ?”

He slowly discussed his roll, deliberately sipped his chocolate ; and then, sud-

denly starting up, rang the bell in a style which seemed to infer that the impatience he had so philosophically repressed heretofore, had now found vent at his finger ends.

So thought the old butler below stairs.

“ I must go now,” he said, “ I must go, now. It's no use putting off any longer, it must come, so give us hold.”

And he held out his hand for the newspaper, which the housekeeper, in her care for her master, had retained until she thought he might have had time to take his breakfast.

“ Well,” said she, sighing, as she resigned the paper ; “ it must come, as you say, and, perhaps, the sooner it is over the better.”

Again the bell rang, and now the butler moved away in earnest—in earnest—but not with alacrity—the angry peal seemed rather to repress than excite his energies.

“Harvey,” said Mr. Dalton, as the man entered the breakfast-parlour ; “I desire you will tell the newsman to-morrow that, if he be so late again, I shall lodge a complaint against him.”

“Yes, sir.”

“There is no excuse—none whatever, for such dilatory work,” continued he, tearing the envelope from the paper.

“No, sir,”

“Remove those things.”

He crushed the envelope and threw it into the fire.

“Yes, sir.”

“I have not relished my breakfast at all,” said he, opening the paper to its full dimensions.

“I’m very sorry, sir.”

“I never do, if I haven’t the paper, and that you know.”

The experienced butler made no further reply ; he saw the paper was duly folded to the leading article.

“ Stupid—absurd—ridiculous—stuff—pshaw !” ejaculated the choleric gentleman, as he hastily turned to another page : “ I’ll read no more of their trash. I wonder what old woman they have for editor now ? Why, in the devil’s name, don’t you carry those things away.”

Harvey who had been covertly watching his master all this time, now collected cups and spoons, very industriously, and hurried out of the room. Hardly had he reached his own domain, however, ere he was again summoned by a thundering peal of the bell ; and, before he had ascended the stairs it rang again, and again, and again. Mr. Dalton was pacing the room in a towering passion.

“ You knew of this,” said he inarticulately, for he was white with passion, and pointing with one hand to a paragraph in the paper which he held in the other.

“ N-o, sir,” stammered Harvey.

“ Speak out, sir—speak out. Were you

privy to my daughter's intention, or were you not?—if, as I shrewdly suspect, you were, and have been a party in deceiving me, you quit the house within an hour.”

“Mr. Dalton, sir, I'd be sorry for any cause to quit the house in which I was born ; but, as for deceiving you, sir, I have never done that since we were boys together. It has been reported, sir, about, as Miss Emily had got married, but my first true knowledge of it was from the newspaper.”

Mr. Dalton looked keenly at the old man for a moment, and then again betook himself to pacing the room. At first he was silent ; but the corrugation of his brows and the clenching of his hands testified the utter absence of patience or composure. At length, he broke forth into a thundering ejaculation :

“The beggar! the upstart! the base-born beggar ; but he shall rue his presumption, as she shall her disobedience : they shall bitterly rue.”

“Oh sir,” said the old butler, starting

forward, "forgive me, sir, don't be angry with the liberty I take—but poor Miss Emily sir, your only child—you'll surely forgive her."

This interposition was as injudicious and ill-timed as it was well meant.

"I will not forgive her, and that she knows. I have warned her sufficiently; she has deliberately contemned my opinion, and must abide the consequences of her disobedience."

"Still, sir, if I may make bold to speak, I hope you will relent. Mr. Meredith is a very worthy young gentleman, and—"

"Mr. Meredith be d—d; and you sir, be silent."

He took the paper from the ground where he had jerked it, and deliberately re-read the announcement which had excited this burst of passion.

"Married :—At Gretna Green on the 25th ulto; the Reverend Henry Meredith to Emily, daughter of Frederick Dalton, Esq.; of Beechwood Manor. Mr. Dalton

is a gentleman of large property, to which the bride, being an only child, is sole heiress."

"Is she?" said Mr. Dalton, bitterly; "is she? So thinks, doubtless, the precious beggar who has married her. We shall see.—Order my horses directly."

"Oh, Mr. Dalton," again ventured Harvey.

"Begone, sir," thundered Mr. Dalton, "and do as you are bid. Order Joe to ride quickly, without a moment's delay, to Mr. Scribwell, and request that gentleman not to leave his house until he has seen me."

The butler retired to execute these peremptory demands, the purport of which he too well guessed.

"It's all as I feared," said he to the housekeeper, who was anxiously waiting for news. "Master's going straight to his lawyer."

"What a pity he is so almighty passionate," said the housekeeper.

“All the Daltons is so and always was,” rejoined the butler. “They would never bear a contradiction, never a one of them, Master was never no better than the rest on ’em ; and his brother as went abroad was a regular devil. He and the old gentleman never could agree.”

“He was older than our master, wasn’t he ?”

“Yes : two years older ; and the heir, if he’d lived.”

“Wasn’t he drowned ?”

“Why it was said so, but we never rightly knew what became on him. He parted with old master in a towering rage. Old England wouldn’t hold ’em both.”

At this moment Mr. Dalton’s bell again pealed forth a summons.

CHAPTER II.

JOE arrived at Mr. Scribewell's door, just as that gentleman was entering a chaise to drive a few miles from home on business, but he returned to his office door to speak with the messenger, and his representations—for the kitchen and servants' hall at the Manor House were ringing with the news of Miss Dalton's marriage and her father's unappeasable rage—caused the lawyer to hesitate whether to pursue his journey or await the coming of his client. He shrewdly surmised the object of Mr.

Dalton's visit, and his own kind heart suggested that he should not be in the way to meet him, but should suffer the incensed father's first burst of indignant rage to expend itself before it could result in any act detrimental to his daughter's interests. But a few moments' meditation sent Mr. Scribwell back to his office, and the unused chaise to the inn. He was too well acquainted with the Dalton irascibility—as who in the parish was not—to hope that any small manœuvres or temporary delays could suffice to calm the chafed tiger in the first burst of his rage ; he thought it much more likely that in the event of his absence whether accidental or designed, Mr. Dalton should at once hasten to another lawyer ; and partly in the hope—a very faint one—of softening the angry father, and partly on the ground that what must inevitably be done, might as well accrue to his advantage as to that of another person—the plea on which so many fashionable physicians inundate their ner-

vous patients with expensive bottles of innocent coloured water. Mr. Scribewell seated himself in his private room to await his client's arrival.

He had not to wait long. Mr. Dalton had given his wrath no time to cool. In as short a space of time as need to be, from the moment of ordering his horses, he arrived at his lawyer's door, leaped to the pavement, threw the reins to his groom, and, without suffering the clerks to announce him—a most unusual proceeding on his part—he walked through the outer office and tapped at the door within. It was opened instantly, and in a shorter space of time than we have taken to record the circumstance, the angry father and astute lawyer were seated over a little table on which was placed a tin box, the contents of which Mr. Scribewell was hastily turning over.

For no time had been lost ; Mr. Dalton's acknowledgment of his lawyer's salutation ran thus—

“ Good morning, Mr. Scribewell. I must trouble you instantly for the copy of my will which is in your possession : the will itself I have already destroyed.”

“ Dear me, dear me!” thought Mr. Scribewell, as a little excited and with hands rather tremulous, (for he was a kind-hearted man and had children of his own) he turned over the papers in the aforesaid tin box, and drew forth one quickly enough, but not so quickly as Mr. Dalton's flashing eye seemed to expect, endorsed :—

“ Attested Copy of the Will of Frederick Dalton, Esquire ; of Beechwood Manor, made and drawn out by me, Matthew Scribewell, Attorney at Law, on the 23rd day of this present February, in the year of our Lord 182-.”

“ That is it, that is it,” exclaimed Mr. Dalton, hastily seizing the parchment, and tearing off the bands of red tape with

which it was enwreathed, "in this will, Mr. Scribewell ;" indexing it with the first finger of his right hand whilst he held the parchment itself in the left—"in this will I bequeath to my daughter Emily all my property of every description—my landed property, my funded property, my furniture, plate, jewels, pictures, books—"

"You did, sir ; I made the will," chimed in the lawyer *sotto voce*, seeing his patron paused, but whether the evident stoppage of breath was caused by revulsion of feeling or by rapidity of utterance the lawyer could not determine.

"Burthened only by a few legacies of trifling amount to the old servants of the family."

"It is so, sir."

"My business with you now, Mr. Scribewell, is imperative. I wish you now, without an hour's delay, to frame another will precisely such as this ; save that, in lieu of Emily Dalton's name, you place throughout

that of Josiah Brooke, my second cousin, and, as I believe, my next of kin."

Mr. Scribwell sat mute : he felt grieved, much grieved, and he looked so.

"You comprehend me, sir," said Mr. Dalton, with some hauteur.

"I comprehend you, sir, perfectly ; but pardon me, sir, if I take the liberty to beg that you will consider—"

"My daughter should have considered, sir, before she took a base-born beggar to her husband in opposition to her father's commands."

"Miss Emily is young, sir, very young, and—"

"Young," reiterated Mr. Dalton, passionately, "she has proved herself old enough to choose her own course in life, and by Heaven, she shall walk in the path she *has* chosen."

Excited, not cowed, by the mad rage of his client, the lawyer ventured to speak more openly than heretofore.

“Excuse me, Mr. Dalton, I must speak, for I have known your lovely daughter from her cradle ; I have watched her from year to year from her childhood, and like most who have so watched her I have loved her. It is far from my heart, God knows, to justify her rash act ; but indeed and indeed Mr. Dalton, you must yourself be aware that there are circumstances to plead in extenuation of her faults, and—”

What marvels the conjunction copulative was to bring to light were never known, for Mr. Scribwell suddenly raised his eyes to his client's face, and appalled at what he beheld there, shrunk back in silence,

White as ashes, livid with passion, Mr. Dalton advanced one step, laid his clenched fist on the table—but quietly, without the least sound—and spoke in a sort of hissing whisper between his closed teeth—

The only point to be decided between

ns, sir," (a *very* haughty emphasis on *us*,) "is this, whether it is convenient to you to fulfil my injunctions—to the letter—or whether you would prefer to consign my family deeds and papers to the hands of some other solicitor."

Seeing already that he had done more harm than good to poor Emily's cause, by his injudicious interference, and vexed at his own folly in attempting to reason with a madman in his fit, Mr. Scribewell hastened, in professional phrase, to assure his client of his readiness to obey his injunctions implicitly. This, however, was coupled with a silent but fervent mental vow, to assist poor Emily's interests on any occasion that offered, which would at once have robbed him of Mr. Dalton's patronage, could that gentleman have read his secret thoughts.

He could not however read them, and having in some degree calmed himself, by walking up and down the little office—presenting no inapt similitude of a chafed

tiger in his den—though it is really strange how walking up and down the room *does* calm a person, when irate or agitated—we have often tried the recipe, and never found it fail—well—Mr. Dalton being very much calmer, but still continuing his march, as if the concatenation of his ideas depended on the regular beat of his footsteps, dictated to his lawyer a kind of preamble to his new will. And it was strange—and yet not so—for the blindness of the human intellect, and the inconsistency of the human heart, have been the theme of the preacher for long, long ages—but it was curious how this self-deceived man could dilate with fluency and admirable discretion on the sin of disobedience, the enormity of filial ingratitude, and the indulgence of forbidden wishes, even while he was himself breaking every law of Christian charity, and every sentiment of paternal affection and tenderness, by his unrelenting rancour against his child. A child erring, indeed, and faulty, most se-

riously so, but still his own and only one, youthful, tempted, and by no means sufficiently guarded by him in education, by precept, and far less by example, to withstand temptation, or resist the warmth of natural feelings, the prompting of excited passion.

Mr. Dalton expressed himself somewhat to this purport. That thinking the crime of filial ingratitude can scarcely be too deeply punished, since it implies a failure of the very highest of Christian duties, viz. filial love and reverence—*that* feeling implanted by the Almighty himself in the heart of every child—he has, not hastily, but in the pursuance of principles the result of a lifetime's deliberation, visited this crime, as exhibited by his daughter, Emily Dalton, now Meredith, by the greatest punishment save one, he can devise, viz. the forfeiture alike of his paternal affection, and of all those worldly goods, with which it had been his intention hitherto to endow her. His daughter

herself, he said, had been made fully aware, by him, of his feelings and principles on this matter, and of his determination thus to punish her, in case of her persistence in a connexion which he disapproved. He would hope this disinheritance and her own remorseful feelings might be her sole punishment, and that she might escape other trials. Should it not prove so, however, should tangible poverty come upon her, he trusted to Mr. Brooke, whom he now constituted his heir—who was a man of religion and integrity, and moreover a father himself, not to suffer his child to want the necessaries of life.

Mr. Scribwell took notes of these points with a view to insert them in the schedule of the will.

“ You fully understand my wishes, Mr. Scribwell ?”

“ Fully, sir.”

“ And to-morrow, at noon, you will wait upon me, with the new will engrossed,

and in all points complete, ready for signature ?”

“ I will not fail, Mr. Dalton.”

And he did not fail. Mr. Dalton on this day was courteous, gentlemanly and mild ; but no whit less determined. He even assumed a somewhat jocular air, which, however, sat very ill on his haggard features, worn and aged ten years since the yesterday.

“ Master had scarcely been in bed at all, and has hardly tasted food,” whispered the old butler, who was called in as a witness to the will, to the attorney.

“ All right and tight here, I suppose ;” said Mr. Dalton, smilingly, “ no driving a coach and six through it hereafter, hey, lawyer ?”

“ I will pledge my professional character on its legal accuracy,” said Mr. Scribwell, very, very gravely, for his heart was sinking within him.

Mr. Dalton coloured deeply, he seemed to be struck with the lawyer's undis-

guisable dejection ; but no more words were spoken than were requisite to the execution of the will, which was signed and sealed in due form.

Poor Emily!

CHAPTER III.

“DEAR Henry, this is very terrible,” sobbed the young bride, as she wept over the unpropitious answer of her father, Mr. Dalton, to her letter supplicating his forgiveness of her rash conduct, “this is very, very terrible.”

“But, my dearest Emily,” rejoined Mr. Meredith, “it is only what you anticipated. We had reason to suppose that your father would be very angry at first: we knew it would be the case.”

“We did—we did,” sobbed Emily.

“ Then, my dear girl, do not give way so very much. I can't endure to see you so miserable. Write to your father again ; or shall I write to him ? or will you go to him at once ? ”

“ Oh, not go, not go, Henry. I have not courage for that until papa softens a little : he is so terrible in his first anger ; but if *you* would write— ”

“ I will in a moment, Emily, if you wish it ; but do you not think, my dear girl, that a letter from me at this moment might be more likely to increase Mr. Dalton's irritation than allay it ? ”

“ Perhaps it might, ” said Emily, despondingly, “ perhaps I had better write myself. ”

So a letter was written to the offended father, couched in such terms of contrition and humiliation as Emily herself, a month before, would have thought it impossible she could ever be brought to adopt. They were now the genuine outpourings of her feelings. Glorifying as yet in her husband,

and without a moment of repentance or yet of self-reproach for what she had done, she felt a degree of self-abasement in writing to her father which she had never before experienced, a shuddering apprehension of his wrath which she had never before known—the just and legitimate consequence of her duplicity and disobedience.

Mr. Meredith was curate of a village church at a few miles' distance from Beechwood manor. He was very efficient in his professional duties, and was a considerable favorite in the social parties of the district. His accidental introduction at one of these parties to Mr. Dalton led to an invitation to the manor-house, and his intimacy there was soon followed by a mutual attachment between himself and Miss Dalton. But Mr. Meredith was a foundling—the child of charity ; his parents were unknown. A childless, unattached lady had taken a fancy to him, had educated him, sent him to college, and with pride and pleasure watched his advance to the

very threshold of the church. But she died, and her small means died with her. She was an annuitant.

Still Mr. Meredith's laments for his benefactress were unmingled with any fears on his own account. He was young, ardent, and hopeful. He had obtained a nomination to the curacy of W——. He was confident in his own ability and integrity, and trusted to do well.

And so he might, if temptation had not beset him in a form which he could not resist: perhaps he did not try—there is no knowing. But Emily Dalton was handsome, and accomplished, and engaging, and kind. She had not a tinge of affectation in her manners, and a certain loftiness in her air, which might degenerate into hauteur, but certainly had not yet done so, was softened and subdued by a gentle and feminine grace which pervaded all her actions. Marks there were on her fine countenance, incipient marks of a high spirit, of excitable passions, but the warm, sunny

smile of happy girlhood, was as yet the most prevailing characteristic. Mr. Meredith's heart was gone at once. Unfortunately he did not stop to consider that he was a foundling, indebted to charity even for the name he bore ; and that she was the daughter of one of the haughtiest of — esquires. Unfortunately, she did not remember that either.

Where the result is before us, it is needless to dwell on details. On the first *soupcçon* of an attachment between Mr. Meredith and his daughter, Mr. Dalton had peremptorily closed his doors on the former, but unfortunately had forgotten the same restrictions with regard to the latter also. The lovers met only too frequently, and the result was their marriage at Gretna Green.

The truant daughter's first letter of deprecation to her father was, as we have seen, totally inefficient to soften him. She awaited the answer, to her

second appeal, at her husband's confined but neat lodgings in the village of W——.

Duly it came. Alas ! alas ! For hours Emily wept in deep and bitter anguish, which not all her young husband's endearments could suffice to allay. Mr. Dalton totally and entirely disclaimed her. He had given orders that her clothes, her trinkets, her books, all her own personal "belongings" should be forwarded to her at Mr. Meredith's lodgings : he likewise enclosed in his letter a sum of money for present exigencies : she must expect nothing more from him : should she attempt any communication with him, her letters would be returned unopened. He did not by word or hint recognize Mr. Meredith's existence.

Hardly was Emily's extreme grief on this occasion allayed by that hope, which even when unacknowledged, is still ever whispering comfort to the youthful heart, when they were destined to receive another

shock, which alarmed Meredith much more than it did his inexperienced young wife. He came in pale and agitated.

“ Dear Henry, what is the matter—my father—”

“ No, my love, no ; I know nothing of your father—but the Rector is dead.”

“ Dead !”

“ Was thrown from his horse, and died a few hours after. Tidings have just reached here.”

“ How dreadful !”

“ Henry,” said Mrs. Meredith rather timidly, after a long silence, during which her husband had remained gloomily buried in thought. “ Henry, how will the Rector’s death affect you—as to your position here, I mean ?”

“ It is impossible to say : there is a chance of my being retained, but it is also very probable that my services may not be required.”

“ And then, Henry ?”

“ And then, my dear wife, the world is

all before us where to choose, and I may add," said he with deep feelings, "and Providence our guide, for God knows I have no earthly friends."

"Dear, dear Henry," said Emily, starting up, and clasping her husband's neck, "I will follow you over the world."

CHAPTER IV.

MR. MEREDITH'S gloomy forebodings were too soon realized. The newly appointed Rector, energetic in his habits, and in the prime of his years, required no assistance in the care of his new parish—and in six weeks,—the time now recognized as sufficient for any arrangements a displaced curate can have to make, being a few days longer than the warning granted to a dishonest footman or a drunken cook—in six weeks Henry Meredith and his wife were

on their road to London, where they established themselves in respectable lodgings, until he should succeed in obtaining some appointment. They were friendless and well nigh moneyless ; but they were rich in affection and in hope, the ardour of which was as yet unchilled by worldly experience. Though too well acquainted with the realities of life to give a thought to the exploded fable of London's golden pavement, Meredith, conscious of ability, of talent, of industry, did yet hope that in the metropolis he should find a field for his exertions to which in a secluded country place he could hardly look. He knew not that talent tenfold more original and elevated than his is hidden, lost, buried irrecoverably there, merely for want of that opening which an influential introduction may command, or a happy accident give, but without which, genius is unavailing, and labour is vain. Poets may talk of many a "mute inglorious Milton" or "village Hampden" lost in the obscurity

of humble life, but it is probable that their whole aggregate might be outnumbered by those who, with abilities to elevate their species, and ennoble themselves, and in the great arena of talent, London, have sunk unappreciated, unknown, the victims of disappointment and neglect, merely for want of an opening in the vast maze of literary life through which they might work their own way. While, *vice versa*, cleverness of a second-rate order, seen in the dazzling rays of influence and position, will shine perhaps with a transient, but with a very cheering light amid the bright constellation of literary talent. Just as the commonest garden flower if well nurtured in a rich soil, having gentle yet copious irrigation, a sheltered aspect, a western sun, will throw out new petals, become enriched in colour, enlarged in size, until to the common eye it bears little or no analogy to the simple primrose or polyanthus it once professed to be ; whilst a flower naturally the most splendid and gorgeous, re-

moved from its choice garden bed, and left neglected in a cold unsheltered soil, will inevitably decline in colour, and dwindle in size, until it be passed carelessly by as not worth notice.

Perhaps no where is literary talent, *when it has gained* high suffrages, more honourably treated than in London; it becomes the fashion: but nowhere are people more chary in lending a helping hand to unknown merit: and nowhere perhaps, is more fully displayed, than in the mass of London lighter literature, the potency of a name, or, in other words, of fashion, to sanctify inanity and mediocrity.

“Sir,” said a well-known London publisher only the other day, to the author and offerer of a manuscript work—one, too, of sterling excellence, as the man of types and influence himself acknowledged—“sir, if an angel from Heaven were to come down, and write a book, I should have no chance of selling it, unless a fa-

avourite name were placed on the title page."

Less explanation than the foregoing might, perhaps, have sufficed to show that Meredith, poor, inexperienced, retiring, and utterly unknown, could have little chance of improving his means by his literary labours, in the wide wilderness of London. Fortunately, he did not know this ; and his inexperience and his hopes kept him buoyant for a long time. Moreover, had his own opinion of his literary qualifications been much less modest than it was, he had no intention of rendering them otherwise than subservient to his professional avocations. He hoped to obtain a curacy, but inexperienced as he was, he yet knew well that a curate's stipend could not suffice, with the strictest economy, to maintain him and his wife in decent respectability in London, and he hoped that by the most sedulous appropriation of his leisure hours to literature, he might at least add a sufficient number of

stray guineas to his scanty income, not merely to keep the wolf from the door, but to continue, to his delicately-nurtured wife, some, at least, of the comforts and elegancies to which she had been accustomed.

Such were his thoughts, his plans, his projects, during his first sleepless night in London ; neither were they dimmed or dissipated, during their discussion with Mrs. Meredith on the succeeding day. The morning was sunny—golden as their own hopes. She saw no snake in the cupboard, no grinning spectre in the background : she saw nothing unreasonable in her husband's projects ; nothing intangible in his hopes : she knew not that this bright and busy, and bustling London, which she saw from her chamber window spread out before her, palaces on palaces, squares on squares, one suburb beyond another ; that it was but as a sepulchre, in which lay lost, sunk, and buried for ever, the disappointed hopes and quenched aspi-

rations of thousands, as gay, as youthful, and as energetic as herself. She knew not, how should she, and who should tell her? Not her husband, for he knew not himself; and if he had known, he would have hesitated ere he destroyed her happy confidence. Nothing less than peremptory necessity could have hardened him to the task.

Hopefully foreboding too happy influences, from a letter which, on the very moment of her departure for London, she had ventured to address to her father, Emily's spirits were even more than usually exhilarated and lightsome, as if already revelling in the accomplishment of her wishes, she set off with her husband for a long peregrination through the streets of the metropolis, ordering a simple dinner to be ready for them on their return.

It is hardly possible to name objects so fraught with interest to an intelligent mind as our great Metropolis presents.

Emily had never visited London before, Meredith's glance had been a mere transient one, when passing through on business. And so now, ere the realities of their unfriended position pressed too closely on their minds, they varied the monotony of their unemployed lodging life by walks, sails, and cheap drives to the inexpensive lions of the great city, and to objects of interest in its immediate neighbourhood.

And so the time passed not unhappily away.

CHAPTER V.

No : for a time, it passed anything but unhappily. Newly united, warmly attached, at present all the world to each other, inexperienced in those mutual failings, and faults which were kept in abeyance by the unexpanded warmth of their attachment to each other, and were, as yet, unexcited by adverse influences from without ; untouched by privation, unchastened by sorrow, untaught by pain, unacquainted practically with the various, never ending

and most harassing exigencies of life to those whose means bear no analogy to their station and habits—blissful ignorance, which painful and bitter experience was soon to rob them of for ever—placed in the very arena of interesting excitement, with their fancy unsated, their energies untired, animated, joyous, and as yet hopeful, it is no wonder that, for some short weeks, Mr. and Mrs. Meredith thought London a Paradise, and their own, unpretending, but neat, airy, and quiet lodgings, somewhat removed from the busy and bustling streets—a very garden of Eden in that Paradise. One drawback, indeed, there had already been in the pertinacity of Mr. Dalton's silence ; but Emily still hoped and thought—she could not but hope and think that her father would ultimately forgive her ; and, for the present, she felt that she had indeed merited his displeasure, that she could hardly expect to be at once recalled to favour. So dismissing the subject from her thoughts as

much as possible, especially not suffering it to throw any shadow over her intercourse with her husband, she entered freely into all the adventitious satisfactions of their position.

But these were indeed fortuitous, and soon yielded before the unsightly realities which forced themselves on their unwilling gaze. Not indeed that Meredith had ever been blinded to them, or had ever, from the first day, remitted his earnestly anxious quest for occupation. But hoping each day that something might arise, he had not been unwilling, at times, to close his eyes on that probable future which his inexperienced wife did not see so clearly, and on which he could not bear to enlighten her. But his little hoard was rapidly diminishing even with his utmost care, and his anxieties became daily and hourly more pressing.

He had passed through his college career honourably: he was esteemed far above mediocrity, though he had taken no

honours or obtained any prizes, which might give tangible proof of his success as a scholar ; his moral character and conduct were unimpeachable. He had an honourable testimonial, too, to his character, signed by several of the superior members of the congregation, of the church where he had commenced that clerical career, so unfortunately interrupted for him, by the untimely death of the Rector. But this, though all that from the nature of things he could have, he found a very insufficient introduction for an inexperienced stranger like himself, in a field where competition is immense, and patronage all-powerful. He could but be patient and wait.

He wrote some trifling matters for newspapers, not without the idea of their being a step to more important literary occupation, but they had not that result, although, from their constant publication, he felt justified in supposing that they were favourably appreciated. Having a good deal of natural humour, and some

talent for rhyming, in a moment of happy inspiration one day, he threw off a *jeu d'esprit* on government, which he sent to a leading newspaper, and early the next morning received a proof of it, with so flattering a note from the editor of the journal, that he and Emily seemed that day to tread on air, and they ate their scanty meal of cold meat and stale bread (to which their table had now, for some little time, been limited,) in high spirits and with hearty appetite.

At the earliest opportunity he called on this editor—a man well known, and of high repute in literary circles—and was most cordially welcomed by him. But whilst Mr. Meredith's productions were highly praised, his continued contributions earnestly requested, this gentleman, who knew the world well, from a kind motive, without doubt, took occasion in the course of his conversation to remark, that the journal with which he had the honour to be connected, was richly supported by

voluntary contributions, for which it never had made any remuneration. He then turned the conversation on literature generally, lamented the overplus of mediocrity in its ranks, as fatal to the success of those of a higher grade, and strongly deprecated the idea of any young man in these days adopting it as a profession. Poor Meredith!

It is useless, however, to pursue his career step by step, through this portion of his life: these "untoward circumstances" were of perpetual recurrence; his disappointments never ending.

Nor was it possible, any longer, to shield Mrs. Meredith from their effects. Emily, though under the influence of strong excitement, working on an ill-regulated temper, she had married hastily, imprudently, and wrongly, was still a young woman of good sense, superior talent, generous heart, and lofty principle. She was enthusiastic in her admiration of every thing lofty and elevated, unmeasured

in her contempt for any thing paltry or mean. Her jealous affection for Mr. Meredith before their marriage, had been increased ten fold (though probably un-awares to herself) by the sarcastic, un-measured, and sooth to say most unjustifiable contempt hurled on him by her father, when their attachment was first made known to him. Independent of her feelings towards Meredith, as her accepted lover, Emily's chivalrous ideas of truth and generosity were outraged by the un-merited scorn and ridicule which were showered on him, merely, as it seemed to her, because he had presumed to fall in love with her. Mr. Dalton never knew, never guessed, how much his unjustifiable rage, unmeasured scorn, and vituperative passion, had precipitated his daughter's fate.

With an eye somewhat heavy, and a step becoming daily more languid, Emily sought her husband. He was seated in the little parlor, with his head hanging

over an old newspaper, which his wife knew full well, he was not reading.

“Henry, dear, I’m sorry to interrupt you, but you know our month’s rent was due yesterday, and Mrs. Batesman has asked me for it.”

“Indeed, Emily, I havn’t got it.”

Her face flushed up.

“I was afraid not,” she said, and a great sob or rather half gasp, escaped her at this confirmation of her fears. “What must I do, Henry?”

“I’m sure, love, I don’t know. Would not Mrs. Batesman wait a little.”

“Perhaps, she would (another sigh); shall I ask her, Henry?”

“I think you had better, Emily—or stay,” he said, for he was touched with pity for her when he saw her humiliated countenance—he well knew her proud spirit. “Stay, Emily, I will ask her myself.”

“No,” replied she, dejectedly but firmly, “I will do it. All our intercourse with her

has, heretofore, been carried on through me. I will not shrink from my duty the first time it becomes painful."

And she quitted the room with a step still more heavy and languid than when she entered.

These are trivial details ; but how truly do they make up the real interest of life ! the real character of people. Would Emily's proud and haughty character, and somewhat ungovernable temper have been subdued and regulated by some sudden shock — some novel-like incident — some striking, romantic catastrophe, which should have won for her the sympathy, and pitying, and supporting interest of those around, as it will by these daily, hourly, irritating, yet inevitable evils, which cannot be talked of—which excite no pity, but, perhaps, rather the contempt of the careless and indifferent, but which are inevitable, real, most trying, most stinging, in the mortification and humiliation which

they entail. Suspected by none, known only to herself and that God who works His way to the heart by the thunder storm, or the "still small voice" of conscience, as best suits His purpose.

Not that Emily so understood the chastening at first, oh no! Strongly did her lofty spirit—her towering pride rebel against these galling annoyances; and before seeking her landlady she rushed to her chamber, and bolting the door, gave way to a flood of passionate tears of mortification, which she had, with the utmost difficulty, repressed in the presence of her husband.

"Oh!" she ejaculated, between bursts of sobbing, "any thing but this I could bear. (So think we all). I care not for privation—for any mere personal suffering—but this—this disgrace—this humiliation—this humiliating subjection to persons so infinitely below one. Oh, pain—pain, I could bear any personal privation—*any*

thing that did not degrade one—but *this*—
I have not deserved this!”

Ah, Emily ! be wise—be warned to

“Steel thy melting heart
To act the martyr's sternest part,
To watch, with firm, unshrinking eye
Thy darling visions as they die,
Till all bright hopes and hues of day
Have faded into twilight grey.

Yes ; let them pass without a sigh ;
And if the world seem dull and dry :
If long and sad thy lonely hours.
And winds have rent thy sheltering bowers,
Bethink thee what thou art and where
A sinner in a life of care.”

And this she did learn in time.

As soon as her tumultuous feelings were in some degree calmed ; she bathed her inflamed eyes to remove, as far as she could, the traces of tears, and sought her landlady.

“Mrs. Batesman,” she said, flattering

herself that she spoke in a calm and indifferent tone, though her shrewd listener saw, at a glance, that every nerve was quivering with emotion, "I am sorry to say that we are not prepared to pay our rent to-day ; perhaps you will not object to waiting a little?"

"Well ma'am," hesitated the landlady. "I am sure I don't know what to say—I don't wish to inconvenience any lady ; but I'm a lone widow, ma'am, and live by my apartments. Will it be long, ma'am ?"

"I trust not—I hope not—I'm sure I hope—I'm very sorry, indeed, to—" said Emily, quickly, her assumed coolness all giving way, and her voice choked with the tears she was swallowing.

Mrs. Batesman was a kind-hearted woman—she saw how it was ; moreover she also saw, or suspected what, as yet, Emily herself had hardly given a thought to, and her woman's heart warmed towards her young, and apparently, so totally unfriended lodger.

“Don't fret, ma'am, don't fret, I pray : there's no harm done yet anyhow. You will pay me I've no doubt, you *have* behaved like a lady all along, so pray don't worret yourself about it at present. I can wait very well for a little time.”

And she curtseyed herself out of the room.

But this was but a temporary reprieve. Another month elapsed, another term of payment became due and overpast, and again they had to appeal to their landlady. Poor Emily! the personal deprivations to which she was subjected she cared little for : in that she had said truly : but every lofty and independent feeling of her mind revolted from the humiliation of asking time, forbearance, from those to whom they had become inevitably in debt. She had not been accustomed to extravagance, but she had been habituated to pay promptly for all things : her father never allowed her to have a bill. “I can forget a little accidental extravagance, my dear,” so would

he say—"but I desire, that you will never, on any account, or for any consideration, run into debt."

And this had been the rule of her father's house, and had become as it were nature to her. She never remembered to have known an instance, from her childhood, of a tradesman having to ask a second time for his bill.

And now !

Her landlady was considerate and kind, very much so ; yet was there, after forbearance had been a second time entreated—yet was there an increase of familiarity—not glaringly—but rather insinuated, as by a coarse mind it would be, which made Mrs. Meredith's cheeks glow. But she only sunk her head more deeply over her work.

Another circumstance too which made her heart thrill with thankfulness and hope, yet added a sting to her unaccustomed poverty. But under the influence of this hope and of the feelings which it awakened,

she wrote an appeal to her father which she thought it impossible that he could resist. Alas!

Nor could he have resisted it—nor would he. He loved his daughter passionately. The very depth and warmth of his fondness for her added to the vehemence of his anger at her fault, made her ingratitude assume a deeper dye, cast a yet darker blot on her dereliction from duty. But he would have forgiven her—the father's heart would have softened towards his child, even had the desolateness and dulness of the home she had deserted, not begun to press daily more heavily on his spirits.

Yes, he would have forgiven her—in time ; but mark the retributive justice of the All Merciful. As time progressed—as the wound on Mr. Dalton's pride cicatrized, as the edge of his anger became blunted, as his wrathful feelings subsided—as all these things must, and do become, calmed and tranquillized by time, then his natu-

ral affections would have resumed their sway, and he would have recalled his daughter to his heart and his home. But this would have been in the natural course of things without effort on his part. No moral conflict—no exercise of principle over passion—no mercy to the fallen—no forgiveness to the penitent—no sacrifice of selfish pride at the shrine of fatherly pity—no benign compassion for the frailty and weakness of an erring child tempering the severity of the justly indignant father—no, Mr. Dalton gave himself up entirely, and without break or limit to the indulgence of his own inflamed passions, the contemplation of his own insulted dignity—nay, not the contemplation only—for he acted—acted strongly and irrevocably under the influence of untempered rage, and unrepressed and vindictive passion.

As time ameliorated these influences, and his natural affection for his daughter resumed its sway in his breast, he felt disposed to forgive and recall her, and merely

waited for an opening to fulfil his purpose. Then his late will, after being duly expounded to her shocked ears and repentant heart, should be magnanimously torn in her presence.

And while this pompous scene of mock mercy was being planned, his child, his erring, but his only child, was bowed to the earth in a mean lodging, uncertain of obtaining a daily meal, and but for the charity of a stranger, had been houseless and homeless also.

Not one secret fatherly enquiry had he made after her condition—not one thought had he given to her possible destitution—not one natural, reasonable excuse had he made for the frailty and impetuosity of youth, and the violence of temptation—not one angry feeling, how justifiably soever excited, had he attempted to subdue by reason, or soften down by charity and mercy as a Christian duty; his forgiveness was, in fact, merely another offering to the shrine of his own selfishness.

It met not acceptance, for it deserved it not.

The affecting and powerful appeal which Emily worded to her father, was crossed on the road by a letter from Mr. Scribewell's office, informing her of his sudden death. Mr. Dalton had retired to rest in perfect health, apparently, but had been found, in the morning, dead in his bed.

Mr. Scribewell's deputy, for he himself was absent, with much feeling and kindness, communicated tidings the bitterness of which, however, nothing could soften. He broke to Emily, too, the fact of her own disinheritance; but in the agony caused by the first part of the letter, the concluding paragraph was hardly noticed by her.

When Mr. Meredith came home to dinner, after rambling about for hours as had been his wont, without aim or object, but merely because he could not sit at home in utter idleness, a witness to his dearly-loved wife's hourly deprivation—when he came

home, instead of finding her content, if not happy, placid if not gay, and always ready to meet him with welcoming affection—instead of this, he found her in bed, overwhelmed with sorrow and prostrated by pain. Her landlady, Mrs. Batesman, had been most attentive and kind, and medical aid had been at once obtained. Contrition—too late contrition and mental agony had direful effects on the bodily frame of the repentant daughter, and she lost her hope of becoming a mother.

And her husband, as he sate that night, that long, long, weary night by her bedside, watching her every look, anticipating her every wish, yet hardly daring to attempt to soothe her, as she continually burst into paroxysms of anguish, and saturated her pillow with bitter tears for her irreparable loss—did he not rue, in dust and ashes, the selfishness of his conduct—for now he saw it in its true light, selfish in the extreme—in tempting the poor sufferer before him to outrage her filial duties, to

quit furtively her father's house, and to resign all the delicacies, amenities and luxuries of her accustomed home, to encounter life's chances with him. Oh, and to what had those chances reduced her!

At that moment, had it been in his power to restore her to what she had lost, by the sacrifice of his own life, he would have resigned it without a murmur.

* * * * *

Mr. Josiah Brooke, to whom Mr. Dalton had bequeathed his property, was dead; but the heir of that gentleman was found in a Mrs. de Snobyn, who resided in a fashionable quarter of Islington.

CHAPTER VI.

“AND I do trust, Mr. de Snobyn,” said Mrs. de Snobyn, as soon as they had exhausted their mutual felicitations on this unexpected accession of property, “that you will at once drop your connexion with the establishment in Budge-row.”

“Well, Mrs. S., perhaps I shall. I had thought of keeping a loophole in the concern for one o’ the younger lads—Otty, or Guss—but—”

“For one of *my* boys! Octavius—Augustus!—one of *my* sons!”

"I beg pardon, Mrs. S.," said the man of tallow, aiming at a little poor jocularly ; "I thought they were mine also!"

"Nonsense," said Mrs. de Snobyn, too much in earnest now to scold her husband for his vulgarity ; which on a more trifling occasion, she certainly would have done. "I should never, under any circumstances, have tolerated the idea of my boys being connected with the establishment in Budge Row ; but their present improved prospects can render it not a question even with you. Budge Row must be cut at once, and for ever!"

"Very well, Mrs. S., very well—be it so. 'Tis an ill wind that blows nobody any good ; it'll make all the better for poor Jack—a good, honest, industrious, hard-working lad, Jack has been—aye, all his days—and stuck as close as wax to the melting-pot. A good lad Jack has been—aye, a lad after my own heart—a reg'lar trump."

"I am far from wishing to depreciate

Mr. John Snobbins's good qualities," said the lady, coldly, "he is assiduous no doubt, and respectable in his own station."

"And what is the difference, pray, Mrs. S., between his station and that of Otty or Guss; save, and except, that they make ducks and drakes of the money which he has helped to earn; they have all lived, and do live, out of the grease-pot, ma'am, and so have you, too, much as you seem to despise it."

"I do not despise it, Mr. De Snobyn—"

"You did not, ma'am, when you married me," retorted the chafed little man as he strutted about the room.

The lady saw proper to soothe her irritated husband.

"I do not despise your business; and I think highly of the industry and integrity of your eldest son; but my dear Mr. De Snobyn, our actions and mode of life are, certainly, influenced by varying circumstances. You have never, hitherto, found

fault with me that I have endeavoured to elevate my family in society, or to imbue yourself with a little of that gentility which it was not your fortune to acquire in early life."

"No, no ; I know I've no manners. I never learnt none. I'd no time—no money."

"No ; but your children—your younger children—have both these advantages, and only require your countenance and support, to move in that sphere of society to which I was early accustomed, and to which they are entitled."

The shrewd lady had tickled her husband in the right place. Personal consequence, influence, was a grand desideratum in his domestic life. He was not insensible to the unaccustomed compliments.

Still he demurred.

"It is quite natural, Mrs. S., that children should look up to their father for countenance ; but still I can't say as I think these young 'uns has ever done it—

at least, not in the way as Jack and Abel used to do, God bless their curly pates! I think I see 'em now, when my dear Madge, my first wife, used to bring 'em every night into shop for their father's kiss and blessing afore she put 'em to bed—and no fidget, then, because my hands was dirty, or my clothes greasy, or any fallals of that sort ; and the young urchins—how well I remember—I used to give 'em a ha'penny, now and then, when I wanted them to go in a hurry, without my seeming cross-like in my haste—and the 'cute rogues—they soon found out, at a glance, when I was busy, and not a step would they budge without a ha'penny, and their mother used to stand laughing at 'em. Aye, how well I remember them times! God bless her and them.”

It may be imagined that there were some points in this oration not altogether agreeable to the more refined taste of the present Mrs. De Snobyn ; but she had a point to gain from her husband, which made her

more than usually accommodating ; moreover, he spoke under the influence of deeply excited feeling—that was evident.

She was patient and courteous, and succeeded in her object. The Budge Row concern was to be given up ; and, as Mr. De Snobyn very honourably and peremptorily refused to retain a share for any younger son who was too fine a gentleman to work in it, the whole was to be resigned to his eldest, who had been for many years, its main stay and support.

“ And I will look in on Jack to-night,” said Mr. de Snobyn, “ when he shuts up shop, and we'll have a kank together.”

“ Don't you think, Mr. de Snobyn, that I and Helena had better call in the morning, and invite Mr. and Mrs. John Snobbins to dine here ? You can then have your conversation leisurely and comfortably, over your wine.”

The amendment was approved, and by it Mrs. de Snobyn gained two points. Firstly, the credit for hospitable courtesy

towards Mr. John Snobbins, on whose account the lady stepmother's airs often excited the father's indignation ; and secondly, the certainty of being on the spot to counteract any adverse influences, which the conversation with Mr. John might chance to awaken.

But it is time that we introduce our readers more particularly, to Mr. and Mrs. de Snobyn.

CHAPTER VII.

A HAPPY man was Abel Snobbins, a proud and a happy man was he on the day that—the banns having been duly published three several times in his parish church—he was married to Madge Hitcham, and took her home to his little dark, close, unhealthy oil and tallow shop, in Budge Row. Happy was she too—good, artless, affectionate as she was: a comely young woman, abounding in proverbs, the oral wisdom which she had garnered up in her

simple, unlettered education :—frugal, active, self-denying, cheerful, modest, and industrious. Abel Snobbins was a proud man, when the village maiden, whom he had at first accidentally met, during a week's visit to a country cousin's, for change of air after sickness, absolutely dismissed the farrier, who had such a flourishing business, and looked cool on the baker's man, who had such a handsome face and such a winning tongue, and moreover wore such beautiful nosegays every Sunday—all for love of her, as she well knew. And when all competitors were irrevocably distanced, and Abel bore his bride to his own home, he thought, not of her beauty, for it was by no means remarkable, nor of her fortune, for she was penniless, but of her untarnished character, her excellent conduct, her kind, cheerful, affectionate temper.

“ A virtuous woman,” said Abel to himself, “ is a crown to her husband—her price is far above rubies.”

Abel read his bible regularly every Sunday, especially the books of Proverbs, Wisdom, and Ecclesiasticus, and the Acts of the Apostles : and he amused his thoughts, during parts of his journey home, when, from the noise of the wheels, conversation was impossible, with picturing his beloved new wife in the beautiful words of Holy Writ.

“ The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her ;

“ She will do him good, and not evil, all the days of her life :

“ She openeth her mouth with wisdom ; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.

“ She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.

“ Her children arise up and call her blessed ; her husband also and he praiseth her.”

Every word of which was justified by the future conduct of Madge Hitcham, now Snobbins.

At first even her stout and healthy constitution was influenced by the change from the pure, fresh air, to the close, unwholesome atmosphere of Budge Row, and Abel looked with dismay on her paleing cheek.

“ Never mind, Abel dear, never mind— ‘ every path hath a puddle,’ you know. It’s the thick air, but I shall soon be used to it.”

“ But if you shouldn’t get used to it, and if you should be really ill ?”

“ ‘ Patience is a plaister for all sores,’ ” replied she.

“ If you would only rest yourself more, Madge ?”

“ ‘ Think of ease, but work on,’ ” was her quiet rejoinder, as she left her husband to attend to her domestic concerns.

Whilst he took an active personal and practical share in the dipping of the sixteens, she applied herself, heart and hand, to assist her maid-of-all-work in the house. A little snugery to the back of the shop,

the second floor and attics were reserved for their own domestic use ; the first floor was let to a family at eighteen shillings a-week, including cooking, kitchen fire, and attendance.

In all the labours of the household, whether in her own behoof or that of her lodgers, Mrs. Snobbins took an active and engrossing share. Her whole domain was a model of neatness, order, and *cleanliness* ; Herculean as that task must seem to those who are acquainted with the localities of Budge Row ; but not the brightest copper on her shelves could look brighter than her own affectionate face, nor could any idle lady in the land look a more perfect pattern of neatness and propriety in dress than did Mrs. Snobbins when daily, after the active labours of the morning, she seated herself for the remainder of the day at her needlework in the little back room leading from the shop. Here her husband would often and often pop in, and a corner of the curtain being turned which

hung before the window, that gave a borrowed light from the shop, he could see instantaneously if any customer required his presence there.

He always found consolation in this little back room, and he often wanted it; for Abel was of rather a desponding temper, and his business, humbly as he started, and assiduously as he worked, was not at once successful.

“ This is slow work, Madge, slow work : I thought I should surely get on better than this.”

“ ‘ Hasty climbers have sudden falls,’ said Madge, as she laid the pattern of a baby's cap on some fine hair-cord muslin.

“ But there is a difference between getting on too fast and doing nothing at all. I am afraid there are too many of a trade in the neighbourhood.”

“ ‘ One barber shaves not so close but another finds work,’ ” said Madge, as with her pointed scissars she neatly shaved off the unevennesses of the cap crowns.

“ The day is closing in, and absolutely I have not had a customer.”

“ ‘ No day passeth without some grief.’ Oh dear! dear me!” said Madge in dismay, as by an accidental slip of the scissors she spoiled a strip of muslin, selvage-way, which she had meant for strings.

“ I wish you’d have done with your proverbs and your trumpery, Madge, and attend to me.”

Her face flushed crimson.

“ Was it *this* you call my trumpery ?” holding up the baby’s cap, “ but no,” she said, the next moment, throwing down the cap, and putting her arm affectionately over her husband’s shoulder, “ I was wrong, quite wrong ; you couldn’t mean that : tell me, what can I do for you, Abel dear ?”

“ I dont’ know that you can do anything for me, Madge ; but I’m very unhappy about businesss.

“ You’ve done all you can.”

“ That I have.”

“ ‘ A clear conscience—a sure card.’ ”

“ May be so, wife : but our rent is due and must be paid.”

“ ‘ Providence is better than rent.’ ”

Abel turned abruptly, angrily, round, but there was his little wife, not vaunting herself on her wisdom, but standing with pale face and tearful eyes, earnestly bent with the utmost sympathy and affection on him, and blended with a touching humility of aspect, which led him to think that she might even then be mentally imploring the interposition of that Providence to whom she had referred.

He caught her to him.

“ God bless *you*, at any rate,” he said, “ whatever comes.”

At that instant there was a *very* peremptory rap on the counter, as if the customer might have given a previous summons which had been unheard ; our friends had both forgotten to cast an eye towards the window.

Abel rushed into the shop, and could hardly recover his equilibrium and his nerves, in time to make his very lowest bow to the magnet he saw there—the worshipful Mr. Alderman Gobble.

“ So, Master Abel, you’ve got a snug berth here.”

Abel bowed again.

“ You’re doing well, I hope ?”

“ Not very well, sir, thank you.”

“ Not very well ! how’s that ? you’re married too ; is your wife a fine lady ?”

“ Not a bit of it, sir, not a bit of it : but the best little activist woman as ever was.”

“ Very well, very well, very well : we shall do then, we shall do. Now Abel, mark me. I promised your mother, when she died, to be a friend to you if I found you deserved it. I got you into the Free School—I bound you apprentice—”

“ You did, sir, many, many thanks,” murmured Abel, bending lower and lower at every sentence.

“ And I am not going to desert you now, when, more than ever, a friend may be of advantage to you.”

The worshipful alderman looked at his *protegé*, but Abel could not speak, and Mr. Gobble saw that he could not.

“ I am come, in the first instance, myself, to give you an order for the use of my family. If you do not use me well, I shall make no complaints, but I shall leave you. If you supply me, invariably, with the best articles, not an ounce of soap or a pound of candles for the use of my household, shall ever be bought elsewhere.”

“ Many, many thanks, I'm very thankful to your Worship—but— I fear—I must decline your favour.”

“ Decline! why so?” hastily exclaimed Mr. Alderman Gobble, his face absolutely becoming several shades deeper in hue, though one would have thought at first that such a consummation was impossible: but hardly had he looked on Abel's face than he repented his interrogation, or at

least, the tone of it : for he was a quick-sighted, as well as a kind-hearted man.

“ I fear, sir, my articles are not such as would suit you.”

Mr. Alderman Gobble stood a moment or two in consideration.

“ Cannot I have a little talk with you, Mr. Snobbins ? Cannot I go in there ?” pointing to the little back parlour.

Mr. Snobbins, bowing obsequiously, led the way.

The moment our friend Madge heard her husband and some important customer coming that way, she huddled together the already spread tea things, meaning to carry them out.

Mr. Alderman Gobble arrested the movement.

“ Stop, Mrs. Snobbins.—I suppose this is your wife, Abel ?”

And Mr. Alderman Gobble regarded her intently for a moment, and was evidently pleased with his scrutiny—as who would

not, who looked at her neatly attired person, and her kind, healthy, happy face ?

“ Stop, Mrs. Snobbins, I am an old friend of your husband's, and, if you please, will beg a cup of tea from you.”

Who now so happy and so hospitable as little Madge ? who so humble, so honored, and yet so astounded, as poor Abel ? He believed, and he had sufficient reason for believing, that his Worship's usual dinner time was fully an hour later than this at which he begged for tea.

There was no recourse, however, but to give it him—he had it—and drank it.

But what a difference in the feelings of Abel during the short time that elapsed from the sitting down to that table and the rising from it !

Mr. Alderman Gobble made himself master of Abel's circumstances, and learnt that he had not only begun in the humblest way, but that he had been able only to stock his shop chiefly, if not entirely, with

second-rate goods. Mr. Alderman Gobble made him an advance on the spot, in cash, which enabled him to stock his shop with the best goods at the most advantageous price : and this loan was to be repaid gradually, and by perfectly easy instalments. Moreover, he gave him a handsome order for his own household ; and promised, voluntarily, to speak to friends in his behalf. And this voluntary promise Mr. Alderman Gobble kept in letter and in spirit.

“ Well, Madge, this *has* been a red-letter day, I think,” said Abel, as he turned into bed that night. “ And Mr. Alderman Gobble, isn't he a gentleman ?”

“ A very kind-hearted man, seemingly,” said Madge, as she pinned her last curl paper.

“ A perfect gentleman, I think,” said Abel, as he tucked himself in.

“ ‘ Let every man praise the bridge he goes over,’ ” said Madge, as she arranged her night cap.

“ And such a hopeless, wretched, bad,

day, as this had been too," said Abel, as he finally settled on his pillow.

"It is never a bad day that hath a good night," rejoined Madge, as she extinguished the candle and crept into bed.

CHAPTER VIII

OUR liking for Mrs. Margaret Snobbins *née* Hitcham, has led us to dwell too long on the details of her initiation to the dignity of housekeeping. We must hasten on.

Mr. Alderman Gobble was as good as his word. He was a true and efficient friend to Abel ; he not only gave him his own custom, and recommended him to his friends, but urged these friends to act upon his recommendation—nay, even took them

to the shop. Abel's first-rate articles, un-failing civility, and unwearied assiduity, did the rest. Those who went once to his shop to oblige Mr. Alderman Gobble, failed not to go a second time on their own behalf.

In as short a time as such a result could possibly be calculated on, Mr. Snobbins—for so even the Alderman called him now—repaid the loan (with the interest there-upon) with which his generous friend had intrusted him ; and then, that heavy obligation liquidated, he began, indeed, to feel that he was getting on in the world. His gains were small, individually, for some time ; but as his wife said—

“ ‘ Little sticks kindle the fire ; ’ ” and he was inflexible in his resolution not to be tempted to live beyond his means, or rather, to keep his expenditure quite within them ; acting, indeed, in the spirit of the proverb, which Madge was never tired of quoting, nor ever was known to transgress—

“ ‘ Ask thy purse what thou should'st buy.’ ”

Such a rule of conduct, unless contravened by some very unwonted casualty, and by such Abel was not tried, could not fail of successful results. As Mr. Snobbins's capital increased, he enlarged his stock—the most profitable investment he could make—and his gains were proportionably multiplied. The little snug parlour, and the kitchen behind the shop were wanted as adjuncts to it ; and moreover the cellars became too confined for the accumulation of stores which the increase of the business demanded. It was resolved, therefore, to store a certain portion of the dry goods up stairs, and as Mrs. Madge Snobbins's affairs had been on the increase as well as her husband's, this contraction of her empire was anything but agreeable, or, indeed, convenient to her. But they were a loving and a united couple, and they talked over matters leisurely and rationally in bed one Sunday morning—

the only morning of the week they had time to talk—and the result was, that on Monday morning Mrs. Snobbins, with many regrets and apologies, gave the first-floor lodgers notice to quit. This floor was then devoted to the sleeping-room, entertaining rooms, and kitchen, of the master and mistress of the house ; on the second floor were the spare bed-room, young Jack and Abel's nursery, and the sleeping closet of the two maids—(they had now a girl to assist the maid of all work)—and the attic was appropriated to the dry goods and the shop boys.

Mrs. Snobbins was delighted and happy, and had not been in her new apartments a week ere she marvelled how they had possibly contrived without them. So soon does the mind expand (in some respects) with circumstances. The good man, too, was not insensible to the pride and the pleasure of stretching his legs, for the first time in his life, in a first-floor parlour of his own ; and he even cogitated in his own

mind as he sipped his pint of porter and ate his crust of bread and cheese at supper (not in his new drawing-room, by the way, but in the kitchen), the feasibility of inventing some plausible excuse to invite up-stairs the worshipful Mr. Alderman Gobble, when that important gentleman should next call with his usual chandlery order.

In due time the Alderman came, and readily accepted Mr. Snobbins's invitation to walk up-stairs and take a glass of negus ; moreover, the little horse-hair *settee* suited the Alderman's gouty leg to a tee—and the negus, compounded by the ready and hospitable hands of Mrs. Snobbins, and handed by her to her visitor with a touch of her own old-fashioned courtesy. “Welcome is the best cheer, sir,” was mixed to perfection. Mr. Alderman Gobble was very comfortable, very happy ; and under the influence of these kindly feelings, asked to see the young heirs of the house of Snobbins. These were now reduced to

two boys, for Madge had not escaped her share of maternal troubles to counterbalance her joys, but she had borne all in a hopeful and trusting spirit, thankful and humble in joy, meek and patient in sorrow, and at all times looking on the bright side of things. Thus, in the early and unsuccessful part of their career, when children came rather faster, perhaps, than suited their circumstances, and Abel, though he welcomed them, and kindly, yet did so with some misgivings, her woman's heart never failed, her trust was never shaken.

“ ‘Children are poor men's riches,’ Abel, and, you know, that they say, ‘He that has no children knows not what is love.’ ”

“I do love the children, Madge, and God knows that it is for their sakes I am anxious.”

“There's no need to be anxious about that, Abel, for ‘God never sends mouths but he sends meat.’ ”

Poor Madge's philosophy underwent a

much harder trial when she was doomed to lose her treasured children one after another. Of six that she had borne, only two remained ; Jack, a sturdy boy, an embryo tallow-chandler, already in his own conceit abundantly qualified to offer an opinion as to the processes of the melting pot—good-hearted, and industrious—over what he liked—and Abel, some two years younger, a pale thoughtful boy, fonder of sitting by his mother's side with his book, than of romping with his stout brother Jack. His mother's nervous system had received a severe shock before his birth, and it seemed from the boy's delicate habits and quiet, nervous temperament, as if he was doomed to pay the penalty. These were the boys whom Mr. Snobbins ushered into the parlour.

“ Well, my young short-sixes, how are you ?” said the Alderman, as they entered the room.

“ I'm very well, thank your Worship,” said Jack, in ‘ a laudable voice ’, like

Swift's P.P., and coming forward boldly to shake hands with the distinguished visitor.

"Oh, Jack," said his mother, in a re-monstrative tone, "you are too forward."

"Not a bit, not a bit," said Mr. Gobble, shaking the boy's hand heartily. "So, my fine fellow, you mean to be a tallow-chandler do you?"

"Yes, sir, I do."

"And, I dare say, you think you are fit for one now, eh?"

"Yes, sir, I'm sure I'm big enough to begin; only father won't let me try."

"He won't, won't he? Well, you see, my boy, I think perhaps your father knows best; so if I were you I'd go to school a little longer, and then see what he says."

"Very well, sir," said Jack, with such blank disappointment painted on his visage that the Alderman could scarcely keep his gravity. He took out half-a-crown, and held it up.

"Would you know what to do with this, Jack?"

“ Oh, yes, sir,” said the boy, his whole face brightening up, “ oh, yes, sir.”

“ Well, tell me what you will buy.”

“ Oh, sir, a new peg-top, for the one I've got is lop-sided, it isn't my fault that it don't spin well, everybody says it's a bad top.”

“ Well, but you'll buy something else besides a top.”

“ Oh, yes, sir, I want some marbles, and I know where I can get some taws— beauties, sir, and some hardbake, and some string, and there's a boy at the back has got a tame jackdaw, and he asks eight-pence for it, but I think I could get it for seven-pence, only mother said she couldn't afford it, sir.”

And Jack stopped partly from want of breath, partly in awe of some cabalistic signs from his mother, certainly not because his catalogue of desirables was exhausted. The Alderman, laughing heartily, put the half-crown into his hand, and turned towards Abel, who all this time

had stood close by the side of his mother, and beckoned to him. The boy moved timidly forward and held out his long thin fingers in imitation of his brother whom he thought perfection, and idolized rather than loved; but in reply to Mr. Gobble's salutation he merely bowed shyly, and cast a timid glance at his mother.

“ Well, my boy, how is this? why don't you speak?”

“ ‘ Silence doth seldom harm, ’ ” said the boy, in a low sweet tone.

“ Why, how now, my little Solomon. Your youngest son is your pet pupil, I suppose, Mrs. Snobbins ?”

“ No, sir, no more a pet than his brother ; but Abel has been always delicate, and is quiet and bookish, and sits more with me. But you know, sir,

‘ Children pick up words as pigeons pease
And utter them again as God shall please. ’ ”

“ Oh yes, oh yes! it's all easily accounted

for. But, Master Abel, here's half-a-crown for you : what shall you buy ?”

“ Please, sir, I should like to buy a new pencil, and some ginger-bread, and a ball, a good bouncer, I mean, for brother Jack.”

“ Very well, and what else ?”

“ Nothing else, please sir.”

“ What will you do with the rest of the money then ?”

“ Give it to mother to put by with my other money. ‘ Of saving cometh having,’ you know sir.”

“ Yes, I do know, my little preacher,” said he, much amused. He pursued the conversation for some time, and Abel's fair, thoughtful, countenance, sweet toned voice, and quaint sayings made an impression on him that was never effaced. In short before another fortnight had passed Abel was Mr. Alderman Gobble's acknowledged *protégé*, his adopted son, at the worthy Alderman's earnest, reiterated entreaty. He had no children of his own ; he under-

took to provide for Abel, and determined to give him such an education as might develop his peculiar turn of mind, which seemed to be hardly understood by Mr. and Mrs. Snobbins who were "a-feard as Abel was too bookish to do much good in the world."

CHAPTER IX.

WE lose sight now of Jack and Abel for many years, and can give only a brief reference to the career of their parents. Mr. and Mrs. Snobbins pursued their usual course, that course being one of almost unbroken prosperity. She continued unchanged, her modest simplicity of demeanour ever the same. His truthful principles and sterling integrity of character remained unblemished, but in minor characteristics he was perhaps not improved by the favors

of fortune. Though the "stronger vessel," he exhibited some weakness of character which his stronger-minded though less assuming wife had never betrayed. Of these the most marked, (and perhaps the most common) was an aping after gentility ; not that laudable ambition of raising himself with his fortunes which will stimulate the exertions of every high-minded man, but a vulgar ostentation to outshine others—or to ape the doings of others decidedly his superiors of rank. We are speaking more of the tendency of his character than of any actual outburst : he never violated the proprieties of his station, and perhaps during his wife's lifetime hardly felt the inclination to display, so entirely was he accustomed to be led by her stronger mind. But the weakness, the tendency was there, and had as we shall learn a most powerful effect on his after career.

The only trip of more than a day's duration on which Mr. and Mrs. Snobbins ventured during the whole of their married

life, occurred when Jack was nearly through his apprenticeship, which he had served with unbroken industry, integrity, and zeal. So efficient in every respect was he become, that even the careful Madge thought they might indulge in a week's holiday, which could not but do her husband a world of good, and which, sooth to say, the breaking health of the good wife and close house-keeper pointed to as peremptorily necessary for her.

“‘As the old cock crows the young cock learns,’ Abel,” said she; “Jack’s just walking in your own footsteps, as hereafter he’ll stand in your own shoes. He’ll make as good a tradesman as yourself.”

· It never struck the unassuming, meek woman that the high-minded principle, the sterling sense, stirring spirit, and excellent good temper which her son Jack inherited from her, imbibed from her instructions, or learnt from her example, were higher characteristics than the plodding industry

which chiefly had marked her husband's career.

At that time Margate was the *Thule* of fashionable ambition in Cockaigne; the citizens now scout it and even its somewhat more dignified, and certainly much more attractive, sister and successor, Ramsgate. For some time they have tolerated only Brighton, and that no longer sunned by the smiles of royalty, is beginning to be thought rather vulgar. Walmer, Dover, and the Isle of Wight, may enjoy a transient gleam of favour, but it is doubtful whether our own shores will long suffice for the health and recreation of our accomplished islanders, however personally and practically unacquainted with their beauties they may be. No: there is no place now but the Continent for the genteel Cit.

It was not so, however, when Mr. and Mrs. Snobbins took their passage in a Hoy—then the only mode of travelling alike

for the accomplished gentleman or the titled lady and the vulgar tradesman—to what was then the resort of the great and fashionable—Margate. Madge, good woman, had suggested Gravesend, but Mr. Snobbins' more aspiring soul soared a higher flight : he chose Margate. Was it presentiment or was it fate ?

A rather untoward fate he thought it, which gave him for his next neighbour at the hotel dinner table, a Miss Brooke ; a tall, handsome, and most fashionably-attired young lady. He was struck by her appearance, as were others of the company, but awed, or to speak more correctly, cowed by her manners, which certainly were not of that “ hail-fellow, well-met ” kind which prevailed among his intimates in Budge Row, and which he fancied were somewhat more repellent towards him, than to the circle generally.

It might be so. Years and prosperity had filled out the outward man of Abel Snobbins, but had not enlightened the

inner one : with more assumption, more freedom, more familiarity, he was still precisely the unenlightened, narrow-minded tallow-chandler of twenty years before ; and as to his little wife, as round as a ball, as quiet as a mouse, as easy as an old shoe, and though not fine, still much finer than usual, and bedizened in the newest fashion of Budge Row, she was little calculated to raise her husband in the estimation of a fashionable exotic like Miss Brooke.

Still fascinated, somewhat as it may be in the way which a dove is by a rattle snake, so was Mr. Snobbins attracted by Miss Brooke. Even the airs, which some might have called supercilious, he rather admired, as characteristic of her high breeding. But we are wrong ; Miss Brooke was really well-bred, and was much too nice a woman to give herself supercilious airs to anybody. She could perfectly well teach her inferiors their place, without coarsely wounding their self-love. Mr.

Snobbins could almost have crouched beneath "the shadow of her shoe-tie," so queen-like did he feel her deportment to be ; yet withal, a certain graciousness robbed all her haughtiness of its sting. Every night, as he folded up his coat and laid it on the drawers, he said to Madge, " that really that Miss Brooke was a very nice woman ;" an opinion to which poor sleepy Madge always cordially acceded. Indeed I hardly suppose there would have been a dissentient voice in the hotel, for Miss Brooke really was a very nice woman.

It was some four or five years after this expedition, that good Mrs. Margaret Snobbins, *née* Hitchman, died. She had long been in a declining way, and without much suffering, expired peaceably at last, recommending with her last breath to her eldest son, now a partner in the concern, to stick close to the melting pot, and always to superintend the dipping himself. Poor Madge! she then went out like the snuff of a candle.

For some time Mr. Snobbins seemed stupified by his loss ; all his domestic avocations were interrupted : all his usual habits broken in upon ; the very circumstance of the servant calling him to dinner instead of his wife, seemed to paralyse his appetite. All the kindness and attention of his excellent son, Jack—now, however, going to be married, and called Mr. John—failed to excite his father from the stupor which had fallen upon him ; nor was it until the receipt of a letter from Abel, who had lately and suddenly gone abroad, in which he lamented his idolized mother in a burst of passionate grief, which vividly recalled all her unassuming benevolence and winning virtues, that the unhappy widower was awakened to a full sense of his loss.

His grief, when, at length, excited, was violent and overpowering ; but, as with time, it subsided—he did not seem to recover his former energies ; he still seemed inert, indolent, half asleep. Mr. John had

yet to learn that this was his father's natural bent, and that his active, successful, career in life had been mainly prompted and supported by the unobtrusive, unsuspected, but always energetic influence of his lamented mother. Her untiring energies had been the the mainspring of all their well doing.

However, with the view to awaken his father's higher energies, and the hope to restore his certainly impaired health, Mr. John urged him to try change of air and scene ; and having a very lively recollection of the impression Margate had made on him on his well-remembered visit there, succeeded not without difficulty, in persuading him to return thither. Mr. Snobbins, spiritless and indifferent, yielded to his son's representations and went.

He was standing, with his hands behind his back, on the wooden jetty, then called pier, gazing somewhat vacantly on the urchins below, making holes in the sands and

watching the tide fill them, when he felt a little jerk at the cane, which was swinging in his hands, and turning, found it entangled in the end of a lady's scarf. He stopped suddenly in the midst of his apology on raising his eyes to the lady's face—for he surely had seen her before. The features looked older—more bronzed—if we may use the expression, more aged than the lapse of years would seem to justify; and yet, he could not be mistaken, they were still superlatively handsome—that clear complexion—that brilliant eye—that dark ringlet—it was, he was right, it was Miss Brooke.

The lady's recognition was almost simultaneous; but its manner widely different. In acknowledgment of his delighted, but almost reverential bow, her greeting, though perfectly polite, was cold, high, rather haughty; but suddenly her mood changed. What was it? the deep, deep crape on his hat? The mourning ring on his little

finger? The disconsolate appearance of the whole man? The absence of the heretofore inseparable companion—the little tub of a wife. Was it one or all of these circumstances, trivial each in itself, that flashed conviction to the mind of Miss Brooke, that the rich, but whilom well-wived and unattainable chandler of Budge Row, was now a lonely widower in want of consolation?

So it was, however, as Miss Brooke, by the most delicately-insinuated enquiries—for she would not have hurt his feelings for the world—soon learnt; and then how skilfully and soothingly she applied herself to the task of consolation; how she delighted to soothe his mind by dwelling on the virtues of the lost wife; how she recalled various traits in the character, mind, and conversation, of the departed Madge, which, if not suggesting themselves to her mind at the moment, were instantaneously impressed there by the allusions of the bereaved husband; how

she remembered all to which he referred—how she felt for and with him; sympathy so kind, so cordial, so sufficing, he had not experienced from any one since his sad bereavement. She was, indeed, a very nice woman.

Natural misgivings connected with the memory of his really beloved wife had caused Mr. Snobbins to change his hotel. He was almost afraid to revisit the one at which he had been with Madge. But of course, he accompanied Miss Brooke to the door, and then he could hardly refuse her invitation to walk in just for a few moments.

“A few moments, dear Mr. Snobbins, I do beg, for old acquaintance sake”—he could not refuse. And so it happened that ere the evening had passed, a porter was ordered to transfer Mr. Snobbins's luggage from the inn where he had first proposed to remain to the York Hotel.

The rest may be imagined: the tallow-chandler was struck, won, and finally

melted like one of his own dips, beneath the glowing influence of her unwonted condescension. His grief for poor Madge oozed away he hardly knew how ; his half-forgotten feelings of gentility revived in fuller force than ever.

There was no resisting her suavity ; and the care and consideration she evinced for his feelings amid a circle of heedless strangers—her attention to his little comforts sometimes too heedlessly neglected by the flippant busy waiters—these were matters to be thankful for. Moreover she was exceedingly handsome and very lady-like : he was more than ever struck with her gentility and superiority, circumstances indeed which greatly enhanced the value of her considerate care for him. He found himself almost unawares opening his heart to her. She understood his feelings—she pitied his lonely state—she fully agreed with him, or she suggested to him—he could hardly tell which—but they fully agreed that at his years a man requires a

wife—a fire-side comforter and friend. In short, how it came to pass he could hardly tell, but so it was that he found himself engaged to be married to Miss Brooke.

CHAPTER X.

AND the marriage took place very shortly —somewhat sooner, sooth to say, than Mr. Snobbins had calculated on. How it had happened he could hardly tell, but of course it was all right, and every one, even her step son, Mr. John Snobbins, allowed that the bride was a very nice woman.

There was an *eclat* in the affair too which excited our worthy oilman a good deal. Indeed in his highest dreams he had never calculated on seeing himself figure in the fashionable Morning Post as Abel Snobbins, Esquire, Merchant of London (Budge Row

was not specified), married to Helena only daughter of the late Josiah Brooke, Esquire, of the County of Herts. And when the stylish private-carriage-looking post-chaise, hired for the wedding journey, dashed along the stones and stopped with a clatter before his house in Budge Row, was he not fully and pleasedly conscious that all his neighbours were peeping between the crevices of blinds, and through loop-holed curtains, to obtain a peep at the elegant looking woman who seemed as though she might have dropped from the clouds amongst them.

But the establishment in Budge Row had been much enlarged and improved since we viewed it in the boyhood of the young Snobbins ; and the street itself, owing to the entire removal of some half ruinous overhanging tenements, was somewhat lighter and more airy than of old. The next house to Mr. Snobbins's having been vacated a few years before the time of which we now speak, had been taken rather

prospectively—as the business was fast increasing, and by degrees was very handsomely furnished. This was now the dwelling house, having merely doors of connection with the other, which was entirely consigned to business.

The new Mrs. Snobbins was horrified at the situation, and at once told her husband, in a tone he had never before by any chance heard her use, that it was impossible *she* could live there. He was thunderstruck, and defended the place stoutly, reminding her that she had not, before marriage, even hinted an objection to her proposed residence. This home-thrust the lady parried by saying that it was utterly impossible that she should be acquainted with the localities of Budge-row, or that she should suppose it possible that any one could deliberately bring a *lady* to reside in such a neighbourhood.

“But,” she said, suddenly resuming her cordiality, and extending her hand towards him with one of her winning smiles, “I am

sure it was an unintentional oversight on your part, and that you did not mean to hurt my feelings."

Her smiles had not yet lost their power over him; they were still irresistible, and he fondly kissed the fair hand held out to him and dropped the argument. He felt a very uncomfortable sensation oppress him for some time, nevertheless.

On the following Sunday they went to the church in the immediate neighbourhood, which, during the lifetime of his first wife, Mr. Snobbins had been in the habit of attending duly every Sunday. One of those solemn and beautiful, but now little frequented churches which dignify many of the close, bye streets of the city. Though some few of the beautiful churches of the old city were untouched by the great fire, many were utterly destroyed by it. Some portion of these were rebuilt under the auspices of Sir Christopher Wren. The church to which Mr. Snobbins went was an erection of this great artist, and it was

worthy of his fame. It was solemn-looking and vast; being calculated for the wants of a crowded neighbourhood; but since that time the city has come to be devoted entirely to business, the busy traffickers having their habitations elsewhere; and hence it is that many of the finest churches in London are almost deserted.

Thus it was with the church in which Mr. and Mrs. Snobbins offered up their thanksgivings, the first Sunday after their return to London. Mrs. Snobbins did not like it at all, and though Mr. Snobbins was attached to it both from habit and remembrance, still he could not withstand the instances and representations of his charming wife—or he yielded for a quiet life, and a carriage was hired to take them to the fashionable Mr. Spintext's chapel, where, after being huddled in the aisle until the end of the psalms, they were civilly huddled into an already over-filled square pew. To kneel during any part of the prayers was quite impossible, to sit was not

easy, and to stand conspicuous; nevertheless, it did not matter during the prayers, and they had dovetailed and settled into tolerably comfortable positions by the time the Honourable and Reverend Incumbent of the church made his first appearance from the Vestry, where he always remained till sermon time, never by any chance taking a part in the public celebration of the prayers.

“ Really, Mrs. Snobbins—” began our citizen, on his return home. But he was speedily interrupted.

“ Mr. S., why will you! when you know how I dislike—”

“ Well—well—well,” rejoined he, rather pettishly; he had never, somehow, been able to call his wife easily and familiarly by her Christian name—Helena was too formal, and Nelly, which he tried, was at once repudiated—and she could not endure Mrs. Snobbins.

“ Well, well, Mrs. S—, I only mean, I

think our own quiet church is far snugger and comfortabler than yon."

"We do not go to church to be snug and comfortable, Mr. S. : but you must take sittings there, and then you can be snug if you like."

"Take sittings ! why, what's the good of that, when we've a pew in St. Mary Aldermary, that holds eight, and only you and me and Jack to fill it : for I got the prentice lads sittings in another, as you said you didn't like 'em in your pew."

"Of course not : but, indeed, Mr. S., it cannot be your serious wish that I should go to that church."

"Why not ? I have been there all my life."

"That may be," said she hastily, then, as if recollecting herself, she softened her tone. "You know, Mr. S., I would make all allowances for your prejudices : but I am sure, when you properly reflect on the

matter, you will see that it is utterly impossible *I* can go to that church."

Mr. Snobbins looked quite unconvinced.

"Only think, dear," persuasively argued she. "The few people that do attend there, seem dead alive; they glide in and out like ghosts: and they are such third, fourth-rate people! That mumbling old parson himself seems but half-alive: the whole affair seems buried in city dust, and it were a pity to exhume it, even were it possible. Such a total want, too, such an utter absence of any thing like style or fashion in any—"

"Tut, tut, Mrs. S., you can say your prayers without being fashionable, sure—*ly*: as poor Madge would have said—"

"Spare me, I pray you, at this moment, any of the proverbial wisdom of the late Mrs. Snobbins:—I feel rather faint and unwell—the atmosphere of this place (for they were now approaching Watling Street,) is certainly prejudicial to me—ah! I have not my vinaigrette."

Mrs. S's delicate faintnesses came thicker and faster, and when it was announced, on indisputable authority, to Mr. Snobbins, that the lady's interesting situation required his utmost care, he could no longer refuse to listen to her oft-repeated wishes, for a change of air and of residence.

He took one of a newly-built row of villas at Islington : there were some drawbacks to it, amongst others, an evident tendency to damp, and he preferred one, a stone's throw off, certainly a better and more convenient house ; but Mrs. Snobbins did not like it. It was situated just without the charming locality, which recent buildings and improvements had stamped as " genteel " and " fashionable."

They had also the advantage of a church, or, rather, chapel of ease, in the immediate neighbourhood, which a love of a clergyman, the idol of the ladies, had lately obtained.

The rector, or curator of all work, was a mere drone, " a worthy man enough, poor

wretch, in his way ; very assiduous in visiting the sick and all that, and in relieving the poor as much as was in his power ;" having himself to bear the burthen of fifty-two years, and seven children, and having a sickly, sinking wife. He had generally care in his face and a cloud on his brow. He was respected as a worthy, harmless man in his way ; and had always been considered as such, for the last twenty years, during which he had officiated there ; but the young Icarus who had soared above his head, and gained the living by votes of five to one, had the face and form of Apollo—a smooth, clear, white, unruffled brow ; a dark, liquid eye ; a most beguiling winningness of manner—a most highly wrought and flowing eloquence.

He was the very idol of the ladies of his congregation ; and it was not long ere he was on terms of especial intimacy with the elegant and fashionable Mrs. Snobbins, who soon took quite a lead in the neighbourhood.

Never, even in the days when he had first known her as Miss Brooke, had Mr. Snobbins been so struck with his wife's lofty superiority as he was now, when he saw the easy and somewhat patronising terms on which she placed herself with the young divine ; for he and his good wife Madge Hitcham, simple souls ! in attending their parish church regularly every Sunday morning, had looked with a kind of awe and reverence on their quiet, unassuming parson, who had looked reverend and elderly when they first knew him, and hardly looked older now.

Mr. Snobbins hardly knew whether most to admire his wife's courage, tact, and gentility, or to wonder at " the young parson chap's maccaroni airs," so unlike the simple, unassuming, yet unmistakable dignity of Dr. R.

But we must hurry through our preliminary details.

When Mrs. Snobbins first summoned her

husband to return calls at Islington, she placed in his hands a very neat card-case, and though it was a piece of vanity which he would never have dreamt of purchasing for himself, he could not but be gratified by her courteous attention. But what was his amazement on opening it and taking from it a card to find engraven thereon—

MR. DE SNOBYN.

He remonstrated, but he might as well have whistled ; Mrs. Snobbins could not bear excitement—in her present delicate and interesting situation it might be highly prejudicial to her. What could the man do? But the effect of Mrs. de Snobyn's unremitting exertions and beguiling ways in “ her delicate and interesting situation ” was, that by the time his first little girl saw the light, he dare not say that his soul was his own.

But his daughter, his little cherub daughter! Let a man have a houseful of sons, and let him be ever so fond and ever so proud of them, they never touch his heart as does the unconscious smile of his first daughter—a gentle, helpless being—as all babies are—but to remain a gentle, dependent being, which assuredly boy-babies do not.

With a swelling heart and tearful eyes Mr. de Snobyn thanked his wife for his “little daughter,” and at once expressed a hope that she might be called Margaret; a good old English name, and very dear to him. The lady’s elegant languor, somewhat more perhaps than absolute weakness induced, vanished in a moment, and her reply at once sent the brimming moisture from his eyes back to its source. He placed the child in the nurse’s arms, muttering to himself—

“I may love her at any rate, whatever she is called.”

In due time four more olive branches

arose to adorn Mr. de Snobyn's elegant retirement at Islington—all imbued with a considerable share of their mother's beauty and personal elegance, and a more than due share of her pride and hauteur, unsoftened by the winning courtesy which invariably modulated and disguised hers. But they were young, only "just come out," and they wanted experience and knowledge of the world.

And Jack Snobbins, who, as we intimated, was contemplating marriage at the time when he sent his father on that eventful trip to Margate, was married in no very long time after his elegant step-mother's introduction to the name and honors of Snobbins. Not all her blandishments could induce her to adopt him new reading of his patronymic. His suitable and happy marriage had, after the lapse of a few years, been blessed with but one child, a daughter, called Margaret, after Madge Hitcham of beloved and honored memory.

Margaret Snobbins, who was about sixteen when when our story opens, was nearly coeval with her youngest step-aunt, Charlotte de Snobyn : Helena and Evelina being older, as was also Augustus : Octavius was the youngest of all.

CHAPTER XI.

It is a trite saying, and a very true one, that we do not know the full value of our blessings until we have ceased to possess them. This is true indeed of every circumstance of life—of its greatest blessing, health, peculiarly so, and of its minor advantages in their several degrees. But never is this so deeply, so poignantly felt, as on the death of some person to whom we have been closely attached by the ties of kindred or of affection ; and the warmer

that affection, the closer those ties, the more poignant will be the pangs that separation and recollection awaken.

In an ordinary case, and in happier circumstances Mrs. Meredith would have felt the death of her father very acutely, but how did reflection now increase her agony! The father who had loved her, cherished her, for long long years, who had indulged her every whim, consulted her every wish, and ever, ever, to her, repressed the violent temper which he cared not, on occasion, to vent on all others—even had she been at his bed-side soothing his last moments, and dutefully administering at his dying bed, and receiving humbly, on bended knees, his last and hallowing blessing—even then her grief would have been deep and overwhelming, but it would have been soothed by her parent's dying words, hallowed by his last benediction, embalmed in softening and purifying remembrances. Now, Emily's whole frame quivered with agony—torturing, unrelieved

and as it seemed irremediable agony—for she was an outcast from her father's home, an alien from his affections, a wanderer from his sick bed, an absentee from his dying pillow. And why was all this, because she had opposed his wishes, contemned his authority, broken his express commands. Often, before this time, had her awakening conscience suggested to her that perhaps she had been too hasty, perhaps had she been patient, and waited, the father who loved her so fondly would have withdrawn his opposition, and yielded to her wishes—perhaps, probably, nay almost certainly, he would have done so when he found that her prepossession for Mr. Meredith was not a mere whim, a transient fancy, but a permanent feeling in which the happiness of her life was involved. Could any father hold out in such circumstances? Emily felt now, that her's would not have done so.

Thus had she felt frequently of late,

even when hoping daily and hourly for a reconciliation with him, and anticipating—oh how delightedly did she anticipate the moment of her re-union, when she should confess her fault unreservedly and without attempt at extenuation—and should pray her father on the plea of his love for her, and on that plea alone, to take her back, and to open his heart and his arms to her dear husband. Ah, Emily had no idea until now—none—how many an hour had been beguiled by these day dreams, how present privations had been softened and future anticipations brightened by them.

And now—now—he was dead—the father, ever dearly loved, though in a moment of passionate aberration forsaken—the often forgiving, always loving, always generous father—gone, lost, cold, dead—dead, without one act of expiation on her part, one word of forgiveness on his. Now did all his faults and foibles be they what they might, sink into the merest nothingness in comparison with his long enduring

affection and protecting kindness. Now did her sins of omission towards him—trifling matters perhaps individually, and so regarded by him as well as by herself in her careless days—now did they rise in dread array, bright as scarlet before her eyes, and sound as if with a trumpet tongue in her ears.

But he was gone down into the dust, and now she could make no atonement.

Thankfully, in that dread hour, would she have yielded her whole of life for the power to say to a living parent—"Father, forgive me, for I knew not what I did."

It can excite no surprise that the intense agony of mind which Emily suffered under reflections of which the foregoing pages give but a very faint shadow, should aggravate the circumstances of illness in a very serious degree, and for two or three days Meredith's every thought and hope and feeling were engrossed at her bed-side which he scarcely quitted for a moment. Youth, nature, and a good constitution,

however triumphed, and he had the inexpressible happiness of seeing her in a fair way of recovery. At first this in itself seemed happiness unalloyed to him, and he sought no more.

But soon reflection, though it did not lessen his thankfulness, did certainly cast a deep shadow over his happiness. Here was Emily, though pronounced safe by the physician, still in a state of the most extreme debility, and requiring a continuance of costly delicacies and expensive condiments ere she could be restored to her former health. And should she want them? No: not if he died to obtain them for her. Then there was the bill of the medical attendant, and the now somewhat considerable debt to their landlady with the additions which the various requirements of his wife's illness had caused. How were these things to be met: Meredith knew not: he had not a guinea nor could he tell where to turn for one: and the announcement in the lawyer's letter

which Emily in her burst of grief for her father's death had perhaps not seen, was clearly impressed upon his mind—viz : that Mrs. Meredith was disinherited. What to do he knew not.

It was Emily herself who settled this point. She had more than once asked to see that, to her, fatal and melancholy letter, but had been of course refused : but her instances to her medical attendant one day were so pressing, and at the same time so calm and firm—as if her mind were now strengthened to all it might have to combat, that Meredith was counselled to yield to her wish.

She read it twice over, and though her lip quivered and her eye filled with tears, she succeeded in completely repressing her emotion before she spoke.

“ Henry, dear, I should like you to go home—to Beecham Manor House,” said she hastily interrupting herself.

“ Not at present, Emily, love ; I cannot leave you yet.”

“ Oh yes, Henry, you may leave me very well. You know I am going on very well now ; and Mrs. Batesman is so kind, she will take care of me : and I wish you so much to go.”

“ But to what purpose, Emily ?” said Meredith, whose thoughts reverted to his already empty purse, “ I fear the terms of your father’s will admit no hope for us.”

“ Oh, I know that, I know that : I was not thinking of that. I little thought to be a penniless wife to you, Henry : but never mind that : I shall try if I cannot work when I get better.”

Poor Meredith, it was *his* lip that quivered now.

“ No, Henry,” said she, bursting into an irrepressible gush of tears, “ I hope some day to visit my father’s grave—but as I cannot go to his house now, I feel as if it would be a comfort to me if you would.”

So Meredith promised at once, and went with little delay, having first sold, unknown

of course to his wife, a part of the small library that he had gathered together with some difficulty and some care, in order to defray the expenses of the journey.

He went at once to Mr. Scribewell's, of whom he had some slight personal knowledge, and of whom he had also heard Emily speak, but he found that that gentleman had been for some little time absent from his office and his home, being in a bad state of health, and ordered to try foreign baths, though with little hope of ultimate recovery.

Having no partner, his business had fallen much into the hands of his clerks, though nominally superintended by a friend. From one of these clerks, Mr. Meredith learnt that the funeral of Mr. Dalton had taken place the preceding day, that Mrs. de Snobyn, to whom all the property devolved, was now at the Manor House, taking an inventory of the furniture, and marking such things as she wished to retain : the remainder were to be sold by auction im-

mediately : the Manor House was to be let. Moreover, Mr. Meredith obtained permission to read the will, and saw therein that reference to the legatee in favour of the bereaved and disinherited child which we laid before our readers in full, in an earlier page of this work.

To this clause Mr. Meredith referred again and again, until indeed it was registered word by word in his memory ; and then, in deep despondence, he betook himself to his inn.

For he now found that he had, although most unconsciously, cherished a hope, aye deeply cherished it, as, in the bitterness of his heart, he now felt and confessed, even while philosophically telling poor Emily there was none. He sat for hours with his head buried in his hands, his half-pint of wine untasted by his side—a luxury which, in his present circumstances, he loathed, but which he felt compelled to order “for the house.”

To apply to the fortunate Mrs. de

Snobyn for pecuniary aid, and this before Mr. Dalton's remains were well cold in the tomb, was a degradation to himself and to Emily not to be thought of—or rather to Emily—for of his own feelings just now he could not, would not, had no right to think.

And yet to return to her without the power of adding one comfort to her sick bed, or of providing any reviving change of scene or air for the period of her convalescence!—nay—without the means even to buy her a mourning garment!

Stung to the very heart, as this thought crossed his mind, he started up, swallowed his hitherto untasted wine, glass after glass, as quickly as he could pour it out, and hastened to shut himself up in his bed-chamber.

He came down in the morning unrefreshed by sleep, unrevived by hope, sickening at the task before him, yet nerved unflinchingly to do what he had now resolved it was his duty to do—apply to

Mrs. de Snobyn for pecuniary assistance for his sick wife, the only child of her great benefactor.

He went to the Manor House, sent in his card, and was instantly admitted. He was ushered to the drawing-room, (how well he knew it,) where he was received by an elegant-looking woman beautifully attired in deep mourning—Mrs. de Snobyn. She had with her a ladylike, fashionable looking girl, and a genteel-looking young man, both also dressed in new mourning, whom she introduced as her daughter and son.

“Let me beg you to be seated, Mr. Meredith. Augustus, relieve Mr. Meredith of his hat and cane. Suffer my son to take them, my dear sir. May I venture to hope that poor Mrs. Meredith is well? I sympathize with her, I assure you, most deeply.”

And these last words were spoken with such intonation, and such expressive kind-

ness of manner, that Meredith's heart seemed lightened at once.

"I grieve to say, that Mrs. Meredith is very ill: the shock of her father's death has endangered her own life."

"But she is better, I trust?"

"Surely, madam, or you would hardly have seen me here. She is now, I hope, in a fair way of recovery."

"I rejoice to hear it: you must take care of her, Mr. Meredith; but, I am sure," added she, with a most courteous smile and bend—"I need not make that suggestion to you."

Meredith bowed—and sighed.

The lady sighed too.

"I feel sure that the sudden, the very sudden demise of poor Mr. Dalton must have been a great shock to you: my daughters and I have often referred to you and have felt for you much, I assure you."

Meredith bowed again.

“ You will, probably, as soon as Mrs. Meredith is convalescent, let her have change of air and change of scene. Believe me, my dear sir, it will be your best course. She is young, and, I have understood, of an ardent temper. Her grief, at first, must have its way ; but, believe me, change of scene will do wonders for her. You will try it, will you not ?”

“ If possible, madam.”

“ Oh, my dear sir, you must make it possible. Believe me, I speak as a friend, having had much experience myself.”

At this moment the young lady whispered something to her mother.

“ Ha, well thought on, Helena : yes, my dear, I will. My daughter suggests to me, Mr. Meredith, that I should refer to yourself a little matter which we have been discussing this morning. We are, as you may probably have learnt, about to dismember this place, and we were desirous of making some little offering to Mrs. Meredith, which she might appreciate as a

memorial of her former abode. Would she honour me by accepting such a memorial?"

Mrs. de Snobyn looked enquiringly, and Meredith bent a sort of acknowledgment; his heart heaved, and his face flushed, but speak he could not.

"The butler here, Mr. Harvey—a very respectable person he seems to be, and has, I find, resided in the family from his childhood—perhaps you know him, Mr. Meredith?"

Another bow.

"He, hearing our conversation on this point—for it occurred while he was packing up the plate—suggested that Miss Emily—excuse me, but so the old man always names Mrs. Meredith—would rather have that than anything in the house;" and she pointed to a small but very rich and elaborately carved cabinet which stood in a corner of the room. "Harvey said that his young lady had been accustomed to call it her own from a very child, and

that as a grown up young lady, she made constant use of it. These were his words, and that he would be bound to say she would pick it out of the whole house. Will you tell me, dear sir, whether in your judgment, I shall do right to entreat Mrs. Meredith's acceptance of it?"

Meredith rushed to the window and laid his burning forehead against the pane of glass. Doubtless Mrs. de Snobyn meant to be very kind—doubtless she did—every word was cordial and sympathising; yet, what was there in her aspect, handsome and elegant as she was, that caused such an indefinable sensation throughout his frame. Oh, it was his errand, his miserable mission. And then this cabinet—kindly intentioned no doubt, but was this miserable piece of Indian jugglery all that his poor Emily was to retain of her father's rich possessions and ample belongings—once, as it had seemed, all so surely her own! How he longed civilly and coolly to decline it. But could he—dare he—ought he!

Could he decline a kindly-meant compliment, and then in the same breath ask a material favour? Dare he run the risk of having his request denied by refusing a propitiatory offering? And ought he, from any feelings of pride or dislike, to refuse a gift which *might* be most acceptable to his bereaved Emily—for well he remembered that cabinet—and well he remembered it as a cherished favourite of hers. It had been in the family, he knew, for generations; on Mr. Dalton's marriage had been assigned by him to the use of his bride, and on Mrs. Dalton's death, in Emily's childhood, had been even then given to her. He had heard this account from Emily more than once, and knew well that in her mind the cabinet was associated with treasured recollections of her mother. Ought he to refuse it?—no!

Having come to this resolution, he turned and in a hurried, abrupt manner, expressed his wish to speak with Mrs. de Snobyn alone. She started a little, half hesitated,

as if the request were not altogether agreeable ; but the delay was but instantaneous when

“ Helena, my dear ; Augustus,” sent both the young people from the room.

“ What can I do for you, dear Mr. Meredith ?” in even a more sympathizing tone than before, again raised Henry’s hopes ; and he raised his eyes to the lady’s face, but instantly dropped them again, influenced, by he knew not what feeling. Mrs. De Snobyn, too, looked at him with a sort of surprised scrutiny, which did not tend to alleviate his embarrassment, any more than it seemed satisfactory or agreeable to herself. She was becoming, in her turn, a little excited and nervous, when Meredith, severely upbraiding himself for his childishness and folly ; and making a great effort, resumed a more manly tone and demeanour.

“ You have it in your power, madam, to do much for us ; to aid us most materially.

Indeed, to you alone, can we look for redemption in our present necessity."

"Necessity, dear sir—of what sort? You speak in parables."

"Necessity of almost every sort, Mrs. De Snobyn. My wife is on a sick bed—I have no means to supply her with the comforts she requires. I have not the power to procure her the common decencies of her station."

"This is a sad account, indeed, sir ; but, doubtless, your fears for Mrs. Meredith, cause you to exaggerate your trouble ?"

"They do not, I assure you ; if I make any error at all, it is in understatement not exaggeration."

"This trouble is but temporary, doubtless, and will pass away shortly."

"I would gladly hope so ; but I have no firmer basis than hope on which to rely."

"Well, sir, if it be so—though I do not

understand how it *can* be so, I shall be happy if it be in my power to serve you."

"Madam, it is in your power, and in yours only. I appeal to you in the terms of Mr. Dalton's will that you should assist his daughter."

"My dear sir, you are somewhat too peremptory. You speak as if you had a right to apply to me."

"And so I surely have ; you have just succeeded to a noble property in detriment of Mr. Dalton's only child ; and he expressly states in his will that, should his child be in want, he looks to you to succour her with a portion of that large property which, but for my most unhappy fault, would have been all bequeathed to her, not one guinea to you !"

"You speak warmly, sir ; rather unjustifiably so ; but a little scope may be allowed to the expressions of a disappointed man. Mr. Dalton does refer to me under certain circumstances, but he refers to my

pleasure—to my probable inclination, should those very unlikely circumstances occur, but does not control or tie me in any way.”

“No, madam, though a man of strong passions, Mr. Dalton was a Christian ; he could not suppose that you would require controlling, to do what he points out ; but he might naturally think that the scorn of Christendom would follow your neglect of his appeal.

Meredith's dark eye was now flashing ; his strongly marked countenance agitated and working. Mrs. De Snobyn gazed on him as if fascinated, as he quickly paced the room, all his nervous tremors banished as if by magic. These, indeed, seemed, spite of her self-possession, to be stealing over her ; but she controlled herself strongly and shortly resumed.

“As I said before, Mr. Meredith, I can give much license to a disappointed man ; and I do assure you, that I feel deeply for you and Mrs. Meredith. But, much as I

should delight to meet your wishes in all respects, were it in my power—it is not in my power. I have other most paramount claims. I have five children just rising into manhood and womanhood. I were less than woman—I were unworthy the name of mother—undeserving the blessing of children, did I not make their interest the first object of my care. Besides, as I before intimated, you are arguing on false premises. Mr. Dalton only sanctioned any application to me on the plea of his daughter's being in want of bread.”

“ And on that plea I come : Emily is in want of bread, or that she *has* not yet wanted it, has been owing entirely, exclusively, to the charity of a stranger. Mrs. de Snobyn, I have not means to buy her a loaf,”

“ Impossible, sir,” said Mrs. de Snobyn, rising with a calm contemptuous smile, “ this is too much. Mr. Dalton has been

dead hardly a week : it is impossible his only child can be destitute by this time."

" His only child was destitute some time before her father's death, and was indebted to an humble stranger for the food she ate. Mrs. de Snobyn, beware what you do, for on the word of a Christian clergyman, I am telling you merely the truth."

Again he stood facing her, not tremulous and agitated, but firm as a rock, strengthened by his own impressive adjuration, and looking firmly, fixedly on her face, as if he would scan her very soul.

And she, again she raised her eyes to his face, and again she shrank before his gaze. The nervous tremor which had from time to time assailed her, seemed now to overpower her. Hastily and with shaking fingers she drew from her reticule a little Russia leather case, and extracting a note from it, she laid it on his hand, saying with a choked and indistinct utterance.

“ This interview is too harassing, let us end it.”

And hastily quitted the room.

At the same moment Meredith, snatching up his hat, rushed from the apartment by another door, and hastily made his way to the entrance-hall, where he was stopped by a grasp on his coat-lap, and the words in a tremulous voice :

“ Sir—sir—please, sir—Mr. Meredith—sir—how’s my dear young lady ?”

It was the old butler.

“ Ill, Harvey—very ill—God bless you, Harvey.”

And he shook his hand warmly, and hurried away before the old man’s reply had passed his feeble lips.

“ And God bless you, sir, and her, for many and many a day, in spite of all that’s come and gone.”

CHAPTER XII.

THE visit of Mr. Meredith to Mrs. de Snobyn, was an unfailing theme of comment and conversation amongst her young people at home, though Mrs. de Snobyn herself did not appear fond of recurring to the subject, and never encouraged them in dwelling on it. This indeed is not surprising. However firm and unimpeachable her legal claim to the wealth she had so unexpectedly obtained, and however the claims of her own large family might jus-

tify her in strictly retaining the whole, the fate of the poor young lady who had forfeited it, could not but be a painful theme of reflection to her. Therefore, as we said, she never encouraged her children to talk of this affair, though she was far too wise to excite their interest and curiosity by expressly forbidding it. The cabinet had been duly forwarded, with a most courteous and sympathising note to Emily, and had been accepted by her with fitting acknowledgment. And here Mrs. de Snobyn hoped all intercourse would end.

But there was one of the family on whom Emily's story, as she had heard it detailed by her young aunts, made a painful and a lasting impression. This was Maude Snobins who was in habits of kindly, though from various circumstances, not very constant intercourse with her showy relations, and who was on terms of more especial intimacy with her youngest aunt Charlotte de Snobyn, who was about her own age.

The two girls hardly ever met for some-time after the great event, that "poor Mrs. Meredith!" as she was always apostrophised, did not form one subject of their conversation.

"Poor wretch!" said Helena, "I never shall forget him as he sat there looking unutterable things—unuttered at least, for he never spoke. D'ye remember, Guss?"

"Perfectly well, Nell."

"Nell! Guss," repeated Mrs. de Snobyn, looking up from her writing-table with an air of displeasure, "how often have I begged that if you will indulge in these low-bred appellatives, you will at least not shock my ears with them."

"We beg your pardon, dear mamma; but you know my *father* rather likes to hear them," said Charlotte, with a mischievous look.

"Bravo, Lotty," said her brother, *sotto voce*.

Mrs. de Snobyn coloured a little, she was quite aware of her daughter's covert

sarcasm, but she had admirable command of temper, and never weakened her influence over her children by any petulance of manner or snappish reproofs. She replied with perfect quietude,

“As your father is not in the room, Charlotte, your style of conversation could not be adopted for his satisfaction : neither have I ever had any cause to suppose, my dear, that he would feel gratified by your doing what you knew was displeasing to me.”

“Dear mamma,” said the giddy but good-hearted girl, her eyes full of tears.

“Enough, my dear,” said Mrs. de Snobyn, kindly holding out her hand, and again addressing herself to her writing.

Evelina came to the rescue.

“‘*Revenons a nos moutons*’, you were telling us of Mr. Meredith, Helena, is he a handsome man?”

“No—yes—what do you think, mamma? —(mamma did not answer)—I don’t know that he is exactly what you would call

handsome—but certainly not plain. He has marked features, prominent forehead, dark complexion, and deep set flashing eyes—I should say rather striking than handsome.”

“Not plain—not common-looking, at any rate.”

“Oh dear no : quite otherwise.”

“That’s right—I’m glad of that.”

“Why, my dear little Linny—oh my false tongue—my dear Evelina, I mean,” said Augustus, “why are you so anxious on that point. The gentleman—were he Apollo himself is, like Apollo, not to be had.”

“I am quite aware of that, brother mine : neither have I the slightest *penchant* for penniless parsons. Nevertheless, I am very glad he is *un peu distingué*. For it would be sadly out of keeping for the hero of a romance, and of such a romance, to be common-looking, or merely personable.”

“Probably if he had been common looking the romance would not have been

enacted at all, and we might have continued to vegetate here instead of looking forward as we now do to the delights of Connaught Place."

"Yes," said Evelina, "I think we are bound henceforth to hold beetling brows and flashing eyes in especial reverence."

"I think," said Helena, "we should have an altar in our new house dedicated to the god of beauty."

"But you said he was *not* beautiful," said Evelina.

"*Soyez tranquille*—he was beautiful enough, fortunately for us, to fascinate Mrs. Meredith," said Augustus.

"Yes," said Charlotte, "and I fancy, as that silent child might say, 'she's pleased her eyes and pained her heart.' Hey, Maude, won't that do? Isn't that worthy of dear Grandmamma Snobbins herself?"

"Grandmamma Snobbins may have been a very homely woman—I suppose

she was—but she would have scorned to do as you do,” said Maude, the blood rushing into her face partly at her own temerity, partly at the excitement of her feelings. “She would have scorned to quiz the unfortunate—she would have scorned to ridicule those who are suffering disappointment and sorrow. I cannot think how you *can* do it. It is no doubt quite right you should have this money, and I am sure I hope you will enjoy it to the very utmost ; but surely it would be more likely to bring a blessing with it if you thought kindly of the poor young lady who has lost it all.”

Maude stopped suddenly, tremulous and tearful, and evidently half afraid of the lengths to which her excitement had carried her.

“ Whew ! well done my little preacher !” said Augustus.

“ Here’s an oration !” said Helena.

“ Grandmamma Snobbins *rediviva*, or

Uncle Abel *in presenti*," chimed in the schoolboy Octavius, not to be behind his elders.

"Hush, every one of you," said the more warm-hearted and generous Charlotte; "little Maude is quite right, and we are all quite wrong. Bless you, Maude, you are a good girl," and Charlotte kissed her affectionately. "Girls, you must allow that she is right."

"Well, perhaps we were rather too bad," said Evelina; "but we forgot our school-mistress was in company."

"Now, Evelina, you promised never to call me that ugly name again."

"True, Maude, but you promised not to preach."

"Oh, Evelina, I never *shall* understand what you call preaching. I'm sure I did not mean to vex any of you. Dear grand-mamma I hope you are not displeased with me?"

Mrs. de Snobyn had been watching this

scene very attentively ; she did not by any means encourage her young people in the levities in which they indulged with regard to their new acquisitions ; still it was far from her policy that their feelings of sympathy towards their disinherited relative should be too warmly excited or actively exercised.

“ I am not at all displeased with you, Maude ; you are a good girl, and mean only what is right, I am sure. But you mistake your aunts, my dear—they have very high spirits, and it is unfair to read their badinage *au pied de la lettre*.”

“ Dear grandmamma, you are very good—and I don't know how it is, but you always seem to make everything right. I am very, very sure though you say not a word about it, that you have taken kind care of poor Mrs. Meredith.”

“ I feel very sorry, certainly, for Mrs. Meredith, and have done what lay in my

power to reconcile her to her disappointment. But do not interrupt me any longer, my dear—I shall miss the post.”

“ Whenever I am in trouble, little Maude, I shall send to you,” said Charlotte ; “ for you are such a warm-hearted girl, always ready to fight the battles of the unfortunate.”

“ And if I were Maude,” said Octavius, “ I wouldn't come, because you always call her ‘ little Maude.

“ ‘ A fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind,’ as Abel would say : you're no giant yourself, Otty, and so you sympathize with Maude.”

“ I've grown three inches the last half, Lotty, and I mean to grow six the next ; but as to Maude, the joke of it is that though you do always call her ‘ little Maude,’ she is two inches taller than you now.”

“ Nonsense.”

“ Truth, on my veracity : isn't it so, Guss ? don't you think so ?”

“ Possibly it is,” said “ Guss,” neither

thinking nor caring anything about the matter.

“Nonsense,” said Charlotte, more warmly: “it can’t be: I’m half as big again as Maude.”

“In breadth you may be: I concede it; but in height—no.”

“You are very rude, Otty,” said Charlotte, half angry, half laughing: “you are grown quite unbearable during the last half year.”

“I *am* grown, at any rate; and so is ‘little’ Maude; but Miss Charlotte de Snobyn—no.”

“I declare I’ll measure; Maude, dear, take your bonnet off; now then.”

But Charlotte half repented her rash confidence, and Octavius clapped his hands with delight, as the result proved what he had from fun and mischief, not observation, declared it would be, that Maude was perceptibly taller than her aunt Charlotte.

Yet no casual observer would have

thought so : she was very slim, and her extreme fairness made her look almost pale, unless her cheek was more than usually tinged by exercise or excitement. Moreover, her dress, though not without a certain propriety and elegance, was simple, and, if we may use the word, unremarkable.

Mrs. de Snobyn's daughters, on the other hand, though elegant-looking girls, were *rather* inclined to embonpoint ; their complexions were brilliant—their hair and eyes dark—their dress rather showy.

Charlotte and Maude were as nearly as possible the same age ; yet Maude certainly looked considerably the younger of the two.

“ I must, indeed, cease to call you little Maude,” said Charlotte, good-humouredly ; “ but I shall require a little practice before I can quite easily concede your new greatness to you.”

“ And I a good deal before I can as-

sume my new dignity with ease. So I will go home and study dignity, for I see the Sociable at the door. Good morning, grandmamma. Good bye, dear Charlotte, and aunts and uncles, all."

And away she ran.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE removal of her family to a more aristocratic and fashionable situation had been proposed by Mrs. de Snobyn as soon as she was aware of her unexpected accession of fortune, and was effected as speedily as possible. She was not a woman to hesitate or falter in her plans and prospects, and when once she decided on a great move, she suffered no minor obstacles to check the game ; with a definite object clearly in view, she was not to be

daunted by opposition nor disgusted by difficulty. Hitherto her life had been comparatively tame, but still, in all the demonstrations it had suited her to make, she had been eminently successful. We have seen how she achieved the hand of Mr. Snobbins, even before he himself had fully consented to the crisis ; and how, almost within the honeymoon, she had contrived to change the whole current of his existence—subvert the settled habits of a life—and remove him from his homely, perhaps vulgar, but substantial and comfortable house, to a fashionable residence where he looked, and was little more than a cipher. From that hour she had been lady paramount in all things—but not painfully or too obviously so. She had the good taste to defer to him apparently, and he was not shrewd enough to find out that he was duped. A George the Second in humble life, was Mr. De Snobyn.

His sons were more clear-sighted, but

had the good sense not to attempt to enlighten their father, where the only probable result of such interference would be the interruption of that domestic harmony which at present Mr. De Snobyn did enjoy.

These sons were, however, in one point, though only in one, a decided thorn in the flesh to Mrs. De Snobyn ; this was in their unchangeable resolution not to adopt the name of De Snobyn, instead of their legitimate one of Snobbins. There was a fund of plain practical good sense in both these young men, which was proof against all the blandishment and beguiling rhetoric of their stepmother.

So she wisely gave up the contest, though a woman of less presence of mind would often have felt awkwardly placed at the *mal-a-propos* questions and remarks, which the different, yet somewhat similar names of father and son called forth. At first Mrs. De Snobyn made some attempt to pass it as a revived family name—one of some old

ancestors long fallen into disuse. But the assimilation of the Budge Row tallow chandler, Snobbins, the illegitimate son of a wharfinger of Puddle Dock, with the warlike names of the Tudor and Plantagenet heroes, was rather too ridiculous, as Mrs. De Snobyn's ready tact soon discovered. Since then, to say it was assumed in consequence of an accession of property, requiring that alteration, was the easiest plea, and the one usually adopted. But every change of residence, of course, involved new explanations. It is probable, that had Mrs. De Snobyn foreseen the decided opposition of her step-sons, she would have hesitated ere she adopted the title ; but once assumed, to abide by it was indispensable.

With this one exception, all Mrs. De Snobyn's tactics, thus far, had been crowned with success.

Nor did her pre-eminence seem on the wane, for her stratagems now, as heretofore, she carried with a *coup de main*, Mr.

De Snobyn's feeble opposition being entirely overcome by her persuasive eloquence.

"My dear Mr. De Snobyn, I have been speaking to Trollope this morning about a house ; and he says he has several on his list of the kind I suggested to him, of which he will send you full descriptions in a day or two."

"A house, Mrs. De Snobyn—what house ? What do I want with a house?"

"I am sure, my dear, that you will agree with me that, with our improved means, it is desirable to have an improved residence."

"I am not sure of it at all ; if by 'improved' you mean more servants, more fuss—more fallals. I hardly dare ask for a glass of ale in my own house now, my servants are so grand."

"I am sorry that you did not mention this to me before, Mr. de Snobyn. It is always my wish that the little comforts to which you have been accustomed should

be carefully served to you, in your own apartment."

"Aye, Mrs. S., there it is—in *my own apartment*—that's just it! When I lived in Budge Row, I'd my pot o' porter i' th' same room with my wife and boys; and when I lived at Islington, why, to do you justice, you always was pleasant with me there; and very happy I was of an evening, very, when I came tired from the shop, to sit quiet and watch you with your bonny children around you. But now, since we came here, to this fine square, things isn't half so comfortable: I must do this, and that, and the other in *my own* room. I often fancy the children wish I'd keep there altogether—and it's a hard thing, Mrs. S., I assure you it is, not to be genteel enough for the children one's toiled for."

"My dear Mr. de Snobyn you are entirely mistaken, and are distressing yourself for a mere fancy, which has no sort of foundation in truth. You are not well, today, your nerves have hardly recovered

their tone yet since your last attack. You want a little stimulant—let me give you a glass of wine.”

He shook his head.

“No? well, then, I’ll tell you what it shall be, and you *shall not* refuse.”

And she put her hand playfully on his shoulder, and affected to whisper in his ear.

“It shall be a little drop—a wee, wee drop of rum-punch—such as I used to mix for you in Budge Row, just after you made me a happy wife. Don’t you remember teaching me how to mix it, and you said I was a clever scholar. Shall it be a little drop of that?”

He smiled, and the lady withdrew to prepare it. She met her eldest daughter on the landing.

“Helena, just go into the drawing-room to your father, and talk to him cosily until I return.”

“Certainly, mama, if you wish it; but if you have any grand *coup* to make, remem-

ber Charlotte is my father's favourite, and can get to his heart much quicker than I can."

"Yes, love; but Charlotte has more zeal than discretion, and more honesty than either. She is a bad diplomatist, and she wants tact. Your father is somewhat querulous this morning, yet I am anxious to arrange matters, as Trollope *may* be here this afternoon. Go to him—I will relieve you in five minutes."

"Very well, *mama*."

"What, Helena, you here!" said the clever tactician when, ten minutes afterwards, she returned to the drawing-room with half a tumbler of punch, lemoned and sugared and cooled and coaxed to the very point of perfection, and to the admiration of any accomplished toper of 'the olden time,' (Punch is out of fashion now—*rum* punch, we mean—beg pardon, Messrs. Jerrold and Co., for 'Punch' is in fashion; and 'Punch' is decidedly rum) and having first touched it with her own lips, held it

smilingly before her husband. "You here, Helena, and your new bonnet waiting your approval below—or am I *de trop* just now, and were you coaxing papa out of the bonnet?"

"No indeed, mama, I did not know the bonnet was come, and for once I need not trespass on papa, for I have been very prudent and saving this quarter."

"Have you indeed, Nelly? is that true?" said Mr. de Snobyn, his hand already on his purse.

The kind old man was always liberal to his children, but on any unwonted demonstration of affection on their parts his generosity knew no bounds. But it was no idea of paying for kindness—No, no. It was the warm-hearted affectionateness that knew not how fully to demonstrate itself. He would have poured his heart out to them.

"Indeed, and indeed, papa, it is quite true—I have been so good. I do not want

help now, indeed—” and she pushed the purse back again.

“ Well, then, my darling, remember that I owe you a bonnet.”

“ Thank you, sir ; I will not fail to remind you some day.”

“ Whenever you please, child, it shall be ready ; and, Nelly, (as she was leaving the room,) remember I mean your sisters also.”

“ Yes, dear papa, thank you.”

Need we resume the conversation between Mr. and Mrs. de Snobyn ? Can any of our readers doubt that in the temper in which he now was, his wife had little difficulty in persuading him that all the plans she had laid down for the regulation of his family in their new circumstances, were “ wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best.” Never in his best days a very strong minded man, his energies were fast declining, and he certainly displayed more of the imbecility of advanced age than usually apper-

tained to his years, which were yet under seventy. Always most accessible to kindness he could withstand nothing which appealed to his affections ; and this his wife and daughters well knew.

So Mrs. de Snobyn had all her own way, and the house in Russell Square, on which they had expended such heavy sums but two or three years ago, was to be given up, and notice was sent to their landlord to that effect. Amidst the contending advantages of the new ones offered to her consideration by the ubiquitous Mr. Trollope even Mrs. de Snobyn was puzzled, but at length her decision was given in favour of one in Connaught Place.

Perhaps even she did not, at the outset, fully calculate the vast and various outlays which her change of residence would involve ; and we have made a sad failure indeed in our portraiture of Mr. de Snobyn if we need now to tell our readers that he was "innocent o'th knowledge" of anything and everything in the shape of

fashionable expenditure. Mrs. de Snobyn was also practically inexperienced ; her expenses before marriage having been merely personal, and necessarily very limited ; but she was able to judge well both from early associations, and from her own tact and observation, of the necessary requirements of the station which she wished to assume, though not perhaps so well of the income calculated to uphold it. She determined at the onset that everything in her new abode should be in proper style, in harmonious keeping, and in this, as a matter of taste, no one can blame her.

Her furniture was the first matter requiring attention, and on taking her *Decorateur* through her house in Russell Square after he had surveyed the apartments in Connaught Place, she was startled, she really was startled to hear him declare that there was scarcely any of it he could conscientiously advise her to remove—" it was not in keeping."

She ventured a little remonstrance occasionally, for the furniture was really excellent and modern ; a large portion of it having been newly bought for the Russell Square house at an expense which Mr. de Snobyn, generous as he was, had thought so unreasonable that it had required a little extra exertion on her part to propitiate him.

But the man of moveables was quite inaccessible to her representations. The girandoles and ottomans that had cast such a lustre on the "wilds of Bloomsbury" were inadmissible in that habitable world of which Connaught Place was acknowledged to form a component part—"they were not in keeping : " this was Mr. Veneer's "*point d'appui*," his stronghold to which he always could and always did resort, when Mrs. de Snobyn ventured to uphold some article, perhaps, of solid value or real beauty, but wanting that ineffable something which cannot be acquired within

a certain limit eastward or northward of May Fair—"it was not in keeping."

So, at last, Mrs. de Snobyn, perhaps, not very unwillingly, having satisfied her conscience by scruples that proved unavailing, forbore further interference, and left all in the hands of Mr. Veneer, stipulating only for the transfer of a few favorite articles, and for the whole of the furniture of Mr. de Snobyn's "own apartment," he having, with a display of firmness quite unusual for him, expressed his determination to have nothing newly purchased for his own use.

To enter such a house without a suitable carriage would, of course, have been ridiculous. Mr. de Snobyn had, for some time, kept an indescribable sort of useful family vehicle; but this was sent to the sale-rooms, and the great artist of Southampton was desired to build a family carriage in his best style, and to send one down for use in the interim. Carriage

horses, and saddle horses for the young ladies and Augustus, were obtained through the agency of a qualified friend ; and the young de Snobyns were indefatigable in their practice under an accomplished riding master at Knightsbridge, in order to be able to exhibit themselves and their habits in Rotten Row, during the next season with *eclát* to themselves and credit to Stultze.

Augustus, also, was matriculated at Oxford, Octavius was sent to Eton, and their sisters had the most fashionable masters engaged for harp, guitar, singing, &c.

They likewise had their wardrobes replenished in a style which made their hearts bound in the anticipation of routs, balls, beaux and conquests to come.

During the progress of these changes, Mr. de Snobyn looked more than usually uncomfortable, but he did not interfere. He had indeed attempted to do so, but without success ; for on showing himself

somewhat more inconvinceable than usual to the arguments of his wife, she had, at length, ventured on the extreme one.

“I am sorry, Mr. de Snobyn, that you compel me to remind you that I am not now making any claim on your purse, but am spending money bequeathed to *me* by my own relative without recognition of you of whom he had never heard. I am sorry, extremely, to be obliged to refer, however slightly, to this circumstance. Believe me, it is most painful to me to do so.”

Mr. de Snobyn was completely silenced ; for if, when every guinea she spent was subtracted from his own industriously earned money, he had felt it always difficult and often impossible to gainsay her will or to check her expenditure, it may easily be supposed that he could not now, in these altered circumstances, assume a control that he had failed to establish earlier. So he became more than ever silent, inert, and undemonstrative.

But his remark about his virtual banishment from his family circle, was not lost on the quick mind of Mrs. de Snobyn, and she managed that this should be altered, apparently, at least. She really had none but kindly feelings towards Mr. de Snobyn, but not for the world would she have had any thing in the shape of inattention or neglect towards him, appear before the quick-sighted eye of his eldest son ; and such a remark as the old man had let fall, quite, as it seemed, unintentionally, would, she knew, have cut John to the quick, and perhaps have led to some strictures on his young brothers and sisters painful to hear, and difficult to parry. So Mr. de Snobyn was seen more with his family in Connaught Place, than had been the case in Russell Square : his wife, always, as, indeed, she always had, behaved to him with kindly courtesy, and even deference. That the latter sentiment was somewhat hollow, might be inferred from

the conduct of her children, who, though they never contradicted their father, did certainly seldom trouble themselves to attend to him.

So he usually sat, unnoticing and unnoticed, in his large chair by the fire in winter, and by the window in Summer ; but that the kind old man's affections and sympathies, however inert, were still existent, might be seen in the beam which brightened over his face, when his granddaughter, Maude, having paid her compliments to her grand-mamma and aunts, would quietly place a chair by his side, and stealing her hand into his, would whisper some message of kindness and consideration, with which she had been commissioned by his son John.

For Maude loved him—dearly. She had been brought up to do so. The feeling had grown with her growth, and strengthened with her strength. From her infancy, she had experienced nothing but kindness from him—indeed, from his

having children of his own about the same age, she had almost appeared to him as one of them, and it might be, unconsciously to himself, even more endeared, as the child of his son John, the grandchild of his beloved Madge. And in Maude's home, there had been no counteracting influences to the kindly feelings thus excited. She saw how highly he was respected, and how warmly he was loved by her father and her uncle Abel ; she saw him invariably treated with affectionate deference by her own gentle mother, and never, never by any chance heard a disparaging bye-word, which might throw a doubt on the reality of that deference ; and moreover, her childish mind invested him with a sort of reverence, as the husband of that grandmother, Madge Snobbins, who had been enshrined as a sort of deity in the memories of her sons, and was always represented by them to her young descendant, as a rare pattern of female excellence.

Is it any wonder that Maude loved her grand-father ?

Even when he called her " Madge," she had now learnt not only to forgive him, but almost even to like the appellation from his lips. Nay, as her own mind opened, and she could better understand and more highly appreciate her grandmother's character, as displayed to her by her father and her uncle Abel, in records of their mother's trials—quiet, domestic ones, but not the less searching, and in descriptions of her conduct under them, she became inaccessible, even to the quizzing of her gay young aunts and uncles, when they spoke of their hope that " the Madge of proverbial memory might be rescuscitated in her gentle descendent."

And to-day Mr. de Snobyn smiled more fondly on Madge than ever, for her message was,

" Dear grandpapa, I have such delightful news for you, to-day; uncle Abel is

coming home directly, and he promises that he will really now stay in England. *Are you not glad?*"

"Indeed I am, Madge, very, very glad—and always happy to see thee, Madge, love."

CHAPTER XIV.

IN a few days Mr. de Snobyn's happiness received an addition of which he was most acutely sensible, for Abel was seated by his side. Ever and anon seizing his son's hand, and grasping it in both his own, and peering up in his face with fond enquiring looks, as if his dimmed eyes could hardly trace the beloved lineaments with sufficient distinctness, the old man sate a long morning—a long, happy morning—his wife and younger family having driven out—in

listening to his wanderer's account of himself, and in asking multitudinous and oft-reiterated questions of little import, more as it seemed to awaken the tones he loved to hear than from any particular anxiety about the replies. And Abel, whom his gay young sisters called a cynic, Abel sate patient, and almost as gentle as a woman, listening to the old man's maundering ; replying again and again and again to the same insignificant question, giving over and over again the same detail of some trivial occurrence in which his father seemed interested. For all Abel's kindest feelings—and towards his father they had ever been most unswervingly affectionate—were excited and wounded by the sad falling off, the decided alteration for the worse which he in a moment detected in Mr. de Snobyn's appearance and manner. It had occurred so gradually as altogether to escape the notice of his young family, and even the more observant and affectionate John, though not altogether unconscious of

the change, looked at it without apprehension. Abel saw more clearly; he had been away a considerable time, and the change struck him to the heart.

Even had he not been so observant, the outpourings of the poor old gentleman himself would have enlightened him. For the sudden sight of Abel brought all old associations to his mind. He was sitting musing and solitary by the fire-side, his wife and children, as we have said, gone out, he not feeling in spirits to accompany them, his Bible on a little table by his side and his spectacles laid into mark the place—but he was not reading, but sitting thoughtfully with his forehead leaning on his hand, when the door opened and Abel was announced. He had not been expected till the next day.

“Abel! my dear, dear boy!”

Oh, the thoughts that gushed through his heart at that moment, on seeing the well-known countenance, and hearing the dearly-loved voice. For Abel's voice,

though full-toned and manly, was musical as his mother's had been, stealing as it were on the senses; and his countenance bore a striking resemblance to hers.

In his sickly childhood he had been her darling, as people also said he was her living image. He had much of her turn of mind, much of her peculiarity of speech—traits which had been subdued, refined, softened by education and commerce with the world, but not annihilated.

The countenance, the voice, the manner, seen and heard so suddenly, struck the weakened nerves of the old man with almost overpowering force. The long past seemed present to his view, the intervening years almost obliterated. He almost felt as if with this her dear and living image he were talking to his own Madge again; and his conversation, perhaps almost unconsciously to himself, assumed the tone which it might have taken had this his heart's friend, "the wife of his youth," been at his side.

“And my dear boy you are really in earnest—you really will not go abroad again.”

“No, my dear father, I am in earnest : I shall remain in England near you.”

“That is right, Abel : that is as I would have it. Indeed I have never been able to understand *why* you have been away so much.”

“‘Fancy flies before the wind,’ father, you know,” said Abel, smiling.

“Yes, my boy, but you were never given to fancies. Until just before your brother Jack’s marriage—and mine—you had none of these rambling ways. I have had my own thoughts of that matter—yes I have,” said the old man, shaking his head slowly to and fro, more as if in soliloquy than conversation—“I have had my own thoughts of that matter, though I have never, never spoken ’em. But you will stay here now Abel,” with sudden energy.

Abel had changed colour perceptibly during the last few moments, but he has-

tened for the twentieth time, to reassure his father :

“ I will indeed, my dear father ; I will indeed.”

“ Yes, I hope so, Abel ; for I'm going fast : and I sometimes think my last breath wouldn't pass if *her* sons were not near me.”

“ Bless you, my good father, we *shall* be near you, do not doubt it : but I trust you will be with us for many years yet.”

“ No Abel, *I shall not* : I am fast going home ; I feel it : for *home* it must be where Madge is.”

“ My dear father,” said Abel, much affected, “ you must not give way thus ; for our sakes you must not. You are out of spirits to-day, and nervous.”

“ Yes, nervous ! that's it : that's just what your step-mother says. I never contradict her, Abel, no, no—I never contradict her—but I know better. Look here, Abel,” continued he, opening the bible with a trembling hand where his

spectacles lay, and pointing to a chapter in Ecclesiasticus—"see there what does it say—'Fear the Lord, and wait for his mercy,' don't it say that, Abel?"

"Yes, father."

"Yes, and then, higher up, 'Set thy heart aright and constantly endure, and make not haste in time of trouble:' are those the words, Abel?"

"Yes, father!"

"Well then, there it is: many and many a time do I read them words and such like. I do not 'make haste,' I wait patiently. till I go to her: but nevertheless I *am waiting*, Abel, and I feel it won't be long."

Abel could not speak, he felt as if he were choking, and walked quickly to the window till he should recover his equanimity. He had stood there hardly a minute when a beautifully appointed carriage drove to the door, with two footmen in rich liveries hanging behind. A thundering rap at the door, the carriage

steps let down with a rattle, the obsequious attendants one on each side, and another on the steps, and four ladies entered the house whom Abel hesitated not to assume were his step-mother and sisters—the wife and daughters of the ex-tallow chandler of Budge Row.

He was right. Footsteps were heard on the stairs, the drawing-room door was opened by a man out of livery, and the ladies entered, Mrs. de Snobyn first ; but her animated greeting had proceeded no farther than,

“ Well, my dear Mr. de Snobyn, such beautiful things—”

When she suddenly stopped, as Abel advanced from the window, by the curtain of which he had been partly obscured.

“ Is it possible ? do I behold our dear Abel ?” said the lady advancing with both hands extended.

Abel took one, very coldly, and relinquished it almost instantly, after a recognition, formal, if not haughty. But with

his three sisters he shook hands with a kind cordiality in which there was neither mistake nor guile.

Mrs. de Snobyn was taken aback for a moment by the freezing manner of her step-son, so totally unexpected to her ; for she had always felt as a sort of triumph the excellent understanding she had maintained with them—moreover her friendliness with them, added much to her influence with their father. However, she soon satisfied herself with the idea that it was only one of Abel's whims—one of his odd ways—and he was always privileged : so with this comfortable solution of her difficulty, she quickly re-assumed her accustomed benignancy of tone and speech.

“ Do you not think your sisters improved, Abel ? ”

“ Greatly, greatly improved,” said Abel ;
“ I should hardly have known them. Helena and Evelina I suppose are decidedly ‘ out ? ’ ”

“ Yes, Evelina has begun to accompany her sister this season.”

“ And when does my old pet Charlotte enter the market ?”

“ The what ? For shame, Abel ; you are too bad.”

“ Why so, Lotty ? let me feel your pulse.”

She held out her hand to him, and he placed his fingers on her wrist with a very diploma-like sort of air :

“ ‘ Her pulse beats matrimony ;’ decidedly she will enter the market this winter. I should recommend it.”

“ Abel how can you go on so ?” said Charlotte, snatching her hand away, and applying it to his ear, with more energy than politeness.

“ Charlotte, my dear !” said the somewhat shocked Mrs. de Snobyn, “ you forget that you are out of the nursery.”

“ No, mama, so please you ; it is Abel who forgets.”

“ Right, Lotty, right. I must beg you

to remember our old agreement, ma'am, never to scold Charlotte when I am here."

"Why, it will indeed be hardly fair on Charlotte if you still retain your old talent of provocation, but perhaps you are improved."

"Improved, mama! not he," said Helena, "I saw in one moment that he was as cynical as ever."

"And what do you mean by cynical, Lady Helena?" Abel had often used to call her *Lady* Helena, when, as quite a young girl, she aped her mother's manners.

"Why I mean cross, crabbed, sarcastic, and sneering."

"And do you really mean to say that in the some five minutes I have been in your company, I have been 'cross, crabbed, sarcastic, and sneering?' Do you really mean that?"

"No, no, of course not; but you *are* a torment, Abel."

“That also in the past prolific five minutes, Helena?”

“Helena, dear, call *Peccavi* and yield: you know it always does come to that,” said Evelina laughing.

“Well, Abel,” said Helena, holding out her hand, “as you are mighty, be merciful, and let us have a truce at any rate.”

“Not a truce, Helena, but a lasting peace; and behold! in testimony of perfect amity on my part, I humbly lay at your fair feet these tokens.”

So saying, he drew from his pocket three small jewel cases, each containing a bracelet of beautiful workmanship, with a pendant jewelled clasp. They were similar in costliness, though differing in style, and were to be appropriated according to the fancies of the three fair donees. The sisters' eyes sparkled even before the cases were opened; Abel's gifts were always *à-propos*, and in the most perfect taste.

While the girls were exhibiting the gifts to their father, who had relapsed into his

usual imbecile mood, and regarded the jewels and themselves alternately with a pleased though wandering eye, Mrs. de Snobyn drew Abel a little aside.

“And how do you think your dear father is looking? we think, well.”

“Indeed! It grieves me indeed that I must differ from you in this matter,” said Abel, all the coldness and formality with which he had greeted Mrs. de Snobyn, and which he had cast off in chattering to his sisters, having returned in full force, the instant his step-mother addressed him—“but I am sadly shocked at the alteration in my father: I think he looks very ill.”

“No, no, Abel; no no, do not say that,” said Mrs. de Snobyn, impelled at the instant by actual genuine feeling. “He could not be looking so very ill, and I not notice it.”

“Yes: decay that makes its way with a stealing pace, day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute, is often unnoticed by those deeply interested in its progress.”

“Still I do hope you are wrong,” said

Mrs. de Snobyn, who had now recovered from the sudden shock—"or, at all events, that the alteration is but temporary. Something Mr. de Snobyn has suffered, I confess, from the removal here—the bustle, the noise, the change seemed to harass him."

"As well they might," said Abel, bitterly. "You are not fond of proverbs, Mrs. de Snobyn ; nevertheless, I shall venture to repeat one, that I would you had been acquainted with ere you made this accursed change : 'Remove an old tree, and it will wither to death.' I fear me we shall all have to acknowledge the truth of that."

"You are warm, Abel ; you are excited ; you cannot mean all this."

"I *do* mean it all. I may be warm ; I may be excited ; I may be rude ; but my heart is almost broken to see my old father as he is. He ought to have twenty years of life in him yet."

"And has—we will hope."

“Pshaw! folly! look at him.”

“I hope and believe you to be mistaken; but supposing your fears to be just, how am I implicated otherwise than as being the greatest sufferer!”

Abel's lip curled.

“When you were pleased to marry my father, ma'am—and you *were* pleased to marry him,” and Abel fixed his cold, grey eye on her face, “he was a tallow-chandler in Budge Row, respected in his station, and happy. You have brought him here where he is ridiculous, and feels that he is—where all the habits of his life have been broken at a time he cannot form new ones—and do you wonder that he sinks under the change?”

“Has he complained to you?”

“*He* complain! my father complain, when he alone is the sufferer? Do you indeed yet know him so little? If it be indeed so, I cannot be surprised at your conduct.”

“Abel, you are trying my temper

severely and unjustifiably ; you must feel that you are. Surely when our fortune warranted the change, I had an undoubted right to remove my family to a residence which I considered more suitable to their prospects."

" I doubt that undoubted right exceedingly, when its exercise involved the health and comfort, and possibly the life, of the father and founder of that family. But I am willing to believe—yes, I must believe—that you did not anticipate such a result. But I have much outstayed my time, and my brother will be waiting for me. I must wish you good morning."

" You remain here, surely ?"

" No, I thank you," replied he, with a very decided touch of what Helena called his cynical smile.

" What, Abel ? what ?" said Mr. d Snobyn, when he saw him shaking hands with his sisters—" what Abel, going ? How is this, Mrs. S—," and the old man raised himself upright in his chair, " is

not *my* son to be at home in this fine house?"

Mrs. de Snobyn looked absolutely scarlet with pride, vexation, and perplexity; for she could not understand Abel's manner at all. But he hastened to speak.

"My dear father, I have already declined Mrs. de Snobyn's offer of a room, because it is requisite I should remain awhile with my brother. We have important business to transact together, and it would be very inconvenient to John—very—if I were so far from him. But I shall come to see you every day."

"Now do, Abel, do. Don't forget, Abel."

"My dear father, I will not forget."

CHAPTER XV.

PERHAPS our readers may not be averse to learning a little more of Abel, whom we left a pale, sickly, timid boy, under the patronage of the worshipful Alderman Gobble.

That worthy did his duty by his charge, generously and conscientiously. He gave Abel a good education, and at his own death, bequeathed to his adopted son, a fortune large enough to support him in comfort and respectability, even without

the aid of the profession, to which he hoped Abel might attach himself. But Abel did not do so. The thoughtful turn of mind which appeared in the boy, was more fully developed in the reflective youth: he was old enough, on his guardian's death, to reflect on life's various chances, and on his own peculiar inaptitude, physically and mentally, to struggle successfully through its various turmoils, or to push his way through a crowd of eagerly contending aspirants, to any station of particular emolument or fame.

“ ‘Tis safe riding in a good haven,’ ” said the young philosopher to his brother John, who, full from crown to toe himself with the bustling energy of life, could hardly understand his brother Abel's resolution, to rest content with the means he possessed, when he had youth, talent, education, and friends, to further his progress in any profession he might choose to adopt.

“ ‘ Money makes money,’ and doubtless,

were I to give myself to barter and chaffer, I might multiply my guineas ; but I cannot, and if I could—to what end ? ‘ Riches are but the baggage of fortune,’ and, to my thinking, ‘ he is rich enough that can keep himself warm.’ ”

“ All very wise and true, no doubt,” said John ; “ but you mistake me Abel ; I am not urging you to a mere hunt after fortune, you have, as you say, enough ; but I want to see you distinguish yourself in some higher vocation—literary or scientific—you are too retiring, my dear brother : your talents should not be hidden under a bushel ; I want to see you shine in the world.”

“ ‘ Honour and ease are seldom bedfellows,’ Jack.”

“ Now, wouldn’t any one think thou wert the idlest dog on earth,” said John, laughing ; “ to put me off with the ends of old saws, thus, instead of being, as I know you are, the very reverse. However, take your own way, I’ll counsel no more ; only for

once I, in my turn, will indulge you with a proverb. 'A wilfu' man should be unco wise.'"

"And I'll cap your Scotticism with another, John, 'Counsel is nae command,' and I thank you for your kindly meant counsel, brother mine, though I do not think to follow it.

Nor did he ; he followed the counsel of his own heart and mind, that quiet Abel, enquired, if not hastily or capriciously, but many a time and oft, in the watches of the night, and the solitary musings of the day—and we never heard that he repented, in after life, of the decision he had thus made.

He was now in his early manhood—much what his childhood had foreshadowed—

"The boy was father of the man."

rather above the middle height, pale, and somewhat attenuated ; but not more so

than was consistent with a healthy appearance.

He was delicate, not sickly. His countenance was thoughtful ; and when in repose, singularly placid ; his diction somewhat quaint without being formal ; his mind was cultivated and his taste refined by that cultivation.

His disposition was intensely affectionate but singularly undemonstrative ; apparently, cold as alabaster ; really, glowing with the kindest feelings of humanity.

The one event of his life, which fixed upon him the fate of old-bachelorism, and which was, I have always thought, the original fount of that slight tinge of sarcasm discernible in his later life, and which caused his half-sisters to call him cynic, occurred shortly after the period of which we have just spoken, and has, hitherto, been known but to one individual, besides myself.

Amongst the acquaintance of a style and rank somewhat superior to that hereditarily his, to whom his domiciliation at

the country residence of Mr. Alderman Gobble had introduced him, was Mrs. Villiers, a widow lady, with whom resided an orphan god-child called Sophia Leslie. Sophia was the ornament of Mrs. Villiers' childless home, and the comfort of her declining years ; moreover, she had attractions which gained her no slight attention amongst the youth of the surrounding neighbourhood. Sophia was very pretty, very gentle, very unassuming and good-tempered ; and though no great proficient in shewy accomplishments, had received an education quite befitting her station in life. Added to this, she had a pretty little property in her own right, and was shrewdly surmised to be the sole heiress of all Mrs. Villiers might have to bequeath. This last circumstance added much to her consideration in the neighbourhood.

Not, however, in the estimation of Abel Snobbins, with whom her quiet, unshewy gentleness, had more weight than all the drachmas that were ever coined. He felt

abashed and awkward in the company of more shewy and fashionable girls, who thought quizzing a good substitute for wit, and who ridiculed his shyness.

With Sophia it was not so ; impelled solely by her gentle goodness, which could not endure to see another uncomfortable, or influenced by the strong partiality which Mrs. Villiers evinced for Abél, certainly she was always kind and cordial with him as a sister might be, and he regarded her with an affection, of which, at that time, he little estimated the force.

For it had grown upon him imperceptibly ; he never contemplated such a thing as falling in love with Sophia Leslie ; he was constantly and familiarly in her society—for Mrs. Villiers and Mr. Gobble were old and attached friends and near neighbours ; and this was sufficient for his happiness ; he looked not beyond the present.

But when Mr. Gobble died, Abel awoke from the dream in which he had been revelling. The house in which he had been .

residing with his kind guardian, did not form part of the property bequeathed to him ; a removal, therefore, from the next door neighbourhood, if not from the general neighbourhood of Sophia, was involved in the change of his circumstances. This it was, which first opened the eyes of the young dreamer. To be separated from Sophia!

But he saw nothing in the graver consideration of his circumstances to cause him to despond. The property bequeathed to him by his munificent benefactor was enough to satisfy the wants and wishes of sober-minded people, such as he knew himself and believed Miss Leslie to be ; he could not doubt that he was regarded with a favouring eye by Mrs. Villiers ; and as to Sophia, she never hesitated to show the pleasure she felt in his society.

It never struck Abel that had her partiality been of the nature he hoped and thought it was, she might have been more chary in displaying it. Sophia liked, nay

loved Abel as a brother, thought the affection, such affection, was reciprocal, and never dreamt of the nature of his feelings for her. Mrs. Villiers saw more clearly, but resolved to let matters take their course.

Happy in his self-deception, Abel had no mind to precipitate his destiny : he was shrewd enough to understand that, let Mrs. Villiers be ever so friendly towards his pretensions, she would not hear of an immediate marriage, on account of the youth of both ; and he resolved, secure as he thought in circumstances, to wait a twelve-month from the death of Mr. Gobble, before he made his offer. He felt he should gain in Mrs. Villiers' estimation by the delay, and he did not fear that he should lose in Sophia's. But he could not forbear to shew his heart's treasure to Jack—his dear brother Jack—who had never seen Miss Leslie from a boy, as she had usually been at school, or otherwise away from

home during John Snobbins's annual visits to his brother's protector, and his own good friend, Mr. Alderman Gobble. Locking his secret closely within his own breast, Abel anticipated the delight he should feel in introducing his brother to Sophia, in listening to his praises of her, in pointing out to his notice the good qualities he should overlook, or not duly appreciate; and, finally, in receiving that dearly loved brother's warm congratulations on his own happy prospects.

“O world! thy slippery turns.”

It is very possible that all Abel's anticipations might ultimately have been realised, but for the intervention of this visit. Mrs. Villiers' warm approbation, his own engaging character, combined with his unexceptionable position, might in time have won him the whole heart of Sophia, had no other attractive suitor appeared in

the interim. But such a one did appear, and that in the quarter where Abel had never dreamt of apprehending one.

John Snobbins was a fine fellow, glowing with health and ardour, frank, free, affectionate and fearless—as yet extremely good-looking, the tendency to corpulency which hereafter might be a disfigurement, being at present just the reverse. He was of a gay and happy temper, had high spirits, was very sociable and conversible, and was a great and decided favourite with all his acquaintance. Moreover, he had been now for some little time his father's partner in the flourishing concern in Budge Row. No doubts or misgivings as to present means or future prospects did therefore intervene to throw a shadow on his sunshiny path.

It was, perhaps, the attraction of contrast which caused the quiet, gentle, retiring Sophia to attract his notice far more favourably than the more animated and

more showy girls into whose society he was thrown. He was very suddenly and very severely smitten, and he made no secret of his attachment, but besieged the inspirer of it with all the frank ardour of his nature. And after some maidenly hesitation, Miss Leslie smiled—not unpropitiously.

And Abel! to him it was even as if a thunderbolt had fallen; and when John—the all unsuspecting John—eagerly claimed Abel's congratulations on his success, gladly would he have welcomed a thunderbolt which should have rendered him insensible to his misery, even at the expense of life itself. Even John, pre-occupied as he was, thought that Abel was somewhat odd, but rendered less observant than usual in the first moment of happiness, by the intoxication of his own success, he merely supposed that his brother had as usual knocked himself up poring over his books, and telling him to “shut

them up, like a good fellow, and have a bracing run in the fields," he hurried back to his Sophia.

"Yes, his Sophia! his! his!" as poor Abel murmured or rather groaned in his agony, as with his head buried in his hands, his long, thin fingers twining in his hair, he sate through that miserable night.

But these hours of self-questioning and reflection were not lost, and when morning broke in upon them, and the bright light of day told the necessity for arousing himself to exertion, he had fully and sternly resolved

"To act the unshrinking martyr's part,"

to hide his shattered hopes, and almost breaking heart from the knowledge or suspicion of every one, but most especially of his dear brother, and, every thought of self annihilated, to claim and regard Sophia as the dearest of sisters.

But the struggle was too great—the

mind might triumph ultimately, but the body was sinking. Fortunately for him there was one who had read his secret, and who now guessed all.

Could Mrs. Villiers have chosen between the brothers, doubtless her election would have fallen on Abel, and she felt considerable disappointment that her godchild did not exhibit the same feeling ; but she was too wise and good to give the least expression to her disappointment, as Mr. John Snobyns was unexceptionable in character, and in all respects a suitable match for Miss Leslie.

To one person only did she speak on the subject, and that was to Abel himself, and such extenuation as his feelings admitted, he received from her cordial friendship and sympathy.

But to remain a daily and hourly witness of his brother's happiness was, he soon found, a martyrdom to which he was unequal ; and he proposed to travel for awhile, a plan which Mrs. Villiers highly approved,

and which John did not oppose, though he thought it a sudden whim. He saw, however, that Abel looked out of health, and therefore in hope that the change might be of service to him, assisted and hastened his preparations—only stipulating that Abel should return and witness his marriage, which Mrs. Villiers had insisted should be deferred for some time.

And Abel did return to witness John's marriage, at the expense to himself of a severe fit of illness, the result of choked feelings and disappointed hopes. For not one iota as yet had his hopeless affection yielded to time.

Again he went abroad, and for a very much longer period, returning only for short seasons at distant intervals. On one of these visits he pledged himself for his little niece Margaret—our Maude—at the baptismal font, and as he pressed his lips on the soft face of the smiling, unconscious babe, he vowed to find in that child his solace and consolation for all he had lost.

For he never loved again—his true and constant heart never quickened its pulse for any other woman. Time, indeed, softened the acuteness of his regrets, and reconciled him to his solitary fate, and gave him a comforter beyond all price, in the daughter of his lost Sophia, on whom, as time passed, he poured all the riches of that affection which had been so vainly bestowed on her mother.

For even in her childish years, he was her frequent companion and playmate either at Mrs. Villiers' abode in England, or when that lady visited him abroad, almost always taking her little god-child with her. For much as Maude was the darling of her parents, being their only child, Mr. and Mrs. John Snobbins were too fully alive to its advantages in various ways, both as regarded health and education, to place any limit on their little girl's intercourse with her kind friend, Mrs. Villiers, or her kinder Uncle Abel.

It were too much to say that Abel's tem-

per had been entirely untouched by the adverse influences of bitter disappointment and a solitary life.

But the slight tendency to acerbity which might, occasionally, be detected in his conversation, was never known to influence his actions. Cynical sometimes in language, he was altogether Christian in heart.

CHAPTER XVI.

THERE were few incidents in Mrs. De Snobyn's career, which afforded her greater satisfaction than the circumstance—the knowledge of which, she gained accidentally from the newspapers—that her relative, Sir Charles Marchmont, Bart., had returned to England with his family, after an absence of many years, and was then sojourning in London. This information she gleaned on the very evening of the day

that Abel had visited her ; and it certainly was more efficacious in dispelling the disagreeable impression his visit had left, than all the efforts of her daughters, or all the *agrémens* of her costly house.

Accompanied by her eldest son and daughter, she called on the baronet at his hotel—having previously by letter, announced her intention of doing so ; and her wish to make the acquaintance of Lady Marchmont, with whom she begged Sir Charles's good offices in favour of his early playmate. The claim was cordially acknowledged. Sir Charles well remembered his cousin and early playmate, though he could hardly reconcile his reminiscences of the black-eyed romp of his nursery, and the majestic woman who now entered his drawing-room. He greeted her kindly, even affectionately, and led her towards Lady Marchmont, who immediately on her entrance, had made preparations to lay down her knitting and rise from her chair. This feat, however, she had not dexterity

to accomplish so quickly as she wished—for she dropped her knitting, and in stooping to take it up she entangled the needles and dropped a loop, so, to avoid increasing the mischief, she held her knitting fast, and begged her visitor would excuse her hand. But if the salutation wanted grace, it was not deficient in cordiality; and, moreover, Mrs. De Snobyn was not in a critical mood.

Mrs. De Snobyn then introduced her son and daughter. Sir Charles looked at them with interest and friendliness.

“These young people are sad chronometers, my cousin,” said he, “I, indeed, am an old fellow, and look what I am—but you would hardly be taken for the mother of this young lady. You look charmingly well, indeed.”

The remark was not a mere courtly compliment, but was evidently made in truthful and kindly sincerity; and was, of course, very graciously received.

“But,” continued Sir Charles, “though

I am not so happy as to have daughters, I have a son whom I shall be proud to shew you. My dear, where is Redwald?"

"Two—three—four—I beg your pardon, Sir Charles—seven—eight—you were asking something?"

Sir Charles smiled good-humouredly, but was not under the necessity of repeating his question, for, at that moment, the door opened, and a young man entered whom he eagerly accosted.

"Redwald, I have very great pleasure in introducing you to a cousin, and, in early life, a very dear friend of mine, Mrs. De Snobyn."

Redwald bowed.

"You have frequently heard me speak of Helena Brooke?"

"I have, father—often."

"I have only recently learnt that I am to recognise her in Mrs. De Snobyn; our long absenteeism, my dear madam, has kept us in ignorance of many circumstances which would have interested us

deeply. We must atone for our involuntary separation by the frequency of our future intercourse."

Again Mrs. de Snobyn bowed very graciously. Had she entertained any doubts of the eligibility of the connection before, the sight of this young man, the only son and heir of a baronet of ancient family and unincumbered property, would have decided her.

He was tall and eminently handsome ; but it was not the regularity of feature that attracted you so much as the intelligence and good temper that seemed to beam from his countenance. His manners had all the frankness and kindness that marked his father's, but were elevated by a courtly elegance which Sir Charles Marchmont did not possess. Both were gentlemen in every look and tone, but the elder one had traces of the country breeding of his youth.

The party were hardly seated after the renewed introductions before Mrs. de

Snobyn had formed a plan in her own mind for cementing these newly formed links of acquaintanceship into a closer and more enduring association. With this bright object in her mental horizon she prepared to attend most graciously to Lady Marchmont who having remedied the disaster to her knitting was prepared to take her own share in the conversation.

“And this tall handsome young lady is your eldest, Mrs. de Snobyn.”

“Yes, she is.”

“Dear me, ma'am, she can't be much younger than my Redwald. You do indeed look very young to be her mother.”

Mrs. de Snobyn coloured a little, but smiled very graciously.

“But I believe,” continued the maundering old lady, “London ladies can dress themselves to look any age : so I am told.”

Redwald interposed with some enquiries about the Opera. The subject was fully

discussed and it was decided to fix an early evening for going there together.

“I shall feel very proud,” said Mrs. de Snobyn, “if Lady Marchmont will allow my practical knowledge of London life to be of service to her in any way. Fashion changes so rapidly, and you have been away so many years.”

“I am sure Lady Marchmont will be much obliged,” said Sir Charles.

“Yes indeed I shall,” said her ladyship, putting the stopper in her smelling bottle, which she usually took up when she laid down her knitting: “everything, as you say, does alter so very much that I have no doubt all the modes and manners of my younger days are exploded. And the people too—though I hope we shall meet with some old friends. And by the way, ma’am, speaking of old friends and old names you know—your husband can’t be a young man, but I don’t recollect ever seeing him, and I can’t guess which family he is of.”

“Probably not; Mr. de Snobyn is a man of very retired life: he has never been known in the world.”

“But of what family is he;” and the old lady balanced her smelling bottle on its way to her nose whilst she enumerated various family trees, giving peculiar emphasis to the head of each house, by tapping the smelling bottle in her left hand, with the stopper which she held in the right.

“There are the De Snobynes of Gloucestershire, who are certainly the heads of that family, though the Earl of Fullarton, who writes De Snobine with the i instead of the y, is usually thought to be so. Their principal seat you know is in Herefordshire. But the Gloucestershire family are far the proudest, and indeed very tenacious about their pedigree. I remember once at a County election when the Tory candidate called on Mr. de Snobyne—the Gloucestershire Snobyne, you know, for his vote, he said,

“I think, Mr. de Snobyne, you are a branch of the Earl of Fullarton's family.’

“‘No, sir,’ said Mr. de Snobyne; ‘the Earl of Fullarton is a branch of mine.’

“He was a very haughty man, and it was said this mistake of the candidate lost him the vote.”

Lady Marchmont sniffed at her smelling bottle, and proceeded.

“Then there are the De Snobyne's of Warwickshire, who also write their names with a *y*—and in Northumberland—”

“Stay, my dear mother,” interrupted Redwald, though very courteously; “won't the shortest plan be to beg Mrs. de Snobyn to tell us her family tree.”

“Right,” exclaimed Sir Charles, gaily; “come, my good cousin, declare yourself—‘under which king, Bezonian, speak or die:’ assure us of your claim to our courtesies: assure us that we shall not lose caste by associating with you.”

“Full many a shaft at random sent
Finds aim the archer never meant.’

How little could Sir Charles Marchmont know the meaning with which his hearer's conscience pointed the words. For one moment, one short moment, Mrs. de Snobyn weighed the possibility of her cousin's knowing nothing personally of this far off Northumberland family ; but the risk was too great. Her good sense prevailed. It was with even more than her usual winningness of accent and manner, that she replied—

“ Indeed, Sir Charles, I have no further claim on Lady Marchmont's kindness than she may be induced to yield to me as your own poor cousin. My husband assumed his present name in consequence of his accession to an estate which requires the owner to bear the family name.”

“ Then it *is* a family name.”

Mrs. de Snobyn *almost* bit her lip.

“ Undoubtedly ; but we have hardly investigated its origin.”

“ ‘ What's in a name ? ’ ” again interposed Redwald, gaily—yet kindly too, for

he was very quick-sighted ; “ and yet there is something too, and I should like to consult your taste, Miss de Snobyn, about a name for this little creature,” and he uncovered a beautiful little Italian greyhound which was nestled in a basket by the hearth.

“ What a beautiful creature,” said Helena.

“ I thought you had decided to call it Ariel,” said his father.

“ I think so : but I should be pleased to have Miss de Snobyn's approval of my judgment. I hope soon to see a young lady, an ancient playmate, here, with whom I made acquaintance in France : I was then on my way to Italy, and the last time we met, I promised to bring her home a greyhound—here it is. That day we had been reading the *Tempest*, and she was bewitched with the character of Ariel. Now I propose to call this little pet—for a pet it must be—Ariel. Do you all approve ?”

The votes were unanimous : the dog's

history had obliterated Lady Marchmont's memory of the pedigree ; and the party separated with many cordial farewells.

If Mrs. de Snobyn *had* a misgiving, it was relative to the lady for whom "Ariel" was intended, but the young man had called her his early playmate—and young men very seldom, very seldom indeed, fall in love with their nursery friends, so she soon dismissed that little apprehension as not worth notice.

CHAPTER XVII.

MRS. DE SNOBYN and her family clustered round the hearth, waiting for the summons to dinner, were discussing the adventure of the morning. Helena quizzing Lady Marchmont for the amusement of her sisters, and Mrs. de Snobyn explaining the family connection to her husband, when a little commotion was heard in the hall, the shrill and positive tones of a female voice mingled with graver sounds, remonstrances as it seemed of the men in attendance. The sounds evidently approached, but the shriller ones gained the mastery, the

graver ones were hushed ; steps were heard on the stairs, and the shrill tones and pattering feet which seemed to beat an apt accompaniment were now at the very drawing-room door. It opened and a little body pattered in quickly but stopt in the middle of the room, cast a quick searching glance around, and elevating both her hands as in wonder, exclaimed,

“ But—well to be sure—but this *is* spicy—this *is* a change !”

The intruder was low in height, and thin and shrewd looking ; she was dressed in a black velvet bonnet trimmed with green ; a black silk pelisse rather the worse for wear, over which she wore a scarlet shawl, the corner of which draggled on the carpet ; her dark gloves sewed with blue were rather too large and were mended, and her little feet were encased in substantial cork walking shoes, which laced over the instep almost high enough to conceal her white stockings.

All looked in astonishment at the in-

truder, and Mrs. de Snobyn had turned to reprimand the butler, but it was evident from the man's countenance that he had not been a willing party to the intrusion.

But in far less time than we have taken to write this description the lady had recovered from her first glance of admiring astonishment, had approached Mrs. de Snobyn, seized both her hands which she shook heartily, exclaiming,

“ Well, and how *do* you do ?”

The scene was so ludicrous that the young people laughed outright, and the well-bred butler made a hasty retreat. The little jerking ill-dressed visitor, standing almost on tip-toe peering up in the face, and vehemently shaking both the hands of the lady who stood before her in all the magnificence of her towering height, the pride of her great beauty, and the taste of her elegant attire, formed a contrast that was irresistible.

Mrs. de Snobyn coloured through her rouge, and a shade of vexation passed over

her fine features, but always remembering what was due to herself, she withdrew with all possible grace from the grasp of her untoward visitor, as she said politely, but coldly,

“ I beg your pardon—you have the advantage of me.”

“ You don't know me!—well to be sure, I should have known you anywhere, and I don't fancy after all perhaps I am so much altered as you are. But I'll soon satisfy you. You remember Margate ?”

“ Certainly, I have visited Margate ?”

“ Yes, yes—and the pic-nic at Herne Bay where you fainted ?”

As if stung by an adder, Mrs. de Snobyn started back, her face flushed the deepest crimson, and then became, spite of her rouge, deadly pale ; but with an immediate and peremptory effort she recovered herself, and spoke firmly.

“ You are Miss—”

“ Miss Prabble to be sure : I *knew*,”—

with a nod and a wink to her hostess—
“ yes, you know that was our first meeting at Margate, but we'd many pleasant parties there after that, hadn't we? Ah! those were merry days. And where's your husband—that dear old Mr. Snobbins. Ah, you put *my* nose out there—I'd cast a sheep's eye on him myself, I can tell you.”

She turned as she spoke, and saw Mr. de Snobyn, who like the rest of his family was rather bewildered, but not so sensitive to or sensible of the ridicule of the scene as they were—was advancing with some idea that he ought to speak.

“ Well, and my very good sir, how are you? well and flourishing, I hope—you ought to be with all this fine family about you. Are these fine, handsome young ladies and gentlemen all your children?”

“ Yes, ma'am, they are,” said the pleased old man, looking at them very proudly, and by no means withdrawing his hands

from her grasp as his lady had done, he was leading her into the midst of the group when his well-bred lady interposed.

“ Allow me to make my young folks known to you, Miss Prabble. My dears, this lady is a very old acquaintance of your father’s and mine.”

The young people were making their briefest of ceremonial acknowledgments, but this did not suffice to check Miss Prabble’s hearty friendliness. She insisted on being introduced specifically to each, and on shaking hands with them all.

“ And you, my dear, are the eldest, are you? Ah! I remember your mamma, there, just such another—a little taller, and may be a little older—yes—a *leetle* older certainly—but not so much when I first knew her. You have just her dark eyes and her bright complexion, aye, and her haughty look, too, I fancy, miss, if you’re not pleased. But you’ll not quarrel with an insignificant little body like me, and an old friend too, my dear. No, no,

no. Your mamma could be haughty enough when she chose ; but to do her justice I don't think she ever offended people with her airs."

So she again shook hands with Miss Helena de Snobyn, and then addressed herself to the others.

All this had been so abrupt, so sudden, and Miss Prabble, though not absolutely impetuous, was so very quick in speech and action, that none of the party seemed to have recovered sufficient self-possession to repress her very energetic advances. Mr. de Snobyn looked indeed contented and quite happy : these homely salutations accorded better with the warm happiness of his early life than the enforced etiquette of his later days. Besides he was beginning to recal Miss Prabble to recollection as one of the most chatty, social, and agreeable of the hotel circle during his never-to-be-forgotten expeditions to Margate. His hand therefore was again most cordially alert when Miss Prabble,

having completed the round of his family circle, came to renew her salutations to him.

“And so, my dear Mr. Snobbins, you are really very well, are you?”

“Yes, ma'am, very well, thank you; but won't you sit down?”

“Well, I will sit down in this chair close by yours, and we'll have a little bit of chat all to ourselves. There's nothing like meeting with old friends, is there?”

“Nothing—nothing,” said the old man, and again they shook hands, and addressed themselves as if for an hour's confidential communication.

The young folks tittered—Mrs. de Snobyn looked perplexed, and the butler looked in for an intimation of what he was to do. He had been on the very point of announcing dinner, when Miss Prabble so unceremoniously announced herself. Mrs. de Snobyn smilingly acknowledged the signal aloud.

“What, Jennings, is Mrs. Omelet alarmed

for her fish? tell her not to mind—to do the best she can: we will not be critical.”

Miss Prabble had an eye, and an ear for everything; she was up in a moment.

“Nay, my dear Miss Prabble,” said Mrs. de Snobyn, in her most winning manner; “do not hurry, I pray you. My cook is so very sensitive: in fact, I believe we have rather spoiled her by our own unfailing punctuality.”

“But, my dear Mrs. S——,” said Mr. de Snobyn, “perhaps Miss Prabble will stay and have dinner with us.”

Mrs. de Snobyn, however internally vexed, immediately repeated the invitation.

“Well, I really don’t care if I do stop and take a bit with you: I can hardly say dinner though, for I had such a capital snack at your cousin Lady Marchmont’s, that, as I told her ladyship, it had saved my pocket and my larder for this day anyhow. For you see, Mr. Snobbins, single women like me, are not sorry now and

then of a take-off that way ; it makes ends meet easier. Not but what I've enough to live on, and thanks to nobody."

During all this time she was fumbling at the pins of her shawl and the strings of her bonnet. Evelina satirically, Charlotte more kindly, offered their assistance.

"No, my dears, no, thank you very much ; but don't trouble—don't trouble. Old fashioned bodies like me know how to help themselves best."

"You had better go to my dressing-room, my daughter will attend you. You will like to refresh your hands and face."

"Not a bit of it, Mrs Snobbins, my dear, not a bit of it : no need at all : I shall be all tight and right in a trice. You must allow me to keep on my pelisse—indeed, I've no gown under (nodding confidentially to her,) and for the rest, you shall see what you shall see."

And indeed they began to watch her movements with some interest for Miss

Prabble's appearance without her shawl and bonnet was rather picturesque. The original binding of her black pelisse round the neck had probably been worn out in the service, for it was now replaced with a binding of discoloured purple satin, which left her withered and wrinkled throat bare quite to the collar bone. The crown of her head was incased in a little skull-cap of figured cotton lace, the binding of which—for there was no border, the trimmings inside the bonnet superseding the necessity of cap frills—the edge of this cap—the cap itself having probably “run up” in washing—did not above half cover the fillet or band of black velvet which bound her front in its place. There may be some of our readers inexperienced enough to require telling that “a front” is the forepart of a lady's wig. With admirable celerity and neatness Miss Prabble folded her shawl, laid her bonnet on it, and her gloves in that, and diving into the depths

of her petticoats produced sundry parcels pinned up in cap-paper, which having opened, she folded the paper, and put the pins in ready for use again.

“ You see, lone bodies like me are obliged to contrive ; it would never do for me to decline a friend’s sudden invitation, because I was not in apple-pie order. You see this little pocket-hole is no eye-sore—it’s hardly ever seen, and my pelisse is just one pocket to the very hem. I can stow a little wardrobe in it, all round between the silk and the lining : indeed it’s rather an improvement in these days, for it makes my pelisse stick out and look more fashionable. I see you are giggling, young missy, but you may be a lone old maid yourself some day.”

“ Heaven forbid,” rejoined Charlotte with such sudden and unmistakeable earnestness that her brothers roared with laughter, whilst they exclaimed : “ Bravo, Lotty ;” her father chuckled and patted her shoul-

der, and even her dignified mother could not repress a smile.

“ But I hope I havn't forgotten my mitts,” exclaimed Miss Prabble as having decked herself with a very neat and tasty cap and pelerine trimmed with white satin ribbon, and a pair of lace cuffs to match, she again dived into the depths of her general receptacle, and fished up first a tiny reticule, from which she produced a laced pocket handkerchief, and at last, a pair of black lace mittens worked with steel beads. Her quickness in the production and arrangement of all these little matters was marvellous, and the alteration in her appearance strikingly beneficial. The rudeness of her *chaussure* seemed never to enter her thoughts.

“ Well, and now, Mr. Snobbins, I'm very sorry to have detained you, and I'm afraid after all your old friend will be but a disgrace to your fine new drawing-room.”

“ Never, Miss Prabble, an old friend is *never* a disgrace,” said he as he drew her

arm through his and led her towards the dining-room. He spoke with an energy quite unusual with him, but which his wife very well understood.

Miss Prabble was right: she certainly had not come for the purpose of eating, though she praised everything, and seemed to relish everything that she tasted: but it was mere tasting, and her want of appetite left her more time to talk. She did not slight the opportunity.

“ And so now you'll be anxious to know, Mrs. Snobbins—but dear me—dear me—dear me—if I haven't forgot all this time,”—and she laid her knife and fork down across her plate, and looked at Mrs. de Snobyn with a countenance which expressed real and unfeigned vexation.

“ Here have I been calling you Mrs. Snobbins all this time, and you got another name, and one so much grander—how very, very stupid I am, *to be* sure. I really *am* vexed ”

If she was vexed, the vexation of the

lady of the house was far more overpowering: she could with difficulty conceal it. She heard the smothered titter of Charlotte and Octavius, her unmanageable children; she *felt* the wondering cross glances of her butler and his assistants, all newly hired on their removal to Connaught Place: she fixed her eyes on her plate, and busied herself intensely with her chicken wing.

But Mr. de Snobyn neither heard nor guessed any thing unpleasant. He saw, indeed, that his visitor looked, vexed, and he hastened to set her at ease.

“ My dear ma'am, what does it signify? You know our name is—was Snobbins, and what harm can it do us to be called by it, only Mrs. S. likes De Snobyn best.”

“ Well, well, that's very natural, and I'll try not to forget again. But, law! who'd have thought it? why, I've heard on every hand, of the handsome and fashionable Mrs. de Snobyn, but I'd no idea, how

should I? that it was my old Margate friend. And how did you come to change your name, sir, if I may make bold to ask?"

It was now Mr. de Snobyn's turn to be confused, but he looked, as was his invariable custom in similar cases, to his wife.

"Mr. de Snobyn had occasion to change his name on his accession to a family estate, a considerable property."

"Oh! a large property was it? Aye, perhaps the estate that I have heard of in *Ayrshire*—or was it in the Isle of *Skye*, my dear?" said the shrewd visitor, on whom neither the discomfiture of the lady of the house, nor the silent reference of her husband had been lost. Augustus and Octavius now laughed loud, and it was only the fear of her mother's displeasure, that gave Charlotte resolution to refrain; but Miss Prabble, as she was great, was merciful, and after a sly wink at Otty, which almost drove him into convulsions,

and the second footman out of the room, she turned the conversation to a less annoying topic.

“So, as I was saying, my dear Mrs. Snob—de Snobyn, you will be anxious to know how I found you out; after all these long years. It's really odd, how chances do come about. I dare say, sir, when you first set up in Budge Row, you never thought of living here.”

“I never did, indeed,” said Mr. de Snobyn, with a gentle shake of the head, which might have been termed melancholy, succeeded as it was, by a smothered half sigh.

“Well, as I was saying, I went to-day to call on Lady Marchmont. A good lady as ever breathed; isn't she, Mr. Snobbins.”

“I haven't the honour of knowing her,” said he.

“My cousins,” interposed the lady of the house, “have been away a great many years, and this morning Mr. de Snobyn

was particularly engaged, and could not accompany me in my call on them."

"Oh! Well, as I was saying, or meant to be saying, Lady Marchmont is a lady born and bred—a very old family indeed—she was a Redwald of Cheshire—people thought no small beer of in their own county, I can tell you—why, people say they've been there ever since the Saxon times—it was thought a high match, for Sir Charles—her brother, was much opposed to it at first—but they were a very affectionate family, and he'd just lost his younger sister, and that made him more tender of thwarting this one."

"I should have thought," said Helena, "from their appearance and manners, that Sir Charles was the higher character of the two."

"Very likely you might, my dear; Sir Charles is a very noble and worthy gentleman, and of a good old family, too; but my lady has the blood, and between you and me and the post," and she leaned for-

ward and whispered loud across the table, "the money too. And by the way, Mrs. Snob—Mrs. de Snobyn—isn't that a fine young man—their son, I mean."

"Very much so indeed," replied she; "I never saw a young man of finer person or more engaging manners."

"Isn't he, now? and as good as he's handsome, I can tell you. Ah, Miss Helena, my dear, there's a catch for you—there's a fish worth baiting your hook for; it's something to call cousins with such a youth as that. Make the best of your opportunity, my dear, before he's seen the London belles—all young men's hearts are rather tindery, and who knows but you may light a spark in his."

Miss Helena tossed her handsome head in magnificent disdain.

"Well, well," laughed Miss Prabble, "where one won't another will. Luckily every Jack may have a Jill in this world. No harm meant, none done."

"None in the world," interrupted Oc-

tavius, rather impudently; "and as sister Nell won't, what should hinder you, Miss Prabble, from trying your fate? I suppose you count cousins with this Adonis as well as mamma, don't you?"

"Me! Lord love you, you saucy jackanapes, but you deserve a cuffing, and you shall have it if I get near you. No, it's this how—my grandfathers before me have been tenants on the estate these two hundred years, and my grandmother was housekeeper at the Park, and when she died, my mother was a widow, with only me, three years old. So she was made housekeeper, and I was allowed to run about in the house; and sometimes the old madam—we always called Lady Marchmont's mother the old madam—she sometimes sent for me into the drawing-room to amuse her; and sometimes I was allowed to play with the younger children; and sometimes to learn lessons with them—and sometimes the young ladies were so kind as to teach me; but this was all chance work,

by nows and thens; and yet, it was enough to hinder me being made such a useful body as my mother would have made me. And so I grew up neither one thing nor another, and when my mother died I was the most feckless creature in the world as to getting my own bread, and though my mother was no extravagant body, she had not saved enough to support me in idleness, so I was in a pretty pass, you may guess. So Miss Redwald—that's my dear Lady Marchmont that now is (old madam had long been dead)—and Miss Juliana Redwald—she was soon after a saint in Heaven—said as much as that I was neither fish, flesh, nor good red herring, and that as it was their faults I had led such a useless life they were bound to make it up to me. So there and then they settled an annuity on me, and with that and my dear mother's savings, I have lived like a lady at large ever since."

"And they did very right," said Mr. de Snobyn, whose eyes were glistening; "and

I don't wonder at your being fond of the family."

"Why as to that you see, no one ever saw the Redwalds at home—in their own place—without feeling respect for them. They may say that my Lady Marchmont is an oddity, and a stupid old lady and all that—people have said that I know. That's nothing to me. My motto, Mr. Snobbins is 'Handsome is as handsome does,' and I don't think that my Lady Marchmont ever did an unkind or unhand-some thing to man, or woman, chick or child, since the hour she was born."

"Well, but Miss Prabble," said Charlotte, "though I suppose you learnt at Lady Marchmont's that we were here, you have not yet told us about it."

"Well, my duck, no more I have. Well you see—"

But Mrs. de Snobyn could endure no more. She gave the mystic signal and the ladies retired.

But it was long since Mr. de Snobyn

had experienced such a treat in his own house, and he very soon followed them to the drawing-room. Ensconced there in his own large chair by the fire-side, he invited Miss Prabble to a seat next him, and a share of the little stand which held his coffee cup. She accepted it at once, and they had a very social gossip, if that can be called so where the talking is almost entirely on one side—and Mrs. de Snobyn contrived, not without some skilful management, to occupy her sons and daughters in another part of the room.

At length it struck her visitor that it was time to go—"quite time—she was so little of a gossip they would think she was lost at home—she shouldn't wonder if they had locked her out. May I trouble you sir," (to the butler who had entered with a note for his mistress)—"or stay, you, my man," (to the footman who was arranging the fire,) "seem younger and fitter for odd jobs: will you call me a cab—see that there's nice clean straw inside will you ;

and mind you make the bargain before hand, for they are *such* cheats. And I say put my pattens inside, and an umbrella, and a macintosh cloak that I left in the hall. And I say, my good young man, see to it for me yourself, will you."

The man bowed and withdrew : on the staircase he met the scullery maid, and asked her very indignantly what business she had in that part of the house. Having no business there she was very wisely mute. So he ordered her, on pain of his reporting her trespass, to tell the porter to get a cab for a queer body that wanted to go the Lord knew where.

Poor Bridget, anxious to propitiate so important a person as Thomas, did her errand without loss of time, and the cab was announced.

" Well, Mr. Snobbins, I've spent a charming evening—a most delightful evening indeed. I'll come again, don't fear."

" Do—do," said he, shaking both her

hands heartily ; “ come very soon—very soon—I’m *very* glad to see you.”

“ Yes, thank you, it shall be very soon indeed. And my dear Mrs. Snob—de Snobyn, I’m quite pleased to have found you, and looking so well and so handsome too. Good-bye young people, get to bed, or your roses will grow pale.”

And having by this time shaken hands all round, and two or three times with Mr. de Snobyn, she departed to the infinite relief of her hostess.

But her pattering steps had hardly reached the hall, ere her shrill voice was heard, shriller than ever. Thomas had evidently neglected her orders. At length, however, Mrs. de Snobyn hoped that patents, umbrella, and mackintosh cloak were all fairly in possession of their legal owner, for she heard her hall door closed, and the sound of wheels passing from its portal.

CHAPTER XVIII.

INSTANTLY, on the departure of Miss Prable, Mrs. de Snobyn retired to rest, on the plea of extreme fatigue—but it may be supposed, that the eager remarks and questionings of her young people were deferred only till the next morning's breakfast.

“Mamma, where on earth did you pick up that aboriginal?” was Helena's question, almost before the salutations of the day.

“ I wish, I do wish, my dear Helena, that you would not indulge in unlady-like phrases—though I must do you the justice, to say that it is very rarely you exhibit such carelessness. ‘ Pick up ’—how should I ‘ pick up ’ any one ? Consider the literal meaning of the words.”

“ Mamma must have stooped for her, at any rate, and that is very near picking up,” whispered Otty to Charlotte.

Mrs. de Snobyn heard Octavius whisper, and saw Charlotte’s face suffuse, but no one was more skilful than Mrs. de Snobyn in being both deaf and blind, when she saw it expedient.

Helena remodelled her question.

“ Where, in all the world, dear mamma, did you become acquainted with Miss Prabble ?”

“ In that part of ‘ all the world,’ known by the name of Margate, as you might have learnt from Miss Prabble’s conversation.”

“ Yes, mamma, I learnt that you were

both there, but that surely does not account for an intimate acquaintance."

"For an intimate acquaintance, certainly not: but for more association than would be induced by the circumstance now. At the period to which Miss Prabble referred, Margate was yielding the palm of fashion to Ramsgate, still Margate was preferred on many accounts, by many genteel people, who had been accustomed to go there. But life and manners at a watering place, at that period, were extremely different from what they are now. People were accustomed to meet day by day in the same saloon, to take their meals at the same public table, daily pic-nics, water excursions, raffles, &c., took place, nor would it have been considered any mark of good-breeding, to slight the respectable people with whom you chanced to meet, because their manners were not quite of the high stamp, to which you were yourself accustomed."

“ Miss Prabble, then, was respectable, mamma ?”

“ Decidedly so, undoubtedly so : you could not listen last night, to her own interesting account of her long connection with Lady Marchmont, and doubt that.”

Her own interesting account ! The girls looked at each other. Augustus half perpetrated a low whistle. Mrs. de Snobyn's children were no fools, and their mother's confusion at times the night before, and her evident disgust, during this *interesting account*, had not been lost upon them.

“ You mean to cultivate your renewed acquaintance with Miss Prabble then, mamma ?” said Evelina.

“ I mean, my dear, to receive Miss Prabble kindly, when she comes here ; regard for your father would induce me to do that, he was so evidently pleased to meet his old acquaintance ;” (again the young people exchanged glances, it was

not their mother's habit to consider their father's old friends;) besides, there appears, to me, something mean and ungenerous in deserting people whom you have known at an earlier and less prosperous period of your career, and who may not have gained so fortunate a prize in the lottery of life as you yourself have."

Mrs. de Snobyn left the room as she said this; the young people gazed in each other's faces, for a minute, and then Augustus and Octavius burst into a loud laugh, in which Charlotte joined. Helena and Evelina could not quite command their countenances, still they remonstrated with their brothers and younger sister on the impropriety of their conduct.

"Mamma is certainly entitled to more respect," said Evelina.

"I respect mamma with all my soul," replied Augustus; "she's a deucedly clever woman, there's no denying that: still she comes it a *leetle* too strong some

times. The idea of her being civil to that unsophisticated native, because she is an old friend of my father's, forsooth !”

“Yes,” said Charlotte ; “and the idea of being civil to Miss Prabble because she has not got on in the world, when the only reason I know for mamma's being so shy of the Burfields and the Marstons is that they have not got on in the world as well as we have. Mamma used to make much of them at Islington.”

“Yes,” said Helena ; “but mamma is certainly right there. You must feel, Charlotte, that it would be very inconsistent *here*, and inconvenient in many ways to keep up our connection with those Islington people.”

“I don't see it,” said warm-hearted Charlotte.

“ ‘ *Tempora mutantur, et nos mutamur in illis,* ’ ” spouted Octavius ; “but leave these grave politicians, Lotty, and come with me, I want you to help me with something.”

Charlotte and Octavius left the room together : shortly after, Augustus, yawning and stretching, sauntered off to "adonize," as he said, and Helena and Evelina prepared for their singing master.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE early day appointed for the Marchmonts to dine with Mrs. de Snobyn arrived, and precisely at half-past six, exactly the proper description of persons, exactly the proper number of persons, sat down to exactly the proper dinner in Mrs. de Snobyn's handsome dining-room. One of her great points was the assorting of her parties, and her admirable management of them. People always returned from her house pleased and satisfied. This

power, this tact of so managing guests, that each individual feels satisfied, and the general enjoyment is not suffered to flag, is a gift of nature ; it cannot be acquired. We have seen highly accomplished women, who lived in a whirl of society totally deficient in it, while others, without half their practical knowledge of the conventional etiquette of society, or half their accomplishment in its higher graces, have surpassed them far in the success of their parties. Mrs. de Snobyn had this tact or talent in perfection.

In the first place, she always assorted her visitors well ; contriving that there should be sufficient accordance of taste and feeling, to prevent inharmonious collision, yet sufficient variety of sentiment to prevent mawkish inanity. She was always *au fait* at all the new fashions of killing time, and had generally some novelty of the sort to bring forward, when her quick eye detected languor stealing over animation, or brisk conversation gradually sub-

siding into silence. At this time too she had admirable supports in her two eldest daughters; they had been educated to shine in society—and they seemed very likely to fulfil their mother's views in that respect. They were admirable in superficial accomplishments, in all the little exigencies and requirements of a morning lounge or an evening party. It was Mrs. De Snobyn's good taste rather than high principle or correct judgment, which led her entirely and practically, to negative the idea of her daughter's playing like professors.

It was not the enormous time that is so inevitably consumed, and in most instances, so deplorably wasted in enabling young ladies to struggle through and to "execute," how deplorably—the fugues and fantasias of Kalkbrenner, Moscheles, Hummel, and Hertz—it was not the waste of time that Mrs. De Snobyn considered, so much as the utter nullity of the thing when done. Her decided wishes, as expressed to the

highly accomplished professor, whom she selected as her daughters' instructor, were that they should attempt nothing elaborate or difficult, but that they should execute fashionable trifles—the easier they were the better—with taste, precision, and elegance. Her own ear and taste, fully enabled her to further, in their private practice, the assiduous teaching of the professor himself.

The same rule held in other things—drawing, needlework, &c. The Miss De Snobyns were quick and skilful in the fabrication of those *petits riens* with which it is the fashion to litter a drawing-room, but they were not allowed to dim the brightness of their eyes or risk the warping of their shoulders by a close application of the best hours of the day, to the trying tent, or wearying cross stitch, of an elaborate ottoman, a high-backed chair, or worse still, a carpet in squares, where your friends *will they nill they* are dragged into the service. We are apt to ridicule the

cambric work of our grandmothers, and it was very trying to the eyes ; and we should think must have been very unsatisfactory to the mind. But it was infinitely less expensive ; and, as a product of skill, far more beautiful than modern work, neither was it much more foolish or much more hopeless. We know two ladies, mother and daughter, who proposed to work a carpet, and began to do so. It was to be done in large squares and then joined. Materials were obtained—patterns were arranged, and every friend who had been known to cut a skein of wool, or put a needle through canvass, was entreated and almost constrained to take one square.

“And,” said the young lady, “mamma and I consider that, with the help promised to us by our friends, we shall, if we can contrive to work four or five hours closely every day, finish the carpet in about six years.”

Mrs. De Snobyn would have nothing of this sort ; and mothers of nobler aspira-

tions and graver hopes than Mrs. De Snobyn would do well to imitate her in this point. It were easy now to fancy that the gravest purpose of a young lady's life was to work tapestry.

But we return to the dinner-table. The appointments were perfection, the servants were faultless, the dinner was excellent, and the guests happy. Sir Charles was gaily tracing "the long extent of backward time" with his handsome hostess, recalling the feats of their youth, the escapades of their nursery days. Lady Marchmont looked very easy and comfortable, dividing her time pretty equally between her smelling bottle, her plate and her host, while he was delighted with her quietude, which some called stupidity—so unlike the vivacity of his dashing wife's dashing visitors. Redwald Marchmont, seated between the two Miss de Snobyns, was keeping up an animated conversation with them, whilst their eldest brother was doing the amiable to a rather pretty looking girl, perfectly

ladylike and *comme il faut*, but serving rather as a foil than a rival to Helena and Evelina. This, of course, their mother had taken care of. There were three or four other visitors, for no one had a greater horror than had Mrs. de Snobyn of the *tristesse* of those elaborately cheerful and unelaborately dull assemblages—a family party; especially when an important object was to be achieved. These other guests were selected by her with especial reference to the impression she wished her family to make on Sir Charles and Lady Marchmont, but as they have no influence on our story, we need not detain our readers by a description of them.

No sooner had coffee been handed round in the drawing-room, than Mrs. de Snobyn laying her hand caressingly on Lady Marchmont's *fauteuil*, said,

“Now, dear Lady Marchmont, you must grant me a favour.”

“What is it, ma'am?” said Lady Marchmont, languidly using her smelling-bottle,

but not equal, apparently, to the exertion of raising her eyes.

“ You must allow me to hope that you do not look upon me quite as a stranger, nor regard formal etiquette when you are here. Probably during your long residence abroad, particularly in the south, you adopted the custom of the country, a short siesta after dinner. If so, pray, pray do not deprive yourself of the refreshment here—or would you prefer to retire to my dressing-room for half an hour, you will find it warm and quiet: let me prevail on you.”

“ Thank you, ma'am, thank you; but I don't think I go to sleep often—though Redwald says I do; but if I do nod, I can nod here, with your permission—thank you, ma'am, thank you.”

And as it seemed quite too mighty an exertion to raise her smelling-bottle to her face, she stooped her face to it as it lay in the hand which reposed on the arm of her chair.

“I will take care my young people do not chatter loud,” said Mrs. de Snobyn courteously, and “Helena, my dear,” with an almost imperceptible motion towards Lady Marchmont’s feet, brought that young lady forward with a small, low ottoman, which she knelt to place at her ladyship’s feet. Lady Marchmont made a slight motion to repel her, but her mother said,

“Do, dear madam, allow Helena to contribute her mite to your comfort. A chair like this absolutely requires the support of a footstool.”

Lady Marchmont said no more, but allowed Helena to place the footstool, and even to raise her feet on to it with very slight help from herself. But she looked earnestly, indeed, for her, keenly at the young lady as she knelt before her, and then raised her head and looked at the mother who was still bending over her chair, she said, but whether aloud or to herself it was not quite easy to guess,

“She’s very like you.”

Mrs. de Snobyn chose to take the observation as an "aloud."

"Indeed, do you think so," said she, in a very pleased tone of voice, "the likeness has been remarked before: of that point perhaps I am not the best judge, but of another I certainly am. My daughter" (lowering her voice,) "is, I am truly thankful to say, an affectionate girl, an obedient good child."

Again the old lady glanced at her hostess, and a half ejaculated "humph" might or might not have been audible, but she immediately addressed herself very industriously to her smelling bottle as if to make up for lost time. Mrs. de Snobyn turned away to do the courtesies of her house to her other guests.

As early as was at all consistent with etiquette, tea was announced, and the gentlemen were not long in answering the summons. Mr. Marchmont was the first who came, and Mrs. de Snobyn saw with pleasure that his eye glanced quickly round the

room, and that he instantly betook himself to the corner where her daughters were seated. Helena introduced him to Charlotte.

“What, another cousin? the more the better—of such,” said he, as he shook hands gaily with her, “but how was it that I did not see you at dinner.”

“Oh we are all *en grand tenue* to-day, and I'm not out,” replied Charlotte, with such gay and artless *naïveté* that several around her smiled, and Redwald laughed outright. Mrs. de Snobyn thought the remark an untoward one, but she smiled too, and intimated that “she feared her giddy Charlotte would never learn to subdue her spirits.”

“And why should she subdue her spirits,” said Sir Charles, as he came forward to shake hands with her, “time and chance and change will do that without any effort on her part. Let her enjoy them while she has them, my good cousin.”

Mrs. de Snobyn was all pleasureable

gratitude at the kindly notice taken of her "little rustic," and after a variety of nothings which are not worth recording, and apropos to one of them, she said,

"Evelina, my dear, I wish you would attempt that pretty ariette that Signor Mercanti gave you the other day. Probably Mr. Marchmont is acquainted with it, and would kindly give you a little instruction in it."

"I will attempt it, mamma, with pleasure; still you must remember I have not learnt it thoroughly."

"Thank you, love, for trying it; our friends will be merciful in their criticisms I do not doubt."

Without further delay Evelina struck up a dashing and brilliant prelude on the piano, which gradually subsided into a pretty, lively, light air, to which she sang a coquettish French song of Berangér's. The air was simple, and perfectly within the compass of her voice, and she gave the words in a style which though not saucy or

bold, was piquante and attractive. All were pleased, and so expressed themselves.

“ You do not know the song then, Mr. Marchmont ?”

“ I do not. I never heard it before, but I shall hope to have the pleasure of hearing you sing it again and again. But who touches this ?” pointing to an elegant harp.

“ Helena, my dear,” said Mrs. de Snobyn, “ as your sister has made her attempt I think we must call upon you, before we tax the kindness of our friends.”

Helena sat down, and Mrs. de Snobyn, leaning over the harp, in order to twist the refractory end of a string out of the way, whispered—

“ Something soft, plaintive ; as complete a contrast to your sister's as possible. That style *won't do*.”

Helena replied, by one glance, and her mother having arranged the string, moved to another part of the room.

A few loud and sonorous chords seemed as if Helena meant to emulate her sister's dashing prelude, but it was not so : she was, as it were, merely feeling her fingers on the strings, and she quickly modulated the tones to a soft melodious symphony, and then glided into an old plaintive Scotch air, which she played with exquisite taste, and a touching pathos :

“ A soft and solemn breathing sound
Stole upon the air,”

and was hushed into silence, so gradually, so gently, that the last note was hardly perceptible.

Helena received not half the compliments that her sister had done, but the impression was greater, and a long drawn breath close to her was the most grateful incense she could receive. She turned her large, dark, speaking eyes to her mother, and received a bright beaming glance in return. She had done well.

“But, Miss de Snobyn, you sing, do you not?”

“A little.”

“Oh, if you would but give the words to that?”

“I dare not.”

“Dare not?”

“No,” said Helena, in a low smothered voice which obliged her not unwilling auditor to bend down a little towards her.

“I can sing trifling, careless songs, such as that my sister sang; but I dare not attempt anything of this sort—you—you will think me foolish, perhaps,” (glancing towards him with a half deprecating look)

“but I always feel as if my sensations would overpower me at the moment my voice should be most firm—and then there would be a scene, you know,” smiling with a little scorn, as she now looked up. “But I dare say you think this childish folly.”

“I am not at all sure of that,” said Red-

wald, in a tone as decided as if he had challenged some one to prove it. "But you will, at least, play again, Miss de Snobyn, will you not?"

Helena again glanced at her mother, but met a look of warning instead of encouragement. One of Mrs. de Snobyn's most successful rules of practice was to "let well alone."

"I shall have much pleasure in doing so by and bye; but at present I hope our friends will gratify us. You sing?"

"No, but I delight in hearing music."

Miss de Snobyn then requested Miss Farnwell to play something, and she permitted Augustus de Snobyn to lead her to the Piano. Mrs. de Snobyn followed her with an open music-book.

"My dear Miss Farnwell, you will oblige me exceedingly if you will play this; my Charlotte is just beginning to learn it, and it would be such a very great advantage to her to hear you play it."

“That, dear Mrs. de Snobyn,” said the young lady, looking aghast, “that long, heavy, wearisome Sonata ; “why, I have hardly tried it since I left school.”

“Ah ! that is of no consequence ; Charlotte is too young a performer herself to need great exactitude.”

“I will practise it to-morrow, and call the morning after, and play it for her : only do let me play a waltz now.”

“Certainly, my dear, since you will not oblige me.”

“Nay, if you say that, dear Mrs. de Snobyn, I must play it,” rejoined the poor young lady, as sighing she placed the book on the desk before her.

Mrs. de Snobyn's manœuvre answered completely ; Mr. Redwald Marchmont approached the piano, as the young lady struck the opening notes of her piece, but after listening to a page, quietly retreated. He looked round. His father, mother, Mr. de Snobyn, and another lady were engaged at whist, Augustus de Snobyn and

a middle-aged lady were engaged in a very animated conversation, Evelina and Octavius were playing a game at Patience, and others were grouped at the piano, others were looking at prints, but in rather a retired corner Helena was sitting alone at a table, turning over the leaves of a fashionable annual. He drew towards her—she raised her head on hearing his footstep, and immediately asked his opinion of the portrait of the Countess of ——, which graced the first page of the book, at the same time moving her chair a little aside, so that he might draw one near if he chose.

He did choose ; that annual was discussed, another taken up, numberless pretty things about the table commented upon, and before the lucky Sonata was quite concluded, Mr. Redwald Marchmont and Miss Helena de Snobyn were deeply engaged in a game at Spellikens, the best cover imaginable, as all the world knows, to a very elaborate flirtation.

And Mrs. de Snobyn took especial care it should not be interrupted. Always most sedulously attentive to the feelings of all her guests, when being so did not interfere with any *important* movement of her own, she not only retained Charlotte, for whose behoof the piece was *ostensibly* performed at the piano, during the whole of its progress, but remained there herself turning the leaves, and at the close of the piece, gave such warm and cordial thanks to the performer for her indulgent exertions, that the poor young lady was more than gratified, and felt as if she had behaved ill in at all hesitating about the performance. She then summoned her eldest son to her aid, who invited his fair partner to join him in a duett. Evelina was summoned from "Patience" to play a waltz : other songs and duetts followed, but no interruption was offered to Miss de Snobyn in her interesting game. It seemed almost that people had forgotten her existence

altogether. Mrs. de Snobyn was a most admirable tactician. The happiest evenings, however, must draw to an end at last, as did this. But at the very instant Lady Marchmont's carriage was announced, with a celerity almost magical, a most elegant *beauffet* was carried into the middle of the room, glittering with wrought silver and cut-glass, and decked, or, as old Caleb would say, decored, with such dainty looking refectious, as certainly were never seen out of Fairy land. To refuse one taste and one sip was impossible, nobody dreamed of it ; and even Lady Marchmont said, as she deposited her smelling-bottle in her reticule :

“ It was vastly pretty, and like everything else they had had, very good.”

What a contrast altogether, to the evening of Miss Prabble's *debût* in that same drawing-room.

“ Mrs. de Snobyn,” said Sir Charles, “ we are indebted to you for a delightful

evening, the precursor I hope of many more. But, my dear cousin, though we hope shortly to be sheltered beneath a roof of our own, we do not want to wait even so long without seeing you. Will not you and your worthy husband, and my young cousins, dine with us *en famille* at our hotel."

"With very great pleasure."

"So far, well: and when, my dear, did you propose—"

"Next Wednesday, at six o'clock," said Lady Marchmont, with the most courteous earnestness, "if quite convenient; but if not, Mrs. de Snobyn, I will adopt your day, so that it be not far off."

"I thank you; we have no engagement of importance for Wednesday, and we shall be proud to wait on you."

"You must bring all your children."

"No, dear madam," laughed Mrs. de Snobyn, "that were too unreasonable."

"I should like to see them all; we have

an old friend coming, and a young one—a good little girl, I should think about the age of Miss Charlotte, here.”

Mrs. de Snobyn thanked her again, but avoided any specific promise.

After proceeding a considerable part of the way in silence, Lady Marchmont suddenly raising her head from her mufflers, remarked,

“It appears to me there’s something there not the thing.”

“Where, my dear?” said Sir Charles.

“Why, where we have been—with that fine, handsome, fashionable woman, Mrs. de Snobyn.”

“My cousin?”

“May be so, my dear; but I should be very much surprised, and very, very sorry, to see your eye steal about as that lady’s does, as if she really did fear a snake in every cupboard.”

“Nonsense, Cecilia, you fancy things.”

“Am I given to fancies, Sir Charles?”

“No; to do you justice, you are not.

“Then, believe me when I say that that lady is not the lady she appears.”

“Now, my dear mother, I could almost presume to say you are wrong. Her manners appear to me faultless: she certainly is a very nice woman.”

“She *is* a very nice woman. I said nothing against her manners.”

“Well then, mother—but perhaps it is her vulgar husband that has given you this dislike to her.”

“No; I think her husband the least vulgar of the two.”

“Mother!” ejaculated her son, in perfect amazement.

“Even so, Redwald,” said his mother, sinking back languidly, and feeling for her smelling-bottle. “There are various styles of manner or no manner; and coarseness, and clownishness, and want of tact and want of knowledge of life are all very disagreeable; but there cannot be vulgarity

where there is no assumption, which is its very essence. Mr. de Snobyn has none, Mrs. de Snobyn a great deal, and moreover she can't look you in the face. He does, and he is quiet, respectful and unobtrusive. Now let me alone, I'm very tired."

Lady Marchmont snoodled her head in her wraps again, but her son was by no means satisfied, though he did not take the liberty to disturb her.

After she had retired for the night, he addressed his father.

"What does all this mean, sir?"

"All what, my boy?"

"All that my mother says about Mrs. de Snobyn."

"I'm sure, Redwald, I don't know."

"My mother has surely taken some strange crotchet into her head."

"I should hesitate to say that. I know your mother to have considerable knowledge of life, and much shrewd observation, though it is too often quite hidden and lost under that inertness which I have often

feared of late years was stealing over the mind, as it has long shrouded the body. But that she suspects 'something rotten in the state of Denmark,' is very evident—what it is, I suppose time will show. Good night."

CHAPTER XX.

THE important Wednesday came, and Mrs. de Snobyn, her two eldest daughters, and her son Augustus were driven up to Lady Marchmont's hotel, at precisely the correct moment. They were very cordially welcomed, but very earnest regrets were expressed at the absence of the two younger children, and especially of Mr. de Snobyn.

"I regret the circumstance very much myself," said Mrs. de Snobyn; "and so

indeed does Mr. de Snobyn; but he is so extremely unwell as to be obliged to forego the pleasure of the visit. My youngest daughter and son remain at home to nurse and amuse him."

"I should have thought, Miss de Snobyn," muttered Lady Marchmont, glancing at Helena.

"My eldest daughter was indeed most anxious, most solicitous to stay with her father," (a fib—we need hardly tell our readers,) "she is indeed a most admirable nurse: but Mr. de Snobyn would not hear of her being debarred from so great a pleasure as this visit will afford, on his account: moreover Charlotte's childish *naïveté* amuses him greatly: my eldest daughter is, as becomes her age, rather more sedate."

Lady Marchmont was by this time arranging her knitting to lay it aside, which cannot be done, as every knitter knows, until the needles are safely poised; an ex-

plot which, as we have before seen, the good lady never achieved in a hurry.

But she was not wanted: Mrs. de Snobyn and Sir Charles were conversing on Mr. de Snobyn's illness which the lady was afraid of making too serious, lest her old fashioned, matter of fact cousins should feel surprise at her leaving him: and she feared to treat it lightly lest a *soupcçon* of the truth should suggest itself to them—the said truth being that Mr. de Snobyn was perfectly well, but little inclined for a “grandee visit,” and his lady wife being not at all solicitous to exhibit him, the matter was easily arranged.

Redwald was very quickly engaged in an animated discourse with both young ladies, and the social feelings of the family party were progressing most satisfactorily when the door opened, and the servant announced,

“Mr. and Miss Snobbins.”

Mrs. de Snobyn started, and stared, yes absolutely stared—she had distrusted the

evidence of her ears, and could hardly believe that of her eyes, when Abel entered the room, with Maude hanging on his arm.

More wonders still. The usually undemonstrative Lady Marchmont seemed to forget her knitting altogether, for it fell unheeded to the ground as she passed forward, and putting her arm round Maude, kissed her affectionately, a caress which Maude returned with equal warmth. The old lady was then proceeding to remark on her appearance and on the alteration in it, when Sir Charles interrupted her,

“Come, come, my lady, let me have my turn,” and he too kissed Maude, saying however—

“But I shall be afraid of a repulse soon, why you are really quite a young lady.”

“Yes indeed,” said Redwald, “who would have thought that this was little Maude, my little dumpling of a play fellow Madge—I suppose I must say Miss Snobbins now”

“Dear Redwald, what nonsense,” said Maude, yielding him both her hands.

It would require an abler pen than mine to depict the consternation of Mrs. de Snobyn and her daughters during this scene. Fortunately those whose observation she would most have deprecated were all busily engaged, and she at any rate had composed her countenance to be all smiles and graciousness as she held out her hand to Abel, forestalling the introduction Sir Charles was about to make with the words—

“No need for introduction here, my dear Sir Charles ; but I had expected it would be *my* pleasant task to make you acquainted with the step-son to whom I am so much attached.”

(“I never saw anybody like mamma,” whispered Evelina to Helina, “she never *is* put out by anything.”)

Evelina was wrong, nevertheless. On Mrs. De Snobyn's announcement of Abel,

Lady Marchmont, as if involuntarily, reiterated the word, "step-son, her step-son," and turned one look on her husband. Only one. He did not see it; he was rather clamourously seeking from Abel, a solution of the mystery, and her son did not see it, nor the young ladies, but Mrs. De Snobyn did; and that one look thrilled through her to the very points of her fingers, during the whole of that, to her, miserable day.

But, of course, she did not shew it. She kissed Maude kindly—she had always been kind to her, and so had her young aunts, in a patronizing kind of way—so there was no opposing feeling in Maude's mind to interfere with her returning their greetings as cordially as they were offered (for they had soon taken their cue); and, as Abel's conduct to them was very much, at all times, regulated by theirs to his darling niece, there was nothing at all to prevent the party from seating them-

selves in the greatest apparent harmony and good feeling towards each other. So far well, and their doing so apparently without foresight or design certainly tended, more than any thing to efface the first awkward impression on the mind of the host. Mrs. De Snobyn, however, had not forgot its effects on the countenance of the hostess. As soon as the bustle of salutation had, in some measure, subsided she turned to Lady Marchmont.

“I told you, dear madam, that we claim no affinity with the noble families to whom you referred the other day, and that my husband changed his name in consequence of his accession to a large property.

“You did, ma'am,” with a slight bow.

“I was afraid to alarm you on a first visit, by too many claimants on your good will, or I should, before this, have begged permission to introduce my step-sons, and my good little grand-daughter, to you.”

Another bow.

“I see I am too late with part of my family ;” looking smilingly at Abel and Maude. “I presume, therefore, you are also acquainted with Mr. and Mrs. John Snobbins.”

“Not yet—we hope soon to be so.”

“I shall be extremely happy to be the medium of introduction. Allow me, I pray you, to be so.”

Another slight bow.

Even yet, Mrs. De Snobyn was not disheartened, or rather, would not have been so—for she had often achieved wonderful victories by her eloquence—but, happening to glance at Abel, she saw the sneer that curled his lip, gradually assuming an intensity of scorn that alarmed her for its effect on her host and hostess. Betray her intentionally she was fully sure he would not ; she had the fullest confidence in his courtesy as a gentleman ; but he might not feel obliged to tutor his countenance, and this might do

her harm. So, gracefully acknowledging Lady Marchmont's very doubtful bow as one of undoubted acquiescence she turned away.

"Then," said Sir Charles, who seemed even yet, not fully to comprehend matters ; "then, Mr. De Snobyn, with whom I dined the other day, and whom, I am sorry not to have the pleasure of seeing here to-day, is your father, Mr. Snobbins ?"

"My own dear and excellent father," said Abel, firmly ; "a man respected through life," he continued, "for unshaken probity in his commercial concerns, and unwearying kindness to all connected with him !"

"Such an opinion from a son, is the very proudest testimonial any man can have," said Sir Charles feelingly.

"My good old father richly deserves all and everything his children can do for him : but how is it, if you expected him here, that he is not here ?" said Abel.

“Illness, I am sorry to say,” said Sir Charles.

“Illness!” repeated Abel, looking sternly at his step-mother, “why when I saw him this morning—”

Poor Mrs. de Snobyn, the fates were certainly against her this day; but there was no help for it, and she hastened to interrupt her step-son ere the conclusion of his ill-timed observation.

“He did indeed appear charmingly well this morning, Abel, but I have almost learnt to dread those exuberant spirits, as the certain forerunners of illness. They are almost always succeeded by the nervous attacks to which your poor father is so subject, and under one of which he is suffering now.”

All this sounded natural enough, and reasonable enough to people who knew nothing about it, and though Abel did not in his heart believe a word of it, he did not suffer this to appear. He doubted the

fact of any nervous illness at all, save such as was induced by his lady mother's utter absence of sympathy in his feelings and complaints ; for his father had appeared to improve since his return, a circumstance which Abel was not slow to attribute to the fact of his children clustering more about him, whether impelled by Mrs. de Snobyn's policy, or their own awakened feelings at witnessing Abel's daily assiduous and solicitous attendance on him.

Not venturing to look Abel steadily in the face, Mrs. de Snobyn continued :

“ My cousin was so kind as to wish to see all my family, but I left Charlotte and Octavius to attend upon their father.”

“ You did perfectly right, you could not have done better, Charlotte is cheerful and affectionate, and Octavius merry and warm-hearted—you could not have done better.”

All this was very well. Abel at once

changed the topic of conversation, and exerted himself to support it, and the cloud had passed away, and all was cheerful courtesy when dinner was announced.

CHAPTER XXI.

“WELL, mother, have you introduced Maude to Ariel, or rather, I suppose, Ariel to Maude,” said Redwald to Lady Marchmont, as the gentlemen returned to the drawing-room after dinner.

“No indeed, Redwald, I would not forestal you in that pleasure.”

“Always kind and considerate, my

mother," said Redwald, as he rang the bell to desire that the dog and all its belongings might be brought from Lady Marchmont's dressing-room.

"The dog!" exclaimed Maude, "then have you really brought me a little greyhound?"

"I have."

"An Italian greyhound, really?"

"An Italian greyhound, really: did I not promise you one?"

"Yes, but I feared you might forget."

"Forget! Miss Snobbins," said Redwald, in mock heroics, "pray, when did a chivalrous knight ever forget a promise to the vowed lady of his affections, the inspirer of his valour; whose favour nerved his arm, and whose smile pointed his lance, though it might be but to pluck a hair from the Soldan's beard, or a withered leaf from the burning plains of Palestine, or carry a little dog from Italy? Miss Snobbins, you have wounded me deeply—I am deeply hurt."

“ ‘ My wound is great, although it be but small !
Perhaps 'twould be greater, were it none at all.’ ”

said Maude, laughing.

“ Cruel, cruel Maude ! now you are adding insult to injury.”

“ Poor fellow,” began Maude, very sympathetically, “ but here’s the dog.”

And starting forward, she knelt down, and took a beautiful Italian greyhound out of the basket, which the man had just laid on the hearth-rug. It was the most perfect little creature imaginable ; it had not a blemish, nor a hair turned. Its coat was fawn and white. The Italian is certainly the beautiful fairy of the dog creation, and this was one of the purest breed, the most faultless of its kind.

The little creature did not resent, at least, not loudly, Maude’s sudden irruption and capture, but as she pressed him to her, he drew back his stately head, with the ears drooping on to the neck, pressed his fore-paws against her, and fixed his

large, liquid, swimming eyes on her face. Apparently the scrutiny pleased him, for he gradually raised one ear, yielded to her endeavours to draw him towards her, and at length began to lick her face. This was a token of approval which, however natural in a dog, Maude did not quite approve.

“Not that, my little doggie, not just that, any thing else, if you please,” as, at length, having nearly exhausted her raptures, and showered kisses on him, she threw her hand back, still sitting on her knees, to the donor.

“Dear, dear Redwald, however can I thank you enough?”

“I am more than enough thanked already,” said Redwald, kissing her hand; he had watched the little scene with great delight; and, indeed, he must be cynical, who could have looked on it without pleasure. That fair, gentle, unsophisticated girl—childish it may be, but she was not seventeen—and that beautiful little animal, which, with the wonderful instinct they

possess, after looking in her sweet face, laid his own head fearlessly on her shoulder, for they are the most sensitively timid of all the canine race.

“I have seen your little dog before, Maude,” said Helena, “though I knew not it was yours,”—(’twould have been a shock to her if she had,)—“let me renew my acquaintance with him.”

But Ariel did not acknowledge the acquaintance. Helena stooped down to stroke him gently, but hardly had her finger touched his neck, ere he set up a sharp yell. She coloured, but tried again, with the same success. She was now quite annoyed, and looking round, as if some explanation were called for, said,

“I am quite sure I did not hurt him.”

“So are we all sure of that, my dear Miss de Snobyn,” said Sir Charles, kindly, “but these dogs are very delicate, and very, very timid, and it seems a provision of nature, that they should cry out before they are hurt; they often do it.”

“He did not cry out before Maude seized him,” *thought* Helena, but she knew better than to recal attention to the difference.

The name, Ariel, was then discussed, which Maude thought faultless ; and Redwald told her that he was partly indebted to the Miss de Snobyns for it.

“Indeed,” said Maude, “I know my aunts are infallible in matters of taste : did they suggest it ?”

“Oh no, indeed,” said Evelina, “we only approved it.”

“Your approbation gave me that confidence in my own suggestion which I had wanted before,” said the young man, gallantly, and, as Helena thought, with a marked emphasis towards herself.

Ariel's wardrobe was then discussed. His day jacket and his night jacket, his day bed and his night bed, his cushions and his coverlets, were all displayed in due form. These had been prepared under the care of Lady Marchmont.

“Surely,” said Mrs. de Snobyn, “this is rather too much ; I am no advocate for unkindness to anything, nor for carelessness towards the decent comfort of domestic pets. But all this—really there would need hardly more care and wrapping for a child.”

“Nor does a child need more,” said Sir Charles. “I am myself no advocate in general for what you call domestic pets. I like a good house dog. I can appreciate a sharp terrier, a magnificent Newfoundland, or a majestic English bull-dog—if any are left ; I like dogs in the hall and the stable, and the field, or outside my chamber door ; but I have little sympathy for the race of lap-dogs ; and I question much if my son has done his little friend a real kindness in thus fostering her taste for them. But if we do bring an animal from its native climate, a hot one, to one many degrees colder, we are surely bound in common humanity to obviate to it the painful and dangerous effects of such

change. No Indian suddenly transported to England, or Englishman to the Northern wilds of Canada, ever suffered more from the change of climate than does that poor little dog ; it shrinks from every breath of air. And I should have prohibited my son from bringing it, had not Lady Marchmont kindly said that she would undertake the care of it for her young friend."

"You have reproved my ignorance indeed, Sir Charles ; I had never considered the matter in that light. But do they never become acclimated ?"

"That I do not know," said Sir Charles.

"Never completely so, I believe," said Abel ; "that dog as long as he lives will, probably, require his winter and summer coats. But suppose we call another subject. The dog himself gives us an intimation so to do."

The little dog had, in fact, crept away from Maude, snoodled himself up in his basket, and was apparently fast asleep.

"Not yet, uncle Abel ; I, at least, can-

not quit the subject yet, for *I* have been arraigned."

"How now, Maude?"

"I'll tell you how directly. Dear Sir Charles," and she placed herself by him, and laid her hand on his arm, "I think you and my uncle treat me very unjustly."

"How now, Maude," said he, smiling, as he repeated her uncle's words.

"First, you reprobate the idea of a lady having a lap-dog, and then my uncle desires the subject may be changed. Now, as I happen to be the only lady in the company who has a lap-dog, I not only feel the remark as a peculiarly pointed one, but I feel that my whole lap-dog loving sex is insulted in my person."

Uncle Abel laughed, Mrs. de Snobyn and her daughters looked—they were rather surprised to see Maude come out so : they had accustomed themselves to consider her at home as "quite a child."

Augustus de Snobyn and Redwald Marchmont were in close conversation, and

Lady Marchmont had dropt a stitch, which, bending over the light, she was trying to take up.

“ And you will fight the battle of the whole sex, my little girl, will you ?” said Sir Charles, with smiling kindness.

“ Certainly, sir, if you will be a patient listener and an impartial judge.”

“ I think, Maude, you must hardly call me an impartial judge, for you know you have an old trick of persuading me to anything.”

“ Thank you, sir, but on the present occasion I seek justice, not indulgence,” said Maude, drawing her slim form to its utmost height with mock gravity.

“ Begin then ; I promise to be rigidly, sternly, severely just.”

“ Well then, in the first place, in this christian, moral, cultivated, and elevated country, you acknowledge some degree of equality between the sexes.”

“ Granted.”

“ Though woman's part to play may be

the second, and though in depth of intellect she may be inferior, still you allow that a religious, moral, and responsible being, she is on the same level as man."

"Certainly."

"Why, Madge," began Uncle Abel, but Sir Charles, much amused, held up his finger to silence him. Mrs. de Snobyn and her daughters exchanged looks not unmingled with contempt.

"Then," pursued Maude, "such amusements, and relaxations, as men have, should, when not unfeminine in their nature, be conceded to women also."

"Undoubtedly."

"You are fond of field sports."

"Very."

"And you admire the dogs which are so important an adjunct to them?"

"Admire, certainly. I think a pack of hounds in full cry the finest sight and sound in the world."

"But you do not like ladies to join the field?"

" I do not, it is not feminine."

" Nor any sporting ?"

" Nor any sporting."

" You are very fond of Jumbo, your Newfoundland dog."

" Very, he is a noble animal."

" You used to take him into the water with you ?"

" Always ; a good plunge did him good ; moreover, I considered he was a safeguard to me. Many a drowning man has been saved by his dog."

" And little Wasp, you were fond of him ?"

" Poor Wasp, I have lost him ; he was a capital little fellow, and useful in a variety of ways."

" And companionable ?"

" And companionable very ; when I was fishing, the poor little fellow would sit as quiet as a mouse, his quick eye seeing everything, and looking up at me, I sometimes thought, in congratulation at a good bite. Poor Wasp !"

“ And he was fond of the horses ?”

“ Absolutely so—he knew them all, and they knew him, and I have often loitered in my stable to watch their various salutations.”

“ And did Wasp and Jumbo never come into the house ?”

“ I must confess they did, they always followed me closely, and I *could* not always order them out.”

“ Quite right. Do you approve of ladies going into the stable, sitting on the corn bin, and listening to the delectable conversation of ostlers, grooms, and stable-boys, while watching the mute but intelligent greetings of the dogs and horses ?”

“ Maude, what a question ?”

“ One other, please to answer. Do you approve of ladies fishing ?”

“ Hardly, love ; I cannot fancy it at all in unison with the female heart to cause, or still more to watch the dying agonies of any living thing. Years, long years ago, Maude, my attention was drawn to Lady

Marchmont by seeing her—when she little thought any one saw—take an earwig from her dress—I saw her shudder even as she took it up on a bay leaf—and put it gently out of the window, instead, as many delicate ladies would have done, crushing it under foot. I loved her from that hour. No, Maude, ladies should not fish. But, my dear, when is this to end—Instead of presiding judge I seem to be witness under examination, I could almost say, if you had not so pretty a face, under cross-examination.”

“ I have done now,” said Maude, very quietly ; “ but you will please to observe that you admit that ladies are entitled, under certain restrictions, to the same recreations as men.”

“ Yes.”

“ They may have a pet dog.”

“ Yes.”

“ But they must not hunt, nor course, nor swim across dangerous straits, nor fish, nor sit in stables.”

“ No.”

“ Therefore they cannot enjoy the society of their pet dog in any of these circumstances ?”

“ No.”

“ Therefore when *may* a lady have her pet dog.”

Sir Charles had kept his gravity very laudably during this long interrogation, though evidently with some difficulty, but Maude's arch look now was irresistible, and he in common with those around burst into a hearty laugh.

“ Quite a Socratic mode of argument, indeed, Madge,” said her uncle.

Sir Charles wiped his eyes, patted her shoulders, and promised never to say a word against her lap dog.

“ Nor against other people's, sir.”

“ I don't promise that, Maude ; you will treat your little dog kindly, very kindly, it would be cruelty to the poor exotic to do otherwise ; but you will not pamper him up and lavish, and degrade

your womanly affections on him as many do. It disgusts me," he said, "to see the pampered lap dogs, masses of obesity and disease, *carried* about by footmen for air, because they are too fat with overfeeding to walk : to hear of delicate chicken being boiled expressly for their luncheon, when starving human beings are sent empty away from the gate ; to see, as I have seen, married women, mothers, lavishing kisses on these brutes which their poor neglected, not half-so-much-cared-for children would have bounded to obtain—I have seen so much of this—not now and then, but continually—that I almost hate to meet a lady's lap dog."

"Apropos of dogs," said Mrs. de Snobyn, "for my little grand-daughter" (looking very kindly at Maude,) "has not wearied us with the subject, have you ever observed how very important a personage in all the Waverley novels, a dog is."

"In most of them," said Abel, "nearly in all ; and this circumstance was one

amongst others which very particularly drew the public attention towards Scott as the author of these works, because in all his poems a dog figures in much the same way. It was a new feature. The Strephons and Chloes, and Amaryllises and Phylisses of preceding romances, deigned not to acknowledge the existence of the animal creation, in the portraiture of their sentimental griefs and high flown sorrows."

"I think Scott's day is past," said Augustus de Snobyn, drawing his fingers gently through his beautiful hair; "most people prefer Bulwer, now."

"I hope not," said Sir Charles, emphatically.

"I am *sure* not," said Abel; "the prestige which accompanied the first appearance of Sir Walter's works, or even their re-appearance under his avowed sanction, has of course passed away. But so long as a love for all that is high and lofty, and pure and noble in fiction remains—so

long as 'pure thoughts, kind thoughts, high thoughts' shall find an echo in the human mind—so long as the emanations of genius based upon the loftiest principle shall be welcome to men—so long as the truest and purest views and pictures of human nature, and human life shall have power to attach—so long will Walter Scott's works be enshrined as household Gods among us."

"I quite agree with you," said Sir Charles.

Augustus was vexed and discomfited, but not abashed. He opened some books on the table, one after another, and closed them again. At length he paused on "Wordsworth's Excursion."

"You, Abel, will have something to say for that I suppose. *I* could never wade through it."

"I am not surprised at that," said Abel, quietly

"Nay surely, Abel," said Helena, "you cannot call Wordsworth a poet."

“ Say he is not always a harmonious poet, my handsome sister, and I will fully agree with you ; but a poet he is, and a first-rate one too, there can be no question.”

“ But if he be not harmonious, how can he be a poet, the very soul of poetry is in its numbers.”

“ If it be so, then will Pope and Tom Moore drive Milton and Wordsworth out of the field unquestionably.”

“ But Milton is harmonious surely.”

“ In his minor poems, his *Comus*, *Lycidas*, *L'Allegro*, *Penseroso*, most, or almost, inimitably so ; but what it is usual to call his great work, the *Paradise Lost*, most certainly not always so : amidst great magnificence of diction, and the highest stretch of human thought, he is often turgid, rough, and obscure.”

“ But Wordsworth—”

“ Well, Wordsworth : his language is often rough, his diction not flowing—there are

exceptions, splendid ones—but I speak of the bulk of his writing. His lines want that fine rythm, that flowing cadence, which falls on the ear, and fixes itself at once on the memory, in reading the productions of Pope and some older poets. But he has a fund of philosophy, and uncommon depth and expansion of thought : his principles are pure, his benevolence great, his aspirations high, and his poetry is a reflex of all these. His illustrations are borrowed entirely from natural objects—therefore true as nature herself of which his is so deep an observer, so ardent a worshipper—or from human beings—not degraded ones, not the Jack Sheppards, Quelps, and Lucretias of the day, but of the suffering, smitten, and it may be sinful heirs of humanity—for, as I said, he paints from nature :—but the suffering are patient, or try to be so : the smitten bow to the rod, and the sinful learn the error of their way. Not one line has Wordsworth written, which, dying, he need wish to blot

speaking I mean in a moral and religious view. He is not a favourite with young people, at which I do not at all wonder: his works require a power, or rather a concentration of thought fully to understand and relish them, to which they can hardly have obtained. But I have beguiled my little niece into reading and studying many of them with me, not so much from the idea that she will admire them now, as from the hope that as she becomes older, graver, and more initiated in the sorrows which must be her lot, she will recur to these poems as, next to her bible, the best soothers in sorrow and inspirers of fortitude which she can have."

"That is a high opinion to give of any human production."

"It is my very deliberate one," said Abel.

"Yes but Abel, you really are rather too bad," said Helena, a little petulantly, "you become so grave over everything."

I thought you were going to give us some of Moore's delicious stanzas, and here you preach us a sermon-like dissertation on the heavy texts of Wordsworth. You deserve to be voted to Coventry."

"Any punishment but that, fair Lady Helena, for that would take me from your side. Say, how may I please you?"

"By balancing the tirade on Wordsworth by a panegyric on that dear, delightful, melodious, E. E. L."

"Melodious, I grant you; her strains are most mellifluous; but that is all I can grant you."

"All! can you possibly see any fault in her poems?"

"Can you possibly see any good in them? save her mellifluous diction—her abundant—her superabundant flow of smooth words, which fall, like sweet music, on the ear."

"But, what possible harm is there in her works?"

“None, but what may arise from the absence of absolute good. Negative good sometimes assumes the shape of absolute ill. L. E. L.’s imaginative sorrows take little hold on the mind—they are merely poetical—not really nature; divest her subjects of their adventitious ornament, of her own beautiful spell of language and what is there?”

“Oh! you seem to read poetry like a mathematician.”

“No, only like a rational being.”

“And Mrs. Hemans, then, I suppose you class her in the same category.”

“By no means; I place her immeasurably higher. But lofty, pure, gentle, feminine, high-minded, and most essentially poetical as she is, if I had a daughter, I would not encourage her to bestow too much of her hours and her thoughts on Mrs. Hemans.”

“Oh, why not, uncle; I do love Mrs. Hemans,” said Maude.

“ Because, my dear, I consider that her writings are more calculated to excite the imaginations of young people, than to strengthen their minds to the performance of every day, trivial, distasteful duties. Her own career was a proof of this. She had no practical knowledge of the duties of a mistress of a household ; though her position was never above their calls. That her husband seldom had a pair of stockings mended when he wanted them, might be a very sublunary imagination ; but the reality was, doubtless, very uncomfortable to him—at least, it would be to me ”

“ Now, Abel, you are positively uncharitable.”

“ I do not wish to be so, Evelina.”

“ I always understood she was a most amiable creature.”

“ I believe her to have been pure in thought, and admirable in intention. She was a devoted mother, and a faithful wife ; remember, she was a separated one.’

“ Well, but Abel, that was for no fault ; only uncongeniality of disposition !”

“ No fault ! *only* uncongeniality of disposition, dear Helena, beware, or you will be beguiled into admissions which I trust, in their real light, you would abhor. When a woman takes those solemn vows, which, I fear, few of you consider solemnly enough ; they are undertaken till death—cannot be broken till death—save by one circumstance, which I cannot refer to here ; and yet, knowing this, you speak of “ uncongeniality of disposition”—that is, I suppose, the husband being a little cross and the wife a little unyielding—as reason sufficient for the utter abruption of these very solemn vows.”

Whatever might be Helena's secret opinion of “ twaddle,” she read in the looks of her host and hostess, that it was not twaddle to them ; so she replied gently, and indeed, truly—

“Indeed, Abel, I never thought of it in that light.”

“I am quite sure of that, Helena,” said Abel, very kindly.

Soon afterwards the carriages were announced.

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