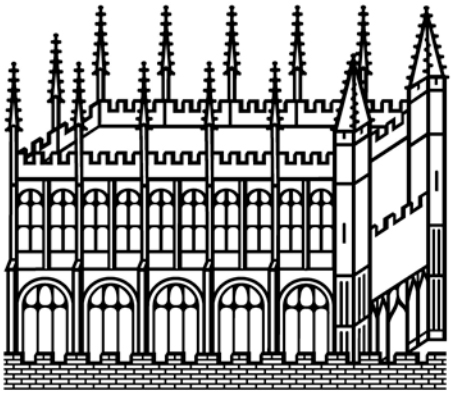

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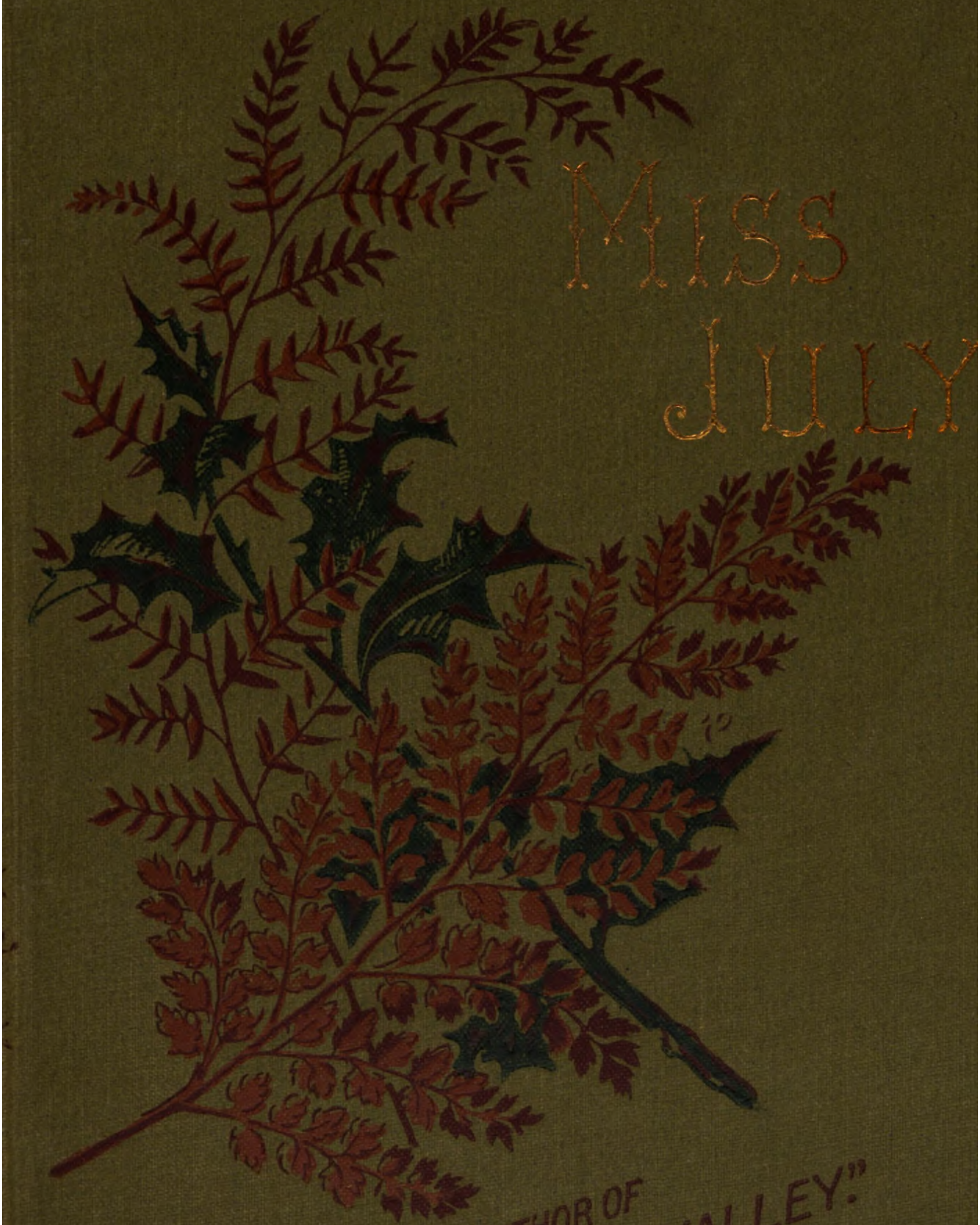
MISS JULY



BY THE AUTHOR OF "OUR VALLEY."

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"THE LITTLE CHURCH DOOR OPENED AND HE STOOD FACE TO FACE WITH JULIET NEVIL."

Frontispiece. *Page* 82.

MISS JULY

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"UNA CRICHTON" "OUR VALLEY" "THE
FORTUNES OF HASSAN" &c.

Or anywhere in the sun or rain
To have loved and been beloved again
Is loftiest reach of Hope's bright wings

DANTE ROSSETTI

ILLUSTRATED BY GORDON BROWNE

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MISS JULY.

CHAPTER I.

What's in a name? That which we call a rose,
By any other name would smell as sweet.
Romeo and Juliet.

MISS JULY! It was a strange, foolish name. A name which had no sense or meaning in it, which might have belonged to a horse, or a bird, or any other creature, as well as to a human being. And when you heard it at every turn and corner, as you did at Glenarva, when the children in the place screamed about Miss July at their games, and the old goodies talked of Miss July to each other over their tea-pots, and the boatmen painted the name in letters of vermilion and gold on their fishing craft, it was no wonder that the sound began to vex you.

At first it might naturally excite your curiosity, but before long you became annoyed at the perpetual repetition. For a little while you were amused, then it aggravated you, and at last you began to hate the name.

At least, this was the case in some instances.

"What in the world do they mean with their Miss July?" said Edgar Wynne to his brother one rainy evening in September. They were strangers who had arrived at Glenarva the previous day, and had taken up their quarters at Lettice Micklewright's, one of the best houses in the street of Glenarva. "I declare I've heard the name a dozen times since I've been in this blessed place."

He spoke impatiently, and there was a look of languor on his face which showed traces of recent illness and remaining weakness.

"I don't remember hearing the name the last time I was here," replied his elder brother, in a gentler tone, without lifting his eyes from the easel at which he stood engaged in completing a half-finished picture.

"I begin to think it belongs to a witch—another Lorelei—luring men to die in these desolate parts," returned the other bitterly. "You are only one of her unconscious victims, I suspect, Wilfrid, and I perforce have been dragged down here to become another."

The artist looked up from his easel this time. He was apparently a little disturbed at the severity of his brother's tone, and scanned his countenance with a nervous, hurried glance.

"I daresay these poor people mean the Vicar's daughter, Edgar," he said blandly. "I remember seeing a venerable, grey-headed parson on my last visit to Glenarva. It is possible that he had a daughter or a sister; but I cannot say that I recall her appearance."

A vision of an elderly maiden in blue spectacles and corkscrew curls, dispensing tracts and bottles of port wine, rose before Edgar Wynne's eyes at these words. He had spent most of his past life coffee-planting in Ceylon, and had but small knowledge of modern society and its ways. His brother's suggestion did not serve to mollify his temper, already severely tried by the unlucky circumstances which had attended his arrival at Glenarva. "Anywhere but Brighton" he had said to his London doctor. "Send me anywhere you like but there. All the world goes to Brighton now; and if that is the only cure for me, I frankly own I had rather give up the battle at once."

The doctor laughed and rubbed his hands. Yes, Brighton would be best; but his patient was so far recovered, that he might please himself; and he had better go where he liked, and in fact do as he pleased generally.

During the long weeks of convalescence in which Wilfrid had nursed him he had spoken to him in glowing terms of the little fishing village on the west coast, where he had spent a month sketching the year before, and now Edgar gladly availed himself of this liberal order to choose his own watering-place. He caught eagerly at the notion of a place where he could find quiet and enjoy beautiful scenery away from the dreary din of town life, and decided on Glenarva without further hesitation. His long years of absence from England, and the grief which he had felt at the death of his mother only a few weeks before his return home, together with his recent illness, had left him with a degree of cynical feeling, and made him rather inclined to shun the society of his fellow-creatures. Besides this, he had a traveller's love for exploring new country, and Glenarva Cove lay in a district wholly unknown to him, and, if Wilfrid's account were to be trusted, combined in itself the advantages and delights of all the watering-places in the British Isles. The houses were good and comfortable, the people primitive and kindly, unspoilt by the rush of tourists and the greed of money-making. Glenarva was ignorant alike of the abominations of monster hotels and the incursions of swindlers and adventurers. No parade could be carried over its precipitous rocks,

and the only highway of any importance was the one steep, straggling street which led down to the little harbour.

Then, too, all the year round, Glenarva was beautiful. Of that Wilfrid felt sure. But at no time was it so beautiful as in September, when the first russet tints had touched its golden woods, and the light autumn mists threw silvery veils over the distant moorland beyond. So the brothers had come to Glenarva in the last days of September, and Wilfrid had wisely secured rooms beforehand at the house of his former landlady, Lettice Micklewright. Unluckily, the week they chose for their arrival had been marked by a course of equinoctial gales. When, after a tedious journey by rail and coach, the travellers found themselves landed at the top of a steep hill a mile and a half above Glenarva, the rain fell in torrents, and they had considerable difficulty in removing both themselves and their luggage into shelter. When the next morning they rose, indifferently rested after a night disturbed by the violence of the hurricane, the creaking of doors and shutters, with an occasional interlude of crashing slates, it was still raining. And now, at four o'clock in the afternoon, the rain fell and the wind blew with the same furious violence as ever. It was therefore not to be wondered at if Edgar Wynne had as yet failed to

discover the superlative beauties of Glenarva, and if his temper, which had never attained the uniform equanimity that marked his brother's, was in a considerably ruffled condition.

He could not sit down contentedly as Wilfrid did, to paint pictures which no one else cared to see, and which were never admitted to the honours of any exhibition. His scanty supply of literature had been exhausted in the course of one morning. He had smoked till he was tired, and, after making two ineffectual attempts to brave the weather, had returned to the solitary arm-chair in Lettice Micklewright's parlour to grumble.

"Are there ever any visitors besides yourself at Glenarva?" he asked his brother as he sat there, piling up coal on the fire, not because he felt cold, but for want of a better occupation. "Do you suppose other men are fools enough to explore these benighted regions at this time of year?"

"I don't know about this time of year," was Wilfrid's mild answer. "When I stayed here last August there were—let me see—three visitors. One man lodged at the next house to this, and an artist and his wife were staying at the farm-house above the school."

"A vast concourse for a popular watering-place, indeed," said Edgar sarcastically. He was going to utter a wish that he had never set foot in this

hole, when fortunately for his brother's feelings his attention was roused by a sudden crash of falling crockery from the inner room, followed by a loud burst of sobbing.

"Accidents will happen in the best regulated families, and it appears that our friend Mrs. Mickle-wright's is no exception to the rule," said Wilfrid with one of his placid smiles. "I hope it is not the Bristol ware milk-jug we were admiring this morning."

Edgar opened the door to look what had happened and found himself face to face with a small boy of four or five, who was pointing to the shattered pieces of a cup and saucer which lay on the floor and repeating between his sobs—

"Oh!—Miss July—Miss Ju—ly, Oh, oh!"

"Hallo! have you broken your crown, Tommy?" said Edgar, thinking that nothing short of this could possibly account for this frantic outburst of grief on the part of a child of this age.

No answer, only a fresh storm of crying broke from the little fellow.

But a small sister who stood looking gravely at the scene of the disaster and thought herself gifted with superior wisdom in right of her two years' seniority, replied with a lofty air, "His name's Bobby, and he hasn't broken hisself. It's Miss July he's sorry for. But it was his own fault.

Mother said he wasn't to touch it, but he got on a chair and reached it down. It serves him right, it do."

"Here's a shilling for you, Bobby," said Edgar, slipping the coin into the sobbing child's hand; "that will buy another tea-cup, if that's what you mean."

"I don't want another," cried Bobby, not refusing the silver, but beginning to cry again. "It was her, *she* gave it me because I could spell the long words in my lesson-book. And Bab, she hasn't got one—only me—and now it's gone."

"Ah, I see it was a school-prize?" said Edgar, looking inquiringly at the little damsel opposite. "Never mind, Bobby, perhaps if you're a good boy you'll get another."

Decidedly, Wilfrid had guessed right. Miss July was the Vicar's daughter or sister, no doubt a lady of a certain age who found her vocation in doing the part of Dorcas among the fishing people of Glenarva. An admirable work no doubt, he allowed, although at the same time he could not restrain a sigh of compassion for any existence doomed to spend itself in these narrow ways.

His curiosity prompted him to seek for further information as to this mysterious personage who was the object of such true devotion on Bobby's part.

"What's the name of the lady who gave Bobby his tea-cup, Bab?" he asked.

"Miss July," replied both children in one breath.

"Who is she?" was his next question—an appeal which was met with so evident a stare of amazement from Bobby and his sister, that he made haste to add, "I mean, where does she live?"

"Up on the hill, at the house in the trees, where father goes every day," was Bab's reply.

"At the kennels where the two big dogs are," lisped out Bobby.

They might have supplied him with further and more valuable information had not their mother entered the kitchen that moment carrying an armful of clothes from the wash-tub.

"Look, mother," shouted Bobby, forgetting all about his misfortune, "look what he's given me," and he held up the shilling triumphantly between his finger and thumb.

"La! I never!" said Lettice, a strong young woman with black eyes, and cheeks that might have rivalled the apples in her garden for ruddiness of hue. "To think of that! why, Bob, you'll soon be rich enough to buy all the goodies in the place." She gave a knowing wink at Edgar Wynne as she spoke, and admonished Bobby to hold up his head and thank the kind gentleman.

"But he was naughty all the same, mother," moralised Barbara, whose sense of justice was by no means satisfied by the whole proceeding. "He ought not to have reached up to that shelf."

"Bless you, he's but a little one," said Lettice, making an ineffectual attempt to wipe Bobby's nose with a corner of her apron. "I'm sorry we're all so no-how to-day," she continued, glancing round the kitchen, which certainly showed symptoms of considerable disorder. "The place is so mewed up with children, and I've such a to-do to keep them out of the mud a day like this, bless their hearts, poor lambs. And I'm too busy to mind 'em myself. Here, Bab, just run and put these things in soak."

"It's bad weather for washing, isn't it, Mrs. Micklewright?" observed Edgar, thinking it necessary to make a polite remark.

Lettice gave a smile which showed two rows of brilliant teeth. "Plenty of water overhead and under foot to-day," she said, arming herself, as she spoke, with a fresh bundle of dirty clothes. "But it's not that. It's because when it's rained two days, it's pretty sure to give over and be good weather for drying on the third. That's my 'sperience, sir, you see, and I ought to know the weather at Glenarva by now as well as most folks,

since it's two-and-thirty years I've lived in this house, if it's a day."

The idea was a novel one, and Edgar Wynne returned to the front parlour in a rather better frame of mind, devoutly hoping that Lettice might be right in her cheerful augury. If not, his mind was made up. He would take the coach the next evening and go straight back to town and remain there within reach of the resources of civilisation, rather than spend another day in this detestable hole.

But he thought it wiser not to communicate his resolution to Wilfrid, for fear it should spoil the picture at which he worked long after dark.

CHAPTER II.

Where should this music be?
I' th' air, or th' earth?—*Tempest.*

LETTICE MICKLEWRIGHT had been right. The storm had spent its fury, and on the following day the sun broke over the bay with renewed splendour.

Edgar Wynne looked out from his window that morning on a scene which might well alter his first impressions of Glenarva. The veil of cloud and mist which had hung for days over the shore had been suddenly lifted, and in its place was a sea of sapphire blue stretched far and wide as the eye could reach. Wherever he looked over the slanting roofs of the irregularly-built houses, shelving down to the beach, or through the green leaves of the apple trees in the little orchard opposite, he saw the same radiant sea, dazzling his eyes with the reflected sunshine that danced in its thousand ripples.

The little fishing village was early astir that morning. Everybody seemed to be out of doors. Women

and children appeared at the windows or called to each other as they stood at the open doors of their houses. A couple of donkeys laden with coal were ascending the roughly paved street, stumbling and stopping at every step, and the voice of their driver was heard vainly trying to coax the refractory animals into good humour by addressing them in the most persuasive and endearing terms. Perhaps they resented being driven up the hill when everybody else in Glenarva seemed to be making for the beach. The harbour was naturally the centre of interest on a fine morning like this, when the sea was calm as a lake and the red-sailed herring-boats were putting out one by one to try their luck after the long storm.

Edgar Wynne was not insensible to the atmosphere of brightness and sea-freshness breathing around him. The sight of the healthy faces and busy, happy people who met him in the street filled him with a consciousness of returning vigour and youthfulness as he strolled down the village street towards the little harbour. He owned to himself that his first judgment of Glenarva had been, to say the least, hastily formed, and he understood the fascination which this fishing village possessed for Wilfrid. He, good soul, had been out for hours already, in search of subjects for future pictures—a task which afforded him unfailing occupation. Edgar partly admired, partly pitied his brother for

the steadfast way in which, through good and ill report, he clung to the practice of his art. It was not because of the reputation it brought him, for he had never succeeded in getting a picture into an exhibition, and scarcely as yet in finding a sympathetic critic. And it was certainly not for the sake of the money which it brought him, for he had never sold but one picture, and that was for a charity. Besides, he had independent means of his own, and fortunately had no need to trust to the profits of his calling. But he had great dreams of the future and a belief in himself, which bore him up in all difficulties. Some day, he was sure of that, the time would come when these stormy sunsets (which as yet failed to win the admiration of gaping crowds) and misty moonlights would be accepted by the world; and in that hope he was content to wait. In the meantime, to Wilfrid's credit it must be owned, he found happiness in the pursuit of his art, which was more than Edgar could always say for himself.

His lot had been cast in very different lines. The paths where his feet had hitherto walked had not been always pleasant places. As a boy he had left a happy home to lead a rough life among strangers in a far land, and, although that foreign country had become home to him, he had missed the gentle influences which had brightened his early years.

And now he had come back after a lengthened absence, broken only by his brief holidays, to find the home of his childhood broken up, his mother dead, and Wilfrid almost the only near relative that remained to him in the world.

It is not to be wondered at if in these circumstances Edgar Wynne was inclined to look moodily upon things around him, and to heave a sigh over the disappointments and delusions of life. Now, as he stood leaning against the stone wall of the little harbour that affords its shelter to the Glenarva boats, and looked back at the village, framed in by the autumn woods and hilly background, brighter thoughts rose in his mind. It seemed a wrong, almost a sin, to be sad on a day like this in a world that, with all its shadows, was still glad and beautiful.

He watched the thin blue line of smoke curling upwards from the topmost cottages against the bank of trees that rose behind them, with a sense of satisfaction, and gave himself up to a passive enjoyment of his surroundings.

The little crowd which had gathered on the beach to witness the departure of the herring-boats had now dispersed; the men of Glenarva were at work, and the women had gone back to their homes. Almost the only other person to be seen was an old man who paced silently up and down, rocking a baby backwards and forwards. The lullaby which

he sung to his charge had a seafaring ring about it, and the long looks which he cast every few minutes after the vanishing sails showed that, like most of the Glenarva men, his life had been spent on the waves.

Edgar Wynne began moralising to himself over the aged sailor, and wondering what strange adventures or moving incidents had been his lot in past times. All at once the old man advanced, and, touching his red cap respectfully, asked if his honour would not please to have a row. His boat was lying there on the beach, and if he might be so bold as to say so, the gen'elman would have a better notion of the place if he pulled out a bit, away from the shore, and saw how the coast lay.

Edgar looked at the sea, which was as blue and still as a lake, and thought that on the whole this might not be a bad way of beguiling the morning, and at the same time improving his knowledge of the place. "Well, I think I will come, if you can get rid of that baggage. I won't bargain to have him with us," he added, looking at the infant's grimy face with a man's dismay.

"Bless the little chap, I'd never be for taking him," said the old sailor, with a chuckle and grin. "I'll just hand him over to his sister. Here, my honey," he added, as a tiny child peeped out of the door of a neighbouring cottage, "just you take the little

'un, and see that you don't let him drop. All right, sir," he continued, seeing that Edgar looked in some alarm at the diminutive size of the new nurse, " she's little, but she's sharp enough, Suey, and she'll see to him better, maybe, than a sight of bigger lasses. Only I takes him sometimes for a bit, because he's a heavy weight to drag about all day long, and because, you see, sir, I mind the days when I'd little 'uns of my own toddling round me. They're all gone now, bless 'em, but they've left a soft corner in my heart for the babsies, I think, still."

Edgar was a little afraid his new acquaintance might prove too loquacious a companion for his taste, but once in the boat old Jacob had enough to do to ply his oars, and left him to make his observations undisturbed by further remarks. They rowed out from the shore till they could see the great headland which closed in the bay, and the roofs of Glenarva were lost in the thick luxuriance of the woods which clothed hill and valley. Then they turned and came suddenly on a wilder part, where the cliffs rise in precipitous heights from the water-line, and low stunted oaks and a rough growth of scanty herbage are the only verdure that cling to the limestone rock. Close under the shore they rowed, and Edgar was measuring the height of the cliff with his eye, when to his surprise he heard a voice carolling in the air above him.

He looked up quickly, but saw nothing. The cliffs rose abruptly from the water, the ledges of rock cut the air sharply above his head, and it was plain neither man nor beast could find a footing there. Still the clear voice warbled on, strong and joyous in its lightness of heart. He could not catch the words, but he heard enough to know that it was some stirring battle-song. The voice was not a trained one,—even at this distance he could tell that,—but it had a passionate ring, a fire and spirit which stirred his soul as it went echoing along the cliffs.

Presently it stopped, and old Jacob who had been watching his employer with a curious smile, gave him a cunning look and a nod.

"She can sing, can't she? You'll not hear another voice like that in all the country round."

"But what on earth is she? A spirit or a water nymph?" exclaimed Edgar. "There isn't a place where a goat could find footing here, and yet that voice sounded close by."

Old Jacob laid down one oar and turned himself solemnly round. Then he pointed upwards with the other to a cleft in the rock almost hidden by a mass of foliage and brushwood. A rough path led from this cave to the top of the cliff, and along this narrow ledge at that moment Edgar saw the slight figure of a girl in a blue skirt walk-

ing boldly by herself. The position seemed to him so perilous from where he lay in the boat at the foot of the rocks, that he held his breath involuntarily till the form had vanished out of sight on the top of the cliffs.

"Well, old chap," he said with a sigh of relief, "that's a sort of feat which I have no ambition to try."

"Looks baddish from down here," replied old Jacob, with a confidential air; "but you know it's not so bad as it looks, and *she* can go anywhere. Why, bless you, sir, she's as light as a gossamer-web, and these cliffs and places they've known her ever since she was born, and there's not one of us would hurt her or touch one hair of her pretty head,—no, not to save our lives."

Old Jacob paused after this speech, in which he had exhausted both his breath and his powers of expression, to judge from the slight confusion of metaphor to be observed in his language.

"But who is she? you've not told me that yet?" said Edgar. "I begin to think she belongs to the mermaidens in good earnest."

"I thought you must have known, sir," was old Jacob's reply. "I thought everybody knew. But to be sure, I mind," he continued, scratching his head with a reflective air, "I mind now you're a new-comer. Lettice's little Bab, she told me you'd only been there since the day before yester'night

and Glenarva folks they're sometimes a bit shy of making free with new-comers, or else you'd have surely heard of her 'afore now, if you hadn't seen her, for there's hardly a day she's not in and out of our houses, a running here and there, like a flash of sunshine breaking in upon one where one looks for it least. She's Miss July."

"Miss July!" exclaimed Edgar, clapping his hand on the side of the boat with an energy that startled old Jacob, who had taken him hitherto to be "one o' them lackadaisical kind o' town folks."

Then he took another look at the path in the rock, and said more to himself than to Jacob, "So that's your Miss July, is it? Well, I begin to think there is something of witchcraft about her, that draws every one within her spell. And that is her fairy bower, I suppose," he continued, addressing the old man.

"It's a path the old Squire had cut in the rock this twenty years back or more. He was newly-married then, and his lady she loved standing to watch the sea and listen to the waves when they come breaking like great guns on the rocks, and they call it the Mary Bower after her'n. The folks did say she came from a wild place up in the north country, and it minded her of her own old home; but I can't say if that were just true or not. Maybe

it was and maybe it wasn't, for folks they do talk uncommon free about the quality now-a-days."

Here Jacob paused; and Edgar, who had become interested in his story, took another look at the perilous path overhead, and then asked—

"But Miss July, she has nothing to do with the Squire's lady, has she?"

"Bless your honour, she's her own child," cried old Jacob, shocked at this unheard-of ignorance. "Poor lady, she died when July was but a little 'un, and Master Algy, the young Squire, he was but a year or two older. And then Miss Nevil, she was the old Squire's sister, she came to the Court and stayed there and kept things going, for the Squire he was broken down with grief and trouble of one sort or another, and he'd spent a sight of money, and there was no one but Miss Nevil—Miss 'Licia we used to call her in old days—who could keep him straight."

"And Miss July is Squire Nevil's daughter?" said Edgar, satisfied to have at length reached this conclusion.

Old Jacob nodded, and then deliberately resumed his oars. Perhaps his own appetite warned him that it was drawing on for dinner-time, or perhaps he was fatigued after his long, and, for him, unwonted exertion of brain and tongue.

They were soon back in the little harbour, and the old man felt himself liberally paid for his pains, and begged Edgar to remember him whenever he wanted to have a bit of a pull out from shore.

CHAPTER III.

Like to a flower, so charming,
  So pure and fair thou art ;
I look at thee, and sorrow
  Comes stealing into my heart.
Fain on thy head would lay I
  My hands and pour forth prayer,
That God may keep thee ever,
  So charming, pure, and fair.—HEINRICH HEINE.

LETTICE met Edgar Wynne at the door on his return, with a smiling face and a red rose pinned on in front of her clean print gown.

"What do you say to Glenarva now, sir?" she asked, with a proud wave of her head and neck. "I knew you'd open your eyes this morning when you see the weather. But it's always the same here. The rain's bad while it lasts, and then it clears off a kinder of sudden, and folks they wonder when they see what a place ours is."

"It is certainly very much changed from yesterday," said Edgar, turning round on the doorstep to look at the vast expanse of radiant sea which lay below. "You were a better prophet than I sus-

pected, Lettice. I confess I put little faith in your prophecy last night."

Lettice acknowledged the compliment with another broad smile and a twinkle of her bright black eyes.

"Mr. Wilfrid's been in, sir, some minutes." He was always Mr. Wilfrid to her, in right of her previous acquaintance with him, while she did not venture on this familiarity with the younger brother. "I've served him a mouthful of lunch, since he wants to be off again to his paints."

Edgar went in, and found his brother hastily finishing his luncheon with his sketch before him.

"I am glad it is you," he said, with the same open smile which seemed to be his habitual greeting. "I was wondering what had become of you. Have you been climbing the hill or exploring the coombe at the back?"

"Neither," said Edgar, flinging himself into his favourite arm-chair. "On the contrary, I have spent a lazy, but by no means unprofitable, morning. I found an old boatman, who rowed me, and by whose help I made important discoveries. I've not the least doubt that by this time I know more about Glenarva and its inhabitants than you do. Let me see. Have you ever heard of Squire Nevil?"

Wilfrid confessed that he had not.

"Nor of his sister? nor of his daughter? I can even tell you where they live," continued

Edgar, with a vivacity that rejoiced his brother's kind heart. "Why, Will, old fellow, what were you doing with your wits—wool-gathering, it strikes me—all the weeks you spent at Glenarva last year? There was old Jacob just now holding up his hands in horror at my ignorance. What would he have said to yours, I should like to know? But tell me first where have you been? And your sketch, how has it fared?"

Wilfrid silently handed him his board, and then proceeded to explain in which direction he had found his subject. The knotted roots of ancient oak and ash, and the tangled growth of the branches that meet above, were always favourite studies with him, and these abounded in the coombes and valleys in the neighbourhood of Glenarva.

Edgar never criticised his brother's drawings, or indeed hazarded any opinion about them. He had no wish to hurt the artist's sensitive nature, and yet he could not help being conscious of a certain weakness and failure in every picture that Wilfrid attempted. Up to a certain stage the work was well conceived and executed; but when this point was reached, as certainly did the failure and inability to express the painter's whole meaning become apparent. A degree of confusion followed, the picture became a medley of subjects indifferently realised, without unity or proportion,

although retaining in a measure the poetic feeling to which it owed its origin.

Each time he set to work again, a little saddened it might be, but never altogether disheartened, and began with fresh hope and energy to endeavour how he could best realise some new conceptions, and each time, alas! the result was the same. Still, he worked steadily on with untiring patience and a firm belief in his own powers, which always buoyed his own spirits up if it had ceased to convince others.

He was soon gone, and Edgar remained alone, brooding over his thoughts. He had an uncomfortable consciousness that what struck him so forcibly in Wilfrid's drawings might be true, in another sense, of his own life. The same conviction of failure seemed to hang about him and all that he did.

It was true he had been fairly prosperous abroad, and had come home with more money in his pockets than most of his comrades; but that was in his eyes a poor compensation for those long years spent on a foreign shore far from home and friends. He could not think of his mother or of his early boyhood without bitter regret, and a sense of loss which could never be repaired; and now, whichever way he turned his gaze, the future looked cold and dreary. His few remaining relatives and the friends he had known had become

strange to him during his long absence, and he did not greatly care to renew the broken link. He envied Wilfrid the happiness which he found in his painting, however unsuccessful his efforts might prove, and was inclined to wish he had even the incentive of poverty to make him work.

While his musings took this melancholy turn he fell asleep and forgot speculations about the past and future alike, until he woke up, dreaming in a confused way that he was resting under a banyan tree on the shore of a blue sea, watching a band of children at play together. It was not all a dream, for when he woke lively voices were talking outside the window, and he heard Lettice in the act of saying—

"Well, I never! I did think I was high enough to reach the top of the wall; but I do believe my arm's shrunk. It's no use; I must get a longer stick."

"Oh, never mind, Lettice; please never mind," said another voice; "these leaves are lovely, and I can have those to-morrow or any time."

But Lettice was evidently not satisfied with this conclusion.

"Maybe we shall have more rain to-morrow, and they'll all be dashed; and there's no virginy like them in the whole place, although I says it, as shouldn't say it. And all these days I've been watching them turn brighter and brighter red, and

each morning I says to Robin and Bab, 'Them's for Miss July.' And to-day I saw they were beginning to drop. If Robin were here now he'd have 'em in a twinkling! But wait one minute, miss," she added; and, struck with a sudden inspiration, she opened the parlour door and put her head in.

"Do you want me, Lettice?" said Edgar, guessing the reason of her unceremonious entrance, but hesitating before he ventured to offer his assistance.

"I looked in once half-an-hour ago, and you were fast off," she said, "so I didn't want to disturb you; but, if it isn't troubling you out of reason, I'll thank you kindly just to reach down a bough of this creeper out here."

Edgar promptly acceded to her request, and in a few seconds the coveted crimson leaves were gathered, and triumphantly placed in Miss July's hands by Lettice.

"There! I'd vowed none but you should have them. But he's a fine tall one, isn't he?" she added, looking at Edgar with as much satisfaction as if he were a portion of her personal property.

"Thank you! oh, thank you!" said July, looking up in the stranger's face with anxious eagerness to atone for the seeming rudeness. "I am so sorry you were disturbed. There really was not the least occasion. But I am very much obliged all

the same, and only sorry you should have been troubled."

"It was no trouble," said Edgar, shortly; and he was about to turn back into the house, when the young lady said—

"There are many more here than I want, Lettice. Do let me arrange them in your big blue china bowl."

The bowl in question stood in the parlour, and July's quick fingers had soon arranged the brilliant-hued leaves into a bouquet which delighted Lettice's eyes.

"I'll fetch you a rose or two from the garden," she said, disappearing through the back door. "It won't take a moment."

"Won't you sit down?" said Edgar, feeling as if it was his duty to offer some hospitality to his visitor, and not being even quite sure he ought to address her.

"Thank you," said July; but she remained standing, and, catching sight of a half-finished sketch of Wilfrid's which lay on the table, she exclaimed the next instant—

"Oh, is that yours? How very, very good! It is our rocks just under the ash-trees, beyond the point. I should know it anywhere. That is how the upper branches grow, and the old trunk is just like that. It was struck by lightning in the great

storm three years ago. Oh! it is all exactly the same," she cried, in her delight at recognising each familiar object.

"I am glad you like it," said Edgar, with a smile at her pleased face. "It is my brother's. I think he must have done it last year, when he was down here alone, as we have only been here two days this time. He is out sketching somewhere now."

For the first time in his life he began to wish that he could draw, since a simple sketch could afford any one such evident pleasure.

"But why doesn't he finish it?" asked the girl, more intent upon the drawing than upon Edgar's remarks. "It seems such a pity to leave it like that, when it might make such a beautiful picture."

"That is more than I can tell," replied Edgar. "I fancy I heard him say that he was not satisfied with it. I suppose something else pleased him better."

"I don't think anything could be better than that. I wish I could draw," Miss Nevil added with a sigh.

"You could if you tried, I suppose," said Edgar. "Most people can do what they like, if they try their hand at it. But I must confess I have never even wished to draw."

The girl looked at him, half in doubt whether he were in earnest.

"Perhaps if I lived at Glenarva long, I might have the wish," continued Edgar, afraid his last remark might appear rude. "But I seldom see a picture that I care for much."

Just then Lettice returned with four or five large yellow roses from a neighbour's garden.

"They're real beauties, miss, now, ain't they?" she said, holding them up admiringly at a little distance from her. "And they'll set off the virginy. Mr. Wilfrid will be pleased now, won't he, sir? He's that fond of flowers, or if he isn't he's strangely altered to what he was last year," she added, seeing that Edgar made no immediate response.

He was watching Miss Nevil as she divided the leaves and arranged the bowl to show off the roses to the best advantage.

She had finished now, and, taking a cordial leave of both Lettice and her unknown friend, she left the house, carrying her share of the spoils which Edgar had torn from the creeper.

"That's Miss July," said Lettice, assuming an air of importance, the moment the door had closed behind her. "The Squire's daughter, Miss July. Leastways, folks here all call her so," she proceeded to explain. "Not that it's how her name spells, for I saw it once in a prayer-book she gave Bab,

but her father and the young Squire and we others all say July, 'cause she was born in summer-time, folks say, and when she's about the boatmen they laugh and say it's July weather all the year round."

"I thought the young lady must be Miss Nevil," said Edgar, without further comment, and he moved towards the door and walked a few paces up the street.

"Not Miss Nevil, but Miss Juliet Nevil," Lettice called after him in her anxiety to be correct. "Miss Nevil, she's as different to that as chalk's to cheese."

But her last remark was wasted upon Edgar, who was already out of hearing.

He walked slowly up the village street, looking at the fuchsias and clematis trailing over the doors and windows, and saw Miss July turn into a cottage a little higher up.

In a few minutes she came out again, and went on her way with a spray of large-blossomed purple clematis in her hand this time.

Edgar watched the slender outline of her figure against the wooded background and noted how the wind lifted the shady brim of her straw hat and waved the rings of golden hair which fell in thick clusters on her neck.

Old Jacob had called her pretty, and he supposed he was right. He was not sure that he

thought her a beauty, but she was pleasant to look at; and it seemed to him especially that she was exactly in harmony with her surroundings.

The bright young face with its soft brown eyes and cloud of golden hair breathed the same freshness and sense of healthy, joyous existence which seemed to belong to Glenarva. The light, happy laugh had as true-hearted a ring as Lettice's voice or old Jacob's look. July was beyond all doubt one of themselves, a child of Glenarva and the rock-bound sea.

Edgar Wynne smiled to himself as he remembered the terrible apparition which he had been picturing to himself of a middle-aged maiden lady, rigid in air and formal in manner, dispensing tracts and blankets in the goodness of her heart, who might address him and adjure him to consider the error of his ways betimes. This Miss July was not at all fearful or alarming to look at, and he need not dread that she would molest him in any way during his stay at Glenarva. He did not wonder the simple fishing folk were all so fond of her, and that old Jacob had called her like a flash of sunshine sent to brighten the long winter days.

As he looked after her a new yearning woke in his breast for those tender influences of which his boyhood had been so early robbed. A sister like that, what a boon it would have been in his life,

what a stimulant to exertion, what a stay and refreshment in dark and lonely hours!

And then, after his favourite method, Edgar Wynne began to analyse the girl's probable thoughts and character, to wonder how her early years had been spent, if she had received any sort of education in this remote place. She had admitted her ignorance as to drawing, and the very frankness and unsuspiciousness of her remarks argued a certain country breeding. Edgar liked her all the better for that on the whole, he thought, although she had certainly shown a remarkable want of interest in him, and had confined her attention exclusively to Wilfrid's drawing.

When he returned to Lettice's cottage he took up the unfinished sketch and examined it more closely than he had ever done before, but could not see anything striking about it, and concluded that July's innocent admiration must have been wholly due to the fact that the scene was a familiar one to her.

"She must be very young, and I daresay that old spendthrift father of hers has never let her learn a thing," he said to himself contemptuously, as he laid down the drawing block.

But he told Wilfrid that evening conscientiously every word that Miss Nevil had said in praise of his sketch, and was touched to see the evi-

dent pleasure the narrative seemed to afford his brother.

He dwelt upon the little incident with a seriousness that surprised Edgar, and kept recurring to what Miss July had said and speculating as to what she might have thought all the evening. Finally he took up the neglected sketch and expressed his resolution to try the subject again.

In short, the little word of sympathy and admiration which his work had elicited from a girl whom he had never seen, appeared so powerful a stimulus for the moment that Edgar reproached himself for the discouraging effect his own silence must have on his brother. He even began to think that encouragement and kindliness might have the effect of making Wilfrid, after all, into a successful artist.

Was this gentle influence the one thing needed, he asked himself, in both their lives; the warmth and brightness which could alone make the desert blossom as a rose? He put aside the thought scornfully, but at least it had the good result of making him ask his brother about his day's work with a new interest, which Wilfrid took as a happy sign that Glenarva had already produced a beneficial effect on the convalescent's health.

CHAPTER IV.

Hast thou seen that lordly castle,
That castle by the sea?

. . . .

Well have I seen that castle,
That castle by the sea,
And the moon above it standing,
And the mist rise solemnly.—LONGFELLOW.

THERE had been Nevils at Glenarva as far back as the memory of man could reach. The founder of the race was said to have crossed over with Norman William, and the pedigree of the family could be traced as far back as that of Howards or Courtenays. Of old they had been *puissants seigneurs*, feudal lords who had held their own against the proudest names of the West. They had fought on the King's side in the civil wars, and in the royal cause had lost their lands and treasure, which the Restoration had not given back to them. Since those days they had never recovered their former

position, but had gradually sunk lower and lower in the scale, until they had almost entirely dropped out of the roll of county magnates.

The loneliness and remote situation of Glenarva Court, the ancestral home of the Nevils, had been one cause of the oblivion into which the family had sunk of late years. Another and a more powerful reason was to be found in the reckless extravagance and follies of its last representatives.

The two latest owners of Glenarva had, indeed, themselves to thank in a great measure for the reverses which they had sustained and the present state of their fortunes. As old Jacob had said, it was only owing to the prudence and careful economy of the Squire's sister that the family were able to remain in the home which had been theirs for so many centuries.

But with all Miss Nevil's efforts the place showed evident signs of the straitened circumstances to which its owners were reduced.

A great part of the original mansion had been pulled down, and one wing of what had once been a stately quadrangle alone remained, with a single turret of the many towers that once crowned the building. Seen from afar, where it stood buried in its ancient woods, the lonely pile appeared like a ghost of its former splendour.

The picturesque grace which nature lends to

ruined halls had not failed to atone in some degree for the ravages of time. The ivy clung to the solitary tower with kindly influence, hiding the cracks and crevices of the crumbling wall, and flowering creepers and splendid passion flowers trailed over the fragments of a broken balustrade which had once lined the terrace. Above all, there was the loneliness of the spot itself and the beauty of the prospect. This, at least, was a heritage which the foolish extravagance of spendthrift owners and the evil results of bad times could never destroy.

The ground fell away almost immediately from the windows, and below, thickly planted with oak and ash, was the glen through which the Arva stream flowed down over rocks overgrown with fern and brushwood to seek the bosom of the sea. And there, where the lines of the opposite hills ran sharply down together, and golden gorse and purple heather mingled their bright hues with the scanty herbage of the down, was a glimpse of the sea itself, broad and blue and changeless in its far-reaching expanse. The fair-haired girl who stood leaning against the ruined balustrade that October morning thought little of the view that unrolled itself at her feet in all the glory of the autumn day. Her gaze was turned in quite another direction. She was looking towards the road which led

towards the village, evidently watching for some one who would arrive that way. At last her attentive eyes caught sight of a boy's figure passing under the stone gateway, which still marked the boundary of the Court grounds, although there had been no iron gate within the memory of the last generation.

Then she darted away to meet him, followed by a big mastiff, who watched every motion of his mistress, and in a few minutes returned more leisurely up the approach.

She held the post-bag in her hand, and was attentively scanning its contents, which to-day had an especial interest for her. Presently she quickened her pace and ran in at the hall door, holding a letter in her hand.

Bevis, the big mastiff, followed her in, but retreated at the sight of a lady who sat on a high-backed settee near the open hearth, and lay down submissively on the door-mat.

"Here's a letter from Algy, Aunt Alicia," said Juliet, waving the said letter above her head, and dropping the remaining contents of the post-bag on her aunt's knee as she turned to find her father.

"Well, July, child, what's the news? When will the boy be here?" said a voice behind her as the old Squire came shuffling into the room as fast as he could manage on his gouty limbs. He was a heavily-built man and looked old for his age,

which could not be more than sixty-three or four. His face was still handsome, but the mouth was weak, and the look of habitual irresolution in his countenance showed an enfeebled will.

"I haven't looked yet, father," said Juliet; "the letter is for you."

She handed it to him as she spoke, and sat down on the rug, with her face turned in eager expectancy to hear Algy's news.

"If Algernon has written you may be certain he is not coming this week, and probably not next week," the elderly lady in the oak chair enunciated, folding down a blank fly-sheet as she spoke, with a paper-knife. There was no trace of indecision either in Alicia Nevil's face or voice. Her tones seemed to cut like a knife with their clear incisive sharpness, and her long chin and the straight lines of her mouth had all the firmness that was wanting in her brother's countenance.

Everything about her betokened a strong character, a vigorous will, and a resolution undaunted by troubles and opposition. She might not always prove a pleasant companion, more especially if your will happened to run counter to hers, but a glance at her face was enough to explain the supremacy of her rule at Glenarva Court.

July's grandmother had been a person of strong sense, and a courage which had stood her in good

stead in long years of adversity; and if her son had taken after his father, it was a fortunate thing for Glenarva that these excellent qualities had descended to her daughter Alicia.

July herself had a certain resemblance to her aunt; indeed there was a curious family likeness between the three, in spite of the difference of age and character; but with the high white brow and fair colouring of the Nevils she had her mother's brown eyes, and a soft musical voice which was certainly not inherited from either her father or her aunt.

"What did you say, July?" said the old Squire when he had at length opened the letter and with the help of his glasses deciphered his son's hasty scrawl. "The boy isn't coming. Not a bit of it. I knew how it would be when he once took to his heels. And I can't even make out where he writes from. One of your hateful German names, I'll be bound it is. There, girl, take the letter and make what you can out of it."

"It can scarcely be German if Algy is in Norway," said his sister severely, while Juliet hastily seized her brother's letter and read its contents aloud for her aunt's benefit. Her father was right so far, that Algy said he should not be back for another ten days, but he wrote from Bergen and talked of sailing soon for England.

"He says he's had glorious weather and capital sport, you see, father," commented Juliet, knowing that everything that affected Algy was of the keenest interest for her father, although his vexation at his son's return being delayed clouded his face for the moment.

"Has he? Poor fellow, poor fellow! Well, well, I suppose boys will be boys," he said, nodding his head and recovering his good humour by degrees. "And what day will he be back?"

"He isn't sure," replied the girl, with a little sigh, as if she, too, shared her father's disappointment. "That must depend upon the passage. But he'll come here straight, once he is back in England. Was your letter at all interesting, aunt?" she continued, seeing that Miss Alicia sat bolt upright in her chair with the letter folded between her hands, in what was for her an unusually meditative mood.

After a little pause, she cleared her throat and said, "My letter is from your godmother, Juliet. Amy Maxwell, you remember, George, she was one of the Sinclairs. She writes to say that two of her cousins, Wilfrid and Edgar Wynne she calls them, are staying in the village. She hopes that we will be kind to them, and says that the younger one—her especial friend and old playfellow, I

see she calls him—is recovering from a fever, with which he has been ill for some weeks in London."

"Wynne?" said the Squire. "Wynne, do you say? I've heard the name somewhere; but Amy's mother was a Murray, so I don't see how they can be her cousins. And if they are, they are not mine. What in the world does she mean by sending her grand London folk down here to spy out our country ways? Let them stay where they are if they like Glenarva; and if not, why let them go back. I've no notion of letting them plague us with their fine airs."

Alicia was too much accustomed to her brother's passing tempers to pay attention to his words, and said nothing in reply. She had a great regard for the respect due to connections of the family, and was secretly thinking within her own mind what would be the best way of showing civility to these strangers.

As relatives, however remote the link that united them to the Nevils of Glenarva, they must be recognised and hospitably entertained in some form or other. That Alicia had no doubts about. She had also considerable regard for Mrs. Maxwell, whose father had been a cousin of her own, and one on whom she had not looked unkindly in bygone days, report said; and as Juliet's god-

mother was a person who moved in the best society she might some day prove useful.

All this Miss Nevil turned over in her own mind, while the Squire paced uneasily up and down the hall and declared that he was not going to have these friends of Amy Maxwell's worrying about here.

"Why, there's not even a good day's shooting to offer a fellow now," he growled out. "Ever since you sent away Berridge, it's never been the same."

The Squire knew perfectly that Berridge was a wasteful and drunken servant whose dismissal had become absolutely necessary, and Miss Nevil scorned to notice his last remark.

Just then July, who had gone outside with Bevis, reappeared in the doorway. An idea had struck her.

"I think, father," she said, "that these strangers cousin Amy talks of are lodging at Robin Micklewright's house. I saw one of them yesterday, and he seemed quiet enough. And I want to get to know them, because the other one paints; I saw a sketch which he did in the glen, on the table."

"I hate artists," said her father; "they make a pretence of sketching, with their tents and their paraphernalia, to poke their noses in everywhere. Of course, if these men are really Amy's cousins,

they may not be so bad. But I hate having strangers about the old place. It would be one thing," he continued loftily, "if we could receive guests as they should be welcomed at Glenarva. But, since that can't be, I would rather keep to ourselves."

Alicia did not take the trouble to point out the obvious selfishness of this proposition, but contented herself with saying in a decided tone—

"You must call upon them, George, at Micklewright's house, or wherever they are staying. And then you can ask them to dinner one day."

She knew very well that her decisions were almost invariably accepted as final, and, rising from her chair, left the hall. The bunch of keys which she wore hanging to her *châtelaine* rattled heavily as she moved, and increased the imposing character of her appearance. Every servant in the house or, indeed, on the estate knew the sound of that *châtelaine*, and the thought of Miss Nevil's approach had a magic effect in quickening the steps and wits of those who heard it.

The Squire gave a deep sigh as its echoes died out in the distance of the long passage.

"It's no use, July, it's absurd to think of calling at Micklewright's. I'll write a line on my card and you can leave it."

"Would that be civil?" asked Juliet doubtfully.

Her experience of the world was of a very limited nature, but she thought her aunt must know best, and she was not at all sure whether her father's cavalier treatment might not have the effect of affronting the strangers.

"Civil enough to be sure, child," returned her father hastily. "But perhaps we'd better wait till Algy comes, and then there'll be no trouble about it," he added, after a few seconds' reflection. "Yes, we'll wait till Algy comes," he repeated, putting his hands in his pockets and chuckling to himself like a satisfied schoolboy. "That will be much the best way. And then, when Algy comes, he can give them a day's shooting," he continued. "Of course, as your aunt says, we must do something civil, since they're Amy's cousins; although what on earth they are doing at Micklewright's cottage is more than I can imagine. What can they live on, July, what can they live on?"

"Cranberries and cream, I suppose, father," suggested Juliet, with an arch look in her eyes. "I know Lettice can give them that—the biggest berries and the stiffest cream to be had anywhere in the county."

"Stuff, child!" returned her father; "you can't live on cranberry tarts and cream."

"I daresay she could provide a herring or two for dinner into the bargain," said July, laughing at

her father's grave commiseration for the strangers. "Anyhow, I should never be afraid of starving in Lettice's house. Come along, Bevis," she exclaimed suddenly, whistling to the mastiff, who pricked up his ears at the sound of her call, and the next moment he was bounding after his young mistress along the edge of the rushing stream which flowed in the glen below.

CHAPTER V.

And these gray rocks, that household lawn ;
These trees, a veil just half withdrawn,
This fall of water that doth make
A murmur near the silent lake ;
This little bay ; a quiet road
That holds in shelter thy abode.—WORDSWORTH.

THE Wynnes had already been at Glenarva a week. Since those first two days there had been no break in the fine autumn weather, which had set in this September. Morning after morning the same transparent haze rested on the woods, and drew its silvery veil over the patches of red gold that began to appear here and there in the foliage of the oaks. Each day it vanished before the noonday sun that steeped woods and rocks and sea in the same fulness of light and colour. The beauty of the coast, and the sense of returning vigour which he found in sea breezes and long walks over wood and moorland, had gone far to remove

Edgar's prejudices. He amused himself studying the lives of the simple Glenarva folk, entered into long talks with the boatmen who lounged about the little harbour or spread their nets to dry on the beach. Old Jacob was a fast friend of his from the first day of their acquaintance, and poured his long yarns into his ear whenever he gave him the chance. Lettice took him so far into her confidence as to consult him respecting the alteration of the standards which the last Education Code had introduced, and which puzzled wiser heads than hers.

He made less progress with his latest acquaintance. Miss July had not repeated her visit. Wilfrid's hopes of finding a lover of art and an admirer of his paintings in these secluded regions had been disappointed so far. They had seen her at church on Sunday, installed with her father and aunt behind the high pew which screened the occupants of the Nevil aisle from the vulgar gaze. So carefully guarded were they, that Edgar could only just see the plumage of the bird she wore in her hat and the outline of her aunt's high forehead and hooked nose, which stood out prominently against the yellow-washed wall. Something in the elder lady's countenance attracted his interest, and recalled old Jacob's stories. To say the least, she must be a striking person, and one worth

knowing. It was no secret in Glenarva that her firmness and courage had saved the family from ruin. There was even a talk current among some of the people, although Lettice would have held it treason to listen to it for a moment, that Miss Alicia had met the bailiffs at the door, and by her dignity and resolution had averted this last disgrace. After hearing these reports, and catching that glimpse of the lady herself, Edgar Wynne was considerably amused when, on the following morning, he received a letter from a relative informing him that she was herself closely connected with the Nevils, and begging him to call at Glenarva Court, and give her a minute description of all he said and did there.

"What a discovery!" he said, as he tossed the letter across the table to Wilfrid, who was starting on one of his sketching expeditions. "Amy seems to think Providence deputed us here solely to report on the condition of her august relatives. I wonder she did not pounce upon you the last time you were here, Wilfrid."

"She means it kindly, poor Amy!" was his brother's rejoinder. "No doubt she thinks this is a dull sort of place, and she thinks if you know the Nevils you may find some amusement. You see what she says: 'There used to be good shooting at Glenarva when I was there last; but that

was ten or twelve years ago, and since then there have been all sorts of changes and troubles.'"

"Her next sentence is the best, about Alicia Nevil," replied Edgar, taking back the letter into his own hands and reading out the following words: "'She is an excellent creature at bottom, if you can get over the starch and buckram in her composition. I firmly believe that it is her sense which has saved poor George Nevil from utter ruin. But mind how you behave, sir, in her presence, if you wish to keep in her good graces.'"

"What shall we do?" said Wilfrid, when his brother had done laughing at his cousin's letter. There was a little flutter in his voice, and he looked up anxiously at Edgar as he spoke.

"Do?" said Edgar contemptuously. "You don't mean to say that you think it necessary to go and call on these Nevils just because they happen to be distant relations of Amy's? If they care to find us out, and wish to be civil, that is one thing; but I shall certainly wait for them to make the advance."

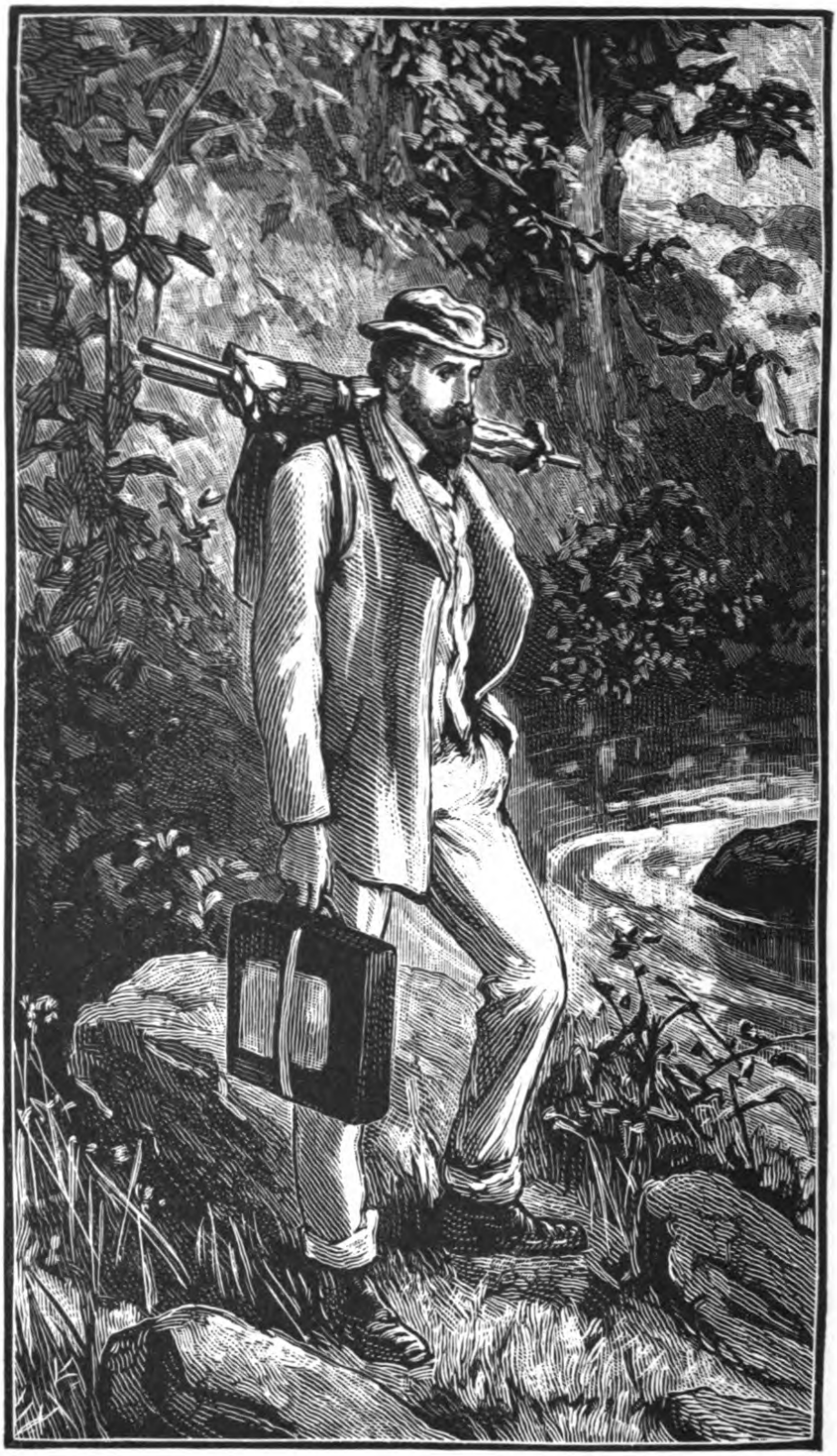
"I don't quite see how they can tell we are cousins—I beg your pardon—connections, I meant to say, of theirs," said Wilfrid humbly, "unless we call upon them."

Edgar shrugged his shoulders.

"Trust them to hear of it! I daresay Amy

herself has told them all about it. However, that is not my affair. What I say is, that I have no intention of forcing myself upon people who are utter strangers to me to please a gossiping woman or two. I daresay that old Squire is as proud as Lucifer, all the more because he has fallen in the world." He took up the paper as he spoke with the air of a man who has said his say and wishes to dismiss the subject, and Wilfrid made no remark. "But all the same," he added, as he cut the leaves of his *Pall Mall Gazette*, "all the same I confess I should like to have made acquaintance with Miss Alicia, as Amy calls her. I expect she is the best worth knowing of the lot."

Nothing further passed between the brothers on the subject. Wilfrid was too little accustomed to think or act for himself in these matters to venture on taking the law into his hands, and discharging alone the social duties which Edgar obtinately refused to undertake. Amy Maxwell's letter was left unanswered, and her exertions to bring her mutual cousins into friendly intercourse might have remained fruitless had it not been for an accidental meeting, which produced the desired result in anything but the way that would have been preferred by either of the parties concerned. Two days after this discussion Wilfrid turned his steps to the coombe, through which the Arva stream



"HE WALKED ON, CARRYING HIS SKETCHING MATERIALS WITH HIM."

Page 55.

runs down to the sea, in search of an old subject which had formerly caught his fancy. He found the place, but, seeing the afternoon light would not suit his purpose, he walked on, carrying his sketching materials with him up the valley.

The banks of the stream were strikingly picturesque. The branches of the trees which grew on either side met together overhead, and shut out the sky by their thick growth. Below the torrent ran noisily along, checked now and then in its course by boulders of rock which held the rushing waters captive, and sent them surging to and fro in masses of creamy foam.

This part of the coombe was new to Wilfrid. He walked on, stopping sometimes to pick a fern or flower which grew in the red soil at his feet, till the path turned the corner of a projecting rock, and he suddenly came in sight of Glenarva Court. The house stood at the top of the cliffs, about half a mile distant. Wilfrid's first inclination was to go and call there just as he was. On second thoughts, however, courage failed him. He was encumbered with his sketching apparatus, and, after his scrambles along the steep banks of the coombe, had not improved the condition of his clothes. Miss Alicia Nevil would surely think him wanting in proper respect if he presented himself in this guise at her doors.

On the whole his wisest course would be to retrace his steps by the glen. He turned round with this intention. As he did so he was struck by the outline of the headland opposite, and thought, since he had his sketch-book, he might as well commit the scene to memory.

The sun shone full upon the bank where he sat, so he pitched his umbrella tent to protect himself, and set to work at once. As he drew the lights changed. The sun dropped behind a passing cloud. A purple shadow fell on the wooded foreground, and the far cliffs beyond shone with a faint saffron tint under the pearly sky. Wilfrid's artist-nature was kindled into enthusiasm. In his keen pleasure at the scene, and his anxiety not to lose one of the delicate hues that he was trying to record, he forgot everything else, forgot that he had taken up his position exactly opposite the windows of Glenarva Court, and that he could be seen by every one in the house and garden. As ill-luck would have it, that same afternoon Mr. Nevil happened to be alone in the house. His sister had taken the old barouche, drawn by the single horse, which was the only occupant of the stables, and did duty on the farm when required, and driven with Juliet to vist a sick neighbour. So the Squire was by himself. He had been inspecting the removal of some fallen timber, and

had just returned home when, from the terraced walk, he saw Wilfrid's large sketching-umbrella on the hillside above the glen.

Now, if there was a class which inspired the lord of Glenarva with a just aversion it was the tourists who infested, not Glenarva itself as a rule, but the neighbouring strip of sea-coast towards Clovelly and Tintagel. He dreaded above all things lest his own domain should become a prey to knapsack-bearing walkers and picnic-makers, while sketching he held to be only a thin cloak under which these abominations were veiled.

As yet comparatively few visitors along the north-west coast had found their way to Glenarva, and these few had proved remarkably harmless. Most of them had come and gone, like Wilfrid the year before, without discovering the existence of the ancient seat of the Nevil family; and if once in a way some ardent soul had penetrated into the secluded depths of Arva's glen, the boldest of these had never dared to establish himself within sight of the house itself.

It was not to be wondered, then, if this unwonted sight roused a storm of anger in Mr. Nevil's breast. Without losing a moment, he started for the spot, and in a few minutes was ascending the opposite hillside, hot and breathless with his unwonted exertions.

Great was Wilfrid's surprise when, just as the violet tints grew tenderest and the sea began to catch the soft radiance of the setting sun, he heard a loud voice close behind him speaking in peremptory terms.

"Hallo, sir! I should like to know what business you have in these grounds? Are you aware that these grounds are private, and that all trespassers are strictly prosecuted?"

The startled artist looked round at the speaker with unfeigned astonishment on his face. At first he was not quite sure whether this was a maniac who might prove dangerous, but a glance at the Squire's face showed him that he would not fly at his throat or assault him bodily. So with one regretful gaze at his sketch-book, where ultramarine and rose-madder were running into each other in confusion inextricable, he rose politely from his seat, and said in the mildest of tones—

"I beg your pardon, sir; I was altogether ignorant that I was trespassing. I walked up from the sea-shore and sat down to sketch without reflecting that these hills might be private property. I can only hope you will excuse the intrusion."

He bowed as he spoke, and prepared to remove his umbrella and collect his scattered articles of property. The completeness of the apology and the readiness with which it was tendered alto-

gether disconcerted Mr. Nevil. He expected a sharp rejoinder, perhaps an impertinent one. It was evident that he had to do with a gentleman. It was his turn to look foolish now, and he floundered about helplessly for words in which to explain and modify the violence of his first attack.

"You see, one has to be careful—I mean, it doesn't do—these places will soon be swarming with tourists; and if once the rabble get in, there's no getting them out."

Here he stopped awkwardly, conscious that his meaning had, to say the least, been not very civilly expressed. But his consternation was still greater when Wilfrid, who had now packed away his belongings, politely handed him his card.

If the name he read there had been that of the first peer in the realm, it could hardly have filled him with more confusion than the plain Mr. Wilfrid Wynne which he slowly deciphered. All at once the remembrance of his sister's letter, and of the discussion which had followed, flashed upon him.

"Bless my stars!" he ejaculated. "I've put my foot in it this time."

Wilfrid had by this time recovered his self-possession, and was seized with compassion when he saw the plight of the foe whom he had so unconsciously discomfited.

"If, as I presume, it is Mr. Nevil whom I have the honour of addressing," he said, in his most suave manner, "I believe some members of my own family are not strangers to you."

"No, no; there's Amy Maxwell, I know," said the Squire, cordially grasping Wilfrid's hand in his gratitude to him for extricating him from his awkward position. "Alicia, my sister, heard from her a day or two ago. Very happy to make your acquaintance, Mr. Wynne—very fortunate that we met, although I am sorry, of course I am very sorry, that this should have happened." He gave a little nod which Wilfrid took to express a wish that he would overlook this unlucky incident and accept his proffered friendship. "You will come back with me; my sister will be in directly, and will be delighted to see you. Indeed, I was hoping to do myself the honour of calling upon you, but I waited for my son, who returns shortly."

Wilfrid hesitated, looked at his watch, but the Squire would take no denial, and the two walked back to the house down the steep path which had cost Mr. Nevil no small trouble to climb in his hurried ascent. The absurdity of the whole thing struck him forcibly, and as they entered the house he said, with a candour which charmed his guest—

"I can't help thinking how put out my sister will be when she hears of this. Why, she had just

been telling me to ask you to dinner. A queer sort of hospitality you must have thought it." And he laughed heartily at the recollection of his own conduct.

Wilfrid murmured that it was very kind of Miss Nevil to interest herself in himself and his brother.

"And there was my girl, too. She told me—good heavens! I never thought of it till this minute, I swear!—that one of you was a bit of an artist—not professional, I didn't mean that, but fond of scenery and that sort of thing—and it took July's fancy."

The Squire was evidently terribly afraid of making a fresh blunder, and he was considerably relieved when the carriage drove up and the ladies came in from their drive.

The sight of a stranger drinking tea—Wilfrid had refused all other refreshment which his host had pressed upon him—in the library with her father might well make Juliet open her eyes. She was more surprised since, beyond a formal introduction, he gave no explanation of the reason which had brought them together, and left both her and her aunt to suppose that this visit was purely an act of courtesy on Wilfrid's part.

The perfect simplicity and frankness of the girl's manners, however, soon removed all con-

straint, and Wilfrid was charmed with her eager questions about his drawings.

Had he been in the glen, and had he finished his first study of the rocks at the Point, and would he be so good as to bring his sketches for her to see?

In fact, she asked so many questions that her aunt began to fear she was overstepping the bounds of politeness, and gently checked her.

"You must forgive my niece," she said, with a slight inclination, "for troubling you with her eagerness to see your pictures; but here, in our quiet life, she has few opportunities of acquiring information in these subjects."

Wilfrid replied honestly that it would give him the greatest possible pleasure if he might bring a few of his drawings for Miss Nevil's inspection at any time; and after a little hesitation, it was agreed both he and his brother should dine there the following evening. Mr. Nevil himself, in his anxiety to atone for his apparent rudeness, insisted upon this, and Wilfrid agreed, with a slight uneasiness as to what Edgar might say to his part of the programme.

"So there you are at last!" was his brother's exclamation when, towards seven o'clock, Wilfrid made his appearance at Lettice's door. "I began to think you had tumbled down some yawning

chasm, or twisted your neck in clambering up and down the rocks. It has been dark for the last hour, so I hope, for the good of future generations, you have only been painting in sepia. I should think you have caught your death of cold into the bargain, with this heavy dew on the ground."

Wilfrid shook his head as he laid down his burdens, and was silent for a moment. But it did not escape Edgar that he looked unusually cheerful.

"What have you been doing with yourself? You don't look starved or perished either, and yet you ought to be both."

"I have fared remarkably well and am perfectly warm," said Wilfrid, with a little twinkle in his eye. "It was not my doing, Edgar," he continued solemnly, as if feeling some protest of the kind necessary before he began his story; "but I have been at Glenarva Court and I have seen Miss July."

CHAPTER VI.

She hears the flooding stream that falls
By these ancestral castle walls,
Her father's woods are tossing free
Between her and the southern sea.—F. W. MYERS.

IT was extraordinary how soon the news that the strangers who lodged at Lettice Micklewright's cottage were related to the Squire's family got wind in Glenarva.

By the next morning every soul in the place was aware of this important fact.

Robin Micklewright, who worked as under-keeper at the Court, was the first to retail how one of the two gentlemen had been seen walking with the Squire and had stayed on talking with the ladies. From that time every one in Glenarva looked upon them with heightened respect. Old Jacob's daily bow became more profound than

ever, and every child in the place touched his cap or dropped a curtsey to the Squire's friends, as they were called. Bobby Micklewright asked his sister gravely if the tall one was Miss July's brother or husband—a degree of ignorance which Barbara felt called upon to reprove with horror, although she had to confess presently that she did not know exactly what relation he was to Miss July, only not *that*, she was quite sure.

As for Lettice, in the secret depths of her heart she felt her cottage and everything about it had received a new dignity, and she could hold her head up among all the folks in the place as she had never done before. But she would not for a moment admit in public that the news surprised her.

On the contrary, she had always known that Mr. Wilfrid and his brother belonged to the quality. People might talk of money and say that made all the difference. She knew better. Blood was the thing for her, and she could always tell it when she saw it. Hadn't she seen at a glance of what sort her lodgers were, and couldn't she tell such as them from your upstarts who think themselves somebodies just because they've had a run of luck in trade? Other folks might be caught with chaff, but not such an old bird as she was.

Fortunately for the brothers, she did not give

them the benefit of these reflections; but there was an importance in her manner when she mentioned the Squire or any of his family, an additional degree of ceremony in the way she handed the plates or removed the dishes from table, which Edgar was convinced had been assumed since the great intelligence had reached her ears.

"Of course, of course, it's all as it should be," she was heard saying to herself as she watched them go up the hill towards Glenarva Court, and was told that they would not be home till after dinner.

That evening was a novel experience to both the brothers, one wholly unlike anything they had ever had before or, as Edgar observed, were ever likely to have again. There was a good old-fashioned flavour about everything in the place which it was impossible not to like, even if the *régime* which produced it might not be altogether to your taste. True, there were unmistakable signs of poverty and enforced economy. The brocaded curtains were shabby and faded, the carpets worn and almost threadbare in places, the doors creaked painfully and moved rustily on their hinges. But the chairs and tables of the hall were undoubted Chippendale; the carved mantelpieces and cornices went back to the days of Queen Anne herself. The tankards and trays on the

sideboard were of massive silver, the square cut-glass decanters, even the wine-glasses, were of solid, old-fashioned shapes, and the wine itself was of the best. The one old butler on whom the arduous task of waiting devolved, had a majestic deportment which would have done honour to the house of Ravenswood, and discharged his duties with a solemnity worthy of Caleb Balderstone himself.

Miss Nevil received her guests at the drawing-room door with a drooping curtsey which made Edgar feel he ought to acknowledge by going straight down on one knee before her, or at least bowing to the ground. Her black velvet train and deep lace ruffles suited her commanding form and strongly-marked features to perfection. She looked as if she had stepped out of one of the picture-frames on the walls where hung portraits of cavaliers and dames of Stuart times. Indeed, the whole atmosphere had so antique a character that both the brothers felt as if they had been suddenly transported into the last century or still earlier times.

On the whole, perhaps Juliet was the most modern thing in the place. She had retained just enough of her aunt's stately courtesy to give her a gracious manner and distinguished air, but there was at the same time an unstudied simplicity about

her, a frankness and open-heartedness of speech which was the result of her country life and breeding. In her soft folds of creamy-white, with no touch of colour about her but the healthy glow in her cheeks and the bright gold of her hair, she reminded Edgar of those tall mountain lilies which he had seen growing in Alpine pastures.

It fell to Wilfrid's share to hand Miss Nevil in to dinner; but since her brother claimed him as his original acquaintance, and Juliet attacked him at once about his sketches, Edgar found himself required to bear the brunt of the conversation with her.

The task, however, was not an unpleasant one, for Alicia was a shrewd, sensible woman, and if, as Amy Maxwell had said, there was a considerable proportion of starch in her composition, it was not without a due admixture of more agreeable properties. After making polite inquiries as to his state of health and the nature of his illness, Miss Nevil began to ask how long he had been abroad, and where he had travelled.

Evidently, thought Edgar, Amy Maxwell has been enlightening her as to our past history.

Depend upon it, he said to himself, the sharp old thing knows all about us; exactly how much a year my father left us, and whatever else she may think advisable to know.

"After so long an absence, Mr. Wynne," she continued, "you must feel almost a stranger in your native land."

"You are quite right, Miss Nevil," returned Edgar. "I felt very strange indeed when I landed at Southampton. But the sight of London soon dispels all that, I think. Directly my feet touch the 'flags of Piccadilly' I feel that I am at home again. Unluckily, just as I was beginning to enjoy myself and find out my friends, I fell ill."

"Let us hope there *will* be time for that in the future," said Miss Nevil. "You have no intention of returning to Ceylon, I presume, annually."

Edgar shook his head.

"I think not. Eighteen years of banishment is enough for a lifetime, I think. I have only been home twice since I first went out. And I am not sure after all if the loss does not outweigh the gain. Nothing can make up for all one misses by being away so long."

There was a ring of sadness in his voice which attracted the attention of other ears besides those of Miss Nevil.

Looking up, Edgar saw that Juliet's brown eyes were fixed upon him with an interested expression. Her father and Wilfrid were discussing the height

of certain neighbouring rocks, and she had been listening to his last few words.

"I wonder if people do feel that," she broke in. "Algy thinks he would be never tired of traveliing, especially if he could always be sure of sport; doesn't he, aunt Alicia?"

"My niece is speaking of her brother," explained Miss Nevil, addressing Edgar. "There are, of course, limits to all things. Still, youth is the season for travel, Mr. Wynne; and, although I have had small trial of its advantages, I put great faith in the knowledge and varied experience acquired during a residence abroad."

"Has your nephew travelled much?" asked Edgar carelessly.

"Not so much as he would like. This is only his second visit to the Continent," replied Miss Nevil. "He was in Brittany one Long Vacation; and now he has left Oxford, he is gone to Norway with a friend who owns a yacht. We expect him back next week, so I hope he may have the pleasure of making your acquaintance."

Edgar bowed in return, and secretly wondered if the youth had the same brown eyes and bright face that met his each time he lifted his gaze.

He would have liked to enter into conversation with Juliet, and remind her of Lettice's virginia leaves, but he knew that Miss Nevil's keen eyes

were upon him, and the consciousness that she was taking his measure and mentally putting down each word that he said restrained him.

Wilfrid, meanwhile, appeared to be spending a very pleasant evening, to judge from the briskness of the conversation and the mirth in which the Squire indulged.

"Your brother is a very lively person," observed Miss Nevil, in a tone which might have been taken either for approval or rebuke.

Edgar smiled at the idea of the epithet being applied to Wilfrid. "He works so hard all day that he deserves a little relaxation at night. Now I am idle, Miss Nevil, hopelessly and incorrigibly idle, please understand once for all, and so I cannot plead that excuse."

Just then a burst of laughter broke from Mr. Nevil, in which Juliet joined so heartily that her aunt cast a reproving glance in that direction.

Edgar suggested that they, too, ought to be allowed to share the joke.

"Father has been confessing his sins. Only fancy, aunt, he took Mr. Wynne for a tramp in the distance, and was going to drive him off the place."

"No, July, not a tramp, but a tourist," interrupted her father.

"Well, then, a tourist. You must know, Mr.

Wynne," the girl contined merrily, "father hates and abhors tourists, and lives in terror lest we should one day see a huge Fifth Avenue Hotel at Glenarva."

"Kept by Lettice Micklewright and Company, I suppose," said Edgar, with a glance at his hostess as he spoke. "I am sure it would be an admirable speculation. If it is started I shall certainly take shares."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the Squire, "that would be a pretty joke. But you'll have to bring the railway to the bay first if your grand hotel is to answer." The notion appeared to please his fancy mightily, and during the whole of the evening he kept recurring to the hideous phantom which Juliet had conjured up.

When the ladies had retired Edgar grew restless under his rather ponderous jokes, and wondered how Wilfrid could listen so patiently and smile so blandly through them all.

At last they rose and adjourned into the drawing-room, where Juliet sat at the open window, looking over the glen. Edgar stopped at her side to admire the view. There was no moon, but the stars shone bright and clear, and from the valley below came the rushing sound of waters.

"Is that the stream?" he asked. "How plain you can hear it!"

"Yes—our river," replied Juliet, "the Arva.

You can always hear it going on and on, like that. Some people says it is such a fretting, wearying sound. Aunt says it makes her miserable to hear it. She feels as if she must be doing something to put the noise out of her head. I like it. I scarcely know why. I like to stand here and know that whatever the days are like, there is that one thing that never stops. It seems to bring a sort of peace into one's life. Algy would call that a silly reason, but I like it all the same."

She was talking more to herself than to him, and Edgar thought less of her words than of the clear deeps of the eyes that were raised to his, and the fairness of the pure white brow that rested on her hand.

He quoted a line of poetry in reply—

> And men may come and men may go,
> But I go on for ever.

Juliet looked up quickly with a rapid change of expression.

"That is what Algy says we do here—go on for ever," she said, with her bright laugh. "He says nothing ever changes, only we all grow older, and the poor old house tumbles to pieces; each day a little bit more of it crumbles away."

"Juliet!" called Miss Nevil at that moment, from her sofa on the opposite side of the room, "come in and shut the window, child. The sea

mist is very unhealthy at this time of year. And you have had one bad cold already."

Juliet rose reluctantly, and allowed Edgar to shut down the window. He looked at the open piano and was on the point of asking her to sing, but checked himself, fearing her aunt might consider this to be a liberty.

Wilfrid, too, he saw was looking at him and hesitating whether it were time to make the move, so he gave up his intention for the present, and moved across the room to say a few civil words to Miss Nevil before taking leave for the evening.

"You will bring your sketch-book, will you not, next time?" were Juliet's last words to Wilfrid as the brothers went out of the hall door. She had run out after them to say this, and as they walked down the hill they saw the gleam of her white dress in the starlight, far behind them.

"Well," said Edgar, giving a yawn as he spoke, "what did you think of it all, old fellow? I know I got uncommonly tired of our excellent host and his witticisms."

"Oh, you mean Mr. Nevil," said Wilfrid, as if he had quite forgotten his host's existence. "It seemed to me the evening slipped away very quickly. I had no notion it could be so late."

"It strikes me, Wilfrid, that you have developed

a surprisingly sociable turn of late years," said Edgar, who had not forgotten Miss Nevil's remark. "Do you know, that worthy dame observed at dinner that you were quite a lively person?"

Wilfrid laughed in his turn at this sally of Miss Alicia's. He was curious to know what Edgar had made of the elderly spinster, whom he, for his part, regarded with a considerable degree of awe.

"Oh, she's a clever old thing, and says good things now and then. Any one can see she has an iron will. But I don't object to her. She's the sort of person I should not mind quarrelling with. One might be quite sure that she'd give good honest thrusts and not be playing tricks behind one's back," said Edgar.

"I hope you may never have cause to quarrel with her, I am sure, Edgar," returned Wilfrid, taking his brother's words literally. "As for Miss July," he added, with a little sigh, "she is charming."

"Why, Wilfrid, I declare I believe you are smitten with that young lady's bright eyes," said his brother. "Are you going to fall in love in your old age, after being proof to Cupid's venom for all these years? If so, give me fair notice, for I own I should be curious to watch the process."

"Nonsense, Edgar!" was all Wilfrid said in answer; but it did cross his mind that if he had

been twenty years younger the case might possibly have been different.

"I am sure there is nothing so reprehensible in my suggestion," continued Edgar, amused at his brother's serious air. "You are quite juvenile by the side of the elderly bridegrooms we hear of in these days. Only think what a blessing you would confer on our hapless race if you took it into your head to marry and have a dozen children."

"It would certainly be a very good thing if one of us were to marry," said Wilfrid pensively.

"Then you must make haste about it, old fellow, for you may be quite sure that that one will never be me," was Edgar's final word. "Women are an interesting study—I am quite willing to concede that much—but what I know of them has never disposed me to seek a closer acquaintance with their follies and frailties.

CHAPTER VII.

Thou art to me but as a wave
Of the wild sea; and I would have
Some claim upon thee, if I could,
Though but of common neighbourhood.
WORDSWORTH.

WILFRID did not forget Miss July's parting words. He treasured them up silently, and two days afterwards surprised Edgar by asking him if he would accompany him to call at Glenarva Court.

It was a dull day. The mists clung to the hillside, and there was no distant view. He could not draw, and it seemed to him this would be a good opportunity to show the two ladies the sketches they had asked to see.

"And pray how do you intend to convey that huge portfolio up the hill, may I ask?" said Edgar, pointing with the cigarette he held in his hand to the drawings which his brother had been sorting preparatory to the intended exhibition.

"Oh, I shall only take my small sketch-book and these two or three sheets which roll up together," said Wilfrid modestly. "I have been careful to choose Glenarva subjects almost exclusively; it may please them; and after spending the evening there, don't you think we ought to call?"

"Upon my word, Wilfrid, you are becoming a pattern society man," returned Edgar, with a smile. "Now don't think I mean to be unkind, for I know you are perfectly right, but, on the whole, I think you had better go alone. I don't feel inclined to exchange compliments for an hour or two with Miss Nevil, which will be the inevitable result. Miss July is dying to see your drawings; we know that. I am sure it is very good taste on her part, and it is the least you can do to show them to her. But I am perfectly willing to go as far as the gates with you; I want a walk."

They started to climb the hill together, and Wilfrid felt convinced his brother would relent when they reached Glenarva Court, and go in with him. But Edgar was firm, and parting from him at the gateway turned down the glen, saying he meant to explore the coast in that direction.

Once alone, he walked on rapidly, as if half afraid his resolution would fail. In his heart he knew that it was not dread of a *tête-à-tête* with Miss Alicia that kept him away. It was much rather

fear of himself; a suspicion of weakness on his part which he would have been ashamed to own to a human creature, and which he shrank from acknowledging to himself.

As he plunged deeper and deeper into the thicket, and heard the roaring of the stream become a deafening noise in his ears, he began to reproach himself for his folly. What had July to do with him or he with her? What if she had looked kindly at him and lifted those brown eyes of hers appealingly to his? Surely he could be proof against a friendly glance. He smiled bitterly at his quaking of conscience, and said to himself that he was as bad as a silly schoolgirl. At least he had punished himself, and had needlessly sacrificed a pleasant afternoon to a Quixotic fear. Yes, when he thought of it, he should have liked to see her face brighten up and change as she looked through Wilfrid's sketch-book. What fearless criticisms she would pass on them; how frankly she would point out the faults; how innocently she would admire the things which pleased her taste! He hoped she would be kind for Wilfrid's sake, poor fellow, since the slightest encouragement seemed to give him so much help.

He had reached the shore now, and, taking a path which led to the left, walked along the rocks by the edge of the sea, in the opposite direction

from Glenarva Bay. It was a wild, lonely bit of coast. Above his head the cliffs rose precipitously, and at his feet the waves came rippling up over the rocks. Here and there acacias, or mountain ash, bent over the path, and arbutus bushes and polypody and hart's tongue mingled with the golden lichen, which covered the stones and grew down to the water's edge. Miss July, he could fancy, was fond of this walk. He wondered if she often came here, and if that vast expanse of never-ending sea had the same secrets for her as the torrent's rushing stream.

Here the path along the shore took a sharp turn, and he was roused from his musings by an unexpected sight. In the deep coombe which ran up into the hills stood a little grey chapel, lifting its ancient walls out of a mass of brushwood and shrubs.

The mountain ash hung long trailing boughs, bright with a wealth of scarlet berries, over the slender lancet windows of the nave, and a tiny stream ran merrily along at the foot of the low stone porch.

It stood there alone on the sea-shore, far removed from human habitation, a silent witness to the winds and the waves. The heavy mists which hid the hill-tops made the spot seem even more wild and desolate than usual. Surely some hermit

of olden time must have first planted his cell here —some sainted soul who sought in this lonely refuge a haven from life's storms, and hoped to find peace in communings with nature and his own spirit. In later times his memory had hallowed the spot, and others had come to worship where his bones were laid.

And they had died, too, in their turn, and had been borne to sleep in this lonely churchyard among the hills, where the soft Atlantic breezes sang them to rest and the long ripple of the waves murmured an eternal lullaby.

The moss-grown stones which marked their tombs were still to be seen on the south side of the chapel. Here fuchsia and myrtle grew in wild profusion over the low grey wall, and a fresh wreath of mountain-ash berries hung on the old cross in the centre of the churchyard, and showed that loving hands still tended the resting place of past generations.

Edgar tried to decipher the inscriptions on the tombs, but they were too much overgrown with moss and grass for him to make out more than a few dates, which belonged chiefly to the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth centuries. More than one of these were adorned with fragments of stone carving, and he was occupied in removing the lichen from some curious heads that had attracted

his attention when a sound of sudden music filled the air.

He looked round in surprise towards the little church, from which the music came. Evidently some one was playing an organ within. The air itself was a simple chorale of Mendelssohn's—

Es ist bestimmt, in Gottes Rath,
Dass man vom liebsten das man hat
Muss scheiden.

Edgar knew it well. He had heard it in many places on strangely different occasions; sometimes in German theatres and concert halls; sometimes sung in festive chorus; sometimes played as a dead march at soldiers' funerals, and often he had seen Germans brush a tear away when the familiar melody reached their ears in some foreign land.

And now as he stood there by the forgotten tombstones in the lonely churchyard, it came to him with a peculiar fitness, for it told the same tale of never-ceasing farewells of tears and death—of love that sees beyond the veil and clasps the vanished hand yet; the same voice that speaks for ever in the moaning of the wind and the sighing of the waves on the seashore.

But the music stopped, and before he had recovered from his surprise at the sudden flow of melody, the door of the little church opened and he stood face to face with Juliet Nevil.

"Miss July!" was the exclamation which

sprang naturally to his lips; but since she gave a little cry of surprise at the same moment, he hoped she had not heard his involuntary expression, and said as she shook hands with him—

"I am afraid I frightened you, but I can only say you did as much to me. I could not think where the music came from, and you were the very last person I expected to find here."

July smiled as she replied, "I think I ought to beg your pardon. I was only practising the organ. My mother had it put up there long ago, and I come and play on it sometimes."

"Does any one ever come to church here?" asked Edgar as he helped her to close the church door and took a glance at the modest little interior. "I should have scarcely thought there was room for an organ, much less for a congregation."

"Oh, there is plenty of room. And the people who live up the coombe and above the hill come, when there is service every other Sunday. It is called St. Columb's, and is very, very old. There is a story of a saint who lived here once, but Algy says it is all fables, and I don't know how much of it is true. Anyhow it is a lovely place."

She looked back as she spoke at the mist-wreathed hills and wooded slopes of the coombe in which the chapel stood, and pointed to the small

bell-tower which rose above the lichen-stained roof. "Do you see that bell?" she said. "On stormy nights it is rung by an old blind man who lives up the valley, as a warning to sailors."

"I suppose it is a dangerous coast?" said Edgar, as they turned into the path at the foot of the cliffs, and July began to tell him thrilling stories of the wrecks and narrow escapes which she had heard from the Glenarva fishermen.

She seemed to think it quite natural that they should walk back together, and Edgar for his part asked nothing better than to beguile the way with her company, although he could not quite stifle a qualm of conscience when he thought of Wilfrid's disappointment.

They talked of the stirring lives which dwellers by the sea must necessarily lead, and the effect it has on their natures.

"I should be sorry to live inland," the girl exclaimed. "It must be so tame and dull for the people there. I can't think what our Glenarva women would do without the sea. Just think, the excitement and pleasure it is to watch for the boats when they are putting in, and just the same when they set out again. The harbour is always a lively place, and the children grow up to think the sea is their natural home."

"But there is the darker side to it," said Edgar,

amused at her eager face; "what we were talking of just now, the long weary watchings for the husbands and brothers who never come back. The inland dwellers are saved that. No doubt they grow up a different race. And I own I like your seafaring folk. I think the people here, as far as I know them, are a capital set."

"I am glad you like them," said Juliet, with a grateful look. "You would if you knew them better, I am sure."

"Lettice Micklewright is a great friend of yours, is she not?" asked Edgar. "She is always talking about you."

"Is she? Poor Lettice!" replied Juliet; "I am fond of her, and I think she often has a hard time of it, harder than people know who see her bright face and hear her chatter. But I am afraid Robin is not always as steady as he might be. Twice over he has almost lost his place, and I know he spends a good deal of his time at the 'Nevil Arms.' I am sorry, for her sake."

Edgar was sorry, too, and promised he would try and interest himself in the man; and, encouraged by his friendliness, July talked on confidingly of her schemes for the Glenarva folk, and of the difficulties she encountered. If only she could raise the money and had her own way, she would have started night-schools and reading-rooms and em-

barked on a dozen different schemes. It was fortunate that she had her aunt to restrain her zeal within limits, and to check the unbounded enthusiasm with which she threw herself into these projects. Besides the lack of necessary funds there were certain deeply-rooted prejudices in Miss Alicia's mind which made her offer serious opposition to certain of her niece's philanthropic designs. If the different classes were to be kept within their proper boundaries they must not be over-educated or brought out of their position. Their learning must be strictly confined to those subjects which would qualify them for the state of life into which they were called. Viewed in this light, reading-rooms where newspapers found their way and politics were freely discussed, were highly dangerous experiments, and Miss Alicia would rarely allow Juliet to mention such a thing, and took care to nip her scheme in the bud.

Edgar did not venture to discuss the fallacy of Aunt Alicia's theory, since July accepted it dutifully, and only observed: "Speaking of your aunt, I hope my brother will find her at home this afternoon. Do you know he has taken his sketch-book for you to see, and now he will have missed you."

"Oh, I am so sorry," said July; "I hope he will leave it for me. And he won't have found my aunt either, for she has had some bad news. She

heard this morning that an old relation of hers who had been an invalid for years had become suddenly worse, and so she had to start off early for town. Poor Aunt Alicia, she does not care for travelling, and it is a long way. I wished I could have gone with her."

While she was speaking it began to rain, and big drops fell on her blue serge frock and the scarlet feather in her cap.

"I am afraid you will get very wet," said Edgar, looking at her thin coat. They had neither of them an umbrella and the rain was evidently coming on steadily.

"Oh, never mind," said July, quickening her pace and shaking back her fair locks, "I am used to be out in all weathers. It generally ends in rain when the mists hang so low all day. I hope you don't mind; I mean, I hope it won't do you any harm. Your brother said you had been ill."

Edgar assured her that she need have no fears on his account. But it was pleasant all the same to feel that the warm young heart which was so full of kindly interest in the Glenarva folk, could spare him even a passing thought; and he walked on by her side all the more briskly in spite of the falling rain.

"That German chorale you were playing is

still in my head," he said presently. "They are strangely touching, these simple melodies. And the words came back to me with a deeper meaning as I stood looking at the old tombstones."

He repeated the first line of Mendelssohn's *Volkslied.*

"Oh, do tell me what it means exactly, please," said July eagerly. "It is very stupid of me not to remember; but I don't know German at all well. I had a governess once, but I am afraid I was idle and did not learn so much as I might have done. I am very ignorant," she added, with a blush; "Algy is always saying so."

"'Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever,'" said Edgar, trying to restrain a smile at this candid confession, and thinking to himself what a detestable prig Algy must be. "I hope it is true, for really all English young ladies seem to me to have become so terribly clever, that it is quite a relief to find any one so fortunate as to be stupid."

She asked him again to explain the meaning of the German words, and he told her how often he had read them on tombstones in German graveyards and heard them played by German orchestras.

"You must have wondered when you heard the organ in that lonely little chapel," said July

merrily. "Did you think that ghosts or fairies had taken possession of the place?"

"I certainly never thought it was you," replied Edgar, "but I shall know now. Whenever I hear singing on the rocks or music stirring the air, I shall always believe it is you. Perhaps you are not aware—no, of course, you can't know—but I heard you long before I saw you."

July looked at him with a puzzled expression on her face through the rain that was dropping from her hat, and he told her the story of his row under the cliffs of the Mary bower with old Jacob for his boatman. It seemed to please her, and she promised to show him the place herself some day.

"Algy is coming home after all sooner than we expected. He will be here to-morrow or the next day, and then I hope you will come and see us again."

They had reached the foot of the glen, and she shook hands as she spoke.

"Thank you," said Edgar. "I am afraid you are very wet indeed, but I can't say I am sorry you walked to St. Columb's to-day. Good-bye, I hope you will have good accounts of Miss Nevil." He lifted his hat and watched her go bounding up the hill-side like a young fawn, till the scarlet plume had disappeared in the woods along the banks of Arva.

"I wish to goodness that brother of hers was not coming home in such a hurry," was the comment which he made in private on the last bit of information which July had given him. He was convinced, from the little he had heard, that Algy Nevil was an odious person, and would certainly not promote the friendship which had sprung up between his sister and the visitors to Glenarva.

Edgar reached home tired and wet through, but not ill-pleased for all that. He could afford to be generous to Wilfrid, and gave him Juliet Nevil's messages, but otherwise said very little of his walk. It had been an amusing little episode, and had pleasantly varied the monotony of the past week. Go where he might, it seemed as if the fates were resolved to throw Miss July across his path. But the experiment was not likely to be repeated, for the brother was coming to-morrow and Edgar was equally determined to avoid him.

CHAPTER VIII.

The golden sun shall glance and go,
  Shall rest and tremble in her hair,
Beside her cheek shall love to blow
  The soft and kindly English air ;
O leave her glad with such caress,
  In such embraces clasped and free ;
Nor teach thy hasty heart to guess
  The woman and the love to be.—F. W. MYERS.

THE days of Algernon's return home had always been red-letter days in the calendars of Glenarva. Everybody in the house conspired to make an idol of him. His father and Juliet worshipped the ground he stood upon, and listened to his opinion with the utmost deference. If his aunt was not quite as demonstrative in her manifestations of affection, she was scarcely less influenced by his wishes and her anxiety for his welfare.

In her eyes he was not merely a favourite nephew, her brother's only son, but he was the heir of Glenarva, the future hope of the race, in

whose person the fortunes of the Nevils were to revive again and the family was to be restored to its ancient glory.

Alicia Nevil had her dreams for Juliet, too; but she could not regard her future with the same importance that she did her nephew's. She had strained every nerve to advance Algernon's career and fit him for the position in which she hoped one day to see him.

Hitherto, it must be owned, the youth had not done much to fulfil the high expectations that were entertained of him. He had got through Oxford creditably but by no means brilliantly. The chief effect of his university career hitherto had been to inspire him with a passionate love of sport in whatever form he could get it, and a sovereign contempt for his home surroundings.

He was a first-rate shot both with gun and rifle, and he made no secret of the impatience which he felt for the narrowness of his home education. Two fixed ideas had taken root in his mind, which, in one form or another, he was never weary of reiterating in his sister's patient ears. One was that he meant to see the world and had no intention to stick at home all his life; the other that, if ever he had the money, he would have a moor of his own in Scotland. Since, however, there did not seem any immediate chance of the last part of

his scheme being put in practice, he availed himself of any opportunity that presented itself to get sport of any kind, and had considered himself very fortunate when his friend Herbert Bryce asked him to accompany him to Norway. The trip had proved a successful one, and Algy came home in high good humour with himself and every one. On the whole, he did not much regret his aunt's absence, at all events for the first day or two, although it roused his curiosity in a remarkable degree.

"Is the old lady going to leave her money, or what, July? I can't imagine anything short of that, getting aunt Lis on the wing," he remarked irreverently to his sister.

"Oh, Algy, I never thought of that," said Juliet loyally; "and I am sure Aunt Alicia never did either. But she said there was no one else who could go, and you know old Mrs. Lane had asked for her. And the maid who wrote said she was dying."

"She takes a good long time about it, then," returned the young man, stretching himself lazily on the grassy bank at the foot of the terrace in front of the windows, with his cigar in his mouth. "Haven't you any more news to tell me, July?"

He had been the rounds of the stables and kennels, had ascertained from Robin Micklewright

that some black-cock had been seen on the hill, and had gleaned what other information he could about the place from his father and the servants.

"There's one thing you haven't heard, Algy," said Juliet, playing with Bevis's ears as she leant against the creeper-grown balustrade, "unless Aunt Alicia told you; but I dont think it is likely. There are two strangers, friends of Cousin Amy's, stopping at Robin's house. Their name is Wynne, and one is an artist; at least, he sketches. I have got a book which he lent me to look at here."

"They are the very men I want to meet," exclaimed Algy, clapping his hand on his knee. "Why in the world didn't you tell me this before? I always say you're like Münchausen's horn, July; you thaw by slow degrees."

"I didn't think you would care to know, Algy," said July penitently, "or of course I would have told you."

"Well, you might give one the chance of hearing who's in the place, anyhow," returned her brother. "The fact is, Bryce knows one of them very well, and says he's a splendid shot. He travelled with him in Tyrol once, and he brought down a chamois with his rifle and amazed the guides. Bryce says he's a capital fellow all round, and he heard he was come down this way and told me to let him know if I came across him.

And now I've told him he couldn't be in this part of the world or I should have been sure to hear."

"That must be Mr. Edgar Wynne, I think," said July, pondering in her mind whether this description could possibly be applied to Wilfrid. "He isn't the painter."

"Edgar Wynne? yes, that's the very fellow I want to find out. He's been coffee-planting in Ceylon the best part of his life. I daresay he has seen tiger-hunting and been in the jungle, too," said Algy. "If I had known sooner I would have looked him up to-day. I suppose you haven't seen him, July?"

"Yes, I have, Algy," was his sister's answer. "They both came here to dinner one evening, and only two days ago I met Edgar, the one you mean, down at St. Columb's, and walked back with him. I like him; but, you know, Algy, he isn't young at all."

"Oh, you think no one young who's a day older than yourself," said Algy impatiently. "Girls are always like that. I wonder if it would be too late to go down to-night and ask him to go after black-cock to-morrow? What do you think, July? Is he the sort of man to take offence and stand on ceremony?"

"He won't expect you to leave your card just as Aunt Alicia wanted father to do," replied Juliet,

laughing to herself. She was thinking how rapidly they had got beyond the pale of formal acquaintance.

"Then I declare I'll go down directly," said Algy, starting to his feet, as if seized with a sudden impulse. "You may just as well come with me, July," he added, looking back at her; "it will make it easier. And if he is out, I'll leave a message with Lettice."

That afternoon it happened that Edgar Wynne had taken a walk across the open moorland which stretched to the north of Glenarva. He was returning home towards sunset, and was lingering on the top of the hill to enjoy the pleasant breeze which had sprung up from the sea, when the outlines of two figures, sharply defined against the yellow light in the western skies, caught his attention. They were coming towards him. One he saw at a glance was Miss July. She wore the same dark serge and red plume which he remembered seeing on their rainy walk from St. Columb, and Bevis was walking at her side. So accustomed was he to meet her alone with the faithful mastiff that it gave him almost a shock to see any other companion with her, but he had not forgotten the expected brother, and advanced towards them with considerable curiosity.

The heir of Glenarva was a much more boyish

person than he had expected. He had curly brown hair, and a fresh young face not unlike his sister; and, excepting for a touch of imperiousness in his tone and manner, did not impress Edgar at all disagreeably.

After the first introduction, they walked on with him towards the village, and presently Algernon asked him if he cared to take his gun the next morning and go after some black-game that had been seen on the moor a day or two back.

Edgar agreed, with some surprise at the suddenness of the offer; but this was soon explained when he learnt that Algernon's yachting friend was no other than his old schoolfellow and travelling companion, Bryce.

They were soon on the most friendly terms, and the young man had so much to say about his fishing in Norway that Edgar was scarcely able to ask Juliet how she had fared after her wetting two days ago.

But he saw that she looked bright and happy, and was evidently pleased to see him making friends with Algy.

She asked after his brother, and spoke with pleasure of the sketch-book which she had found on her return from St. Columb's, until Algy said they must go back, and Edgar was left to go down the street to Lettice's house. The Fates seemed

to conspire, he said to himself, in quite a singular manner to bring him into contact with Miss July. Fortunately, he reflected, he was old and wise, and there was no fear of his falling headlong into love as he might have done if he had been a boy of twenty. He could look coolly before him, and see the breakers ahead, and stop while there was yet time. And, at any rate, he was grateful to think that the dreaded three weeks at the seaside were not to prove so irksome as he had anticipated.

He thought so still more decidedly the next day as he tramped across the breezy moorland with Algy and Robin Micklewright for his companions, and after an exciting chase, bagged a couple of brace of black-cock. Algy was delighted to find him as keen a sportsman as himself, and became very communicative as they lay on the down in the shelter of some furze bushes, and ate their luncheon.

Before they went home Edgar had gained a tolerably clear insight into his young companion's mind, and had been favoured with the tale of more than one of his grievances. He knew, for instance, that Algy had been destined for the Bar, but had absolutely refused to pursue the study of law; that his father wanted him to live at home and help him, and that his aunt was always holding up to him a picture of the arduous responsi-

bilities and duties which his position as heir to Glenarva entailed.

The boy was self-willed and impatient of control, it was easy to see; but he had, at the same time, an affectionate disposition and youthful candour which attracted Edgar; and, above all, he had not the least bit of the prig about him.

"You will come to dinner, won't you? They are expecting you," he said, as Edgar was in the the act of turning down the village street.

"I'm thinking of my brother," he replied, after a moment's pause.

"Won't he come too?" said Algy. "My father is glad to see any one, especially now my aunt's away. That is to say, if you don't think us too dull," he added, reddening with a consciousness that his last speech was not exactly civil.

So the brothers spent a second evening at Glenarva, this time without the somewhat formidable charm of Miss Alicia's presence.

Her absence could not be said materially to affect the spirits of the party. They all seemed to feel a sense of greater freedom, they talked with less constraint and laughed more merrily. The old Squire, above all, was exceedingly cordial to his guests, and was not satisfied till he had heard every particular of their day's sport. Whatever Algy did was right in his eyes, and the

natural way in which everything yielded to the young man's wishes made Edgar smile more than once.

He ordered old Jennings about without any pity for his infirm limbs, sent for a bottle of Burgundy from the cellar, and took the carving-knife and fork out of his father's hands with the same imperious manner.

Since he and his father both addressed the whole of their conversation to Edgar, Wilfrid was left almost exclusively on Juliet's hands. She exerted herself to make things pleasant in her aunt's absence, and had plenty to say about his drawings, so that he, at least, had no cause of complaint.

By the time dessert was on the table Edgar overheard him offering to help her if she felt disposed to try and draw, and secretly wondered what Miss Nevil would say to this bold proposal.

It was not till they had left the dining-room that Edgar had an opportunity of speaking to Juliet.

"Have you been at St. Columb's again, Miss Nevil?" he asked, with a smile as her eyes met his, and she, too, smiled at the recollection of their wet walk home along the shore.

"Not since that rainy day," she replied. "I hope you will go back again when it is finer

You ought to see the coombe when the sun shines."

"I hope you will be there too; I should miss the organ-music that came pealing on the air. That song of Mendelssohn's has been in my head ever since," said Edgar.

"Should you like to hear it to-night?" asked the girl, glancing towards the open piano. Edgar assented, and she sat down and played the German *Lied* through.

"I am sorry I can't sing the words, but I should pronounce the German so badly," she said as she ended, looking round instinctively for Algy who had gone outside to smoke a cigar with Wilfrid.

"Perhaps you will sing an English song instead?" said Edgar.

"Yes, sing another song, July, my girl, sing another song," said a sleepy voice from the depths of the arm-chair in which Mr. Nevil was nodding over a local paper.

"Father always goes to sleep when I sing in the evening," said Juliet. "I am afraid I shall shock your ears. I play my accompaniments so badly. Cousin Amy—Mrs. Maxwell, I mean—plays very well, does she not? I have heard my aunt say so."

"She used to play a good deal when she was

a girl; now she tells me she never touches a piano," said Edgar carelessly. "Her playing was very brilliant, I suppose, but I cannot honestly say that it ever gave me the least pleasure."

"I am afraid you are very hard to please,' said July, looking rather alarmed at the prospect of performing to so critical a listener.

"Why don't you go on?" asked her father, looking up again from his slumber at this pause in the music. "What are you waiting for now?"

Upon this the girl began her song, and Edgar moved away towards the open window looking over the glen. It was the same wild fresh voice which he remembered that day when old Jacob had rowed him out in the boat under the rocks.

The song was Tennyson's well-known "Break, break, break," and although the singer was evidently untaught, and her voice was not altogether under her control, all her heart was in the music. The ring of wild pathos in the notes touched a chord in Edgar's heart and set him wondering what July would be when the child developed into the woman, and her soul felt the touch that would have the power to wake its slumbering faculties into song.

He looked critically at the girl, thinking more of herself than of her song; and as she ended, his manner gave July the impression that he despised

her music as much as she had expected, and made her inwardly resolve never to sing to him again.

But he spoke to her kindly the next minute and led her on to talk of her Glenarva friends, and the hard times which the fishing population had to meet in the winter, until Algy interrupted them to make arrangements for a second day's sporting in another direction.

"Yes," he said to himself that evening as he walked home silently under the moonlight that was touching the roofs of Glenarva with silver. "Yes, the child is not a mere butterfly. Some day, when the right time comes, the soul within her will spring into sudden life, and the phantom of delight will blossom into the perfect woman of the poet's dream.

Some day!—the fruit was not ripe yet, and the moment had not come. But he owned to himself that he should like to be there when the hour arrived, and he was more than half inclined to envy the man who would win the right to take that first look deep down into July's heart.

CHAPTER IX.

Thanks, Fortune, yet, that after all my crosses,
Thou givest me somewhat to repair myself.—*Pericles.*

LIFE has its surprises to the very end. We are never too old and never too wary to find ourselves suddenly brought face to face with the unknown and unexpected.

This had been the case with Alicia Nevil during the memorable week that she spent in town this autumn. She had turned a corner sharply, and had found herself encountered by a new and altogether unprepared-for contingency.

On her arrival in town she had found her old relative Mrs. Lane speechless and insensible, and although she had lingered on several days there had been from the first no hope of ultimate recovery. And now she was dead, and by her will had left her house in town and whatever else she had it in her power to leave, including a comfort-

able little sum in the Funds, to her cousin, Alicia Nevil.

The old lady had left no near relatives, and since Alicia was the only member of the Nevil family whom she knew at all intimately, the bequest was a natural one. To do her justice, the thought of such a possibility had never crossed her mind when, prompted by a stern sense of duty, she came all the way from Devon to attend Mrs. Lane's death-bed.

In former years she had known her well, and recently she had frequently paid her short visits in town; but Mrs. Lane had been an eccentric character in her day, and had never breathed a word of her intentions with regard to Alicia to any one. Most people thought she had nothing to leave, since the bulk of her income was known to be derived from a pension which her husband, an Indian civil servant, had enjoyed. But the issue had proved that they were mistaken, and Alicia Nevil reaped the benefit of the mistake.

There had been a great deal of business to settle after the funeral, which detained her in town one more day, and occupied every moment of her time and thoughts. Now, as she sat alone in the empty little drawing-room of the house in which her aged relative had breathed her last, she began to think of the inheritance which had become

suddenly hers, and to realise the change it would make in her circumstances. Prosperity had not been Alicia Nevil's lot in life. Her youth had been troubled and darkened by her father's misfortunes, her riper years by those of her brother. With her strong character and proud nature she had felt acutely the dependence of her position, her inability to do more than prop up the falling fortunes of her house.

She could not restore the Nevils to their old position; she could not even raise again the crumbling walls of their decaying mansion, or keep up the place as she remembered it in the days of her childhood. It was her daily trial to see how much that ought to be done had to be left undone, how much that she longed to do must be relinquished as impossible. From the first she had to meet with opposition in many quarters, most of all from her brother, who blindly resisted the reforms which she introduced; and if her unflinching perseverance had won the day, it had cost her many a struggle and had left her cold and hard.

Nor had life brought her an independent happiness of her own which might console her for these disappointments that were so bitter to her proud heart. If this had been the case things might have been different with her now; but she had missed the happiness which would have softened

her spirit and developed the womanly side of her nature.

Alicia Nevil was the last woman in the world to brood over the past and spend her time in vain regrets; but now, as she sat alone in the dreary little London room, long-forgotten recollections stirred in her breast. An image of herself as a girl of July's age rose up again before her. She saw herself walking along the cliffs at Glenarva in gay converse with a companion about her own age. She heard his whispers as he bent over her; the very pressure of his hand seemed to thrill her pulses again. And that other scene yet more deeply engraven in her soul came back to her too—the day when Alfred Sinclair wrote to tell her that he had failed to obtain his father's consent to their union.

How rebelliously her proud nature had risen up against the wrong that had been done her; how furiously she had torn the paper into shreds and flung it from her in her anger! He had married a girl with money, a cousin of her own, had lived prosperously, and died some years ago. From that day to this no other man had dared to speak to her of love, and she had never mentioned his name again. But to-night, as she sat alone, she remembered it all, and wondered how it might have been if this fortune had been hers, and if there had been

no prudential reasons to cheat the young people out of their happiness.

All this flashed through Miss Nevil's mind in a moment, but it was only a passing weakness; and as she looked at herself in the glass which hung over the fire-place, she smiled grimly to think of the foolish dreams in which she had been indulging. No one would have thought it possible that an elderly spinster like herself should allow her fancy to conjure up love-passages that had happened nearly half a century ago.

The visions thus sternly repressed began to assume a new form, and take a shape more consistent with their author's present circumstances. She began to think of her brother's children, and to rejoice that she should now find herself in a position to be of use to them. Although Algernon had been her first object, and Juliet had in some ways been sacrificed to her brother, Miss Nevil had a genuine affection for her niece, and she was glad to feel that now the girl should enjoy some of those advantages which had hitherto been denied her.

She should be brought to town and see the world like other girls, and, like other girls, she should marry and spend a happy wedded life. What Alicia Nevil had missed, those sweet joys of home and child, which she had never known, should

be July's yet some day. And further on in the future yet there might come a day when Glenarva should raise its head again, and the Nevils should be restored to their old position in the eyes of the world.

These and a hundred other similar possibilities filled Miss Nevil's mind both that evening as she sat in her solitary room, and the next day when she travelled by rail and coach down to the far west where her home lay.

Juliet had written to say she would come in the old open carriage to meet her aunt at the "Nevil Arms," where the coach deposited its passengers; and when Miss Nevil alighted there she was surprised to find no signs of either her niece or the carriage. The landlord of the inn was out, but his wife asked if she would please to step in and wait; or if she would like to walk on, and send back for her box; adding, with an ominous shake of her head, that she feared there was some misfortune at Glenarva Court.

Somebody had been hurt, she feared, and there had been a talk of sending to town for the doctor. The Squire himself had been up there half-an-hour ago, speaking with the man who brought the mails, and Robin Micklewright had been heard to say the young Squire was well-nigh distracted.

Miss Nevil listened to these confused reports

without visible signs of perturbation; but she breathed more freely when the trot of a horse was heard on the road, and the rickety old carriage made its appearance. Without stopping to ask any questions of the boy who drove this ancient equipage, Miss Nevil forthwith took her seat inside, and preserved a rigid composure until she reached the doors of the house.

Here all looked peaceful and undisturbed. There were no outward signs of trouble. The lovely evening sunshine lighted up the woods of the valley below, and lent the ivy which trailed over the old stonework a brighter tint of green.

Miss Nevil looked anxiously around as she stepped out of the carriage, and her eye lighted on Bevis, who was the only living being there to receive her. The dog got up and wagged his tail in token of recognition, but knew his mistress too well to venture on a more familiar greeting.

Within, Mr. Nevil and both his children stood together in the hall, with marks of visible concern on their faces, and evidently too much troubled to be aware of the fresh arrival. As Miss Nevil entered she heard Algy exclaiming, in a despairing tone—

"It's no use; I know he'll be blind for life; and I shall never forgive myself!"

The sight of Miss Nevil startled the little group.

"What does this all mean?" she asked, in a voice which fear and alarm made even sterner than usual. "Juliet! Algernon! tell me what has happened."

"Oh, aunt, I am so glad you have come!" cried July, turning eagerly to welcome Miss Nevil. "We are all very unhappy. Algy has had a sad accident out shooting, and we are afraid Mr. Wynne is badly hurt."

"It was the worst luck in the world," muttered Algy, moving away, with an uncomfortable sense that his aunt's eye was fixed severely upon him. "The bird started up behind a bush and turned sharp round, and the shot glanced back from a heap of stones."

"Well, well, we are all liable to accidents; and it's no good making a fuss now, Alicia," said his father, anxious to excuse the boy before anyone had blamed him.

"You do not suppose that I think Algernon shot any one on purpose?" returned Miss Nevil, sharply. "All I want is to be told what has been done, and if you obtained medical advice at once."

Juliet explained hastily that they had called in the Glenarva doctor, but that he could only prescribe a few simple remedies, and had wished for

further medical advice, which had been immediately sent for. The shot had struck his forehead and left eye, and the doctor feared the sight might be injured."

"Where is Mr. Wynne?" asked Miss Nevil, without making any comment. "And which of the two brothers is it that has been hurt?"

"The younger one, of course," said Algy, impatiently; "Edgar Wynne. You don't suppose I was likely to ask the other to go out after blackcock, do you, aunt?"

"He is up in Sir Walter's room?" replied Juliet. Sir Walter had been the hero of the Nevil family in the days of the civil wars, and whatever was old at Glenarva Court bore his name. "Of course he couldn't be moved. His brother is with him. I sent Mrs. Allen upstairs to see if she could do anything for them. I hope it is not quite so bad as Algy thinks—as we feared at first. I was at the door when he came in. I could not think what had happened. But he spoke to me quite naturally, and begged me not be frightened. But he was in pain; I could see that."

"He's such a capital fellow," said poor Algy, hopelessly: "that's the worst of it; and he's a first-rate shot, too. I've seldom seen a better one. Bryce told me so, and he was quite right."

Just then a footstep was heard on the stairs.

They all looked round with the nervous anxiety of which every one is conscious when there has been an accident or any sudden alarm. It was Wilfrid, who came to tell Mr. Nevil that his brother's head was a little easier, and that he hoped no one would be anxious on his account.

Wilfrid himself looked dazed and utterly bewildered. He could with difficulty find his words, and the small amount of presence of mind which he retained vanished at the unexpected sight of Miss Nevil.

He stood there buttoning and unbuttoning his coat, and looking as abjectly miserable as if he were the guilty person. "We must hope for the best; we must hope for the best," he repeated nervously, again and again.

Miss Nevil on her part felt that something was required of her, and drawing herself up in her most dignified manner, with a determination to be equal to the occasion, said solemnly—

"Mr. Wynne, I need scarcely assure you how sincerely we regret this unfortunate affair. You will, I am sure, rest satisfied that everything that can be done will be done."

Wilfrid bowed in return for this appallingly majestic speech, and looked helplessly towards July, who took compassion on his forlorn condition, and said kindly—

"I am afraid you must feel very anxious, Mr. Wynne, but I hope the other doctor will be here soon. We might hear by the evening mail, at all events, in a quarter of an hour. Shall we walk to the 'Nevil Arms' and see?"

Wilfrid caught gratefully at her suggestion, and walked with her towards the gateway looking down on Glenarva, whilst Algy went upstairs to see what he could do.

"I am so sorry for you," she said simply, as they walked along. "The suspense is so hard to bear. And it is sad that your little visit to Glenarva should be spoilt in such an unfortunate way."

"It is not only for my brother or myself that I am grieved," Wilfrid stammered out in a low, hurried voice; "I am extremely distressed that this should have happened here when you have all been so exceedingly kind."

"Perhaps after all it may not turn out as serious as we fear," said Juliet, trying to look on the brighter side of the case for her companion's sake. "One does hear of those sort of accidents, I think."

"But I know how very very hard it must be for you," she added presently. "Don't think I want to make the least of it. We all feel what it must be for you. And he is your only brother, I know."

Her voice had a ring of gentle sympathy as she spoke, and Wilfrid, in his excitement and anxiety,

could have blessed her for her sweet kindness of heart. We all know how little things are apt to fasten on the mind at times, when our emotions are strongly stirred. Wilfrid Wynne remembered that half-hour to the end of his life, and never recalled it without a grateful thought of the girl who had walked by his side that evening. As it was, he could not speak his meaning, and only turned his eyes in silent gratitude to July's face.

She saw that they were filled with tears, and, raising her hand, pointed to the light that glowed in the distant sky where the sun was setting in a cloud of gold over the sea.

The next moment they met a messenger hastening to the house with a telegram in his hand, and turned back to learn its contents.

CHAPTER X.

Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head.
As You Like It.

THE few days which followed Edgar Wynne's accident were not quickly forgotten by any of the inhabitants of Glenarva Court. Everything was strange and out of joint; the ordinary course of life which went on month by month and year by year with the same unalterable regularity was altogether upset, and no one, excepting perhaps Miss Nevil herself, could settle down to the usual round of occupations.

In course of time the doctor had arrived from the county town, and his opinion was so far re-assuring that he did not think the eyesight would be permanently injured. But he looked on the case as a grave one, and prescribed perfect rest and confinement to a darkened room for at least a week.

There was no possibility of moving the patient until that period had elapsed, and Edgar resigned himself to his fate with a tolerable degree of equanimity.

There were, no doubt, certain alleviations which rendered his captivity less irksome than might have been expected. Every possible attention was paid him. Mr. Nevil was anxious to place a whole suite of rooms at his disposal, and insisted on his occupying the state bed-chamber which had of old been reserved for princely personages, and was once said to have been inhabited by Prince Rupert himself. This spacious apartment opened into a smaller room, hung with faded tapestry in which the Loves of Orpheus and Eurydice were depicted, and looking over the glen to the sea. Here the invalid spent most of his days. If he might not see the sunshine and the glorious world without his darkened room, he could at least hear the singing of the birds in the woods round Glenarva Court, and hear the rushing noise of the Arva down below in the valley. After the first two days he was comparatively free from pain, and was able to talk, and glad to see the members of the family, who vied with each other in trying to beguile the tediousness of his long days. Th e different attempts which they made to amuse him at once touched and entertained him. Mr. Nevil would

sit with him by the hour reading the newspapers and giving him the benefit of his views in politics, which generally took the form of a violent invective against the members of the Government, and ended in a loud lament over the state of the country and the downfall of England.

This sort of talk became wearisome after a time, and Edgar was not sorry when Miss Nevil took her brother's place. She brought her work with her, generally a piece of knitting, and Edgar began to associate the invariable click of her knitting-pins with the thoughts and feelings to which she gave utterance. The shrewdness of her remarks, and the knowledge of the world which she had gained even in her narrow life, surprised him. She could be amusing in her way when she condescended to break through the crust of formalities, and Edgar was greatly entertained by the quiet humour of some of her observations.

He even ventured to rally her on her aristocratic prejudices, and by no means always had the best of it in his battles with her.

"You don't really believe that it can matter what a man's father is if he has the education and feeling of a gentleman, do you, Miss Nevil?" he asked one afternoon when the question happened to arise in the course of conversation.

"On the contrary, I think it matters very much,"

replied Miss Nevil, glancing at the ceiling as if the walls of Glenarva Court must shudder at this sacrilege. "It takes a whole lifetime and more to gain the habits and the refinement that birth gives."

"But surely if two men are educated in the same way and are both of a naturally refined disposition, surely there could be no appreciable difference between them?" said Edgar.

"No difference?" replied Miss Nevil, slightly raising her eyebrows. "There would be all the difference in the world. I am afraid, Mr. Wynne, you do not take into account the immense force of traditions and of noble ancestors on a man's nature."

"I should be far prouder of my ancestor if he were an honest hard-working tailor or a wheelwright, than if he were a peer of the realm who wasted his fortune in riotous living," said Edgar, wishing he could see Miss Alicia's face through the bandage which covered his eyes.

"Apply your theory to women, Mr. Wynne," was the skilful reply with which Miss Nevil parried her opponent's thrust. "Take one of Lettice Micklewright's children, for instance. Do you suppose that any degree of educational advantages could make that girl the same as Juliet? I take her for want of a better example."

Edgar moved a little uneasily. He resented even the notion of instituting a comparison between Barbara Micklewright and July.

"Well, no: you are right, Miss Nevil," he replied after a moment's pause. "I don't know that my theory does hold good with regard to girls. Women are different creatures."

Miss Nevil made no reply to this observation, but said presently—

"I think you will find your principles better in theory than in practice, Mr. Wynne. And now I will ask you to excuse me, as I have household affairs to which I must attend, and my nephew is, I know, impatient to take my place if you are not fatigued."

"Send him up by all means, Miss Nevil," replied Edgar. "I promise not to make a Radical of him, although I am not sure he is not more than half one already."

"I hope a Nevil will never stoop so low," was Miss Nevil's parting rejoinder as she gathered her work together and left the room.

In this fashion they quarrelled many times, and became ultimately very good friends. Miss Alicia did not make any secret of the reduced circumstances of her family, and acknowledged some of the difficulties with which she had to contend, but always spoke hopefully, and gave Edgar the

impression of a fine character only wanting in feminine softness and tenderness.

He often wondered what were the real nature of her relations with July. That they each had a true affection for each other there could be no doubt, but it seemed to him that the aunt was of too unbending and stern a mould to supply the warmth of a parent's love and take July's dead mother's place.

July herself was the only member of the family whom he did not see during the first few days that followed his accident. He heard her light footstep on the staircase outside his room, and the sound of her voice more than once reached his ears through the open windows.

"Was that you, Wilfrid, talking to Miss July this morning?" he asked his brother one day. "I thought the intervals between her sentences must be filled up by you. No one else talks so low."

"I was showing her how to draw the old oak outside," said Wilfrid, smiling to himself at the recollection of his pupil's first attempts at sketching.

He had only partially recovered from the first shock of his brother's accident and was still in a very much subdued condition. His whole days were spent at Glenarva Court, but he refused to take up his abode at the house, as the Nevils begged, and preferred returning every evening to Lettice's

cottage where anxious inquiries after Edgar awaited him daily.

"To be sure, accidents be accidents," was the form which Lettice's moralising took; "but it's a thousand pities when they happen to nice-spoken gentlemen as Mr. Wynne." She could only hope it would be a lesson to Robin and the young Squire, and teach them not to go blazing each other's brains out after their heedless fashion.

She would try her hand, too, at consoling Wilfrid, and beg him not to take on so about his brother, for, after all, plenty of folks had only one eye, and managed to see their way very well through the world with that.

Juliet's efforts at consolation were less direct but more effectual, and Edgar was really grateful to her for persuading Wilfrid to take up his drawing again, under pretence of giving her lessons. He set to work on a study of an old oak-tree in the grounds, and thus it happened that Edgar heard the sounds of July's laughter as she made vain attempts to reproduce the gnarled trunk on the sheet of paper which Wilfrid lent her.

"She has been very good to me," he said to Edgar. "I shall never forget her kindness the evening of your accident. But she is the same to every one."

"I think you might extend a little of her

charity to me," remarked his brother. "But I suppose her aunt considers her presence would be too great an excitement in my present condition. I fancy that excellent lady keeps a strict watch over her movements. My only wonder is that she should allow July to ramble about with you so freely."

The conversation was interrupted by Algy's appearance.

Since the day of the accident, the boy roamed the house and grounds like an unquiet spirit. He refused to take up his gun again, or even take a walk beyond the gates, and gave vent to his remorse and trouble of mind by ordering the servants about, in half-a-dozen different directions, silencing one and scolding another, and making himself generally obnoxious.

He was humble enough, poor fellow, with both Edgar and his brother, and did not know how sufficiently to show his eagerness to atone for his unlucky accident.

He brought in a paper in his hand now, in case Edgar might care to hear the latest news of the sporting and dramatic world, but, on perceiving Wilfrid, he stopped, and was about to leave the room.

"Is that you, Algy?" Edgar called after him. "Don't go away. I was just asking my brother

what had happened to your sister. She never honours me with a visit."

"I'll go and fetch her directly," said Algy, delighted to find there was anything which he could do. "She's only dawdling about somewhere in the front, and she may just as well come here."

In a few minutes he re-appeared followed by his sister, much to the amusement of Edgar, who had not expected his bold stroke would produce results so instantaneous.

"You are very kind to have compassion on me," said Edgar, as the girl entered, and, rather awed at the sight of his bandaged head, asked timidly how he felt. "If I go on as well as this I shall soon be undeserving of any pity at all."

After the first few minutes, Juliet recovered her usual spirits, and began to tell Edgar of the drawing lessons his brother was giving her.

"I am afraid I shall never do my master credit, that is the worst of it," she said, laughing. "I can't even draw a straight line, and when I try to use a brush all my colours run into each other."

"Oh, July can't draw a bit," said Algy, who had placed himself in the old-fashioned window-seat, and was balancing his legs in this elevated position. "You might as well try to teach me, every bit of it. But girls always think they can draw, just because it is supposed to be the right thing."

"You see, Mr. Wynne," returned July, "the kind of encouragement I am likely to get from my family."

"Miss Nevil's successes, like my own, are all to come," said Wilfrid, in his most suave tones. "At least we must do her the justice to own that she is a most industrious pupil."

"She must have spoiled a good many of your sheets already," said Algy.

"I should make him try his own hand, and show us how he can draw, Miss Nevil," remarked Edgar. "That is the only way to silence captious critics. If I were not condemned to blindness, I should set you both to work, and myself as well, and Wilfrid should adjudge the prize to the worst blunderer."

"Well, I am going to prove to you that your example is not wasted on me," said Wilfrid, rising to leave the room. "I will see how the oak looks in the evening light, and then I shall be in a better position to judge of yours."

At that moment Mr. Nevil's voice was heard calling his son's name under the windows. Algy jumped down from his seat, and hastened out of the room, calling to July that he would be back soon.

But once out of doors he forgot his intention in examining some dogs which Robin had brought

up from the kennels, and July was left alone with the invalid.

"You have been very good to my brother," Edgar began, when the door closed behind Wilfrid. "You don't know how grateful I am to any one who will take the trouble to befriend him, and take interest in his work."

'Are you?" said July, reddening with pleasure at the thought that she could possibly be of use to any one. "But I am afraid I have done very little, nothing at all, in fact. It is he who has been good to me, indeed, Mr. Wynne."

"He has so few friends," continued Edgar. "And I am a very bad companion for him. I know no more of art than Algy, perhaps rather less, and I can't pretend that I like his drawings at all. They never give me the slightest pleasure, so I am inclined to suspect it is the same with other people."

"Oh, I think that is very severe," said July. "Some of them please me very much, particularly the sketches of the places about here."

"I don't know that I object altogether to his sketches," replied Edgar; "it is his finished drawings which are beyond me. They end in a confusion which may be poetic, and possibly pictorial, but which is nothing except utterly bewildering to my mind!"

"I know I sometimes wonder what it is they mean exactly," said Juliet. "But I thought that was my own ignorance."

Edgar smiled. He wished he could have seen her face, and thought he knew exactly how her long eyelashes touched her cheeks as she spoke.

"Ah! Miss July," he said—the name slipped unconsciously from his lips, and made the girl smile, "you see I am not so humble. I think the fault is in the picture, not in my eyes."

July pondered over his words. She had her own misgivings about Wilfrid's paintings, and what Edgar said strengthened them. She took refuge in saying—

"But he has been very good and patient with me. Algy is quite right really, you know. I never could draw a bit, and I am grateful to your brother for trying to teach me. I hope he will get on with his pictures, and at least some of them will be successful."

Edgar wondered in his mind, if July took his brother for a struggling artist, whose bread depended on the sale of his pictures. Her next words showed that his conjecture was not far wrong.

"I wish I had money of my own, and could buy one of his Glenarva sketches," she said innocently.

Edgar tried hard to look grave as he replied

"There is no need for that; I am sure he will give you anything you care to have."

"Oh, no!" said July quickly. "Please don't tell him I said so. It looks just as if I had asked for one, and Aunt Alicia would be shocked at my bad manners."

Edgar said no more. A new thought had struck him, and, after a moment's pause, he began—

"Miss Nevil, I was just saying you had been very good to my brother. I want you to be good to me now. Will you sing me one of your songs? It would do me more good than all the doctors in the world just now, I think."

"Would it?" exclaimed July joyfully. "I mean, do you really care to hear a song. If I had only known, I could have sung to you every day. I really thought I sang too badly to give you any pleasure at all. And as you know," she added, looking round the tapestried room, "there is no piano here."

"I don't mind that," said Edgar. "You may be sure I shall not criticise your singing as rudely as I do Wilfrid's drawings. I want to hear it too much for that."

Juliet moved a little further off till she could see through the half-closed shutters out into the valley reaching down to the bay. Then she sang a Scotch ballad as freely and joyously as the birds

carolled in the trees outside. The song had been a favourite of her mother's, and July liked it too, and threw her whole soul into the old story of the lordly lover who sought the bride of low degree, as she sang—

Blair in Athol's mine, lassie,
Fair Dunkeld is mine,
. . . . .
And all that's mine's thine, lassie.

Edgar listened, and suddenly he was seized by an irresistible impulse to take one look at the girl's face. Without a word he loosened the bandage from his eyes and took one long look at July as she stood there with parted lips and raised head, forgetting herself in her song. One streak of imprisoned sunlight shone in between the shutters and fell like a glory on her brow, turning the threads of her hair into ruddy gold as Edgar looked at her with his dazzled eyes.

Her eyes were turned away from him, and it was not till her song was ended that she looked round and saw him in the act of fastening the handkerchief that bound his brow.

"Oh! what have you done?" she said reproachfully. "You ought not to uncover your eyes, I am quite sure. Shall I tie that again for you?" Her fingers soon fastened the handkerchief, and Edgar thanked her for her trouble and said quietly—

"It couldn't hurt for one moment, you know. It was a strange sensation, but a horrible fear came over me, while you sang, that you might have changed, that I should not see the same face that I remembered, and I felt that I must take one look at you. Perhaps it was the magic spell of your song, or perhaps an unconscious sympathy with Orpheus over there." Algy had been describing the subject of the tapestry for his benefit the day before.

"I only hope it won't have hurt you," said July anxiously. "But could you see with both eyes, I mean?"

"I think so," said Edgar. "They felt weak and dazzled naturally, but that was all."

July gave a sigh of relief.

"We shall know better when the doctor comes, I suppose," she said. "How you must long to see the sunshine and everything round you! I don't think I half realised before what a dreadful calamity blindness would be. I shall always pity every blind man I see, twice as much as I did before."

"I think I could bear a tolerably long spell of it, if you came and sang to me every day, as you have done to-day," replied Edgar; and July was quick to promise that she would sing him a song each afternoon as long he was kept indoors.

"If Aunt Alicia does not want me," she added, recollecting herself, and conscious that Miss Nevil might not altogether sanction the arrangement.

To say the truth, Edgar had totally forgotten the fact of Aunt Alicia's existence that evening, and the sound of her name recalled him with something of a shock into actual life.

But the waters of the Arva were not the only sound that haunted his sleep that night, and a golden head and a pair of deep brown eyes flitted to and fro in his dreams with a persistence which his strong common sense was inclined to resent as an intrusion.

CHAPTER XI.

The whispering waves were half asleep,
  The clouds were gone to play,
And on the bosom of the deep
  The smiles of heaven lay ;
It seemed as if the hour were one
  Sent from beyond the skies,
Which scattered from above the sun
  A light of paradise.—SHELLEY.

GREAT were the rejoicings at Glenarva Court when, ten days after the accident, Edgar Wynne was pronounced by both doctors to be sufficiently advanced on the road to recovery to resume his ordinary life. The wound had completely healed, and the eye seemed to have escaped injury, although he was advised to wear a shade and to consult an oculist on his return to town.

The good news was hailed with joy by the whole family, and the first evening on which he came downstairs was kept as a festive occasion.

Miss Nevil advanced to the door to greet him,

and bade him welcome with her most stately curtsey, into which she managed to infuse an unusual degree of cordiality. Juliet had put a rose in her hair, and her father insisted on bringing out a bottle of his best and oldest Madeira which was reserved for rare occasions, and which Algy declared had not been tasted since his own christening.

Wilfrid showed his happiness in his usual quiet way, and beamed on every one in turn, but said to July, with an earnestness which touched her heart, 'You see, he is my only brother and all I have left in the world."

That evening they were all happy together, and no mention of departure was made; but the next day the brothers announced their intention of returning to town immediately.

This decision did not at all please either Algy or his father, who would not hear of their leaving Glenarva so soon, and pressed their guests to stay, at least until Edgar was able to have another day's sport on the moors.

Wilfrid was half inclined to yield to these friendly persuasions, but nothing would induce Edgar to alter has mind. He saw that the Nevils would never allow them to return to their old quarters in Lettice's cottage, and thought rightly that they had already encroached long

enough on their friends' hospitality. And since the advisability of his consulting a London oculist was admitted by all, his opposition could not be overruled, and he would only consent to spend one more day at Glenarva.

In the course of the morning he walked down the hill with Algy to Lettice Micklewright's house, where that day five weeks before he had arrived in the pouring rain, and amused his companion by telling him how disagreeable were the first impressions which he had formed of the place.

"I hope you'll come back another September, and then we'll have some rare good sport on the moors together, only you must not come *here*," were Algy's warm-hearted words as they stopped at Lettice's door and looked round for her. The boats were out and the children in school, so the village street was quieter than usual. After Edgar's ten days in darkness the view of rocks and sea, and the sunshine breaking in among the crowded roofs below and pouring its glory on the russet hues of the autumn woods, seemed more beautiful to him than ever before. After all, he thought, Wilfrid had not been so far wrong when he praised the beauties of Glenarva in such eloquent terms.

Presently Lettice herself appeared at the door

of her cottage, and at the sight of the two visitors gave a loud exclamation of surprise.

"Lawk-a-mercy!" it's never you, Master Wynne," she cried. "Well, I never! I'd as soon expect to see my own mother's ghost come stepping down out of the churchyard as you. But I'm right glad all the same. And I hope you'll never be so venturesome again as to take a gun in your hand and go trapesing up and down in that foolhardy way that you young folks do. I've given Robin a bit of my mind about it, and I don't mind if I gave the young Squire one, too," she said, boldly facing Algy, who was too much used to her plainness of speech to pay much attention to her remarks.

"I wonder you ever let Robin take up such a perilous profession then," he returned.

Lettice had a prompt answer at hand as usual.

"It was not with my will, sir, that's all I can say. But what's done's done, and it's no use to fret about it, is it, Mr. Wynne?" she said, appealing to him with the freedom of an old acquaintance. "But I hope you'll take no harm, and your sight will come back to you. And so it will, if the Almighty pleases; we know that, don't we? And if not, we must eat our bread as we find it buttered; and if it's dry we must eat it dry."

She delivered these last remarks with a

solemnity suitable to their intent, and concluded with expressing a sincere hope that the two gentlemen would honour her roof again some day, and have better luck next time.

As they retraced their steps homewards, they met Miss Alicia issuing from the schools where she had been receiving the obeisances of the rising generation, and inspecting their progress in the three R's, and whatever further degree of superfluous knowedge the State required. They walked on together, and Algy diverged on his favourite tract towards the kennels, leaving his aunt to accompany Edgar up the hill.

"At least I am bound to believe in the efficacy of the air of Glenarva as a tonic," he remarked in reply to Miss Nevil's civil inquiries if he was fatigued. "I was a wreck when I came here, and now, in spite of accident, doctors, and my long spell of indoor life, I have picked up my strength in a surprising way. You need not pity me, I am sure, Miss Nevil. I feel a terrible impostor with my eye still covered up."

"You must be careful not to run any risk when you are back in town," said Alicia prudently. "Above all things, pray remember not to read by candle-light or try your eyes in any way this winter."

Edgar promised to observe these instructions, without the least intention of keeping his word,

and began to ask questions about the acreage of the Glenarva estate.

Miss Nevil had it all at her fingers' ends, and knew a great deal more about the value and actual returns of the property than her brother himself.

She warmed up with the subject, and before they reached the gates had given her companion a pretty good idea of the charges with which the place was burdened. But she spoke hopefully of better days to come, and made Edgar admire her courage and patience more than ever before.

"By the time Algernon comes into the property I trust things will be very different," she said, with decision. "I have every reason to hope he may be in a position to hold his own among the country gentlemen as a Nevil of Glenarva should do. But for that, of course," she added, "one thing is necessary."

"That he should marry an heiress, I suppose," said Edgar, with a touch of sarcasm in his tone.

"No," replied Miss Nevil, "that was not what I meant. I was going to say," she said very clearly and with marked emphasis, "I was going to say it is necessary that Juliet should marry well. She will have no fortune herself, and yet it is of the greatest importance that she should be in a position to be of use to her brother."

Edgar listened with amusement, mingled with

a certain scorn, to this unlooked-for conclusion. So July was to be sacrificed to her brother and to the family pride of the Nevils of Glenarva?

"I hope the Fates may be propitious, and that your expectations may be fulfilled, Miss Nevil," he said, in a tone which was meant to be playful, but had a flavour of irony which was not lost on Miss Alicia.

But she had spoken advisedly; and when a few minutes afterwards they reached the spot where July sat on the bank assiduously engaged in following Wilfrid's instructions under his personal superintendence, Edgar began to think that there was an obvious meaning in her caution.

No doubt, he said to himself, the old lady's sharp eyes have detected the girl's sympathy for poor Wilfrid, and his evident pleasure in her companionship. She has seen them together, and, as she fears mischief may be brewing, thinks it well to give me a word of warning before it is too late. The moral of it all was clear. It was high time for both of them to be off, and Edgar congratulated himself that he had resisted all temptations to linger in this enchanted garden, where so formidable a dragon guarded the golden fruit.

But as the day wore on, and he began to realise that it was the last he would spend at Glenarva, an indefinable sense of dreariness and

regret came over him. That evening Algy and his sister rowed him out for the last time under the cliffs to St. Columb. They landed and walked past the lonely chapel far up into the wooded coombe, and climbed a breezy down still gay with heather bloom and yellow gorse, to look out on the open sea.

"The old sailors would tell you there is nothing between you and Newfoundland now," said Algy, pointing to the boundless waste of waters stretching far to westward. "Your friend, old Jacob Frewin, brought me up here one day when I was a small boy, and told me if I looked hard I might see a ship from Bristol sailing for Ameriky."

"Don't you sometimes envy the sea-gulls?" said Juliet, turning to Edgar, who stood by her side. "A view like this makes one long for one's wings to fly far away over that glorious sea, with its deep purple and emerald streaks flushing deeper and deeper."

It was glorious under the flaming skies as the great sun sank slowly and solemnly to rest.

It was late by the time they reached their boat again and started homewards. The sea was calm and glassy as a lake. From afar the houses of Glenarva, catching the radiance of the sunset, rose in glittering tiers out of the blue shadows of the woods, as they rowed along the bay.

The boat glided silently along the surface of the waves, and there was scarcely wind enough to lift the straggling locks of July's golden hair, or stir the delicate fronds of the ferns which grew over the rocks.

It was all still and beautiful as a dream. And very dreamlike it seemed to Edgar as he lay in the back of the boat, paying little heed to July's chatter, which ran rippling on like a brook over its pebbly bed. He was thinking how pleasant it would be to drift on like this all over the smooth waters his life long, letting the days and hours go by in blissful unconsciousness.

And he was thinking how soon the little episode of this visit to Glenarva would be over. The boat would reach the shore, and they would go their way, and not for him would the birds sing or the waters murmur in this far-away Edenland. These few last weeks, with all their adventures and misfortunes, appeared strangely bright as he looked back on them, and made the future cold and barren in his eyes.

He was startled from his reverie by the sound of distant voices which came floating over the sea.

"Is that singing we hear?" he asked July, who in her turn had grown silent now, and sat watching the parting waves as the boat glided along.

"It is the Glenarva girls," she replied. "You

will see them presently on the beach. They often sing together on summer evenings there, and to-night it is so fine it is almost like a June evening."

As they drew nearer shore they could hear the words plainly. It was an American hymn—a favourite among the revivalists and dissenters of the West, and the refrain sung in those wild musical voices sounded sweetly over the waves as it came again and again—

> Shall we gather at the river,
> Where bright angel feet have trod?
> With its crystal tide for ever
> Flowing by the Throne of God.

The next moment the boat touched the strand, and at Algy's shout two boys ran out and dragged her up on the beach.

"You had better walk on, or you will be late for dinner," called Algy. "I must speak to someone about putting up the boat. We shan't be wanting it again this year."

Edgar walked briskly on by Juliet's side up the village street till they reached the lane that led towards Glenarva Court. "It was exactly here I met you walking with your brother four weeks ago," he said, lingering a moment at the corner to take one last look round.

"Four weeks!" exclaimed July. "Is it really so much? It seems almost impossible; but I sup-

pose it must be that. It seems now like a few days to me; and yet a great deal has happened since then—your accident, and Aunt Alicia's journey to town, and all."

"Yes, a great deal," said Edgar, walking on as if he would trample under foot the stormy feelings inside his breast, making July, strong and active as she was, find it hard work to keep up with him. Then he said rather abruptly, "Have you ever been suddenly woke when you were in the midst of a pleasant dream, and felt it all slip and vanish away from you, and looked about you and seen it was morning, and heard the maid opening the shutters, and the clatter of people on the stairs, and known you must get up? I feel like that now. I hate to wake up as I shall do to-morrow, and find myself back in dingy London, and, worse than all, know I must move and act like other people, and forget my pleasant dream."

July looked rather puzzled.

"One can't dream away all one's life, I suppose," she said presently. "But I don't see why you need forget," she added innocently; "I never try to forget anything that has been at all pleasant. And I shall always think of your visit, and of my drawing-lessons—yes, even of the time of your accident, all except just the first two days—among the pleasant things of this autumn."

"Thank you for that," said Edgar, a little vexed at the downright matter-of-fact way in which she took his words. "I should be sorry if we appeared to you in the form of a nightmare. Ah, here comes Algy," he added, turning round at the sound of the boy's steps behind him.

For many years it had been Edgar Wynne's boast that he held his heart well in hand, and had no fear that it would ever slip for one moment out of his control. And when Glenarva lay far behind him the next day he had the satisfaction of reflecting that he was still able to say this to himself. If it was rather a cold, barren gratification, he did not care, so long as his pride was satisfied, and his heart had escaped whole. But in another twenty years would he be *still* of the same mind?

CHAPTER XII.

I have no other but a woman's reason ;
I think him so, because I think him so.
Two Gentlemen of Verona.

"WELL, of all absurd, ridiculous customs, going out of town for Easter is the most foolish. I have always said so, and I say so still."

These words were uttered by Mrs. Frederick Maxwell, as she sat in the drawing-room of a house in Chapel Street, Mayfair, and looked disconsolately at the closed shutters of the opposite houses.

"You'd better get the seasons changed by Act of Parliament," said her husband, a big, heavy man, with a dark beard, who was in the act of leaving the house, and stood at the door in his greatcoat to hear his wife's lamentations. "At least you are better off here than you would be if you were with your friends in the country." This

sentiment would, he knew, meet with approval from his wife, and on the strength of it he went off to his club, leaving her to bewail her dreary fate.

It was a cold, raw day, towards the end of April. Most people were still out of town for the Easter holidays, shivering in cold country-houses which had been shut up for months, or at colder roadside stations, waiting for the next train, and devoutly wishing they had never left their warm town-houses and snug firesides.

The empty streets and closed windows made London itself cheerless, and more than one person might have been tempted to follow Mrs. Maxwell's example, and invoke maledictions on the weather, the calendar, and society in general.

But if the outside was cold and wretched, within things were very different. The room where she sat was luxurious and comfortable to the last degree. The sofas and chairs were of the most expensive and commodious description, the stamped leather paper, the carved super-mantel, with its mirrors and china, were all pretty and tasteful. Amy Maxwell had nothing genuinely artistic in her nature, but, like many of her neighbours, she was quick to catch the tone of society round her; and since it was fashionable to dress in terra-cottas and peacock blues, and to adorn your walls with Morris papers and blue china, she was not behind

the rest of the world in this respect. Her pretty house and carefully-chosen combination of tints gave her little pleasure in themselves; but since they were undeniably the right thing, they became dear to her heart. She would have shuddered at the sight of the Cupid-patterned pink cretonnes, with which she formerly covered her chairs, and have turned away in disgust at the sight of the French-grey curtains and carpets which, ten years ago, had been held to be the height of elegance.

To be in the fashion was the aim and object of her life. This ruling principle governed her actions, —the law to which she conformed herself and her husband's ways, as far as it was possible. Even when she disliked the tasks which it imposed—as, for instance, this very custom of going out of town for Easter—she submitted with a groan, although no one was more loth to leave her beloved London home, and she took care to be always among the first to return there.

In other respects Amy Maxwell was a kind-hearted, sensible little woman, and as she had the most comfortable of husbands, and could afford to do pretty much as she liked, the current of life had generally flowed smoothly with her. The conflicting force of strong feelings, deep emotions, and high aspirations, never disturbed the even tenor of her way; she was popular among her acquaintances;

and, as she had leisure and means to do a good many kind things, she was not without a few real friends.

When her husband left the room, she took up a sheet of the *Times* and glanced wearily through the advertisements without apparently finding anything to satisfy her.

The sound of the door-bell made her look up joyfully, and she listened eagerly for the footsteps of the servant who proceeded to answer the summons.

Yes, it was really a visitor; she could hear the footsteps on the stairs now. No heaven-sent messenger could have been more welcome at this moment than was this unexpected arrival, to judge from the sudden change in Amy's whole manner.

She threw down the paper on the table, gave herself a rapid survey in the glass to see that her appearance was satisfactory, and turned her most smiling face and animated expression towards her welcome visitor.

"You, Edgar!" she exclaimed in her liveliest tone, as Mr. Wynne followed the servant into the room. "This is charming indeed. You really are the best creature in the world. Here, take this chair by the fire; I am sure you are perished with cold. Was there ever such odious weather? Why, it is almost May, and it might be December. If

it goes on I tell Fred we shall all of us have to go and live on the Riviera or in Algiers. You have come singularly *à propos*, in time to save me from being bored to extinction. I declare I have just been looking at the *Times*, and it is more than stupid. There's no one born or married or dead that one cares sixpence for."

"You must, indeed, be in a lamentable condition," said her cousin, as he took the chair which she offered, and glanced round the room, which looked all the prettier from its contrast to the bleak and cheerless day. "I should have thought you had pretty things enough about you to save you from being reduced to seek for amusement in the demise of your dearest friends. When it comes to my turn, at least I shall have the satisfaction of knowing the pleasure I am affording you."

"Nonsense, Edgar," returned Amy, laughing; "you know I did not mean anything so bad as that. But you always have a way of making me feel ten times more wicked than I am. However, as you have come to pay me a visit on such a wretched afternoon, I suppose I must forgive you."

"I should have come before, but I thought you were still out of town," observed her cousin.

"Not I," said Amy. "We did go down to Fred's sister for a week. It snowed two days

running, and the rest of the time there was a cutting east wind. I vowed that I would never leave town again before July. But one must do as one's neighbours do, I suppose," she added, putting her head on one side with the most resigned air.

"I should be sorry to have to live on those conditions," said Edgar. "You fashionable people seem to me to undergo a perfect slavery."

"Oh, you—you are a savage, we all know," said Amy, in a mocking voice. "Perhaps I shall put you in a better temper if I tell you what a good character I heard of you the other day. It came from a most unexpected quarter, too, I can assure you; only you don't deserve to hear it. Shall I be forgiving and tell you?"

Edgar shrugged his shoulders. He felt perfectly aware that Amy was dying to tell him her story, and had not the least fear she would deprive herself of the pleasure of repeating it to him.

"That is just like a man," she said. "But I will be magnanimous for this once; especially as I think it may do you good. A few weeks ago I heard from Alicia Nevil, and she actually told me how much pleasure it had given her to make your acquaintance. Stop! don't think that was all, by any means. She went on to express her deep regret at the unfortunate accident which had interrupted your visit, and to say how much they

all hoped you felt no ill effects now. Quite a pretty speech for Alicia, you must confess, Edgar! You know how very far she is from being a gushing person, but I assure you she gushed about you, so far as it is possible to apply the expression to any one so austere and magnificent."

"I am very much obliged to Miss Nevil for her kind interest in me," said Edgar, without moving a muscle of his imperturbable countenance. He liked his cousin, but at the same time he had a wholesome dread of her inquisitiveness, and always suspected her of trying to ferret out secrets when she became confidential. Fortunately she had been out of town for six weeks after his return from Glenarva, and had, in consequence, been satisfied with hearing the chief incidents of that memorable visit, and had asked fewer questions than he had expected.

"She seems to have taken quite a fancy to you. I suppose it was the result of your accident. After that silly boy's carelessness, I must say they owed you some reparation. And I daresay all this time you have never once had the grace to write and tell one of the Nevils how you have been getting on this winter?" continued Amy, working herself up into a fine pretence of anger, which was not very alarming.

Mrs. Maxwell was wrong there, for after the

brothers left Glenarva last October Wilfrid had addressed not one, but several letters to Miss Nevil, in which he had expended almost as much pains and time as he did on his pictures. Since then whatever communication had passed between them had been in the shape of short notes from Algy, who dwelt chiefly on the prospects of next autumn's sport.

"Wilfrid is Miss Nevil's correspondent, so you had better consult him on that point," was all that Edgar said.

"Is he?" said Amy, with surprise. "I should have thought you would have suited her much better. But tell me, what is Wilfrid doing with himself? I have not seen him since before that snowy Christmas when he came to lunch with you. It is a thousand pities he should bury himself so completely."

"Leave him to his fate, Amy," returned Edgar, smiling at the business-like manner which his cousin assumed. "Clever I know you to be, but you are still cleverer than I take you for if you can unearth Wilfrid from his studio. He paints by daylight and he blots out, or whatever artists choose to call the process, by candle-light."

"It is a pity, especially as he is the elder brother and you are of so unsociable a nature. Now, I should not mind if he were a genius, or even a suc-

cessful artist. He might exhibit his pictures, and then it would be all very well, even if it were only at the Water Colours, and he would get invitations everywhere, and become the fashion. But if he can't do that he had better give it up and throw his paints into the fire. A man who takes to painting as severely as Wilfrid does ought to be successful. It is all very well to be a *dilettante* and dabble in art, but to devote your life to it and then never be heard of is a great mistake."

"I wish with all my heart he were successful; but what would you have?" said Edgar, and he repeated the line—

'Tis not in mortals to command success.

"At least you must give Wilfrid credit for one thing; he secures what some of us find harder than even success to reach—happiness. I never knew a more contented individual."

"If he really is happy, I suppose it is best for him," said Amy, with unmistakable contempt in her tone. "But pray don't follow his example, Edgar," she went on with a comical expression of disgust.

Edgar laughed.

"You need not be afraid of that," he said. "One artist in a family is enough. Just now Wilfrid is meditating a tour in North Italy. He has never been south of the Alps, and begins to

think the Venetian painters may have something to teach him."

"I hope you are not going with him," said Amy promptly.

Edgar shook his head.

"Not that I know of. An artist is not a good travelling companion; I discovered that at Glenarva last autumn. Wilfrid scarcely ever took a walk, and he spent a month there the year before without even discovering the existence of Glenarva Court, and, as far as I can make out, of the Nevil family."

"I hope you told Alicia Nevil that," cried Amy, bursting into an irrepressible fit of laughter. "My dear Edgar, he must be crazed!"

"I sometimes wonder which of us is sane," said Edgar, with a touch of irony. "Happily our manias take a different form. Some run after one bubble, some after another; but it is all the same in the end—at least, with most of us."

"You have become more detestable than ever, Edgar, I think," said Amy, in a petulant tone. "I wish you would marry; it would do you simply all the good in the world."

"I am glad to hear you think I am still capable of being improved," said Edgar lightly. "To say the truth, I fancied you had long given me up as hopelessly incorrigible. But I am afraid there is

no chance of my swallowing the physic you prescribe for me."

"You had better try your hand on Alicia Nevil," said Amy, laughing; "it is true she is a few years older, but you are fast turning grey—old age is coming on apace. And, do you know, she had a small fortune and a tidy little house in Glanville Place left her recently. I saw a bill up in it the other day; but it is dirty and shabbily-furnished, and isn't likely to let unless it is done up. It might not prove such a bad investment."

"I'll think over it," said Edgar as he rose to take leave, much to his cousin's vexation.

Before he left, Mrs. Maxwell had made him promise to come back one day the next week to dinner. They would be quite alone, and then she would have a good talk to him before the plot thickened, and the gaieties of the season absorbed every moment of her time.

After all, Edgar said to himself, Amy was a good little woman. She might be frivolous and ridiculous at times, but she was good at heart, and had a sincere affection for him, he believed. She was about the only person in town who really cared about him and seemed genuinely pleased to see him. And then she belonged to the far-away days of his youthful memories, which in itself was a strong recommendation.

There was one other reason which perhaps

drew him more to her than any of these, although he would scarcely allow it to himself. She was the one link between him and the Nevils—the only person who ever spoke to him of Glenarva and its inhabitants. This afternoon she had not even mentioned July's name ; and yet as he walked home in the teeth of the east wind, with the foggy atmosphere of the streets wrapping him round, it was July's presence which seemed to follow him and her voice which rang in his ears.

Once more they seemed to be rowing together on the shining waters of that western sea, where soft autumn airs, with their scent of myrtle and jessamine, came fanning his brow, and it was July's happy laugh that sounded across the waves.

Very far off they appeared to him now in the dim haze of the past—those bright Glenarva days, and it was seldom that he recurred to them even in thought. But that evening, much to Wilfrid's surprise, his brother walked into his studio, which he did not often honour with a visit, and asked him what he had done with his Glenarva sketches.

Wilfrid gladly brought out a large portfolio from under a mass of blocks and sketch-books, and Edgar spent the rest of the evening tossing them out one by one for his amusement as he smoked on the divan by the fireside or hummed snatches of "Huntingtower" and "Break, break, break!" to himself in a low voice.

CHAPTER XIII.

Gratiano speaks an infinite deal of nothing, more than any man in all Venice.—*Merchant of Venice.*

"I WISH you would change your mind, and come after all. It is a good time of year for Italy, and if you were tired of it you could come back easily. It would make a great difference to me, if it did not bore you."

Wilfrid spoke so humbly and looked up with so wistful an expression in his face that even Edgar's resolution was shaken for a moment.

But he did not yield, strong as the temptation was to exchange the grey skies and dull pavement of London for the fairy city in the sea. In the first place he had undertaken to help a friend to whom the experience which he had acquired in Ceylon made him a valuable assistant. For several months he had been regularly to the City, and, besides helping his friend, was doing a little business on

his own account, which promised to turn out well. And then he had vague plans of running down to the west country a month or two later, and seeing how Glenarva looked in its summer garb.

So Wilfrid said no more, and returned to his packing. During the last three months he had talked of his intended journey, and had been engaged in making endless preparations for his actual departure; and every day and hour of the last three weeks had been spent in going to and fro between the colourman's and the trunkmaker's shops, ordering easels and sketching-blocks and all the interminable stock of drawing-materials which he thought necessary, and then endeavouring vainly to stow them away in specially-constructed portmanteaus and bags.

Edgar wondered secretly whether the result of the Italian journey would be at all in proportion to the immense amount of labour and thought expended in previous preparation. But he wisely kept his reflections to himself, and only indulged in a malicious smile when he found Wilfrid in the act of unpacking and re-packing some unusually large parcel.

At last all was ready for the start, and after consigning a heavy box to go by goods train and paying a considerable sum for extra luggage into the bargain, Edgar saw his brother safely off for

Paris, and returned alone to the rooms at the studio in Russell Street. He had thought of moving to more convenient lodgings now that Wilfrid was gone, but the quiet situation of the house suited him, and he determined to remain where he was, at all events for the present.

The empty studio was a desolate place, and the whole house wore a melancholy untenanted air which made him half repent of his decision when he found himself alone. He remembered with satisfaction that he was engaged to dine with his cousins that evening, and made his appearance in Chapel Street punctually at eight o'clock.

Amy was ready to receive him in a becoming gown of black velvet and Spanish lace, which struck him directly as intended to make an impression on some one else besides himself, and he was not surprised when she began to apologise.

"I hope you won't mind, Edgar, but another man is coming to dinner; it was all Fred's fault. It is Hugh Cockerill, Sir John's son; I daresay you know him. No? well he is very pleasant and sociable, and when he was calling here the other day, Fred began to suggest his dining here some night, and I was obliged to let him come to-night."

Edgar assured his hostess that he had not the smallest objection to meeting any of her friends, and only smiled a little at the mention of her

husband, who was a very frequent scapegoat of Amy's in these matters. It sometimes struck Edgar that she used Fred's name almost too freely, and made him responsible for more than he would have altogether approved; but his shoulders were broad and he, as Amy often said, was the most good-natured of men.

He was not remarkable for intellectual brilliancy, and conversation when left to him was apt to lapse altogether; but when he did speak it was generally to the purpose, and Edgar was inclined to think Amy had by no means the worst of the bargain.

Fred Maxwell on his part was always glad to see his wife's cousin, and as he walked into the room with his heavy stride, greeted Edgar cordially and began to discuss the topics of the evening papers, which he never failed to get by heart. Probably long experience in dining out and giving dinners had taught him to have recourse to them as the best means of supplying him with the few remarks to which he gave utterance at intervals throughout the evening.

A few minutes afterwards Mr. Cockerill was announced, and the four went down to dinner.

The last-named guest was a tall, sandy-haired young man with well cut features and a remarkable degree of self-possession. He wore an eye-

glass, of which he made frequent use, scanning the pictures and china on the walls with a connoisseur's eye, and had a flow of small-talk which might have rivalled Amy's own fund of that commodity.

Political and social gossip, theatrical and artistic novelties, the last echoes from the clubs, and stories from the society papers,—what one lady wore in the park, what another had appeared in at the drawing-room,—all succeeded each other with the same fluency, and were told in the same light vein. The only part of it which Edgar disliked was the habit which he had acquired of discussing women in a contemptuous manner, aiming small shafts at their weaknesses and taking pleasure in pointing out their mistakes.

When, later in the evening, it appeared that Cockerill had been staying in the West of England that winter for the coming of age of a young friend of his, and when it came to light that the Nevils had been among the guests, Edgar positively trembled. It sounded like sacrilege to hear him take Juliet's name on his lips, and talk about her as freely as if he had known her all his life.

Amy was, of course, delighted to hear this, and flattered herself that here was a subject which could not fail to interest and amuse Edgar, if he could not always follow her other guest in his anecdotes of the gay world.

"How very singular!" she exclaimed; "really the world is very small. My cousin here was down at Glenarva, the Nevils' place—a poor tumble-down old house it is—only last autumn, and has too good reason to know it well since Algy Nevil shot him in the head and almost put out his eyes."

After this Edgar was compelled to exert himself and feign interest in hearing about the Nevils, while inwardly he wished Cockerill had hit upon any other subject. However, to do him justice, Cockerill did not say anything but what was flattering of his hostess's relatives, and the utmost he ventured to remark was how refreshing it was to meet with any one as full of old-fashioned courtliness as the elder Miss Nevil.

"And the girl Juliet? you have told us nothing of her," said Amy, whose curiosity was apparently not yet satisfied. "I have been told, I forget by whom, certainly not by you, Edgar, for I never yet heard you pay a girl a compliment in your life, either to her face or behind her back, but I have been told that Juliet has grown up a very pretty girl. She ought to be, if she is at all like her poor mother."

"Yes, she *is* decidedly pretty, very pretty indeed," replied Cockerill, with emphasis. "It is a charming face, and when she lights up I have seen her look really lovely. The night of the ball I

heard several people asking who the tall girl with the beautiful eyes and fair hair could be."

"What a shame it does seem to keep her buried alive down at that remote country place!" exclaimed Amy. "I cannot think what Alicia Nevil is about not to have more sense, especially now she has a house of her own in town. It only makes it more incomprehensible."

"No, I don't agree with you there, Mrs. Maxwell," returned Cockerill. "I, for one, should be sorry to see a girl like that become a London beauty. Her head would be turned in no time, and she might be the talk of the town for one season, but she would be forgotten the next. Does it not sound to you very like transplanting an Alpine gentian to this drawing-room?" he continued, appealing to Edgar, who made no response. The whole conversation was distasteful to him, and he shrank from the bare mention of such a thing as July becoming a London beauty, and the talk of the town. Fortunately Amy had too much to say for his deficiencies in this respect to be noticed.

"I don't see that at all," she went on; "if the girl were properly brought out it would be all right, and it would do the child all the good in the world to see a little good society. Did I ever tell you, Edgar, that she is my god-child? Poor Mary

Nevil insisted upon it, because I was staying in the house the autumn before she was born. And so I naturally feel a certain degree of responsibility in the matter. Indeed, if it weren't for Fred over there, I should have long ago braved Alicia's wrath, and invited Juliet Nevil here for a few weeks of the season. But he won't hear of my going to balls, except just now and then, so that would be of no use."

"I am sure if I were the girl's aunt or father I would not let her go out with you," muttered Fred Maxwell in his good-humoured way. "Why, Amy's about the worst chaperone in the world. She talks far too much to give any one else a chance."

There was a general laugh at this brilliant sally on Fred's part and the subject dropped, or rather Cockerill started an eloquent thesis on the qualities requisite to constitute a model chaperone, and ended by declaring his own conviction that the institution was obsolete and ought to be done away with.

On the whole, Edgar was considerably relieved when the evening was over, and he found himself alone in his solitary rooms in Russell Street.

He had not the least doubt that Cockerill was harmless enough, probably, as Amy said, a very good sort of man, but he had certainly managed

to inspire him with an invincible repugnance. He could not forgive him for talking of Juliet Nevil in that light, flippant way, and was unable to get rid of the disagreeable impression which the whole conversation had left on his mind.

It was of no use struggling with himself; he felt he must go back to Glenarva and exchange the artificial atmosphere of his surroundings for one draught of pure moorland breezes, one breath of fresh sea-air. If he could see July once more in her own wild home, with Bevis bounding along the glen after her, or kneeling in the high-backed pew of the Nevil aisle by Miss Alicia's side, he should be able to shake off the unpleasant effects of these words, which, do what he would, still haunted his memory. The dreams which had for some time been floating vaguely before his eyes now took a definite shape. He would manage to get a fortnight's holiday from business, a thing which was easy enough in his position, and as soon as he saw his way to this he would write to Lettice Micklewright and order his old rooms.

In this manner he would see July again without troubling any one at Glenarva Court, and if Algy were at home he should be sure not to lack opportunities of meeting her often. And then, "come what come may," he should know his own mind, and once for all put an end to the doubts

and questionings which tormented him. If, after all, this haunting fancy turned out to be a mere dream, an illusion, he would gladly let it go, and come back a wiser if a sadder man.

CHAPTER XIV.

The world and I are far too full of bliss
To think or plan or toil or care ;
The sun is waxing strong,
The days are waxing long,
And all that is is fair.

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

THE soft spring airs had touched the western shores, and everywhere there were tokens of new life. For months past the birds had sung of the coming summer which this year delayed so long to answer the call of their joyous voices.

But now at length it came, and all along the seashore there was a sudden burst of spring. The woods broke into every shade of tender green, the dead brown ferns put out new shoots, and the ground was carpeted with Lent lilies, wild blue-bells, and anemones.

It had been a long, dreary winter for the fishers of Glenarva, and, like all fishing populations, they

suffered much and often had a hard struggle to keep the wolf from the door. But now they forgot their privations and sorrows, forgot the long months of frost and snow during which they had waited in vain for a gleam of sun to cheer their dark days, and rejoiced with the rest of creation around them because the winter was over and gone. Many of the men joined expeditions to the cod-fisheries in distant parts, and left their wives and families behind them. The others were out at their nets both night and day, according as wind and tides favoured them, and great was the excitement and the rush down to the beach when a good haul was brought in.

A stirring time it was in the little fishing village with these frequent departures and returns, and those longer farewells to the husbands and sons who joined the distant expeditions and could not be home for many a weary month.

But yet every one was gladdened by the quickened sense of life around them, and the village street rang with echoes of happy laughter and the footsteps of children hurrying down to the beach to see the boats start.

Those were happy days for July, too. She loved to share the lives of Glenarva folk, to hear their sorrows and their joys, and be one with them in everything. And she loved the lengthening

days and the budding woods and the warmth of the spring sunshine as she roamed in that free, open-air life over moor and hillside. Sometimes she went with her father, more rarely with Algy, and generally alone with Bevis.

Often was she seen in the village street talking to the children about their fathers and brothers at sea, or watching on the beach when the boats were expected home, always with the same bright face, and with a word and a smile for each.

But to-day she came on another errand. As she knocked at Lettice Micklewright's door and told Bab to call her mother, it was not to hear of other partings or meetings, but to bid farewell herself.

"Going away, Miss July?" cried Lettice, "you're never going away? How in the world are we to get on without the sight of you? Now, if it were Robin I shouldn't miss him so much; and I say that, not because he's not a good husband, but because he's always up there at the kennels and you're most always down here."

"I'm afraid it's true, all the same, Lettice," replied Juliet, a little sadly too. "We are going to London."

When first Miss Nevil had told her of Mrs. Lane's bequest, she had rejoiced both for her father and her aunt's sake, and the prospect of a

few weeks in town had at first sounded delightful to her. But when it came to leaving Glenarva,—above all, when she had to go round and bid farewell to the humbler friends among whom so great a part of her life was spent,—she began to see the dark side of the picture, and was almost inclined to wish the house in town had never been left to her aunt. The worst part of it all was that her father resolutely refused to go to London. He made no opposition to his sister and child leaving him. On the contrary, he urged their departure, and told July it would be a pleasant change for her, and joked her about the grand folks she would meet up there and the fine sights she would see, and told her how, when she came back, she would despise her poor old father.

But no persuasion could induce him to accompany them. The habit of staying at home had grown upon him with years, and he declared he could not breathe in town and should never be happy away from Glenarva.

At first Alicia Nevil was displeased, but after a little reflection she came to the conclusion that, all things considered, her brother was right. The house in Glanville Place was small and dark, the Squire would be for ever pining for the light and space of which Glenarva Court afforded him so large a measure, and it would be an exceedingly difficult

task to keep him amused away from all his usual occupations. Juliet was far more seriously distressed at the thought of leaving her father, and felt sure he would be very lonely when they were gone, especially as Algy had just accepted a tempting invitation to go to Ireland with his friend Bryce for a month's fishing.

But she was too lighthearted to grieve long, when she saw her father satisfied, and consoled herself by thinking how much she would have to tell him on her return, and what long letters she would write to him from town. Now, as Miss July communicated the news, the prospect of a journey to London sounded imposing, almost fearful, in Lettice's ears, and she took some time in recovering from the astonishment with which Miss July's news filled her.

"Well, I never heard the like!" was her first exclamation when she had sufficiently collected her thoughts to speak. "I only know two, nay three, folks from Glenarva who went up to London town and came back safe alive to their friends; though they do say Sally Tregarva is doing well for herself up there—it's the truth she does send home money to her old mother. Now, I've always heard say as London's a very vain place, Miss July; although, maybe, I says it as shouldn't say it. Mother she said so often and often, and father

he was very hot agin poor Tom going up there from the first, and you know he died of throat-disease in the hospital. Father he always would have it was them streets which they build so thick together you can't get a breath of air, but sure enough he died." Here Lettice's voice became sepulchral in her desire to be impressive. "And Morris's Susan, she came to no good there either. That's what mother always said, 'London's a vain place, and you'd best keep away from there, Lettice, child; that's what I say.'"

"I'm afraid I shall go there all the same," said Juliet, laughing at the stress which Lettice laid on her original statement. But I'm sorry your mother had such a bad opinion of London."

"There's one thing," said Lettice, with a sudden revolution of feeling, "there's one thing strikes me. You'll see Mr. Wynne again and Mr. Wilfrid! Lor' bless me! I never thought of that before. And there! Robin he says I'm for ever talking of them. But you'll see them, sure enough, miss, won't you?"

"I hope so, Lettice," replied July thoughtfully. "But I am not sure. You see, London is a very big place, and I fancy it is not so easy always to find out one's friends there."

"It's a mighty queer place as well as a big one, if one's friends can't find one out, miss," re-

turned Lettice promptly. "All I can say is, I don't hold with such places. And if that's the case I'd rather live and die here where one can't get lost."

She would have found plenty more to say on this subject as on any other, if Juliet had given her time, but the girl had other farewell visits to pay, and cut her short.

"Well, good luck go with you, Miss July, and bring you safe back here; and whether you stay a long or a short while it will be all the same when you come home. There won't be a sad face in Glenarva that day, I'll be bound. And if you see Mr. Wynne and Mr. Wilfrid, you'll not forget as I wished to send my duty and I'd be glad to see them at any time, and the rooms are empty and ceilings new whitewashed and all just ready."

Juliet promised not to forget, and, after saying a few more adieus, walked back up the hill.

A moment's sadness came over her as she looked round at the top of the lane, and thought how long it would be before she looked down again on the roofs that nestled among the trees in the hollow of the hillside. But it was only for a moment. It was quite impossible to be sad in that brilliant sunshine with the fresh sea-wind blowing in her face and the open moor before her, and spring leaves and flowers everywhere to greet her. The

"A MOMENT'S SADNESS CAME OVER HER AS SHE LOOKED ROUND AT THE TOP OF THE LANE."

Page 172.

future lay before her new and untried, and all the world seemed bright and beautiful.

Even London, that vain place, in Lettice Micklewright's imaginings, looked attractive in the distance, just because it would be all new to her, and unlike any other place which she had ever seen.

July was not in the least unsociable, although her bringing-up had accustomed her to solitude, and she could always be happy alone. The week at Castle Weyland last February had given her a delightful taste of society, and had gone far to remove many of her childish fears of the fashionable world. After all, people had not been so alarming as she expected, and several individuals had been exceedingly kind, and had seemed quite anxious to make her happy. And the dancing, over which her aunt had looked a little grave at first, had been the greatest possible fun, she thought.

There would be balls in town, she knew that, and she hoped the floor would be as good as it was that night at Castle Weyland. She hoped, too, people who gave balls would be kind enough to ask her sometimes, although Aunt Alicia had wisely told her beforehand that she knew scarcely any one in town now, and that July must make up her mind beforehand not to expect a very gay season. And then she began to wonder if Edgar

Wynne went to balls, and if, as Lettice had suggested, she should meet him and Wilfrid in London. It was nice to think she did know the two brothers, and she felt sure they would be kind to her when they met. Perhaps Wilfrid would take her and her aunt to see the National Gallery and Royal Academy, both of which were mere names to July. Anyhow he would be sure to take them to his studio and show them his pictures of Glenarva.

And then as she reached the gateway which led to Glenarva Court, she remembered her last walk with Edgar along that very path. It was particularly impressed on July's mind, because they had been late for dinner, and her aunt had scolded her, which she thought rather hard, since it had been entirely Algy's fault, and it was he who had insisted on climbing the hill above St. Columb's.

She remembered exactly what Edgar had said, and how she had felt a little frightened as she often did when he talked to her, and she was not sure if she understood all he meant to say, and feared he must think her so very stupid. But she liked him all the same. There was something so good and true in his eyes, and he was always gentle and kind to her, and of course it was very good of him to talk to her as he did, and to care to hear what she thought about things. It was curious,

July often said to herself, but she thought much more about Edgar Wynne than she did of Wilfrid, and cared much more to see the younger brother again; and yet of course the artist had been more with her here, and had taken so much trouble to teach her. She was afraid it seemed ungrateful and not quite right, and was altogether rather puzzled.

Her reflections on this perplexing point were brought to a sudden close by the sight of her father, who was standing at the door waiting for her to go down to the kennels with him, in Algy's absence.

The remainder of the day was devoted to the sublunary cares of packing, and the necessary preparations involved in an absence of at least several weeks. Miss Alicia had fixed no date for their return, and announced oracularly that this must depend on circumstances.

"The long and short of the business," remarked the Squire aside to July, "is that she'll stay up there till she's sick of it. But if you are bored and want to come home, child, you just write to me, that's all."

July laughed, and said she should be sure to do that, but owned she was much more afraid her father would find the time hang heavily on his hands down here all alone.

Of this, however, her father would not hear. If his little girl was happy, he was very well content; and after all she would soon be back, and he should take care she did not run away again in a hurry.

CHAPTER XV.

We built a castle in the air,
  In summer weather, you and I,
The wind and sun were in your hair,
  Gold hair against a sapphire sky.
When autumn came, with leaves that fly
  Before the storm, across the plain,
You fled from me, with scarce a sigh
  My love returns no more again.—A. LANG.

IT was about ten days after Miss July had paid her farewell visit to Lettice Micklewright, when late one evening she was startled by a tap at her door.

She was all alone. The children had been in bed some hours, and Robin, as was too often his habit, must have lingered at the "Nevil Arms," and had not yet returned home.

An arrival in Glenarva at this hour of night was most unusual, and Lettice cautiously unfastened the shutters of her window and looked out to see who this unexpected visitor might be. As she did

so, she heard a well-known voice calling her by name.

"Mr. Wynne," she exclaimed joyfully, "it's never you at this time o' night! I'll unfasten the door in a trice. Who'd ever have thought it?" she went on as Edgar entered the parlour, dusty and travel-stained, with his own bag in his hand, and sank wearily into a chair.

"You need not be frightened, Lettice," he said, noticing the suspicious look that lingered in Lettice's eyes. "I'm no ghost, but very real flesh and blood. And I'll prove it to you very shortly if you will give me something to eat, I don't care what, but I've been travelling all day, and I've had all sorts of misfortunes. I missed the coach, and drove ten miles, and then had to walk down the last four because the horse I hired was so fat and out of condition, he could not get along any further."

Lettice made him step into the kitchen, and take a chair by the fire, while she busied herself in preparing a rough meal, making excuses all the time that she had so little in the house.

"If I'd only had an inkling of your coming, sir, it 'ud have been very different."

"But did you not get a letter from me yesterday?" asked Edgar. "I wrote three days ago, and thought you would be expecting me all day, and wondering why in the world I did not turn up."

"La! now that is peculiar like!" cried Lettice, stopping in the midst of her preparations to throw up her hands in astonishment. "I daresay, though, you never thought o' putting 'Mrs. R. Micklewright.' It's that there letter R makes all the difference," she cried triumphantly. "I'll be bound you never thought o' that. Mr. Wilfrid he always puts it. For there's Robin's aunt as lives a mile the other side of the hill, out beyond the Squire's, and first of all you see the letter would go to her, and if it wasn't hers it would go back to the post, and then to-morrow or the next day, maybe, some one might bring it down here."

"I'm afraid it was my fault then, as you say, Lettice. But as long as you can take me in, I don't mind."

"Bless you, yes, sir, I can do that much and gladly too," said Lettice, putting the kettle on to boil, and stirring up the fire with redoubled energy. "I know you're not one to make a to-do because all's not just ship-shape, so to speak. And how's Mr. Wilfrid, and why hasn't he come along with you this time?"

While Edgar was explaining that his brother had taken a longer journey, Robin entered, and all the story of his adventures and the letter which had miscarried had to be told again.

By that time his supper was ready and he in-

sisted on Lettice and her husband going to bed, and leaving him to satisfy his appetite.

He felt no inclination to sleep, and when his meal was ended sat up by the dying embers of the fire wondering what the morrow would bring forth.

He could scarcely understand himself, and wondered at the might of the impulse which had driven him to take this sudden resolution. Certainly he was strangely altered from his old self, and he could not help recalling his first arrival at Lettice's house last September, when the children of Glenarva had vexed him out of all patience with their perpetual talk of Miss July.

Was he in love, then? Had the fatal contagion reached him, too, after all these years of resistance? But, no, he would not even yet allow this much to himself. He was not in love, only interested in the girl, and anxious to remove the disagreeable impression which that fellow Cockerill's remarks had left on his mind. All he wanted was to see Juliet Nevil once, and satisfy himself that time had not changed her for the worse. Of course he must call on her father, and pay his respects to Miss Alicia. This was the least he could do after the hospitality and kindness which had been shown him. Algy he knew was away, for a letter had reached him from the boy the day before he left

town, so it was useless to pretend that he had come all the way to Glenarva for his sake.

Unfortunately, however philosophical Edgar's reasoning might be, however well-balanced his arguments, his frame of mind was anything but stoical. He could not rest that evening, and finding Lettice had left her key in the door, he availed himself of the chance to take a look at the star-lit skies overhead, after which he paced up and down for half-an-hour at the imminent risk of disturbing the slumbers of the honest Glenarva folk, and being taken for a house-breaker or a madman himself.

The night air was still and balmy. Down on the beach he heard the long low ripple of the breaking waves, and far away along the bay he could see the silvery line of their foam on the dark rocks ; and up yonder were the woods of Glenarva Court, where he had walked by July's side last year, where on the morrow he would be walking again.

At this point he sternly pulled himself up, and, turning down the street again, resolved to waste no more time in these idle musings, but go straight to bed and to sleep.

Whether or no he carried the latter part of his resolve into effect, he was up at an early hour the next morning, and surprised Lettice by ringing

his bell before half her own jobs were done. She was equal to the occasion, however, and when Edgar appeared he found the most excellent breakfast of coffee and toast and fresh herrings awaiting him in the sunny parlour where he and Wilfrid had lived together.

Lettice herself was at hand, brisk and smiling as ever, ready to supply his wants, and to sharpen his appetite if required with her unfailing flow of conversation.

He had not proceeded far when she surprised him by asking him if he had come from London.

Yes, of course he had come from London—that is to say, he had left it two days ago, and had spent a night with a friend at Taunton on the way.

"Then you have seen Miss Nevil and Miss July—bless her sweet face!—up yonder, sir?" cried Lettice joyfully, eager for news of her young lady.

"What do you mean, Lettice?" asked Edgar, seized with a vague alarm.

It took some time before he could be made to understand that Miss Nevil and July were away—nay, worse than this, that they had actually been in town for a week without discovering their presence. He said little in reply, but before he left the house told Lettice that he was going on by coach next

morning for a tour along the coast, and should only spend that one day at Glenarva.

"He's changed his mind uncommon sharp," was Robin's remark to his wife when she informed him of Mr. Wynne's intention. "Last night it was a week at least, and maybe more. It looks queer, that does."

"Not a bit more queer than it does for you to say you'll be back to supper, and then stick on with a pair of good-for-nothings like yourself half the night at the 'Arms,'" retorted Lettice, with a promptitude that utterly silenced her husband.

But although she never allowed any one else to say a word against the quality, she had her own suspicions, and privately concluded that Miss Alicia must have had some scent of what was in the wind; and although Mr. Wynne was such a pleasant-spoken gentleman, and she for one had not a word to say against him, it was hard to think that even he could be worthy of their Miss July. So she kept her counsel, and maintained the most decorous front to her visitor during his brief stay.

Edgar's own state of mind was not an enviable one. He was angry with himself for what he now called his folly, and wished devoutly he had never left town. Bitterest of all was the reflection that if he had called on Amy Maxwell again he would have no doubt heard of her relatives' arrival; but

after dining with her that evening when he met Cockerill, he had been in no humour to go back in a hurry, and was accordingly punished for his impatience and foolish resentment.

A long tramp over the moors which he took that afternoon in the opposite direction from Glenarva Court had the effect of comparatively restoring his equanimity. He began to get over his disappointment, and to see that things were not so bad as they had seemed at first sight. A trip along the coast of North Devon would not be disagreeable in this fine weather, and he resolved to carry out this plan, if only by way of satisfying his own pride and assuring himself that he was still fancy free.

It was all very well in theory, but before the week was over he had come to the conclusion that he had travelled too far and seen too much of the world to find anything in these regions that repaid his trouble. Tired of rocks and blue seas, of open moorland and deep-wooded coombes and fern-fringed hollows, of all the changing loveliness of sky and cloud, and summer in her pride, he turned back to the busy world, to the noise and hum of men, and breathed more freely than he had done for days when he found himself seated in a railway carriage and whirled along through smoke and dust towards the great city, Babylon.

CHAPTER XVI.

Eat, drink, and play, and think that this is bliss.
A. H. CLOUGH.

MISS NEVIL and her niece had been in town a fortnight. Up to this time it cannot honestly be said that either of them had enjoyed their season much.

It was naturally hard for a person of Alicia Nevil's age to change all her habits, and after years spent in one groove to be suddenly transported into another. The mere fact of having to do with strange servants and tradespeople was at first awkward and difficult. There was much to decide and arrange. All kinds of unexpected troubles kept springing up. The gas refused to burn; a water-pipe burst and deluged the drawing-room; the kitchen range would not act, and the servants quarrelled; and a hundred other small difficulties presented themselves, none of them very serious, but each adding its item to the sum

total, and making the daily round of duties an arduous one.

Alicia had prepared herself for much of this beforehand. She had repeated to herself a hundred times over that the task must prove an uphill one, and she was of too strong and resolute a nature to flinch before the first hindrances that came in her way. With Juliet it was different. She was young and inexperienced, and her imaginings of life in town had been perhaps all too rose-coloured in her ignorance. The change from her free open-air life on the breezy moor or by the wild sea-shore naturally told upon her. Here in town it seemed hard to breathe. She felt imprisoned, pent up, and found herself longing for a run on the beach or a scamper on her old pony over the down.

The shops in Bond Street and Regent Street amused her. She was never tired of watching the riders in the park, only the sight made her long for a horse of her own. But everything else in town puzzled and wearied her. The one or two parties to which she had been with her aunt had been of the dullest. She knew no one, and had made no friends as yet. Mr. Cockerill, whom she remembered meeting at Castle Weyland, was positively the only person whom she had ever seen before; and in her pleasure at finding one man who

was not a stranger to her, she turned to him with an unfeigned warmth which flattered that rather *blasé* individual in no common degree.

Even Mrs. Maxwell, the Cousin Amy to whose friendship and protection she had looked foward impatiently, puzzled her a good deal.

At the first moment July had been charmed with her elegance and bright manners. She thought her house in Chapel Street the prettiest she had ever seen, and was surprised that Amy should treat her with so much kindness and interest, and be so anxious to provide for her amusement.

Mrs. Maxwell, on her part, was astonished at Juliet's beauty, and equally distressed at the state of her wardrobe, and her utter ignorance of the world's way.

"I declare, Fred," she said to her husband two days after the Nevils had called upon her, "it is a crime to let a girl like that go about so badly dressed. She hasn't one gown fit to be seen, poor child! Alicia ought really to know better. But she always dressed like a scarecrow herself, so I suppose she doesn't see the difference. But something must be done, Fred; something must be done at once."

That something, after undergoing several processes in Amy Maxwell's active brain, ended in

Juliet being carried off bodily to her cousin's dressmaker, and measured and fitted with all that lady considered necessary. To this her aunt made no objection whatever. She was perfectly alive to the necessity of conforming to the usages of society, and knew Mrs. Maxwell to be an excellent guide in these matters.

July herself submitted reluctantly to these tiresome preliminaries, and not without a shudder at the sum mentioned as the probable cost of her outfit.

"I had no idea a gown could take so much money," she said, with a sigh that excited her cousin's merriment in the highest degree. "Twenty pounds! Why, it would buy a pony or pay the rent of several cottages at Glenarva for a whole year, Cousin Amy!"

But since Cousin Amy insisted on paying for the said gown herself, Juliet could say no more, and was properly grateful for the generous present, if still a little uncomfortable in mind at the thought of so much money being spent upon her attire. When the gowns came home, she owned that they were very pretty, and enjoyed the pleasure of wearing each one in turn, especially as Cousin Amy pronounced the result to be highly satisfactory.

"Yes, you will do now, Juliet," she said, leading

the girl to a mirror and scanning the effect of a pretty myrtle-green costume, which was one of the gowns in question. "I thought that colour would suit you. With a face like yours it is a positive sin to dress badly. Come, you need not blush so, when your glass tells you the same thing every day. But there is one thing you must promise me, child; that is, never to wear that black silk you had on yesterday again—at least, while you are in town. It is a frightful cut and dowdy, and old-looking enough to have been your grandmother's."

Poor July! The black silk which had roused Amy's ire had been new last year, and was her only best Sunday gown, and since it had cost more than any gown she had ever worn till she came to London, she regarded it with great respect.

"I am very sorry you don't like it, Cousin Amy," she said humbly. "It was father's present, and I did not know it looked so bad. But, of course, I see how different this one looks."

"Oh, I daresay it did very well down at Glenarva, where there are only old fishwives and dirty children to see you; but here it is different," said Amy kindly. She feared she had hurt the girl's feelings, which, of course, was not in the least her intention; but since Alicia was so blind, the only way to mend matters was to attack the girl

herself and open her eyes. "You see, my dear, I am determined you should do us all credit. I have set my heart upon it; and, as Fred says, when I have set my heart on anything it takes a great deal to make me change my mind."

"I am sure it is very good of you to care about me at all," said Juliet, returning Amy's embrace. She was really grateful for her cousin's kindness, but sometimes she could not help wishing it took another form than this constant harping on one string. Somehow, she had expected her mother's friend to have been different, and had never thought she would bestow so much of her time and pains on the outsides of things. It was disappointing, and she felt a good deal puzzled.

That same day Mrs. Maxwell had asked a few friends to tea, with the express purpose of introducing her relatives to one or two acquaintances who might prove useful to them. "There is Mrs. Barker, who always gives balls, and Lady Hart and her sister, Mrs. Woolley, who are both good people to know, and Eleanor Lindsay. The Lindsays don't give balls since Eleanor's mother died and the other sisters married, but their parties are capital, and Eleanor is just the sort of person who will do anything for a girl to whom she takes a fancy. And, somehow, I rather think Juliet will suit her."

This was the way in which Amy enumerated her friends for Miss Nevil's benefit, and July listened, and wondered if people in London were all like this and only valued their friends for what they could get out of them.

"I think seeing one's friends in town is more of a business than a pleasure, Aunt Alicia," she observed to her aunt, as they drove to Chapel Street in their hired brougham; "every one has to work so hard, and Cousin Amy works the hardest of all."

"It is very kind of your cousin to take so much trouble for your sake, Juliet," was all Miss Nevil said in answer, and July felt properly abashed. She was afraid her aunt implied that she was ungrateful, which was certainly not her intention, although she secretly wished that Mrs. Maxwell would not trouble herself so much for her sake. On a lovely afternoon like this she would have been much happier taking a walk in the park or among the shady trees of Kensington Gardens, where she quite envied the nursery-maids and children at play. As for Glenarva, she scarcely dared to think of it, so passionate was the longing which came over her to be back again there, enjoying the freedom of her happy country life.

It was past five when they reached Mrs. Maxwell's house. Amy had not mentioned any parti-

cular hour, and Miss Nevil could not understand a tea-party taking place earlier—and the small drawing-room was already half full. Amy exclaimed that they were very late, and immediately introduced Miss Nevil to a stout lady in purple velvet by her side.

Juliet slipped unobserved into a corner behind a group of girls, who were chattering round the piano, and found plenty to amuse her as the different people came in. A nice-looking girl in a grey hat attracted her notice; she had just come in with her mother, and stood talking to another, in dark-brown satin, apparently some years older.

They were discussing the merits of a particular ball, and it struck July that neither of them seemed to have enjoyed it much. But Miss Lindsay, as the elder of the two was called, spoke pleasantly, and although she was not good-looking, there was a frank, honest expression in her face which it was impossible not to like. The girl in grey was decidedly pretty, but had a way of twisting and turning her head which struck Juliet as rather affected, and was certainly not graceful. Her remarks were witty and amusing, and she ran on from one thing to another in a sparkling manner that evidently entertained her companion. Suddenly a remark which she uttered without

even lowering her tone brought the hot colour to Juliet's face.

"Who is that bit of antiquity on the sofa over there by Lady Hart?" she said, indicating Miss Nevil plainly. "Did you ever see such an old guy? She looks as if she had walked straight out of a curiosity shop."

It was in vain that Juliet tried to move on. She had got into a corner and could not stir. Happily for her, Miss Lindsay only replied she did not know, adding that she thought her a very striking-looking old lady, and believed her to be a relative of Mrs. Maxwell's, which had the good effect of silencing Sophy Barker's further observations.

But Juliet's peace of mind had been effectually shaken, and when, a few minutes afterwards, Miss Lindsay sat down to the piano and sang a Spanish song very cleverly and well, she could scarcely listen because of the ill-natured words which she had so unwillingly overheard.

It was worse still when she had to be introduced to that lady herself, and at first her voice was so husky she could hardly speak.

Fortunately Miss Lindsay understood how to set people at their ease, and when she discovered that Juliet had never been to town for a season before, but had spent all her life down in the West,

she was enchanted to discover so refreshing a novelty. By degrees she drew the girl on to talk of her home and the beauties of Glenarva, and told her she must go to the Exhibition and see Brett's Cornish pictures. In fact, she was so well amused with July's answers to her questions, and found the Devonshire maiden so refreshing a variety from the usual run of girls, that she outstayed all Mrs. Maxwell's guests, and ended by begging Miss Nevil to bring her niece to her house the next evening, if they had nothing better to do.

Amy was delighted with the success of her party, and, as soon as Miss Lindsay was gone, pronounced it to have been extremely satisfactory in all respects.

"I had just the people I wanted, and as few of the bores as one can reasonably expect. Why, Juliet, Eleanor Lindsay took quite a fancy to you. She is an odd girl, but she can do just as she likes, and her father lets her have her own way in everything. I am glad you liked Lady Hart, Alicia. I have often heard her speak of George, and she was quite alive to the fact that you were Nevils of Glenarva. And Mrs. Barker, too; some people call her a vulgar woman, but she is a dear good creature for all that, and her balls are some of the best in town. The pity is, I have so few

friends who give balls. Fred hates my keeping out the horses so late, and as I go so seldom I have almost dropped out of the ball-going set."

Miss Alicia hastened to assure Amy that she need have no regrets on this score as far as Juliet was concerned.

"You must not think," she said, with a slight inclination of her stately head, "that Juliet cannot exist without gaiety. She has seen so little of the world that what seems a small amount of amusement to you will be amply sufficient to satisfy her. You must not think she is unreasonable in these matters."

"I am sure she is the most reasonable being in the world," returned Amy; "but the less of society she has seen in the past the more important it becomes she should make haste about it now. We can only be young once, can we, Juliet?"

Juliet tried to smile in response, but the effort was a feeble one, and she was not sorry when her aunt rose to go. Sophy Barker's words were still in her ears, and in their light she looked at her aunt and herself, and imagined how they must appear to the London world.

"I wish we had never left Glenarva," she exclaimed when they were safely out of the house, with a passion that surprised her aunt. I don't care for any of Cousin Amy's friends, excepting,

perhaps, Miss Lindsay, and I am sure I had much rather not go to Mrs. Barker's balls."

"My dear, as you have never been at one, I don't see how you can tell," was Miss Alicia's brief reply.

July went home sorely inclined to write to her father and beg him to send for her back to Glenarva, but she fortunately thought better of it, and kept her grief to herself. She woke the next morning rather ashamed of her ill-humour, and determined to make the best of things for her aunt's sake, and not allow such petty annoyances as a heedless word to vex her. After all, as Algy always said, she was very ignorant and had a great deal to learn in life, and perhaps that silly girl's speech was one of the lessons she had to be taught. Anyhow, she was resolved to forget all about it now, and do her best to be happy and satisfy her kind friends.

CHAPTER XVII.

I know that I shall never see
  Its radiant beauty as I saw it then,
Save by the lamp of memory,
With childhood's starry graces lingering yet
  I'the rosy orient of young womanhood ;
And eyes like woodland violets newly wet.

OWEN MEREDITH.

MISS LINDSAY'S parties were deservedly popular among her acquaintance. They were never over-crowded, never badly managed. The right people contrived to meet each other, and everybody went away saying how pleasant it had been. No one exactly knew the reason of this, although many people, and Amy Maxwell most of all, racked their brains to discover the secret.

Probably Eleanor Lindsay herself could not have explained it to her satisfaction. She was not a brilliant person herself, and did not possess the gifts ordinarily supposed necessary to

become a social success. But then she had a large amount of sympathy, and a considerable degree of penetration. She knew at a glance the people who suited each other, and she took genuine interest in her friends, and all that concerned them.

The genial warmth of her greeting, the happy faculty which she had of saying the right thing to each new guest, went far to produce the agreeable impression which her friends took away with them.

Her father liked society, and preferred receiving his friends at home to going out, so it was for his sake that Eleanor's parties were given, while it was for her own that the guests came so readily.

She had not forgotten to send a card to Miss Nevil the day of Mrs. Maxwell's tea, and Alicia and Juliet were among the early arrivals on the following evening.

"I am so glad you were able to come," said Miss Lindsay, taking Juliet's hand and holding it in hers. She had effected an introduction between Miss Nevil and her father, who she felt sure would get on very well together, and meant to to keep the girl to herself a little bit. "Now sit down for a few minutes here and you shall tell me what you have been doing. I want to hear if you have been enjoying yourself, or if you find

London very dull and dreary after your beautiful west country."

Juliet's eyes brightened at this unexpected greeting. Miss Lindsay was actually the first person who had supposed that it could be possible for any one to prefer country to town life, or to give one passing regret to the spring beauties they had left behind them.

"I am afraid I don't always enjoy it," she said frankly; "but I had a treat to-day. Cousin Fred, Mr. Maxwell I mean, took me to see the Guard-mounting, and it was such a pretty sight."

Miss Lindsay smiled at Juliet's innocent delight, and made her tell exactly what had pleased her in the parade.

"And he is going to take me to see the Temple Garden and the Tower some day, by boat along the river," she exclaimed. "I want to see all I can, of course."

She talked on freely, and her freshness and even her ignorance were charming in Miss Lindsay's eyes.

Before their conversation was interrupted by the arrival of other guests who demanded Eleanor's attention, she had discovered that Juliet was longing to have one ride in the park, and declared that she must accompany her some day on a horse which her father kept for his use but very seldom rode.

The room was filling fast by this time, and Juliet found herself accosted by Hugh Cockerill, who was Mr. Lindsay's nephew, and very much at home in this house.

"You are going on to Mrs. Sale's dance of course, Miss Nevil?" he remarked, giving a glance at Juliet's shimmering white gown, the very one her cousin had ordered of her own dressmaker. "Not really! well, I call that barbarous. I am sure a girl's first season ought to give her the right of *entrée* to every house. I shall tell Mrs. Sale how much she has lost. And you are not actually in tears."

"I hope not," said Juliet, laughing. "I should spend my days in tears if I wept over all the balls to which I am not asked. You see, Mr. Cockerill, I have never been in town before, and my aunt does not know many people."

"Well, I'm glad you can be so philosophical," returned the young man. "I confess I am not. I have not forgotten our valse at Castle Weyland, and I hoped to repeat the pleasure this evening."

"Oh, I remember well!" said Juliet. "It was great fun. I was rather afraid at first, for I had scarcely ever danced before, but, with the music going, one could not stand still."

"You went like a bird," was Cockerill's rejoinder. "It came natural to you, I suppose.

Well, all I can say is, I hope we shall have another chance before long."

He made a few more remarks in the same strain till he noticed that Juliet's eyes were roving in another direction, and that she was no longer giving him her whole attention.

"You are looking for some one?" he asked. "Can I take you back to your aunt?"

"No, thank you; I was looking —— Here is my cousin, Mrs. Maxwell," she said, with some confusion. Amy was, in fact, close beside her, and relieved her from further embarrassment, especially as she soon engaged Hugh Cockerill in an animated exchange of raillery.

But Juliet knew very well that it was not the sight of Mrs. Maxwell's resplendent gold brocade, which had diverted her attention from Mr. Cockerill's airy conversation. It was a much stranger and more unexpected sight. There in the background, talking to her aunt, was her old Glenarva friend, Edgar Wynne. For a moment July stood still in mute surprise. The sight of the familiar figure seemed to call up a whole host of memories—the walk along the cliffs, the day when he found her playing the little organ in the lonely chapel on the seashore, the revivalist hymn of the Glenarva maidens on that moonlight night, when Algy rowed them home; these, and a dozen other

memories as fresh and sweet, came suddenly rushing back upon her mind, and made her clasp in a tighter hold the lovely handful of lilies of the valley which had come straight from the Glenarva woods that morning.

But she did not have long to think. Edgar had already seen her, and was making his way towards her. In another minute they were shaking hands and talking with all the freedom of old friends.

Since Juliet had been in town she had not heard either of the Wynnes' name mentioned, and even Amy had been too intent on other matters to speak of her cousins. So she had a great deal to ask Edgar, and was especially eager to hear of Wilfrid and his pictures. It was not till he pointed to the lilies in her hand, saying he knew where they came from, that she discovered he had been at Glenarva.

"Yes, it was poor Lettice who sent them this morning," she replied, looking tenderly at the dear flowers which spoke to her of home. "But what made you sure they came from Glenarva, and not from Covent Garden?" she asked gaily.

"Because I was there ten days ago and the woods were full of them," he answered.

A look of regret passed quickly over the girl's face.

"Oh, Mr. Wynne, you don't mean to say you

have really been down there? How I wish we had been at home! And father never even mentioned it in his letters."

Edgar had to confess that his visit had been a very brief one, and that hearing they were in town he had not even called at Glenarva.

"I am sorry for that. Lettice ought to have told you. It would have been a pleasure to father now that he is all alone," said Juliet, rather sadly. "But I am glad you have been there all the same. You must tell me about it, please, some time—how the dear place was looking, and exactly where you went. Oh, I wish I had been there! It would have been like living over last October again."

"I wish you had," said Edgar. But in his heart he knew that all regrets had vanished. Now she was there, that her eyes met his again, and the clear tones of her voice sounded in his ears, he cared for nothing.

At that moment Miss Nevil touched her niece's arm.

"Juliet," she said, "Lady Hart wishes to introduce you to her daughter;" and Edgar turned to find Amy Maxwell, who had not yet spoken to him.

He hoped to get another chance of speaking to July, but whenever he tried again she was always surrounded by others, and eventually it was Hugh

Cockerill who took her downstairs and called her aunt's carriage.

Edgar did not know many people, and was in the act of leaving the house, when he heard Amy's voice calling to him from the door of her brougham.

"Do get in here, there's a good creature," she cried. "I'm going on to Portland Place, and the carriage can take you home. Meanwhile it's a perfect age since I've had a glimpse of you, and I've a hundred things to tell you."

Edgar accepted the offer not altogether unwillingly, for he was in an amiable mood, and Amy found him an unusually lively companion. He even excused himself for never having called since the day he dined in Chapel Street, on the ground of his absence from town.

"I began to think you had followed Wilfrid to North Italy," said Amy, "and was quite surprised to see you to-night. I thought you never condescended to honour a party. I shall tell Fred, and see if the force of your good example will not produce some effect on him. Not but what I know he is incorrigible. Still, I never waste an opportunity of pointing out the error of his ways. But tell me, Edgar, did you see the Nevils? Yes, I remember now, I saw you talking to Alicia myself. Well, what do you say to the girl now? Haven't

we done wonders with her? I assure you she had not a decent gown when she came to town. If you could have seen her, that is all!" and Amy turned up her eyes at the mere recollection of the dress in which Juliet had appeared at her house the first day.

Edgar privately suspected that July's gowns were far more familiar to him than they were to Amy, but he abstained from making any remark.

"I carried her off to my dressmaker, and you see the result!" continued Amy triumphantly. "Why, there wasn't a prettier girl in the room to-night. Old Mr. Lindsay was quite struck by her appearance, Eleanor said; and I am sure he is fastidious enough. And as for Hugh Cockerill, I believe he is really more smitten than I've seen him for a long time."

"I should think your friend Cockerill could be trusted to take care of himself," said Edgar drily.

"Oh, yes. I don't mean to say that it's anything more than a mere flirtation. But you can never tell. It might come to more. Lady Cockerill told me only the other day how very anxious she was that her son should marry, poor dear old thing. You see he is two-and-thirty, and the only child. You needn't smile so grimly, Edgar. I know you

are thinking, what Fred always says, that I am never happy unless I can get up a match. But at any rate it's a capital thing for a girl to have a good set of men round her. And, considering all things, I begin to think Juliet Nevil will do very well. It's astonishing what a fancy Eleanor Lindsay has taken to her. What are you laughing at this time, Edgar? What have I said now?"

"I was only thinking that it will not be Juliet Nevil's fault if you do not utterly spoil her, between you all. I wonder what she will be like at the end of the season," said Edgar, with a look of disgust.

"Oh, you men don't understand these things!" returned Amy. "But here we are at my party. It's no use begging you to come in, although I am sure Fanny Smith would be charmed to see you."

"Thank you," said Edgar; "one party once in three months is enough for me. But I'll come and see you some day, Amy. I don't mean to run away just yet."

"Do come, there's a good fellow, any time after six; I am always at home to my friends then," were Amy's parting words. "And I promise not to tease you with matrimonial or any other plans. And if you'll come and dine one day, I'll get the Lindsays to meet you."

She knew that Mr. Lindsay's scientific tastes

gave him something in common with Edgar, and had a little plan of her own with regard to him and Eleanor, which she had not yet breathed to any one, but which his presence at the party this evening had unconsciously fortified.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A change came o'er the spirit of his dream,
The lady of his dream ! O she was chang'd.

LORD BYRON.

THE month of June was already far advanced, and the London season was at its height. The fashionable world had this year indulged in its annual round of gaiety with redoubled vigour. Ball succeeded ball, each more splendid and lavish with decorations than the last ; and night after night people dressed and dined and danced as if there was no other object in life than to dress and dine and dance.

And Juliet Nevil dressed and danced with the rest, and enjoyed her season as well, and perhaps better than most persons. After the first shock of the plunge into this new atmosphere was over, she threw herself with youthful spirit into the amusements around her, and enjoyed her balls and parties and the companionship of other young people most

thoroughly. Eleanor Lindsay, although scarcely to be ranked with these, had become one of her chief friends. She took her to concerts and hospitals, both of which Miss Lindsay patronised largely; lent her a horse that she might ride with her in the park, and showed her every kindness that was in her power. July had felt at ease with her from the first, and found a more congenial friend in her than in her cousin Amy, who still remained a considerable problem in her eyes. She could always talk freely to Eleanor of her home and belongings, of her father and brother, and all the surroundings of her childhood. And to talk of Glenarva was always a happiness to July. Those home scenes might fade from sight for a moment in the rush and hurry of the gay world, but they were not forgotten by her. Her spare moments were spent in writing long letters to her father or to Algy. She often asked her aunt if it would not soon be time to go back to Glenarva, and she generally received for answer, "Most likely about the beginning of July, but that must depend upon circumstances."

Miss Alicia, on her part, felt thoroughly satisfied. She had always regarded her experiment of bringing Juliet to town as a rather hazardous venture, and had felt great doubts as to its success. But now she was amply rewarded for her trouble, and owned that her hopes had been surpassed

beyond all anticipation. Now, at last, she saw her brother's child in a fitting position, and when old friends recognised her in society or talked to her of the past history of the Neviis of Glenarva she experienced the keenest pleasure. Brighter days, she began to hope, were in store for her race. There seemed no reason that Juliet should not soon make a suitable marriage, after which every penny that Alicia Nevil possessed, and every particle of her energy, should go towards rebuilding the walls of Glenarva, and restoring its owner to his ancient position in the west country. Then, indeed, her fondest wish would be gratified, and she would be able to die in peace. The one thing wanting to complete her happiness at this time was the presence of her brother. She felt that for Juliet's sake and her own he ought to have been there, and would gladly have prevailed upon him to change his resolution and join them for the last few weeks. But here Mr. Nevil was obdurate; he resisted all entreaties to leave Glenarva, and declared that he was happier in his solitude than he could ever be in town. Algy was scarcely less obstinate in his dislike to London, and after his fishing in Ireland was over returned to keep his father company at Glenarva, and only spent a few days in town.

One of his chief objects in doing this was to see Edgar Wynne, and, if possible, induce him to

return with him to Glenarva, and join him in a fishing expedition further west. He had expected to meet Edgar at his aunt's house, but since his friend did not appear there he presented himself at the door of Wilfrid's rooms in Russell Street on the last day of his stay in town.

Since that evening at the Lindsays' house Edgar Wynne had scarcely seen July. He had called at her aunt's house twice. Once Miss Nevil and her niece had been out, and once the room had been so full of visitors that he had only stayed a few minutes. After that he had not seen her for some time, until one day that he happened to be walking in the park a lady on horseback bowed to him. It was Miss Lindsay, with Juliet Nevil riding by her side. The girl was talking to a man on a roan horse whom Edgar thought he recognised, and she did not see him. As they rode by, two men who were walking arm in arm near the park railing stopped to look at the group, and one said to the other in Edgar's hearing—

"Pretty girl that, riding with Cockerill. Who is she?"

His friend replied, "Don't you know? That's Miss Nevil—the girl Cockerill's always after. She's quite young, and people say she's an only child. Her father has a big place down in the west, so Cockerill knows what he's about."

"Trust him for that!" returned the other, and Edgar quickened his steps to hear no more.

But what he had heard was quite sufficient to embitter his thoughts, and make him avoid the Nevils for some time to come. Once he was almost on the point of throwing the game up altogether and joining Wilfrid in Tyrol, but the next day he thought better of it, and determined he would not go until he had seen Juliet once more.

Under the circumstances Algy was a welcome visitor, and he was unfeignedly glad to see the boy again for his own sake, although he would not agree to accompany him to Glenarva.

"I'm sorry for that," said Algy; "I hoped you were sure to come, or I would have been here before. But I expected to see you every day at my aunt's. I told July so; but they're always so busy, and are scarcely ever at home for more than five minutes together."

"Your sister seems to be enjoying her season," Edgar said carelessly, without noticing Algy's remark. "I hear of her often, and come across her now and then, although I don't care much for society myself."

"I'm sure I don't," said Algy warmly. "I can't say I've given it a trial yet, and the little I've seen of it certainly does not tempt me."

"If you went in for it, I daresay you would

not find it so bad. It's almost a pity you don't give it a chance, for your sister's sake. You see I never had one, so I can afford to preach," said Edgar, with a smile.

Algy looked at him with surprise. He had fully expected his friend to join him in denouncing their misguided fellow-creatures.

"Oh, July can do very well without me," he said. "It's the men who go in for this sort of thing that I can't stand. Now, there's one who is always dropping in at my aunt's. He's a fellow called Cockerill. I don't mean to say there is any harm in him, but he talks of nothing else but where he has been and where he's going, and sits by the hour doing the civil to my aunt, or playing with July's work, until, I declare, Wynne, I feel inclined to kick him out of the house."

Edgar smiled at Algy's impetuosity.

"I did not think you could be so fierce, Algy," he said. "After all, my dear fellow, it is only a stage in a man's life. I suppose most of us go through it in some form or other. If it pleases your aunt and sister, I don't see that he is particularly to blame."

"Oh, July gets bored with him, too," promptly responded Algy. Edgar thought it was the best thing he had heard him say yet, and laughed outright as he continued: "And as for my aunt, I

can't make her out. If I had ever talked one half of the stuff that fellow talks I should like to know what she would have said to me."

"You see you are not an eligible suitor with some thousands a year at your disposal, Algy," said Edgar, rising from his seat and throwing the window open. "It begins to get oppressive in town certainly, and if it goes on like this I shall soon be off to the Alps."

He consented, however, to walk back with Algy—a step which he thought rather magnanimous after the information which July's brother had been so obliging as to give him.

Algy left him at the door to do a last errand at his gunmaker's, and Edgar went in alone. He found Juliet with her hat on in the drawing-room, waiting for Miss Lindsay, who was going, she explained, to take her to a concert at St. James's Hall.

"I am so sorry; I always seem to miss you, Mr. Wynne," she said simply enough. But somehow Edgar fancied as he looked at her that she was altered. Insensibly she had acquired more of the look and tone of the people round her, and although he could not say it had not improved her, it deepened the sense of the gulf which divided them. He did not have long to make these reflections, for while Juliet was still speaking Eleanor Lindsay

came bustling up the stairs in a prodigious hurry to be off.

"How are you, Miss Nevil? How d'ye do, Mr. Wynne? Come, my dear child, we must not stop a moment; I am late as it is, and have to call at a Home on the way. I would offer to take you, too, Miss Nevil, but I have two deaf and dumb children in the carriage already. I meant to take them to the Home this morning, but was interrupted by some tiresome visitors, who called just when they were least wanted. Good-bye, Mr. Wynne; I wish you would come and see us sometimes. My father was asking after you only this morning."

She was already half-way down the stairs, and Edgar Wynne and Miss Nevil watched them drive off, from the balcony.

"It is a pity Miss Lindsay is always in such a hurry," remarked Edgar, returning to take a chair by Miss Nevil's side. There was no help for it now, and he might as well improve the occasion and cultivate Miss Alicia's good graces for once. "She is an admirable lady, but it deprives her of half her charm."

"And, I suspect, of half her usefulness," said Miss Nevil with a slight smile. "It appears to me that she undertakes too much ever to do anything thoroughly."

"I like her, too," said Edgar. "She is delight-

fully unconventional and original, and I sometimes think she must have some trouble to amuse that crotchety old father of hers."

"Miss Lindsay is an excellent daughter, there can be no doubt," replied Alicia in a formal tone. Edgar wondered if this was deliberately intended to keep him at a distance, or if he had been so unfortunate as to offend her.

"That she certainly is," he returned; "and she is a good friend too. She is very fond of your niece; I often see them together."

Miss Nevil bowed assent, but was apparently not inclined to pursue the subject, for she began to express her satisfaction at her nephew having seen Mr. Wynne.

"I had no notion Algernon was in town, or I should have been here before. I wish he stayed up a little longer. I have been telling him it is very hard on his sister to run away so soon," said Edgar.

"I am afraid my nephew does not always see where his duty lies as clearly as he might," said Alicia; "but we shall be joining him ourselves before long now."

"Yes, I suppose the season is on the wane," replied Edgar. "The trees begin to look dusty, and people must feel the same. Do you own to the jaded sense of which some chaperones complain,

Miss Nevil? I fancy it must be a wearing life."

"I am perfectly well, thank you," said Alicia, with a slight inclination of her head. "I cannot honestly say that my duties have been very arduous, since I have had friends to assist me. Your cousin Mrs. Maxwell has been exceedingly kind, not only in that but in all ways."

Miss Nevil proceeded to ask with polite interest after Wilfrid, and they had not yet exhausted this subject when Mrs. Maxwell was announced, and Amy made her appearance in the most elegant of muslin and lace toilettes fresh from Paris.

"Why, Edgar!" she exclaimed at the sight of her cousin; "you are the very last person I expected to see here. You look as if you had been quarrelling with him, Alicia. You can't think what solemn faces you both wore as I came in. If so, you must accept me as peacemaker, and shake hands and make it up like naughty children. But where is Juliet? Oh, I remember—Eleanor Lindsay told me she was going to take her to some concert or other. If I had been you, Alicia, I would not have let her go. This weather is much too hot for concerts, and the child will look as white as a sheet this evening—at least, if she is anything like me she will. Fred always declares I

have not a shred of colour when I have been shut up in a hot room all day."

"Really Juliet is so strong," said Miss Nevil, "nothing seems to hurt her. But the weather, as you say, is becoming hot for crowded rooms. Mr. Wynne and I were saying the same thing just before you came in."

"I am glad I have found you, Alicia," continued Amy, having paused just sufficiently to allow herself to recover her breath. I came to ask if you would dine with us some day next week. Lady Cockerill was with me yesterday, and is anxious to make your acquaintance, so I told her you had much better meet comfortably at my house. You see, she is very invalidish, and cannot bear parties, and, to say the truth, I was amazed when she agreed to dine with me. She generally refuses all invitations."

It was evident from Amy's tone and important air that she had something else on her mind, and Edgar thought it was time for him to go.

It did strike Amy as she shook hands with him that he looked worn and wearied; and if she had not been so full of her own concerns, she would have thought more of it. But as it was she let him go without a word, and he left the house, feeling, like Sir Launcelot,

In half disdain at love, life, all things.

These two women between them were doing their best to spoil the life of the sweetest soul that had ever gladdened human hearts, and it was his fate to stand by, fettered and helpless, while their victim drifted blithely down the stream, unconscious of her lot.

At least this was Edgar's way of looking at the situation, and it was scarcely likely to improve his peace of mind.

CHAPTER XIX.

She listened with a flitting blush,
With downcast eyes and modest grace,
And she forgave me that I gazed
Too fondly on her face.—S. T. COLERIDGE.

FORTUNE may prove adverse to a man in the long run, but it is rare that she does not give him one chance. The battle is not wholly to the strong, nor the race to the swift. For a moment there is a pause, a turn in the rushing tide, and happy is he who can avail himself of that priceless instant, and win the day in spite of all the blows which the Fates have meted out to him.

That moment had come in the life of Edgar Wynne; when he was on the point of giving up the fight for lost and retiring from the field, the advantages which he had been seeking in vain dropped suddenly into his hands.

Two days after his conversation with Miss

Nevil he received a note from Eleanor Lindsay asking him to luncheon. He smiled as he read the note, written in that impulsive lady's most impulsive style. It was plain to his eyes that Eleanor feared that she had done him an injury in carrying off Juliet in that abrupt manner the other day, and equally evident that she wished to repair the wrong if possible, for in a hurried postscript at the bottom of the note—all Miss Lindsay's notes ended with the same formula, "In the greatest haste"—was written: "Juliet Nevil, and perhaps one or two friends, may be here; but no party."

"It was exactly like her, good soul," Edgar said to himself as he wrote his brief word of acceptance and secretly called down blessings on her head.

So it came to pass that one day in the course of the week Edgar was ushered into Mr. Lindsay's spacious drawing-room in South Kensington, and informed that Miss Lindsay was not yet in, but would doubtless be back before many minutes.

He was not the only guest condemned to await the return of his hostess. Opposite him, on the sofa, sat Juliet herself, looking almost as fresh in her blue and white print, with a wreath of forget-me-nots in her straw hat, as she had done the first time he met her in the village street at Glenarva. She welcomed him warmly, but looked a little

frightened, like a startled bird, Edgar thought, and addressed himself to the task of reassuring her.

They laughed together over Eleanor's unpunctuality, and wondered what good work she had on hand this time, and Edgar asked July how she had fared with her deaf and dumb companions.

He had fancied that she was changed, but he had been wrong; she was just the same -not very clever or knowing, but sweet and true and good as ever. When he said how glad he was to meet her once more before he left town, she thanked him, and went so far as to ask him, with a touch of reproach, why he never came anywhere now in the evening?

Edgar shook his head in reply.

"It is of no use, Miss Nevil," he said. "I don't belong to your world, and I don't fancy the world likes me better than I like it."

"I can't think why you say that," she said, in a low, quick tone. "I am sure you have a great many friends, and we are all glad to see you when you do come."

Edgar was not at all sure of that, but if only she cared to see him, the opinion of the rest of the world mattered not a straw to him.

"If I really thought you cared to see me," he began, "if I could think for one moment that anything which I did could make the least difference to you——"

But alas, for love's young dream! that speech, on which Edgar was about to risk his fate, was cruelly interrupted.

The door opened, and July, in her dim half-unconscious alarm at what he would say next, experienced a sense of relief at the sight of Eleanor.

"I have behaved abominably to you both," were Miss Lindsay's first words, as she threw her bonnet and gloves on the sofa and embraced Juliet. "My only comfort was that there would be at least two of you to amuse each other, and I hoped—of course, I hoped you would not wait luncheon. You must be famished. We will come down at once. Mr. Wynne, it is so good of you to come at so short a notice; and shall I tell you? I scarcely dare confess my sins, but I had quite forgotten that my father had made an engagement for to-day, and could not be in till three. You must forgive me twice over. At least I am glad the Vernons are not here."

Luckily for Miss Lindsay, her other friends had been unable to come after all, and neither Edgar nor Juliet were very formidable guests. Certainly neither of them were inclined to reproach her for what she called her rudeness, and the three made a very sociable little party. July soon recovered from her momentary confusion, and Edgar was

careful to address most of his conversation to Miss Lindsay, and talked with so much presence of mind and cheerfulness, that it never struck Eleanor how critical had been the moment at which she had arrived. In the kindness of her heart she had only asked Edgar on the same day as Juliet Nevil, because she knew he had been at Glenarva, and thought he looked disappointed the day on which she had carried her off to the concert.

"I wonder where Hugh can be to-day," she observed casually, as she looked round for some one to come, and finally ordered the butler to help the chicken before her. "I suppose he is gone to some of his smart friends, or else he generally drops in to luncheon on his way back from the park, and I know he was riding this morning."

None of the party knew, but the fact was that Cockerill, ignorant of his cousin's plans, had gone to Mrs. Maxwell's house in hopes of finding Juliet there. He was not slow in making his escape when once he discovered his mistake, and walked in to his uncle's just as luncheon was over.

Edgar devoted himself to Miss Lindsay, and allowed the new comer to monopolise Juliet's company. But although Eleanor plunged into an animated discussion over the Charity Organisation, he was quite sufficiently aware of what the other two were saying, and noticed that the talk

was mostly on Cockerill's side, while Juliet listened without showing any very warm interest in his conversation.

When at the end of half an hour, Cockerill showed no signs of taking his departure, Edgar rose to bid Miss Lindsay adieu.

"You will come and see us before you go?" were July's parting words to him. They made Cockerill look round with an air of surprise, and he raised his glass to his eye as Edgar left the room, with some curiosity, but was too well assured of his own supremacy to trouble himself seriously about the possible existence of a rival to his place in Juliet's affections.

Edgar went home satisfied that his rash words had done him no harm in July's eyes, and more determined than ever to put his fate to the touch, and win or lose all. Doubts and probabilities were thrown to the winds now; let Mrs. Maxwell and Miss Nevil think and say what they pleased, it was all one to him—his mind was made up. He did not over-estimate his own chance of success. On the contrary, he knew that he was a good many years older than Juliet, that his fortune, although sufficient for them both, was not a large one, that if she married him her lot would not by any means be a brilliant one. But he knew, too, that he had a deep enduring love to offer her, and

that this love was the only thing which could ever make him worthy of her.

That evening he felt strangely hopeful. Perhaps it was the effect of her kind words and simple goodness, perhaps the contented joy which that one sight of her had brought him, or merely the strong certainty which he felt in his own great love. He laughed to himself as he thought of Wilfrid's blank look of surprise when he should hear the news and realise all which had sprung out of those autumn weeks at Glenarva. And he pictured to himself the delighted astonishment of Lettice and Robin and all the good people at Glenarva when he should return there with Miss July, and his own triumphant joy when they should together re-visit the scenes where they had first met.

That same evening Amy Maxwell, who for once was dining alone with her husband, was rejoicing for a very different reason, although it concerned poor July's fate equally. Her plans had so far met with a success which she had scarcely dared to anticipate, and her hopes were now, she felt confident, on the eve of fulfilment. She had arranged a select little dinner-party for the Cockerills, and of course Juliet was to be there with her aunt. Amy had even settled in her own mind the gown she was to wear for the occasion. Everything depended on the manner in which she

impressed Lady Cockerill, and Amy was resolved that it should be no fault of hers if any detail was overlooked.

She had talked it all over with Alicia, whom she found more alive to the situation than she had expected, and but for fear of mistake, she had privately determined to give Juliet a hint of the state of affairs.

"A girl who is so young—not more than twenty or so, you know, Fred," she said to her husband, "and so utterly ignorant and inexperienced, cannot be expected to know how to behave on such occasions. I daresay the poor child has hardly seen enough of life to find out when a man is in love with her."

"It won't be your fault if she is not aware of it soon," growled out Fred from behind his paper. "Upon my word, Amy, it sometimes strikes me you play rather a dangerous game. I should like to know, for instance, what you intend to do if the young lady chooses to think for herself, and prefers to enjoy her independence for another year or two, or does not care to perpetrate matrimony at all? She is young, as you say, and it strikes me as if it were just possible she might have a will of her own?"

"Oh, that is absurd, Fred," said Amy, with her quiet little laugh. "You always suggest such

ridiculous things. A girl like that, who has never seen a soul, and is ready to marry the first man who talks kindly to her, and Hugh Cockerill, who is such a *parti*, and who might have married any one he chose! My dear, your supposition is something more than absurd—it is simply monstrous."

"Love used to be blinded in the days when I went to school," returned Fred. "I don't know if he has grown wiser now like the rest of the world."

"You are very provoking to-night, Fred, I think," said his wife. "But I am quite content to wait," she said, folding her hands placidly over each other. "We shall soon see. Why, there was Eleanor, who laughed at me for supposing such a thing the other day. She sees it all now, and said to me this very afternoon that it was a decided case, and that she supposed there was nothing more to be done. Only she takes a different view, and vows that she is sorry, and that Juliet is too good for Hugh Cockerill, and is sorry that she has ever allowed them to meet at her house. Perfect nonsense, I call that! But Eleanor is romantic—foolishly romantic—I tell her, and has all sorts of notions about people marrying the wrong person and repenting for ever afterwards. It is of no use trying to argue with her. But I repeat, it is a wonderful thing for a girl like that!"

"I know one thing," said Fred, who certainly was in a provoking mood so far as his wife was concerned that evening. "I know one thing, if I were George Nevil I should be furious to find my girl was being married in this fashion without any one asking my leave. I repeat, if Juliet were my child, I would just step in and put a stop to the whole thing."

"Who ever said that her father's leave would not be asked," retorted Amy, "when the right time came? And that is not yet," she added sententiously; "but if I am not very much mistaken, it will very soon be."

"Have you never heard of the proverb 'don't count your chickens before they are hatched?'" was her husband's last sally.

"And have you ever been told not to 'teach your grandmother to suck eggs,' I wonder?" was Amy's final repartee. And, as usual, Fred allowed her to have the last word.

CHAPTER XX.

I could not love thee, dear, so much
Loved I not honour more.—LOVELACE.

THE little drawing-room of Miss Nevil's house was the scene of a curious interview one hot afternoon of the last week in June that season.

For more than half an hour Edgar Wynne and Miss Alicia had been sitting opposite each other discussing the same question without, so far, arriving at a conclusion that could be called satisfactory to either party. If Mrs. Maxwell had come in that day, she would certainly have said they were quarrelling. But the discussion was conducted on the most amicable terms; and, on the whole, perhaps the two parted better friends than they had been for some time.

With all his slowness and indolence of nature Edgar was a man of strong will and unflinching purpose. Once his mind was made up, he never

delayed the execution of his resolve for long. And after that last sight of July at Miss Lindsay's house he had been prompt to act, and early that afternoon he had presented himself at Miss Nevil's door.

Juliet had gone down to Richmond with Eleanor and some other friends; but this did not concern Edgar. On the contrary he was rather relieved to find Miss Nevil alone, for it was with her that his errand lay.

He had gone straight to the point and had begged Miss Alicia's leave to ask Juliet to be his wife. His statement had been perfectly clear and business-like. He made no pretence to be anything but what he was, and all he asked was permission to plead his own cause with the girl. At first Miss Nevil was considerably taken aback, and it needed all her self-possession to conceal the surprise which she felt at this bold avowal. But she listened quietly to all Edgar had to say, and by the time he had ended, was ready with her answer.

"You have been frank with me, Mr. Wynne," she said, "and I, in my turn, will be frank with you. I will confess at once that these had not been my intentions for my niece, that I had other views for her, and that, not without reason, you will, I think, understand. My brother's child is in a position to choose for herself."

Edgar bowed assent. But the form in which he worded his reply showed that he looked at the case in a different way—

"I think Miss Juliet Nevil has every right to choose for herself."

Alicia continued, with one of her stately inclinations, "But, besides this, what may have more weight with you, I have reason to think my niece has made her choice already. I am sure you would not wish to distress her needlessly; and, under the circumstances, I fear I must ask you not to press your suit at the present moment."

For a moment Edgar's courage failed him. The bare idea that he was too late and that July had fixed her affections elsewhere, cautiously as Miss Nevil worded her phrase, sent a chill through his frame. Those last words of hers the other day to him, the pleading tone of her voice, did they indeed mean that she craved his indulgence and would have him not think too hardly of her in the future? If that were the case he had nothing more to say. But what if this were only an excuse of her aunt's to gain time? He caught eagerly at the hope that remained to him, and listened calmly as Alicia Nevil continued: "Mr. Wynne, I know you are in earnest, and you need not think for one moment that I wish to trifle with you. All I say is this: wait for a week—

nay, to-day is Tuesday; I will only say, till next Monday; wait these few days, and then if you are of the same mind still, I will put no obstacle in your way. I ask you to do this for her sake, Mr. Wynne. At this moment she is called upon to make another decision. She is young and has a tender heart, and I am sure you would not wish to cause her needless pain. Oh, reflect! Juliet must be free for these few days. You see I am candid with you, Mr. Wynne. I do not wish my niece to marry you, but after this week I will leave the decision absolutely in her hands, always supposing that my brother gives his consent, which, after what you have told me of your means, is, I think, probable."

Edgar was a good deal perplexed at this request. On the one hand he was agreeably surprised, for he had quite expected Miss Nevil would meet him with an absolute refusal, and that he would have to appeal to Juliet in defiance of her wishes. On the other, to wait even a week was a good deal to ask of him in his present state of mind, especially as he saw plainly the advantage it gave his rival. "Miss Nevil," he said to himself, "would not have attached so much importance to this condition if she had not been pretty sure of her ground."

"I don't like your condition, Miss Nevil," he

replied firmly, "but if it is for her sake, I will not rebel. If I thought it would spare her an hour's pain, I would wait, if need be, a year. But you must understand, that if I bow to your wishes it is not because I am willing to give her up. After this week no power on earth will keep me from telling her everything." Miss Nevil could say nothing against this, and they shook hands and parted more cordially than might have been expected.

But when Edgar reached the hall door, and was on the point of leaving the house, a bitter feeling of remorse came over him—a wild sense that he had deliberately surrendered what was dearer to him than life, and he almost went back to retract his promise and tell Miss Nevil he must speak to July now or never.

But it was too late. He had promised, and he would keep his word, whatever it cost him. "After all, it was for her sake," he repeated to himself. If it were true, as Alicia implied, that she was already half pledged to another, it might only wake a bitter conflict in the child's heart, and make her repine over her lot or grieve for his. And he loved her too well willingly to be the cause of her shedding a single tear for him. And if things were not as Miss Nevil hoped; if she knew Juliet's mind less well than she imagined,

why, then, the short week would soon be over; and then, he said to himself, it would not be in vain that he should plead his cause.

If he could have seen a certain party of friends enjoying the charms of the river at Richmond that lovely summer afternoon, he might not have accepted the situation so calmly or been so tolerant of other people's prejudices; but fortunately for his peace of mind he could not.

When he reached home the current of his thoughts was suddenly changed by the sight of a foreign letter in a strange handwriting. It was from Wilfrid, who said he was suffering from fever, the result of sunstroke, and was so ill that he could only dictate a few lines to a German student, who was his sole companion, in the inn of the lonely Tyrolese village from which he wrote.

The letter had evidently been several days on the road, and Edgar thought with horror of Wilfrid lying ill in this remote place without nurse or doctor to attend him. Without a moment's hesitation he decided to start at once for Mittenwald in Tyrol. His few preparations were rapidly made, and before he left Russell Street he found time to write a brief note to Miss Nevil informing her of the cause of his abrupt departure and telling her that he should return some day and claim the right she had given him to speak to her niece.

He smiled bitterly to himself as he posted his letter, and thought how Alicia would congratulate herself at this easy way in which she had got rid of him without an effort on her part. The fates had played into her hands, truly; and when Edgar looked back from the deck of the steamer that summer night at the white cliffs of Dover growing ever fainter in the distance, he knew that he was giving up the hope that lay nearest his heart. But in any case July would hear where he was gone, and it was some consolation to think that she would have been the last to wish him to stay away from Wilfrid's sick bed.

Alicia Nevil was not a spiteful person. She had no dislike whatever to Edgar; on the contrary, she rather liked him, and bore him no ill-will so long as he would not cross her plans. But it must be owned that she read his note with no small sense of relief that evening. This illness of his brother was really a fortunate thing under the circumstances, for his presence in town at this moment could only have complicated matters, and might have been disagreeable both for himself and others.

Miss Nevil had never ceased to reproach herself with her carelessness at Glenarva during those weeks which followed Edgar Wynne's accident, and in her own mind ascribed the intimacy which had arisen between him and Juliet to

her enforced absence at that time. But with his departure from Glenarva she had hoped the matter had ended, and it was not until the day Edgar came to the house with Algy that her suspicions had been aroused. She had never alluded to the subject before Juliet, and felt confident she could trust to the girl's good sense, and need have no fear that she would allow her former friendship to mar her present prospects.

All Miss Nevil thought necessary to tell her niece on her return from Richmond was that she had received a note from Mr. Wynne, to say he had been suddenly sent for by his brother who was seriously ill in Tyrol, and that he much regretted this abrupt departure, which would prevent him from coming to see them as he had intended.

Juliet did not attempt to conceal her disappointment, or her grief for Wilfrid's illness. But she could not tell her aunt the strange tumult of new feelings, of confused hopes and fears which Edgar's words had aroused in her mind the last time they had met. She had hoped another meeting would explain everything, and at least restore calm to her troubled breast; and now the meeting was deferred to some far-off indefinite season.

"Perhaps till next year," said July to herself, with a weary look over the long interval of space

which lay between now and then ; "perhaps never." He might have written a word to her himself, she thought, or sent her a message, although she supposed her aunt would not have approved of even that. Her heart hungered for one little word, just to show he had meant what he said the other day, and had not forgotten her quite when the bad news came to summon him away.

"Did Mr. Wynne say nothing more, Aunt Alicia?" she asked at length, "nothing but just that?"

Miss Nevil was a little bit disconcerted by this unexpected question. But she evaded it skilfully.

"What more should you expect him to say? There was nothing else necessary. He knew that we should understand that his brother's state must demand his immediate presence."

"Oh, yes, of course," said Juliet quickly; "only I thought he might have said that he was sorry, or that he would have come if he could."

"I told you that he said he was sorry not to see us before he went," said her aunt. Her keen eye noticed at once that there was something that troubled the girl, but she was too wise to ask any questions.

Juliet herself was guiltily conscious that she was trying to hide her feelings from her aunt, and flushed as painfully as if she had been convicted of

a positive crime. She was on the verge of pouring out the whole story of her conversation with Edgar the other day, to her aunt, but there was something terribly chilling in Miss Alicia's demeanour that evening, and she could not bring herself to speak. Nor was this her only cause of trouble.

The expedition to Richmond, which promised to be so pleasant, had contributed to disturb her peace of mind. Without actually committing himself, Hugh Cockerill had managed to drop several hints of his intentions in the course of the day. These, together with certain looks and meaning smiles from other members of the party, had the effect of considerably alarming Juliet. When she drew back and seemed to avoid him, he asked her if he had been so unlucky as to offend her, which she promptly denied. This only made matters worse. She was afraid of appearing rude, and yet of encouraging him further. Her innocent pleasure in the day's amusement was gone. She began to feel as if she were the victim of a plot, and as if every step she took brought her nearer to some hidden danger, the existence of which until now she had never suspected. She feared she had been thoughtless and foolish, and longed for some friend to whom she could open her heart. But fear of her aunt kept her silent, and she went to bed thoroughly unhappy.

CHAPTER XXI.

For the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
That really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain,
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and fight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.—M. ARNOLD.

TWO days had passed since the expedition to Richmond, and Eleanor Lindsay was more overwhelmed with business than ever. Her father had grown tired of London sooner than usual. The heat had exhausted him, and he declared he must leave town at the end of the week, and go down to Cowes for a breath of sea-air.

All Eleanor's plans were accordingly upset. Her hospital visiting had to be given up a fortnight earlier than she expected. A substitute had to be found to take her place in her district, excuses had to be written to various friends with

whom her father had made engagements, and a hundred other matters of the same kind all required her attention at once.

The whole morning had been one course of interruptions, and even her imperturbable good humour was sorely tried when a servant brought her word upstairs that Mr. Cockerill wished to see her. What could Hugh want with her at this time of day? It was half-past eleven and he did not generally make his appearance in Prince's Gate much before two. She sent back the butler to ask if he would call again at luncheon time, but presently he returned with a second message to say Mr. Hugh must see Miss Lindsay immediately.

There was nothing for it but to resign herself to her fate, and Eleanor followed the butler downstairs, thinking Hugh a very tiresome creature, and quite prepared to give him her mind on the subject. But when she saw her cousin he seemed so much more in earnest than usual and so anxious to see her, that she relented and sat down patiently to hear his tale.

"I'm afraid you are busy, but I must see you, Eleanor. I've been abominably treated, and I want your advice."

This was the prelude to the story of his wrongs, which Hugh Cockerill proceeded to dis-

close. After receiving every possible encouragement from the young lady's friends and being in fact urged on by Mrs. Maxwell, he had made an offer of his hand and heart to Juliet Nevil, and had been summarily dismissed with a positive refusal.

Hugh's vanity was terribly wounded. In the first place he could scarcely believe it possible for a girl to reject so splendid an offer as that of his hand, and in the second he had long ago satisfied himself that he reigned supreme in the young lady's affections.

"Why, she never even refused to give me a dance, and she always seemed to enjoy it as much as any one, and wherever I've been this year somehow she's always been thrown in my way. You know yourself she was lively enough when we rode together, and seemed to find it pleasant too. How on earth is a fellow to know what girls mean, when they go on like that? I should like to hear, Eleanor. And yet she isn't a regular flirt, either."

"My dear Hugh, she's too simple and innocent for us, that's the real truth, and you would hardly expect that quaint old aunt to know much of the world's ways either. But I'll allow, you have been rather hardly used this time. Only I think the child herself is less to blame—well, than some of her friends. I asked her the other day if she was

anxious to marry, and she looked surprised, almost shocked at the bare suggestion," said Eleanor kindly. She was really sorry for his disappointment, but saw the hurt was not very deep and was inclined to think on the whole it would do Hugh more good than harm.

"Yes, it is just that," said the young man, glad to vent his anger on some one. "She's a good little soul; I felt that, even when she told me to my face she never could or would marry me, and didn't care two straws about me, which you will allow is not exactly a pleasant thing to be told; but it's her aunt and, still more, Mrs. Maxwell. What business had she got to go telling my mother that there was something up, and asking her to meet the Nevils at her house?"

"Did she really do that?" said Eleanor; "and did the party come off?"

"It was to have been last night. They went, but did not see the girl, my mother says. I suppose she thought it was the best way out of it. And the best part of it is that this morning I got a note from Mrs. Maxwell, asking me to dine quietly with her to-morrow. Of course I know what that means! She is going to have another try at me and see if she can't make it up. I know she'll make me the talk of the town, with that tongue of hers."

"Of course you won't go, Hugh," said Eleanor decidedly.

"Well, I was thinking about it," said Hugh, rather awkwardly. He evidently had a lingering hope that Miss Nevil might change her mind. "You see, I'm fond of her, Eleanor, that's the worst of it. She's not just like the regular run of girls, and she's a lot of spirit too. You should have seen her fire up when I told her that I believed she cared for me all the time. She was indignant enough then and gave it me pretty hot."

"And after that, you mean to say you consent to be dragged into Mrs. Maxwell's snares again? No, I never would go near her, Hugh," continued Eleanor in her most resolute tone. "It will only make the state of things more awkward than ever for the poor girl, and I am sure you would be the last person to wish to force yourself down a girl's throat, Hugh."

"Of course, I would not do that," said Cockerill, with a little hesitation. "But I thought, if the girl was frightened and did not know her own mind, and is as simple as you say——"

"All the more reason she should be frank and outspoken," returned Eleanor. "It seems to me she has told you her mind very plainly once, and you had much better let it rest there. To be honest, Hugh, I never thought she was the wife

for you, and I think so still. I'll tell you what is the best thing you can do. Refuse that invitation at once and come off to Cowes with us on Saturday. Father will be delighted to have your company, and you are sure to find numbers of friends down there. Come with us, there's a good fellow."

Cockerill still hesitated, but he agreed that the course his cousin suggested might be wise. He would think over it and let her know his decision.

"And in the mean time, if you do see Juliet Nevil again," he said as he left Miss Lindsay, "you will tell her I am not quite such a wretch as she may suppose, and have not the slightest wish to worry her, although I do think she has treated me very ill."

"Disgracefully, my dear Hugh, we all admit that," said Eleanor, laughing in spite of herself. "Now, don't think me unfeeling, for I am really very sorry for you, and my own pride is hurt, too, but in my heart I believe it will turn out best in the end for you both. That sounds like a sermon, I am afraid, but it is true all the same."

"Well, I suppose I must be content with that," replied Hugh; and the disconsolate youth proceeded to his club, where, notwithstanding the disappointment he had suffered, he managed to eat an excellent luncheon, and issued forth with an air

only a shade less self-satisfied than usual, and certainly as unlike as possible to the part of rejected suitor which he was playing.

As it often happens in similar encounters, the party who considered himself worsted had really fared the best. After that hasty interview at the dance, when Juliet was too much shocked and terrified to find words in which to express her feelings, she had given way to a passion of grief and remorse. She could never marry Hugh Cockerill—of that she was perfectly certain, for she was already tired of him this season, and it had become an absolute relief to her when she spent an evening without seeing him. But she was distressed beyond measure to think her conduct could have given rise to such a misconception. She felt as if she could never dare to speak to a man again, and would never under any circumstances laugh and joke or even dance with any one. She had been wrong and foolish, and Cousin Amy, or some one else, ought to have told her so long ago, instead of encouraging her to amuse herself in this thoughtless fashion.

But it was worse when, the next day,—for that evening she could not bring herself to reveal the tale,—she told her aunt exactly what had happened.

"You have made a great mistake, Juliet," had been Alicia Nevil's grave and sorrowful expression;

"and I fear you will live to repent of it as much as I do now. For your father and brother's sake I could have wished you had acted differently, indeed."

The tears sprang to Juliet's eyes at this unexpected rebuke, and she asked, with strange dismay, how her action could possibly affect her father or Algy.

"I am sure dear father would be the very last person to wish me to marry a man I did not like; and as for Algy, he would never care for Mr. Cockerill one bit."

Alicia Nevil was not the person to make a scene. She pointed out what she termed Juliet's reckless folly in refusing the brilliant prospects which had been offered to her, and sacrificing the obvious advantages to her family which must have attended the marriage in question. Beyond this she said little, but her stern and pained face was a more cruel reproof to Juliet than any words. The poor child felt terribly guilty and miserable, and longed to hide herself away in any corner out of sight.

"I am sure," she kept on saying, in the midst of her tears, "I am sure I would have done anything in the world but just that for father and Algy; and if they saw me wretched all my life long they could never be happy themselves."

So she reasoned to herself in her grief, poor child. Miss Lindsay had been right when she said the girl was very simple and ignorant of the world's ways. Even when Cousin Amy's torrent of arguments was launched at her, she was slow to take in all the meaning of that eloquent lady's reasoning.

A rumour of Hugh Cockerill's disappointment had reached Mrs. Maxwell the day before, but she had refused to believe it. It was incredible, utterly monstrous, to suppose a girl in her right senses could commit such a folly as to reject a man of his position.

When the amazing intelligence was confirmed, and she heard Miss Nevil's own account of Juliet's behaviour, she concluded the girl to be suffering from temporary aberration of mind, and treated her very much after the fashion of a harmless lunatic. But she did not for a moment give up the cause as lost. In this she was more persevering than Alicia, who had accepted her defeat, and had already written to her brother to say that she and Juliet would return to Glenarva the following week.

Not so Mrs. Maxwell. She began by speaking in the kindest, most persuasive tones to Juliet, and endeavoured to persuade the girl that she had been frightened into her refusal by the abruptness of Mr. Cockerill's proposal, and only wanted time to

consider the matter before she gave another answer.

But she soon found that the task was not an easy one. Juliet might be unhappy, and might even reproach herself for her past conduct and its grievous consequences, but she had not the smallest intention of changing her mind. It was in vain that Amy warned her not to throw away her opportunity, and told her pathetic stories of girls of her age who had thrown away their one chance of matrimony, and had never met with another during their whole lifetime. She met each fresh argument that her cousin advanced with the same, in her eyes, absolutely conclusive reason that she could never like Hugh Cockerill well enough to become his wife, and that she would far rather remain single all her life than marry him.

At length even Amy's patience became exhausted, and she left Juliet, telling her she trusted she would come to her senses before it was too late.

Even then, such was her pertinacity of purpose, Mrs. Maxwell did not altogether despair. There was still a possibility that Juliet might yield to a second attempt on her rejected lover's part, and in this hope Amy penned that neatly-worded epistle to Hugh Cockerill inviting him to dine with her the day after to-morrow. She had already pre-

pared her weapons, and knew exactly the circuitous route by which she would lead up to the burning question, and the advice she would offer in conclusion.

But this once in her life her efforts and preparations, skilfully laid as they were, proved unavailing.

The following evening she received a note from Cockerill briefly declining the pleasure of dining with her and Mr. Maxwell, and the next thing she heard of him was that he had gone to Cowes with the Lindsays.

"I shall always think it was Eleanor Lindsay's doing," she remarked, in her vexation of spirit, to her husband. "Hugh Cockerill would never have given up the battle so easily if she had not carried him off. She never liked the notion of seeing Juliet his wife, although I am sure I cannot make out why, unless it is that she likes to keep him hanging about her to do odd jobs."

It was a disagreeable little speech, but the first half of it was not altogether wrong, and that half-hour's conversation with Eleanor had no doubt greatly influenced Cockerill in his decision. "I think the world is very bad altogether," was poor Juliet's not unnatural conclusion when Cousin Amy had hurled her last shaft at her and retreated. And in the midst of her tears she began to smile at the

recollection of Lettice Micklewright's original verdict—"I've always heard say London is a very vain place."

"But then," was the sequel of July's thought, "it is a great deal because I am so stupid and know so little. I wish I had a friend who was very wise and good, and whom I could trust with all I had to say, and who would tell me all I wanted to know."

Naturally, as she turned over the few friends she had in her mind, her thoughts went back to her last conversation with Edgar Wynne. He was always kind and gentle to her, and yet she knew that he was a clever man, and that Algy had a high opinion of his powers. Then she began to wonder what she should have said if he had asked her the same question as Hugh Cockerill. The mere idea brought a tell-tale blush to her face, and she felt a guilty consciousness that it would have been much easier to say yes. But in that case what would Aunt Alicia and Cousin Amy have said? It all seemed very bewildering and perplexing, and it was quite a pity to think how different it might have been if Edgar Wynne could have changed places with Hugh Cockerill. Then her yes would have been easily said, and everybody would have been pleased and happy, and she would not have been sitting crying by herself in her lonely room.

But it was of no use. Edgar was gone. He had forgotten her, and she should probably not see him again for years.

She sat down with a heavy heart to write to her father, and found some consolation in telling him how tired she was of London, and how very glad she should be to find herself back again at Glenarva. The mere thought of seeing the dear place again, of hearing the noise of the rushing Arva down in the glen, or of running along the cliffs with Bevis at her side, went far to chase away her tears and revive the buoyant hopefulness of her twenty years.

Then she remembered that there would be Algy, too, and she began to wonder if she should ever dare to tell him everything that had happened in this last fortnight since he had been in town. She was afraid he would laugh at her a good deal, and perhaps he would be angry, and say that it was all her own fault, and that if she was unhappy it served her right.

"For, after all," July said to herself, "I am afraid what Algy always says must be true, and that I *am* a little fool."

CHAPTER XXII.

Vain is the effort to forget
Some day I shall be cold, I know,
As is the eternal moonlit snow
Of the high Alps, to which I go—
But ah, not yet, not yet !—M. ARNOLD.

IT would have been hard to find a more complete change from London than the quiet Tyrolese valley where Edgar Wynne found himself at the end of his hurried journey, and where he was kept, sorely against his will, during the next six weeks.

It lay in the heart of the mountains on the borders of Bavarian Tyrol, surrounded by meadows and pine-woods, and far removed from town or rail. For three weeks Edgar nursed his brother through the fever which had attacked him, without seeing a soul excepting the landlady of the inn, the village doctor, and a nursing sister who had been sent for from a neighbouring convent. During that time he rarely left the house excepting for a

ten minutes' walk to the end of the street or through the meadows stretching along the banks of the torrent that flowed through the valley. From the windows of Wilfrid's room he could see nothing but the dark shadows of the pine-woods which clothed the mountain side, and the rocky heights towering into the sky above. It was a gloomy prospect, and very weary he had grown of it during those long days of watching by the sick bed.

He had found Wilfrid lying in a critical state, unconscious, and at times raving. In his delirium his talk was all of his pictures. There was a subject which he must paint. This time it would be a great work, something on a large scale, which should be more ambitious than anything he had tried before. Over and over again he described the scene to Edgar, the waves rolling up on the beach at Glenarva on a cold, dreary, autumn evening, and, up above, a breaking of sunset light touching the topmost cliffs with gold.

"And I think this time—yes, I am almost sure—it will be a success," he would add, in the timid, wistful tones that went to his brother's heart.

It was terrible to a man of Edgar's nature to hear the poor invalid repeating the same words hour after hour through the long watches of the night; terrible to him to sit there alone and helpless, vainly trying to soothe him in these fevered

wanderings and lull him off to sleep. It was always the rocks and the sea and the woods of which he raved, or the wind blowing up the valley and rustling in the trees overhead while he was trying to draw. Sometimes he thought he was in Tyrol, but generally at Glenarva ; and one morning when he had just woke from a slumber that seemed more quiet than usual, he said to his brother—

" I am glad, for your sake, Edgar. I knew her voice again and that bright smile of hers. You will never leave him now, Miss July, will you ? "

At the sound of the name, Edgar started to his feet. He walked to the window, and pushing aside the curtain looked out on the bright morning sunlight which came flooding the valley, and breaking into every nook and corner of the old wooden houses which lined the street, and bringing new gladness into every breast. A wild yearning woke in his own soul, a terrible sense of unsatisfied craving of hunger for the vanished hand and the voice that he could not hear.

He looked back, and was relieved to see that Wilfrid had laid his head quietly down on his pillow and was sleeping peacefully again. Sister Rosa came in fresh and rosy after her few hours' rest to take her turn of the nursing. She smiled to Edgar that his patient was doing well, and signed to him to go out and enjoy the beautiful

summer morning. He went gladly enough, and rambled a little way up the hill-side till he found an opening in the pine-wood through which he could catch a glimpse of the snow-mountains rising in their virgin white against the deep blue of the heavens.

Never before in his whole life had he found it so hard a task to silence the tumult which had been raised in his breast by poor Wilfrid's unconscious words. It all came back to him now—the old Glenarva memories, the events of the last week before he left town, July's face, and the interview with Miss Alicia. He was seized with a passionate desire to know what had happened and if his absence had cost him all he cared for most. The suspense seemed intolerable. But he could not leave Wilfrid in his present state, and it was equally impossible to write, in his ignorance of what had happened. There was nothing for it but patience. He watched the changing shadows on the pine-forests and the crystalline whiteness of the glaciers, till he had little by little recovered his self-control and went back to his brother's sick-room in a calmer mood.

That week Wilfrid's illness took a favourable turn, and from that time his progress was rapid. He was soon able to leave his room and to sit out on a bench in the sun. By degrees his strength

returned. The Tyrolese villagers watched his recovery with the utmost interest, and it was quite a festive day for them all when he was able to walk out into the meadows where the second hay-harvest had begun, and watch the peasant girls in their dark blue skirts and red handkerchiefs turning over the sweet-scented hay.

One child brought him a bunch of flowers, another fetched him a chair from the nearest *châlet*, while its mother brought him a glass of milk and refused the *kreutzers* which he offered her in return.

Wilfrid took it all in his quiet, placid way. He was in a very contented frame of mind as they sat together in the hay-field that afternoon. The soft sunshine and fresh mountain air revived him. He was grateful to the simple peasant-folk for their kindness towards him, and looked with delight on all around him.

"I never knew Tyrol was so beautiful before," he said, as he leant back and took in a long draught of the breeze which came across the meadows. "The view up this valley is as fine as anything I knew in the Oberland; and fond as I am of Switzerland, I must confess there is a charm about these people which is wanting to our good Switzers. They are more unspoilt, simpler, more devout in their ways and manners; at least, so it seems to me. How does it strike you?"

Edgar shrugged his shoulders, and pulled the heads off the flowers that grew in the long grass at his side. He could not pretend to feel any deep interest in the respective merits of the Swiss and Tyrolese character. If the truth must be owned, the very flowers that covered the pasture with their dazzling hues were hateful to him in that moment. The silence which is balm and healing to the soul in some moods is at other times oppressive, and Edgar felt a strange longing to rush away from it all back into the din and stir of the London world which lay far behind him.

It seemed to him as if all the currents of his life had been brought to a sudden standstill just when they had reached their highest tide; and when Wilfrid, in his enthusiasm, declared he should be well content to spend the rest of his days in this peaceful spot, Edgar could not restrain a shudder at the prospect of anything so distasteful to his present sentiments.

"I should die of weariness!" he exclaimed, springing to his feet with an energy which surprised his brother. "No; I may have something of the savage element in me, Wilfrid, but a month or two of this solitude would drive me out of my senses. Even now I begin to long for the rattle of wheels and the sight of a few more of my fellow-creatures than your valley can afford. Besides

which, I am John Bull enough to want to hear the sound of English once again, and be rid of this harsh, grating, guttural German, which plagues my ears from morning till night."

"I am afraid you are thoroughly sick of the place," said Wilfrid sorrowfully.

His gentle tones sounded reproachful in Edgar's ears, and he replied, "Oh, that is only my fun. I cannot go into raptures as easily as you do, old fellow. You know that never was my line. But I shall be well satisfied if this mountain-air braces you up a bit after your long weeks in bed."

Wilfrid thanked him with a smile. "It is strange," he observed thoughtfully, as they walked home together; "last year it was you who were ill. This summer it has been my turn. Let me see, it was about this time last year that we went to Glenarva, was it not?"

Since his convalescence he had not alluded to Glenarva, but now he began to ask Edgar if he had heard anything of the Nevils, and listened with interest to what he chose to tell him about July and her aunt.

Wilfrid said no more just then, but that evening he asked Edgar if he would not return to England. "I should be quite happy here for another week or two," he said. "And you could always join me

again a little later if you liked, when I was stronger and could travel better."

The proposal was a tempting one to Edgar in his restless mood, but he was not quite satisfied to leave Wilfrid just yet, and finally he arranged to go to Innspruck and order a comfortable carriage to convey his brother there as soon as he should be equal to the move. After that he would see about his own journey home, and they might come across some other English people with whom Wilfrid could remain. At any rate, Edgar thought he should pick up a little news and meet some of his countrymen at Innspruck. So he hired his landlord's *Einspann*, a rude little carriage, with the best horse the village could supply, and set off at six one morning on his long drive across the mountains.

That evening he reached Innspruck, and after his prolonged spell of solitude was heartily glad to find himself in a town again and hear English spoken once more around him. The yearly stream of travel had set in. The hotels were crowded with English visitors, and Alpine tourists in blue veils and white muslin scarfs were everywhere to be seen.

Edgar's spirits rose at this renewal of contact with his countrymen. He felt sorely inclined to adopt Wilfrid's suggestion and take the night train

to Munich and Paris that very evening, but thought he would first take the preliminary step of inditing an epistle to Amy Maxwell, in hopes of hearing a little home news from her in return. His departure from England had been so hurried that he had not even written to Amy, and she might never have heard of Wilfrid's illness. Indeed, he had rather avoided her during the last weeks he had been in town, and now in his softened mood he felt more kindly towards his absent cousin, and thought he would atone for his past irritation by writing her an affectionate letter.

With this intention he sat down in the reading-room of his hotel and was looking about him for a pen which could write when his eye fell on a copy of an English weekly newspaper. He had already devoured all the latest papers he could find, but this one was of an older date and had escaped his notice. As he glanced through its contents the name of Nevil caught his eye. It was one of the usual announcements of marriages in high life with which these kind of papers abound at the end of the London season. First in the list of these projected alliances stood the name of Miss Juliet Nevil, daughter of George Nevil, Esq., of Glenarva, and Mr. Cockerill, only son of Sir John Cockerill, of Bilton Park, ——shire. Edgar laid the paper down without moving a muscle of his face, and

replied cheerfully to a remark addressed to him by a young Englishman who had been studying the papers as eagerly as himself. But he did not write his intended letter, and the next day he told Wilfrid that he had given up the idea of going to England at present, and started on a week's walking tour in the mountains.

The date of the paper, which had by the merest chance fallen into his hands at Innspruck, was that of the very week when he had left town, so it was plain to him that Miss Alicia had seen her hopes fulfilled a few days after his departure. She had come off victor, and he had been beaten all along the line. But her triumph or his discomfiture were of slight consequence in his eyes compared to what he felt for Juliet. It was bitter to think that she could consent to be the wife of a man like Cockerill; bitterer still to believe that she might one day repent of her choice. He had no doubt that her aunt and Amy had persuaded her against her better self, and he asked himself if it might not all have turned out differently had he stayed in town. That was the hardest part of all. He could not bear to feel that the poor child should have been left alone to meet the struggle when he would have given his life to save her from trouble.

But all that was over now, and she was probably

happy enough in her new prospects, with smiling faces and admiring friends all round her. And for himself it was only the breaking of another dream, the surrender of a hope which had made life strangely real and intense for one short year.

He went back to Wilfrid at the end of his mountain excursion, and found him still weak and requiring care. Together the two brothers moved on to the Engadine later, and afterwards over the Maloja to the Italian lakes. It was not till one day at Como, when they were talking of the last September at Glenarva, that Edgar told Wilfrid that he had seen Miss July's engagement in the papers, and was not surprised to hear of it after certain rumours which had reached him in town.

Wilfrid said little in reply, and never mentioned the subject again; but he understood now why Edgar had given up his journey to England, and knew, too, as well as if his brother had told him in so many words, that he had loved Juliet Nevil.

"I used to think that she cared for him, too," he said to himself, with one of his gentle sighs, "but I suppose it was all a mistake. Poor Miss July! I hope she will be happy; but she will never find a man who will love her as well as he would have done."

CHAPTER XXIII.

All my life I'll go the sadlier, softlier
For that dream's sake.—R. BROWNING.

WILFRID'S strength returned but slowly after his long illness, and in consequence of the decided symptoms of weakness of chest which showed themselves, he was advised to winter abroad. Edgar was anxious to go to Egypt or Algiers, and had settled on the latter, and made his plans accordingly, but at the last moment Wilfrid's courage failed him. He seemed to have lost all energy, and was so little inclined for a long journey, that his brother gave up his original intention, and they ultimately spent the winter on the Riviera.

Here Wilfrid gradually recovered his health, and Edgar considered it was a hopeful sign when he saw him one day return to his drawing, which for months he had laid aside. After that he gained ground visibly. So far the result of the winter abroad had proved satisfactory.

Meanwhile Edgar was growing very tired of this aimless life. He began to think seriously of returning to Ceylon as soon as his brother should be fit to go back to England, and went so far as to write to the coffee merchant whom he had been helping in the city, offering to go out as his agent whenever an opportunity presented itself. A man of his experience and acuteness could not fail to be of use, and there was little doubt but that his offer would be readily accepted.

He pined for active exertion, and each day wearied more and more of the indolent monotony of life on those fair Mediterranean shores, and of the society of health- and pleasure-seekers whom he met with at Cannes.

As for the past, he said to himself that he had cast it deliberately behind him, and never by word or look showed that it ever recurred to his mind. For some months, indeed, after that paragraph had caught his eye in the paper at Innspruck, he lived in constant terror of meeting Juliet again, and glanced in disquietude at every young couple whom he met at *tables d'hôte* or stations. But now that dread had passed away; and if he could not forget, at least he kept silence, and no one ever knew how deep his wound had been.

Since he had left England he had never heard

of Amy Maxwell, and he was the more surprised when, one day early in February, as he stood at the door of the hotel where they had taken up their abode, idly watching the arrivals in the omnibus, Fred Maxwell's burly form caught his eye. He hastened to greet him, and was in the act of shaking hands, when Amy herself stepped out of the omnibus, looking as neat and elegant after her twenty hours' journey from Paris as if she had come straight out of a milliner's box.

She hailed Edgar's presence with the utmost satisfaction, and forgot all about her fatigues in the pleasure of finding a friend with whom she could gossip of home.

"This is really providential. I was afraid we should not know a soul, and that the few men whose names I saw in the paper would be at Monte Carlo all day. Aren't you surprised to see me, Edgar? But the fact is Fred had a touch of bronchitis. He does not look as if there had been much the matter with him, does he? But the doctors said it was as well to be wise in time, and you could never be sure where the mischief would end. And London has been odious this winter. You don't often hear me say that, do you, Edgar? But I assure you we have lived in total darkness for the best part of the last three months. It does not

strike me as over warm here, and I am half sorry I left my furs, after all; but we have had a few hours' sunshine. I suppose in seasons like this one must be thankful for small mercies. But tell me, Edgar, what on earth you have been doing with yourself ever since last June? You bolted one day in such a prodigious hurry, that I began to wonder what had happened. And then I heard afterwards that Wilfrid had telegraphed to say he was dying in some outlandish place in Tyrol. After that I heard nothing more, so I concluded that he had recovered. People like him always do. Don't think I'm unfeeling, Edgar, but it is quite true. I was very sorry, really; and I would have written to you if I had known where to address a letter. How is he now?"

The sight of a friendly face, and the familiar tones of her voice, incessantly as it rattled on, were a genuine pleasure to Edgar after his long exile, and he laughed more heartily than he had done for months, as he replied—

"He is on the mend now. But it was a near thing at one time, I fancy; and I began to think he would prove the exception to your rule. He will be glad to see you. I think we both want the sight of friends to cheer us up. As for you, Amy, nothing seems to weigh down your spirits. You are vivacious, and look as bright

as you did—well, that day last April when I found you grumbling at the weather."

"I have done nothing else since then. But I am not at all vivacious, as you call it, just now. On the contrary, I am oppressed with cares and disappointments. I told Fred the other day my life had fallen into the sere and yellow leaf," said Amy. "But I will go upstairs now and unpack, and look at our rooms; and after that I must see Wilfrid, and hear all you have got to say. You cannot think how perfectly enchanted I am to find you here."

The Maxwells' arrival proved a great boon to the brothers in many ways, and the task of introducing the newly-arrived pair to the place and people kept them well occupied during the week. Amy, of course, had found out half a dozen friends before she had been there two days, and by the end of the week pronounced Cannes to be the most enchanting place in the world, and told her husband that she hoped he would be ill every winter.

But she did not neglect her cousins, and took long walks with Edgar, while Fred Maxwell devoted himself in the most generous way to Wilfrid in obedience to his wife's suggestion that the two invalids were bound to amuse each other. In the course of that week Edgar was favoured with a large

share of Amy's confidences on every subject under the sun. A hundred times over he was on the point of asking her what had happened to Juliet Nevil, but he always stopped himself, and waited for her to broach the subject first.

In due time the whole story came out.

They were taking a turn one day in the grounds of the hotel, looking across at the graceful outline of the Esterel mountains rising out of the sea, wrapt in a dim noon-day haze, when they met a girl returning from a walk with her hands full of flowers. Edgar knew her slightly and bowed. They passed on, and Amy remarked—

"Dear me! how like that girl was to Eleanor Lindsay! Poor Eleanor! it is ages since I have seen her. The fact is we had as near an approach to a quarrel as we have ever had in our lives at the end of last season. It was all about that silly child Juliet Nevil. Eleanor has decidedly Quixotic notions on some points, and if you venture to disagree with her she can give you her mind plainly enough."

Amy paused just as she had touched on the very subject which touched Edgar most closely; but he knew that if he only gave her time she was sure to tell him all he wanted to learn, and wisely asked no questions, but merely played his usual

part of patient listener. Presently she continued--

"It was about her cousin, Hugh Cockerill; you remember that man you met one night at my house? You must know that he proposed to Juliet at the end of the season, and to our utter amazement the foolish girl quietly refused him. It really was the most unheard-of thing."

"And changed her mind the next day, I suppose," said Edgar drily.

"Not a bit of it. Of course Alicia was horrified, and I am sure I did all I could; but the girl was as obstinate as a mule, vowing she could not marry a man she had never cared for; as if she were old enough to know her own mind! But the tiresome part of it was that just when I thought I had got hold of Mr. Cockerill, and should be able to smooth over matters and make all straight again, Eleanor persuades him to throw it all up, and go off to Cowes with her. It really was most aggravating, and I don't know when I have been so much provoked at anything."

"Stop a moment, Amy," said Edgar, trying to speak carelessly, and playing nervously with the cigar which he held in his hand. "You run on so fast that I hardly know where you are. But just tell me, were they married after all, then; young Cockerill and Miss Nevil?"

"Of course not; don't you see that was exactly what vexed me so much? And now I hear that he is being made a great deal of in Rome, and actually paying great attention to a pretty American widow there. How annoyed Lady Cockerill will be if he ends by marrying a foreigner!"

She little knew the magic effect of her careless words on her companion's whole being, and he concealed his excitement so well that she did not even notice the slightest tremor in his voice as he said—

"I quite thought they were married long ago, for I saw an announcement of their engagement in some paper at Innspruck one day, and the name of Nevil of Glenarva particularly caught my eye. I suppose it was what you call a premature announcement?"

"Ah! I heard of that paragraph. Some one told Fred that old Sir John was terribly annoyed, and put in a contradiction the next week. But it ought to have come off. And with a little careful management it would have been all right. I shall always think that it was partly Alicia's stupidity and partly Eleanor's dislike to the whole thing. You know, from the first she would have it that Juliet was not suited to her cousin, and talked a lot of nonsense to that effect."

"Dear, good Miss Lindsay!" was Edgar's silent

ejaculation; but he suppressed his feelings, and asked Amy what the Nevils were doing now.

"They went back to Glenarva," replied Mrs. Maxwell, "and I don't fancy, from what I hear, that they are likely to repeat the experiment of a second season in town this year. The old father has had a worse attack of gout than usual, and they are as poor as rats, I know. It was only that unexpected inheritance which Alicia had from old Mrs. Lane, which induced her to venture such a novel proceeding. I often wonder now how she ever dared to try it. But it does seem a pity such a pretty girl as that should be thrown away; buried alive down in that wretched place. But it was her own fault after all, and people must take the consequences of their own actions."

Edgar laughed at his cousin's sorrowing tones. "It is a common fate, Amy, after all," he said.

"'Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.'"

"Desert it is, indeed, cried Amy. "I believe there isn't a single neighbour within twelve miles, or something like it. But I am forgetting you know the place. Well, next time you go there, I hope you will give Alicia and the child herself the benefit of your wisdom."

"I am afraid that would not have the smallest

effect," replied Edgar, who felt his spirits rising to an unreasonable pitch. "I have already tried my eloquence on Miss Alicia, with very inadequate results."

"Ah! I know you told me you used to quarrel with her over her high-flown notions of old family and long pedigree. I fear she will not find the long roll of Nevil ancestors will do much towards getting Juliet a husband. But I ought not to be dawdling on here. I must go and change my gown if I am to drive with Lady Hart directly after luncheon. We shall meet again to-night, Edgar."

Amy waved an adieu to her cousin, and left him standing by a young palm-tree that was turning its delicate leaves towards the sun. He thought of Heine's well-known lines on the spruce fir in the far North dreaming on its rocky soil, and wind-grieved heights, of the lonely palm in the sunny South, and he wondered how he could still linger there.

He had a task before him which should not be put off, a wrong to repair which must be done quickly. If only that fatal paper had not come into his hands he would have been back in England months ago, and all this weary time of waiting might have been spared them both. But even now it might not be too late. Of course, he could

not tell, and he had, as yet, small reason for hope; but all the same his breast swelled with exultant gladness now the burden was lifted, and he knew, at least, that the horrible nightmare which had so long haunted him had vanished into thin air. At least, July was true and good and fair, as of old, more precious in his eyes, more perfectly sweet and holy than she had ever seemed before. And he was still free to tell her the secret which had so long lain buried in the depths of his heart.

On the following day he received a letter from his city friend, asking him to undertake a journey to Bombay, and perhaps Ceylon, in connection with his business, on very liberal terms; and although he told Wilfrid he was by no means sure he should accept the offer, he decided that it was worth going to England before he gave his friend a positive denial.

Wilfrid warmly urged him to go, saying the change would do him good, and that he need not think of him now the Maxwells were there.

Amy did not see it at all in the same light, and was much put out on hearing of Edgar's sudden resolution.

"It is just like you, Edgar," she complained, in her spoilt-child fashion. "You always contrive to make yourself disagreeable. It is really very annoying of you, just when we were beginning to

enjoy ourselves. And you know there is that expedition to Vallauris which I am bent upon. I am sure it will be a complete failure if I have not got you to help me manage it all."

Edgar promised to be back again in a fortnight, and to take as many expeditions as she liked then, and partially mollified Amy by saying he was glad to think she and Fred would be there to take care of Wilfrid during his absence.

For the rest, he cared but little what any one thought or said now. But he kept his counsel, and did not even say a word to Wilfrid as to his future intentions.

Only, as they were waiting together at the station that evening, Wilfrid said to his brother quietly—

"You will go on to Glenarva, I suppose?"

Edgar replied that he should, and Wilfrid offered no further comment.

CHAPTER XXIV.

O fair Milly Brandon, a young maid, a fair maid,
All her curls are yellow and her eyes are blue ;
And her cheeks were rosy red till a secret care made
Hollow whiteness of their brightness, as a care will do.

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

THE snow lay thick in the glen of Arva. The bare trees bent heavily under its weight, and the bed of the stream itself was choked up with blocks of ice and frozen snow. Look where you would the scene was one of gloom and desolation. The havoc made by the autumn gales had not been repaired before the severity of the winter came to add its ravages to the general confusion. Trunks of uprooted trees, and boughs which had fallen last October, lay across the stream in many places, and made the path along the glen almost impassable.

The day itself was not a cheerful one. The sky was grey, and cloudy, and the chilly feeling in

the air told of more snow yet to come down, while the wind rushed along the gully, and howled at the foot of the rocks with the mournful wailings of an imprisoned spirit.

Neither sights nor sounds were calculated to improve the temper of the heir of Glenarva, who was trying to make his way up the valley among the fallen timber and mounds of snow that blocked the path.

"I declare the place is in a hopeless state; I never saw such complete chaos," he said, standing on the stem of an ash-bough at his feet, and surveying the scene around him with disgust. "And every time I come home it seems to me to get worse."

"It has never been so bad as it is this winter," replied his sister, with a sigh. "You see, father has been laid up so long, and, now Robin is turned off, old Tregarva has more than he can manage."

"An old fool like that could never keep a place like this tidy," said Algy contemptuously. "It wants at least half a dozen men."

Juliet knew his words were true enough, but she knew equally well that it was impossible to supply the wages for these men when even the faithful Robin, who had worked for years on the estate, had been dismissed.

That winter misfortunes had pressed more heavily than ever on the house of Nevil, and it seemed for a while as if not even Alicia Nevil's efforts could save the family from ruin.

Ever since last September one calamity had succeeded the other. A portion of the roof in the oldest part of the house itself had fallen in, and the repairs necessary to keep the fabric standing had swallowed up the little ready money at Mr. Nevil's command. Then a tenant whose family had held the largest farm on the property died without leaving a successor, and no one could be found to take the land, which in the Squire's hands became a fresh outgoing instead of a source of income. And to add to all these disasters, Mr. Nevil had been confined to his room for weeks with the worst attack of gout he had ever known. This had not contributed to the peace of Glenarva Court or the harmony of its inmates, and it was not altogether to be wondered at if Algy became restive and irritable in his turn.

"I declare things get worse every day here," he repeated. "Each time I come home I find something fresh is going to the dogs. I begin to hate being here at all."

"Oh, Algy," said Juliet imploringly, "don't say that. I know it is bad for you. And I wish

you could go to the East. But I know father is worse off than ever now."

"What has become of that old lady's money, then?" asked Algy, as they climbed the hill-side in the teeth of the north-east wind. "I thought that was to keep us all in clover."

"I don't know, Algy. I don't think there was so very much of it; but if it were not for that, father often says we should all be in the workhouse. The London house is let now, that is one good thing, for a whole year," replied Juliet.

They walked along without speaking for a few minutes, till a new idea struck Algy.

"I wonder what has become of Wynne, July," he said; "you never heard anything more of him, did you? I have a great mind to write and ask him to get me something to do on his coffee-plantation out in Ceylon. That would be better than spending all one's life here."

"But what would father say, Algy?" cried Juliet, alarmed at this threat. "He could never bear to let you go so far. You know that was the reason why he never would let you go into the army."

"It was the greatest mistake he ever made, then," returned her brother. "Here have I been kept hanging about here for a year already, with

nothing to do. And if I want to see after things a bit, Aunt Lis steps in and interferes, as she did the other day when I wanted to look after Barton's land. As if women could understand these things! I tell you what, July, I won't stand it any longer. I'll ask Edgar Wynne to help me, and if I can't get anything out of him I declare I'll see if I can't fish for myself in some way or other. I've serious thoughts of going out to Manitoba."

Juliet opened her eyes in amazement at the sound of the strange name. She had not the smallest conception in what hemisphere Manitoba lay, but felt sure it must be a very remote and terrible place. The bare idea of Algy going there filled her with alarm. Her dismay increased when the boy, who evidently intended to make an impression on his sister's mind, exclaimed—

"It's a first-rate place, Manitoba. I know that. Only yesterday I was reading of a fellow who went out there less than two years ago, and who has already got a farm of six hundred acres, a capital team and ploughs of his own, and has built himself a house, and, I'll be bound, lives like a fighting-cock into the bargain. You need not smile, July," he added, observing his sister's half-incredulous air; "it's all in the papers, if you take the trouble to read it for yourself."

"But you know nothing of farming, Algy,"

returned Juliet. "Surely that would make some difference."

"You always think I know nothing," said Algy impatiently. "That is just like girls. But you will allow there is no reason I should not pick it up. I might begin with another fellow first. After all, I'm not a fool. I flatter myself I'm blest with a fair share of wits, and can turn my hand to most things."

"I think it is very ungrateful of you to talk of such a thing when you know father is ill, and hates you to go out of his sight," said Juliet.

"It's all his own fault," replied Algy doggedly. "If he treated me decently, and gave me a proper allowance like other people, I should not complain. You can't expect a man to spend his whole life in a place where he has not a soul but women to speak to. It's enough to turn a fellow silly. But I'm not going to stand it any more. This time I have quite made up my mind. If I can't get my own way about that farm of Barton's, I'll go to Manitoba."

"Oh, Algy, don't talk so," pleaded his sister. "At least, you ought not to bother poor father till he is better. Could you not wait till the spring?"

"I have waited too long already," returned Algy sullenly. "If I had given Aunt Lis a bit of

my mind before this, things would never have come to such a pass. But one thing is certain, I don't mean to be tied to her apron-strings any longer."

Juliet stood still, appalled at this outburst on her brother's part. Accustomed as she was to hear Algy pour out his grievances, she had never suspected he could launch out into what seemed to her open rebellion. In her distress she could only make one more attempt to change this wild resolve which he had formed in his anger.

"All I know is," she said, sadly, "if you go away like that it will break father's heart. And you don't think of me when you talk like that."

This plaintive appeal had the effect of softening Algy in some measure, and he said more gently—

"I wonder how it is you can take it all so quietly, July. If I were you I'd be inclined to run away sometimes when father goes on bemoaning himself as he did yesterday, and Aunt Alicia's face gets longer and grimmer every day. I wonder you did not marry that fellow who was always hanging about the house in town."

July flushed crimson at these last words.

"How can you talk like that, Algy?" she said indignantly. "As if I would marry anybody just because things don't always go right here. If I ever

marry a man it will be because I care for him and not to get away from home, you may be quite sure of that," she added with a tone of reproach.

"Oh, you need not fire up like that, July," returned her brother, with a coolness that was rather provoking. "I only meant to say that if I were you I should have been out of patience with Aunt Lis long ago."

"It is not always so bad, you know, Algy," said Juliet more cheerfully; "I mean not so bad as it has been just lately."

It had been very bad, as the girl owned, this winter, and in the whole of her life July could never remember so dreary a period as the last six months. And what made the burden heavier for her was the sense, continually present to her, and although unspoken, clearly visible in her aunt's looks and ways, that she had by her own act helped to increase the load of her father's cares.

She herself had never for one moment repented her rejection of the offer which Mr. Cockerill had made her. At times, indeed, just lately, the change such a marriage might have brought in her life, the brilliant prospects her future would have presented, did look more inviting than they had seemed to her in the midst of the London season; but the recollection of the heavy price she would

have had to pay as the wife of a man whom she could not love, outweighed all other considerations, and satisfied her that she had been right, as far as her own happiness was concerned.

But there were other considerations which she could not forget, and which Algy's careless words brought back to her mind. To see her well married, she knew too well had been her aunt's great ambition, and would no doubt have given her father almost equal pleasure. July's notions of the value of money were, it must be remembered, of the vaguest kind, and, with the exception of her London experiences, were chiefly confined to the prices of shoes or gloves, or the rents of cottages in Glenarva ; but perhaps if Hugh Cockerill was a rich man, as people all told her, he might have paid some of these heavy bills of which her father complained, or at least given her money for Robin's wages. Above all, she should have been able to help Algy, she often thought with a sigh, as she heard him grumbling over his hard fate in being without a proper allowance like most men of his age. It had been part of Miss Nevil's scheme, that her nephew should either go into the army or read law as soon as he had taken his degree ; but the youth himself was as strongly opposed to the latter as his father was to the former plan, and at present it did not seem as if

sufficient money were forthcoming to enable him to do either. Meanwhile time was slipping away, and although he had left Oxford young he was now turned two-and-twenty, and it would soon be too late for him to enter any profession.

Algy himself did not particularly object to this, since his own anxiety was to travel; but for this money was still more requisite, and he had been consequently forced to spend the greater part of the winter at home, sorely against his will.

The more Juliet turned these things over in her mind the more guilty she felt; until, so exaggerated did her estimate of the situation become, that she began to look upon herself as responsible for all the calamities which had befallen Glenarva in the last few months, from the falling in of the roof to Robin's dismissal.

Her aunt's manner strengthened this guilty consciousness. Alicia had never been warm to the persons she loved best; but of late she had grown sterner and colder than ever, and July shrank from her keen glance and hard tones, and felt as if each time her aunt spoke to her it was to remind her of the wrong she had done her.

Besides all this, Juliet was mournfully aware of a rapid change in her father's condition. This last attack had enfeebled and altered him more than any previous ones. His mind appeared visibly

affected, and while he dwelt with childish weakness on the smallest annoyances and most trifling inconveniences, he could not be brought to give his attention to matters of real importance.

Deep in these sorrowful thoughts Juliet shook the snow off her coat as she reached the end of the wood and walked through the grounds up to the house. Algy had left her side to pursue his explorations in another direction, and as she walked up alone under the ruined gateway she remembered his question about Edgar Wynne.

It was a long time since she had heard the name mentioned, and she wondered what had become of him, and if his brother had ever got well. It was not much more than a year ago that they had both together been walking up that very path, but it seemed to July as if it were twice as long.

Everything had changed since then, she said to herself sadly, and she was changed most of all. She was no longer the bright, thoughtless child of old days, without a shadow to darken her brow or a care to dim the lustre of her eye, and for whom the mere fact of living was enjoyment in itself. She used to think him old then, and Algy would laugh at her and tell her she thought every one grey-headed who was a year older than herself. But now she felt as if the last year had made a great alteration in her, and was sure that there

could no longer be the same difference between them. She wondered if she would ever see him again, and if he ever thought of her now, or wished to come back to Glenarva ?

But that was a question which the winds and the waves could not answer. Even faithful Bevis could only look up wistfully in her face and rub his nose against her hand, as if he would gladly tell her if he did but know how.

CHAPTER XXV.

The sense of an earnest will
  To help the lowly living,
And a terrible heart and will,
  If you have no power of giving ;
An arm of aid to the weak
  A friendly hand to the friendless,
Kind words, so short to speak,
  But whose echo is endless ;
The world is great, these things are small,
They may be nothing, but they are All.

LORD HOUGHTON.

ALL that winter Juliet spent most of her time sitting with her father in his sick room. It was the tapestried chamber which Edgar Wynne had occupied after his accident, and where, during the week that he was kept a prisoner, he used to make July sing to him to beguile the long hours of his captivity. Mr. Nevil's confinement to his room had been a far longer and more tedious business, and it was scarcely to be wondered at if he was much more difficult to please.

To-day he had a new and particular grievance on which he harped in the most pertinacious manner.

Algy had heard from his friend Bryce that morning, asking him to go to the Mediterranean with him on a long cruise, and telling him to be ready to start in a fortnight's time. Of course he was delighted, and his sister shared his pleasure, while his aunt, having found him rather a troublesome inmate lately, was not sorry to be delivered from his company for a time. But his father did not see this in at all the same light, and, without positively refusing him leave to go, complained bitterly of his intended departure.

"I cannot think why Algy is never satisfied to stay at home," he said to Juliet for the seventh or eighth time that morning. "I am sure I always found plenty to do, and so could he if he chose to occupy himself. But he is never happy unless he can get away; it is always the same story ever since he was at Oxford. I've a great mind to write and give that fellow Bryce a bit of my mind. He ought to know better than to be continually enticing a boy away from his home and duties."

Juliet had become accustomed by this time to this form of irritability, which vented itself in continual recrimination and empty threats, and she only said quietly, "Algy is different from what

you are, father. You know he is fond of travelling, and it is very lucky for him to have a friend with a yacht, who can take him abroad."

"I see nothing lucky about it at all," returned her father sullenly. "My children never seem to be happy unless they can get away from me."

Formerly an unfair reproach of this kind would have roused Juliet's indignation. But this was the strain in which her father reasoned continually since he had been ill, and she only grieved to think how sadly he was altered.

"I daresay he will not be gone so very long," she said, in the vain hope of suggesting some topic of consolation. "And he will have seen all sorts of new places and people when he comes back, and have a great deal to tell us, father. What year was it that you went abroad?"

Juliet knew that the best way to amuse her father was to lead him to talk of old days, and youthful adventures, and the device succeeded for a time. But before long he resumed his usual strain.

"It was all very well in those days. I could do as I pleased, and money was never wanting. But now everything is different, and I am not even master in my own house. Every one goes to your aunt and no one thinks of me," he said with a groan. "I might as well be dead and buried for all other people are concerned."

This was more than Juliet could bear, and the tears started to her eyes.

"Father, you must not talk like that," she said, turning her face away. "Of course you have been ill and shut up for a long time, but we hope you will soon be able to get out again. The wind has changed now, and it blows from the sea again, so I hope the frost is breaking up and we shall soon have some spring weather."

"Neither spring nor summer is likely to do me much good," returned her father. "I am too far gone for that. Whatever you all say, I know I shall never be anything but a useless cripple."

He was evidently in one of those moods in which it is hopeless to amuse an invalid, and Juliet was glad when her aunt opened the door and looked in.

Miss Nevil had been out for a short walk and was still in her bonnet and cloak, and, in reply to a question from her brother, said that she had been as far as the "Nevil Arms," to see a girl who was ill in a neighbouring house.

"I am sorry to hear there is another case of fever in the village," she continued, as Juliet helped her to lay aside her cloak. "I met Mr. Venn, and he said he feared it was something of the same kind as Patty Morrison's. He calls it a

sort of low fever, but does not put another name to it, or think it infectious."

"Who is it, Aunt Alicia?" asked Juliet, eager to know if any of her friends were attacked.

"The fresh case is Lettice Micklewright's little boy," replied Miss Nevil.

"Not Bobby?" cried July. "Oh, poor Lettice! she will be in a dreadful state; and after all the other trouble they have had too! I am sorry."

"I thought you must have known already," said her aunt, with an air of surprise. "The child has been ailing for several days. It always seems to me that you go to Lettice's house every day."

"I have not been there for a long time, aunt," replied Juliet, looking down.

Since the sad day when Robin Micklewright had been dismissed from his place, Juliet had felt too much conscience-stricken and too miserable to face Lettice's reproachful looks, and had, in fact, seldom been to the village at all.

It had been a great sorrow to her, for Robin had worked for years as under-keeper at the Court and had turned much steadier of late, so that it could not be said that he had been the cause of his own misfortunes. But Miss Nevil had insisted with too much reason on the necessity for reducing expenses in this direction; so, sorely against Algy's will, the dogs had been sold and Robin told to look out for another place.

Rumours of Lettice's anger and of the fierce sayings which she uttered in the bitterness of her heart had reached Juliet's ears, and in her dread of facing these reproaches, and her helplessness to mend matters, she thought remorsefully that she had kept away from the cottage lately.

But now she determined to go there as soon as possible, and that same afternoon she walked down to Glenarva. The village street was quiet; many of the men had gone to the cod fisheries or other distant parts, and the rest were at field-work. The children were in school, and only a boy or two and old Jacob pacing up and down in his oil-skin cap and blue woollen shirt were to be seen on the beach at the end of the street.

Juliet knocked at Lettice's door not without some misgivings, and it was opened presently by Barbara, with her prim little face and usual demure manner. Bobby was in bed and the doctor had been, but she could not tell more, and ran to call her mother.

Lettice had prepared a long and eloquent exposition of her wrongs for the occasion, but at the sight of Miss July's face her presence of mind forsook her; she forgot her intended speech, and burst into tears.

"It's never you, Miss July," she said, as she wiped her eyes with one corner of her apron. "I

thought you never meant to set foot here any more. Although what I'd done to be treated so, neither I nor any one else in the town can tell. It's hard, very hard, after all these years, and when Robin has worked so well, and no one can say a word again' him, I'll be bound, although I say it as shouldn't say it. At first I thought I'd fret myself to death a'most, and I'd have gone right away to the Squire myself, but folks says as how he was ill, so I stayed away. And Master Algy, who's so fond of Robin and all——" Here her grief overcame her, and she sobbed outright. Presently, however, she recovered sufficiently to pour out a whole torrent of passionate words into July's ear as she stood in the little parlour where she had so often heard Lettice boasting of her loyalty to the Squire and his family.

She had little to say in return, and could only ask how Bobby was and if Robin had found some work.

"Nothing reg'lar, that's the worst on it," said Lettice, shaking her head sadly; "he does a bit of sawing here, and works first a few days for one and then a few for another. To be sure, there was the place at Farmer Trevenen's for which the young Squire spoke for him, but if he'd gone there we must have all gone too—right across the bay, and that was more than I could bear, seeing I've been born and bred a Glenarva woman."

As for Bobby, he was very middling, and lay there on his bed a-tossing about like the boats on a rough sea. Would Miss July step up and speak to him? The sight of her would cheer him up a bit, and maybe he'd be more contented like afterwards and lie stiller.

Juliet had little faith in the good effect of her visit on the sick child, but she could not refuse to comply with Lettice's wish, and followed her upstairs to the room where poor little Bobby lay moaning on his pillow with heavy eyes and flushed face.

"Come, cheer up, Bobby, and don't look so downcast, my man," began his mother, in her cheeriest tones. "Here's a visitor come to see you. Now just look and see; you'll never guess who it is—Miss July herself! Bless the lad! he hasn't clean forgotten her already?" she said as the poor little fellow raised his head of tangled locks from his pillow and looked round him with a puzzled, bewildered air.

"Never mind, Lettice; don't tease him—poor little Bobby!" said Juliet, taking his hand tenderly and laying her cool fingers on his hot brow. She shook his pillow up for him, smoothed down the bedclothes, and held the cup of milk which stood on the chest of drawers at his side to his lips.

He drank greedily, and Lettice observed—

"He's so thirsty all the while. I tell him he'll drink every drop in the house up soon; and that's the last milk I've got for him. There's none more to be had to-night for love or money now, Bobby."

"Never mind, Bobby; you shall have some more—I'll see to that, Lettice. His head does burn, poor little fellow!" said Juliet, looking down at the child's fevered face with pitying eyes.

"Dr. Venn was here this morning, and he didn't like the look of him at all. He's afeared it's the same fever as Morrison's gal's got," remarked Lettice. "Now, don't, honey—don't ye toss about so. Try and lie still and you'll go to sleep and wake up better to-morrow; and here's the last drop of milk for you. You hear, Bobby, Miss July's going to send you some more; what do you say for that, Bobby, boy?"

"Thank 'ee, Miss July," said poor Bobby, with a feeble smile that was very unlike his usual broad grin.

"That's a good boy, Bobby. You shall have the milk to-night, and I'll come back and see you to-morrow. I hope you'll go to sleep soon."

She kissed his hot forehead, and the little fellow looked up gratefully at her as she turned away. She could not help sharing the doctor's opinion, and fearing poor Bobby was sickening with fever. It was fortunate that Lettice did not seem to take it

more to heart; and, as she said to Robin that evening, the sight of Miss July had done her a deal of good.

Bobby's milk was duly sent from the Court that evening, and July only wished she knew better how to help the poor people in their trouble.

She had been to a London hospital once or twice with Eleanor Lindsay, and envied her the skill and knowledge which she had acquired as a nurse.

If Mr. Venn was right, and the fever was to spread in the village, it would be a terrible time for them all, and the sense of her own powerlessness to help them made the thought still more painful.

The shades of night seemed closing fast upon Glenarva and its people, and, whichever way July tried to look, there did not seem a ray of light to pierce the clouds which hung black and threatening over the future of her beloved home.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The wind and the wet, the wind and the wet !
Wet west wind how you blow, you blow !
And never a line from my lady yet !
Is it ay or no ? Is it ay or no ?
Blow then, blow, and when I am gone
The wet west wind and the world may go on.

TENNYSON.

THE long frost had broken up and had been succeeded by a week of stormy weather. The wind blew in furious gusts and showers of rain fell at intervals all day long. But the gale came from the south-west, and after the biting cold of the easterly wind which had swept over hill and dale for the last two months it seemed soft and pleasant as it came up the valley, wafting scents of seaweed and briny odours far inland.

There was an invigorating power in its strong, mild breath which told of regions where the spring had already smiled, and spoke hopefully of its

coming to these northern coasts, as the traveller from the south crossed the bleak moor that stretches over the hill above Glenarva.

He had slept at Exeter, and had been all day journeying by cross roads in such carts as he could find at these country inns in this dead season of the year when the coach did not run. So, all things considered, he thought himself fortunate in arriving at his destination before dark.

He alighted at the "Nevil Arms," where the landlord, who had not seen a stranger for months, welcomed him with open arms, and offered him the best accommodation at his disposal. It had not been Edgar Wynne's original intention to take up his quarters there, but on the whole he thought it wisest to accept the offer, especially as the innkeeper told him that there were several cases of fever in the village.

"You've had a hard time of it, I'm afraid, this winter," he observed, as he partook of the simple fare placed on the table before him.

"The worst I've ever known. If we've such another I don't know what won't come to us all," said the man, whose round face and ruddy cheeks did not testify to the appalling amount of hardship which he proceeded to describe. "But it's not only here, sir; wherever you go you'll hear the same tale from high and low," was his concluding sen-

tence; "a bad haytime, and a worse harvest, and the longest frost, and more folks out of work than have been ever known, or heard of either, in the memory of man." Then, with a startling versatility of mind, he suddenly remarked: "Beg pardon, sir, but if I'm not much mistaken I've seen your face before. You're not the gent as had the accident out shooting with the young Squire, are you? Well, the missus did say so as she stood at the door when you drove up; and it's seldom her head-piece is at fault, to be sure. But if it came to the Squire's ears that you were here, he might take it amiss. Shall I just step up and tell 'em up at the Court, sir, that you're come?"

Edgar begged his voluble friend to do nothing of the kind, and left him to take a stroll before it was quite dark.

The rain had ceased, but the wind was still high and a heavy sea was rolling at the foot of the rocks. He walked by the path that led along the top of the cliffs towards the village, and stood at the edge looking at the white sea-gulls circling in the air, and listening to the noise of the waves breaking on the beach. An old song was running in his head; but instead of grieving for "the day that was dead," he thought with strange hopefulness of the coming future.

The Mary bower was just below him, and

"HE WALKED BY THE PATH THAT LED ALONG THE TOP OF THE CLIFFS TOWARDS THE VILLAGE."

Page 300.

he recalled the sunny day when old Jacob first rowed him under the cliffs and he heard July's voice for the first time ringing in the summer air over his head.

A sudden gust of wind and driving rain woke him from his dream, and he was turning back to reach the path when, in the dusk of the growing twilight, he caught sight of a lonely figure coming up the rude steps hewn in the rock below him. There was a short cut this way up from the lower end of the village, but in such a rough night as this he almost wondered any one should care to attempt it.

The tide was high, and the waves dashed over the rocks and broke into a cloud of white foam at his feet. Their salt spray flew up in his face as he bent over the edge of the cliff and watched the solitary figure battling with the wind and rain. It was hard to see anything clearly with this mist of spray and rain in his face, but in the darkening light he was able to distinguish what he took for a rough blue woollen shirt, such as the men and boys of the place wear, and satisfied himself that the struggling figure must be one of the Glenarva fisher-boys. As it came nearer he saw that he had been wrong, for the form muffled in this woollen garb was plainly that of a girl. He advanced a few steps down the steep path to give her, if need be, a helping hand ; and as another fierce gust of wind

sent the blue shawl flying in the air, he saw the golden locks escaping from the small tight-fitting cap, and recognised Miss July.

That evening there was bitter grief and sorrow of heart in Lettice Micklewright's home. Poor little Bobby lay dangerously ill, it was feared dying. The doctor had exhausted his skill and remedies alike, and had gone on his rounds saying he had no further advice to offer, and there was nothing more to be done.

Both Lettice and her husband were heart-broken. They sat watching by the side of the bed where the little fellow lay without speaking or moaning, only moving his head backwards and forwards every few minutes on the pillow. The bright curly hair, which was his mother's pride, had all been cut off a week ago, and the burning red in his cheeks had died away, and been succeeded by an ashy whiteness.

Barbara had crept up the stairs and crouched out of sight in a corner, scarcely knowing what it all meant, but crying because she saw the tears dropping down her father's weather-beaten cheeks.

And Miss July was there, too, from early morning till dusk. She had been home for a short interval at mid-day, but could not bear to leave poor Lettice in her terrible anxiety, and had hastened

back to do what she could, and at least share in the grief which overwhelmed the unhappy parents.

She helped Lettice bathe the child's brows and make him swallow the nourishment which was ordered him, and on which his life depended, and, as far as she dared, she tried to keep up the poor mother's courage by words of hope.

Robin had given way completely, and sat helplessly on a bench by the door, weeping bitterly, and expecting every moment to be the last. Lettice was braver and tried hard not to despair ; but Juliet could see that it was a difficult task, and no power on earth could induce her to leave the child's bedside for more than a few moments. Late in the afternoon the doctor returned, and for the first time gave them a ray of hope. The child's pulse was still good, and as long as he could take nourishment there was no reason that he might not still rally.

His words cheered the little household, and when, half an hour afterwards, he fell into a peaceful sleep, the courage of the anxious mother began to revive.

"I've good hopes of him still," she said cheerfully, as she saw Miss July out of the door, and insisted in wrapping her up in an old blue woollen shawl of her own to keep out the rain.

"I'll not give up altogether till the breath's out

of his dear little body. It's no use, Miss July, I could bear a good deal, but not that, not to lose Bobby."

"Poor Lettice!" said Juliet, looking back at her with pitying eyes, "I wish I could stop with you all night; but I will be back again early to-morrow. I do hope he will sleep quietly, and you will feel happier about him to-morrow."

She turned away and, seeing how dark it already was, determined to take the short cut home by the steps which led to the Mary bower. It was a stormy night certainly, and the tide was in; but July knew every inch of the path, and was sure she could find her way up the steps on the darkest night. As yet it was only twilight, and she started on her homeward walk without the least misgiving. It was not till she had reached the beach and began to ascend the path up the cliff that she found what an arduous task she had before her. The steps cut at intervals in the rock were rendered wet and slippery by the spray of the waves and the rain which had fallen in the course of the day. The sea roared below her, and the noise of its breakers seemed to deafen her. Each wave that broke on the beach covered her with a cloud of foam, and she was glad to wrap Lettice's warm cloak tighter round her to keep herself dry as she struggled onwards up the hill.

Worse than all, the wind, which blew violently

from the south, beat furiously against her and drove her back at every step she took. Then a black cloud swept over the sky, and the rain began to fall in such torrents that she could no longer see her way. Her strength began to fail. She felt her knees tremble, and remembered that she had come more than half way up the cliff. She thought with a shudder that if she stumbled or fell she would be dashed to pieces on the rocks below. The path was a difficult one at best, but the darkness and the tempest made it perilous to-night.

What could she do? There was no human habitation at hand, and if she called for help there was not the remotest chance of any one hearing her. It would be useless to try and go back now, as the descent would be perhaps more hazardous than the upward path; and besides, her father would be anxious about her, and wonder why she stayed out so late on such a rough night.

So she pressed onward in the blinding rain and driving wind, making but little progress, and feeling every minute more tired and weary. It was so dark now that she could not tell the exact point she had reached, and feared the top of the cliff was still some way off. For one moment her heart failed her. She began to feel dizzy, and her limbs shook. An awful fear came over her. She thought how terrible it would be to die here alone and on

the rocks, within half an hour's reach of home and all she loved best.

But then there was a passing break in the clouds, and as she looked up anxiously to see how near she was to the top of the cliff, she saw the figure of some one coming towards her. Through the blinding rain she could see it was a man, and that he was walking fast to meet her. Just beyond him were the clump of stunted oak-trees which grew by the Mary bower; so she knew that she had almost reached the top of the cliff, and was safe.

She called out joyfully to the figure who came towards her. She could not see his face in the dark, but no doubt it was one of the fishermen on his way home from St. Columb's or one of the neighbouring villages, and she smiled to think how amazed he would be to meet her here. To her surprise, however, he said not a word, but caught hold of her arm and helped her, indeed almost dragged her up the last few steps, until she stood by his side on the down.

"Thank God!" he muttered in a deep voice, which certainly was not the speech of the Glenarva fishermen, "you are safe now."

July looked around her in bewilderment. She knew the voice again, and yet—it could not be. Was she dreaming, and where was she, or what had happened?

He gently reassured her and explained to her as well as he could how he had arrived an hour ago at Glenarva, and how he had watched her climbing the steps until the last moment, and had taken her at first for a fisher-boy.

She laughed at his mistake, and told him how grateful she was for his timely help, and how frightened she had been because of the darkness and the slippery rocks.

"I never thought it could be so bad," she said, with a shudder, as she recalled the horrors of her walk. "I suppose I ought not to have tried to come by the steps, but I had been kept late at Lettice's cottage with poor little Bobby, who is very ill."

"You certainly ought not," said Edgar, as he walked along by her side, and protected her as best he could from the wind. "But you are all right now, and what is more, I mean to see you safe home."

It was a strange walk, stranger than even that old one long ago, and July could not help saying—

"It is quite natural to see you again—to be walking together here. It reminds me of the day you found me in the little chapel at St. Columb's. Only a great deal has happened since."

She looked up shyly in his face, and then looked down again, as for the first time their eyes met.

"Yes, as you say, a great deal has happened since. But the months and years seem as nothing now. Let me see,—the last time I saw you. It was in town, at Miss Lindsay's, I think. Directly after that I heard of my brother's illness, and had to fly. And now at last I am come to——"

The rest of his sentence was drowned in a gust of wind and rain which came between them.

They walked on in silence for a few moments until they reached the old gateway, and found a little shelter under its ruined arch.

July recovered her breath, and her scattered senses began to return. She looked round and saw that Edgar was looking at her with a gaze which seemed as if it could never end.

He had hungered for this all the long year that lay behind him, and now that he saw the sweet face again which had so often haunted his dreams and vexed his soul, he could scarcely believe his bliss.

"July," he said, seizing her hand passionately, "tell me one thing before I leave you. Tell me, are you glad that I have come?"

She raised her face, all wet as it was with the rain and salt spray of the waves to his, and gave him a smile which made divine amends for those dreary months of hopeless waiting.

"Yes," she said, so softly that Edgar had to

bend down to catch the whisper that was precious beyond all words to his ears.

Then he let go her hand, and she glided from his side.

"I shall see you again to-morrow. Till then, good-bye," were his parting words to her. He yearned to tell her all; but he had vowed he would not speak till he had faced Miss Alicia again, and he kept his resolve manfully.

"Yes, to-morrow," she said, with another look of those bright, tender eyes, which was more eloquent than any words. She wrapt the blue shawl round her once more and was gone.

He lingered under the ruined gateway till her figure was out of sight, and then turned back to find his own way back to the inn. The wind blew more furiously than ever as he crossed the open moor, but there was a sweet voice making melody at his heart that would have charmed the rage of the wildest elements and lulled their fury into rest.

There were many inquiries after Lettice Micklewright's child that evening at Glenarva Court, which July answered readily, but not one word did she say of her perilous walk up the steps, or of the unexpected friend who had come to meet her through the storm. Only as she bade her brother good-night she said to him, "Algy, did you know

Mr. Wynne was in the village. He arrived this evening, and I met him on my way home by the Mary bower?"

Algernon opened his eyes wide and gave a low whistle. "Oh, is that it?" he said, and turned silently away.

But it was a relief to July's mind to feel that some one else knew her secret.

CHAPTER XXVII.

They who may tell love's wistful tale,
Of half its cares are lightened ;
The bark is tacking to the gale,
The severed cloud is brightened.
JOANNA BAILLIE.

THE next day Edgar Wynne saw Miss Alicia again and claimed the fulfilment of her promise. She was dignified and stately as ever, asked after his brother with the same ceremonious politeness, and did not allude to their former interview in town, until Edgar boldly reminded her of the bargain she had made with him ; then she said frankly—

"I repeat what I told you before, Mr. Wynne, that this is not the alliance I should have chosen for my niece ; but I have done my part and will leave your fate in her hands now. You have kept your word, and I will show you that I know how to keep mine."

She made him one of her formal curtseys and

left the room. He hoped he should see Juliet, but old Jennings appeared and informed him that Mr. Nevil would be glad if he would step upstairs. This interview, however, was a much less formidable one than the first.

The sight of Edgar was a pleasing diversion in Mr. Nevil's invalid state, and the warmth of his greeting did not alter when he heard his visitor's errand.

It took some time before he could be made to understand that any one wanted to marry his little July, but when he saw that both Edgar and the child herself had made up their minds, he did not raise the least objection. The whole matter seemed to afford him considerable amusement, and he asked Algy again and again if he did not call it a capital joke.

Algy preserved a stern silence, and was not at all inclined to treat this unexpected event as a joke. He could not reasonably object, seeing he had told July a dozen times over what a first-rate fellow that Wynne was, but he found that the present state of affairs had the effect of depriving him both of his sister and his friend, and grumbled accordingly. At the same time he had the candour to own that if July must marry somebody he would rather it be Edgar than any one else. He took great pains to air this sentiment before his

aunt, and enjoyed the discomfiture of her plans with mischievous pleasure.

Alicia Nevil had certainly been worsted, but she bore her defeat with a dignity and composure which deserved a better fate. She had always liked Edgar and was soon on her old terms with him, and seldom gave him reason to feel that to him she owed the failure of her schemes.

Perhaps Juliet was the one of the two whom she found it hardest to forgive. A daughter of the house of Nevil should have known how to rise to the height of the occasion, and not have yielded to a passing fancy. And Juliet had not done this. On the contrary, she had deliberately thrown away her chances. She had been weighed in the balance and found wanting. Miss Nevil, on further reflection, ascribed it all to the character which July had inherited from her mother and the plebeian blood which mingled in her veins with that of the ancient lords of Glenarva. Happily Algy was left to keep up the old traditions and redeem the honour of the family. To prosper his future and uphold the fortunes of Glenarva in his person was an object worth striving after, and to this dream the hopes and labours of her remaining years should be directed. Perhaps when she saw the sunny radiance of July's face, and heard her laugh ring through the halls of Glenarva with even

more than the old brightness, a suspicion crossed her mind that there might be a happier thing, an end more worthy of days of toil and nights of anxious thought, than the gratification of her cherished pride; but if it did, Miss Alicia kept silence, and no one knew what was passing in her mind.

Of all those closely concerned in the matter, the one who received the news with the most surprise was Amy Maxwell. When Wilfrid had read the letter which brought him the good news, and had sufficiently recovered from the first emotion which it excited in his breast, he hastened to find his cousin to share his pleasure with her.

He found Amy sitting in the hall of the hotel, engaged in studying the contents of her letters, and at the same time keeping three or four of her friends amused by the bits of information which she vouchsafed to impart from time to time.

"Dear me," she was saying as Wilfrid approached, "here is Ernest Travers, who writes to say he is coming from Paris to-morrow, and Agatha Morton says her mother's sisters arrive next week. What do you say, Mr. Mills? A garden-party at Villa S. Maur? How perfectly delicious—a garden-party in January! Of course you must go; we will all go, if only for the satisfaction of telling our friends at home how we play

at summer in these blissful regions. I do think this is quite the most deliriously-exciting place I know, don't you agree with me, Janet?"

While she was still speaking her quick eyes lighted on Wilfrid, who stood a few paces from her, uncertain whether to advance or not.

"Wilfrid," she called to him, "don't run away, there's a good creature. I see by your face you have something to tell me. Yes, you have heard from Edgar? I am glad of that, although I have not by any means forgiven him for leaving Cannes just when he was beginning to make himself agreeable. But he always treated me badly, and I suppose I ought to consider myself fortunate to get as much notice as I do. There, I am coming this instant, as soon as ever I have opened this one letter. It has a black seal—so odd, is it not, Miss Malcolm? What a strange thing it is how few people seal their letters in these days! I declare I can positively recollect the day when we all used seals, can't you, Caroline? But no, I was forgetting, of course, you are a chicken to me, child. I wish I were two-and-twenty, I'm sure I do. Here I am, Wilfrid, at your service."

"I have some news to give you," began Wilfrid, with so grave a manner that Amy implored him to wait till after luncheon if he had anything melancholy to relate.

"If you prefer to wait till after luncheon, you have only to please yourself," replied her cousin; but there was a twinkle in the corner of his eye which made Amy beg him to proceed at once.

"Well, then," he said, "it is this. Edgar is going to be married."

Amy uttered a loud exclamation, and started back. "Edgar!" she cried, flinging up both her hands. "Well, this is news. But, quick, who is he going to marry? Not Eleanor Lindsay surely?" she added, a bright thought flashing across her mind.

Wilfrid shook his head. She was wrong.

"No, not Miss Lindsay. Guess again." Apparently the sight of his cousin's suspense amused him, and he liked to keep up the little game.

"But who can it be then?" said Amy, looking puzzled. "I don't believe there is another woman in the world he cares two straws about. To be sure, there was Alicia Nevil, but that would really be monstrous; for goodness sake, Wilfrid, don't tell me it is her."

"It is a Miss Nevil," said Wilfrid, breaking into a smile. "Only she does not spell her name with an A."

"Not Juliet?" cried Amy, clasping her hands together in the wildest excitement. "Why, the

man is crazed, I do believe. Wilfrid, are you quite sure you are in your right senses?"

"Quite sure," said Wilfrid, handing her Edgar's own letter. "Here, you can see what he says for yourself."

Amy took the letter, and sank down breathless with excitement and eagerness on the cushions of a sofa at the end of the hall.

As she read, her mind passed with amazing rapidity through successive phases of bewilderment and pleasure, and it was not till she had gone twice through the letter that she recovered any degree of composure.

"Well, really," she said, when she had done, resting her hand on her knee in a thoughtful attitude, "now we come to think of it, there is nothing so very strange after all. It is only what might have been expected to happen when one remembers your visit to Glenarva, his accident, and all. The extraordinary thing is that it never struck us before. Fred," she called, as her husband came in from the garden with a newspaper in his hand, "what do you think we have just heard? Edgar is going to be married."

"Ah," said Fred Maxwell, in his slow, deliberate voice, "I am not surprised. When people go off in such a hurry it generally means that there is something in the wind."

"You will never guess who the lady in question is," returned Amy. "I am quite sure of that. No, not if you try till midnight."

"Let me see," said her husband, racking his brain to recall the scenes of last season. "Yes, I know. That pretty little girl you were all so anxious about last June, I suppose."

"Fred, are you in league with Mephistophiles?" exclaimed Amy. "Who in the world has let out the secret?"

"I had my suspicions long ago," said Fred coolly, "only you would not believe me. The fact is, I believe you were smitten with blindness as a retribution for your inveterate habit of match-making. All I can say is that I hope you are cured this time, and will give up the practice in future."

"Not in the least," retorted Amy indignantly. "On the contrary, when so confirmed a bachelor as Edgar takes to matrimony it shows there are hopes for all."

"You must forgive me, my dear Edgar," she wrote in a more penitent mood to her cousin. "I had never thought of this. But I am sure you will make the best of husbands, and will never give your wife cause to repent that she refused to follow my advice."

"Poor Amy! she is a good creature after all," said Edgar, as he showed his betrothed Mrs. Maxwell's letter, in a walk which they took to St. Columb's one day. "But I own, if you had married her friend I should not have found it so easy to forgive her. We can afford to be generous now. I have not forgotten that, after all, it was her doing in the first place that Miss July ever came to be more than a name to me. Without her we might still have been strangers."

There was one other person, however, who claimed to have done still more to bring these two together, and that was Lettice Micklewright.

Fortunately Bobby had recovered, and his convalescence was enlivened by the good news which rejoiced his mother's heart. In truth, Lettice scarcely knew how to contain her pride, and greatly magnified her share in the transaction. "It was me who first told him of her," she said to her neighbours. "And from the day that he pulled down the red creeper-leaves for her, I saw how it would be. I always told you Mr. Edgar was something out of the common, and you see I didn't speak without book. I don't grudge him his good luck one brass farthing; but I tell him this—and I'll tell it him again this day twenty years, if I'm alive to say it—he may go search all

England, from the North Pole to the Land's End, aye, and Ameriky too, and I'll lay him a wager he'll not find another lass to match our Miss July."

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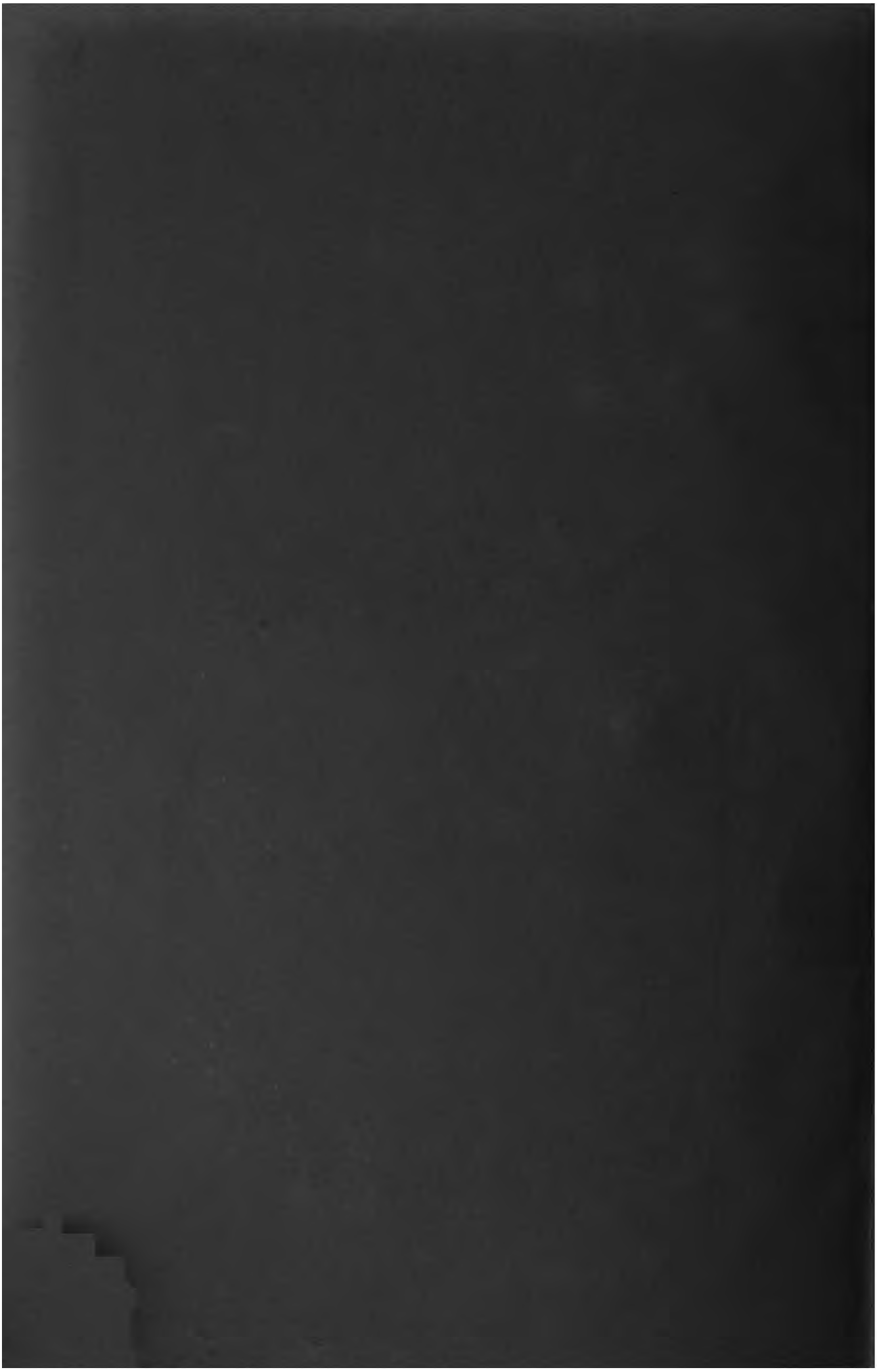
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