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MARCHCROFT MANOR



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MARCHCROFT MANOR.

A Novel.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY

C. A. ROBERTS.

"Amor può molto più che ne voi ne io possiamo."

BOCCACCIO.

VOL. II.



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251. k. 9.

MARCHCROFT MANOR.

CHAPTER I.

There's no art
To find the mind's construction in the face :
He was a gentleman on whom I built
An absolute trust.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE Rector did his best to entertain his distinguished guest, but the time seemed to hang heavily in spite of his efforts. It is difficult to do much towards enlivening a household in which two young and beautiful girls move with clouded brows and smileless lips, like delicate flowers which, when the wind and the rain beat against them, close their fragrant petals and shrink from the chilling storm. When fresh young voices are silent and no ringing laughter echoes from glad lips, politics, the latest discoveries

of science, all fail to dispel the gloom which pervades the atmosphere, however learnedly these interesting subjects may be discussed.

Mr. Selby took his brother-in-law for a drive in the morning, and in the afternoon they went for a walk through the grounds at the Manor, Dr. Malloney's favourite resort whenever he came to Marchcroft. On this occasion his enjoyment of the stroll was rather disturbed by Mr. Selby's lamentations over the present deserted condition of the Manor, and the contrast which it presented to the days when its new owner and his friend had filled the old place with life and fresh interest.

"I am sorry our old friend, George De Tressanay, is gone," said Dr. Malloney, as he stood on a rising knoll which commanded a good view of the house, "I always enjoyed a chat with him. He was thoroughly old-fashioned, it is true, but he had very shrewd perceptions, and it was rather amusing to

meet any one with such downright prejudices and persuasions."

"His intellect was acute enough," answered the Rector, "and I regret the old man in many ways; but of course he mixed so little with the world that his mind grew terribly narrow. I daresay it interested you to hear his thorough-going old notions now and again, but I must confess they made it trying to deal with him when any new scheme that I was anxious should be carried out, was set afloat."

"Ah! I have no doubt you will regret him more as time goes on, and you find the new proprietor, like most young men in these days, deficient in the steadfast qualities which made the old man's friendship a thing to rely upon and value."

"I daresay I should feel it so in many cases, but I assure you that Julian De Tressanay is far above the ordinary run of young men, and he is most anxious for every improvement to be made in the place."

"Everything leads up to this," thought the Doctor to himself, "my relatives seem perfectly possessed on the subject."

"I daresay before long, you will wish these improvements had never arisen in the minds of their originator," he continued aloud, after a few moments' silence, "I daresay this young man will try and alter everything, rushing to the opposite extreme, and anxious most likely to show how much more enlightened he is than his poor old predecessor."

"No indeed," replied Mr. Selby, quite nettled, "I would wager a good deal that such an idea never entered Julian De Tressanay's head. He is desirous for progress, an earnest advocate of improvement in every direction, and I must own that some of his ideas are too democratic for me, though I consider myself a pretty strong Liberal; but I feel confident that he will see that it only does harm for things to go on too fast; for a grand superstructure to rise before a thoroughly firm, solid foundation is laid to

support it. He will realize that he may leave his mark in the world if he only helps to clear the ground and establish this sound basis."

"You will find the whole thing coming rattling about your ears before very long," grumbled Dr. Malloney, "I know all about it. These young men think no one is wise but themselves, and will stop at nothing. I wish at any rate that they would wait till we old ones are underground, safe out of harm's way."

"I assure you, William, you are quite wrong in classing Julian De Tressanay amongst the maniacs you describe."

"Oh, yes," answered Dr. Malloney, in an irritated tone, "I have no doubt he is a piece of perfection ; he really seems quite the rage at Marchcroft."

And he felt quite glad that he was to leave the neighbourhood, where such a monomania appeared to possess the minds of the inhabitants on the following day.

But Dr. Malloney was to make the acquaint-

ance of Julian De Tressanay and his friend, both so overpraised in his opinion, sooner than he had expected.

That evening Mr. Selby received a letter from De Tressanay giving a very indifferent account of Osborne. He did not seem to make any progress towards recovery, and judging from the tone of the letter, De Tressanay was evidently at a loss what to do or to think about his friend.

Mr. and Mrs. Selby were extremely disappointed, they had quite looked forward to better news. Suddenly an inspiration seemed to strike Mrs. Selby.

"William," she said, crossing the room to where her brother was standing, warming himself on the hearth rug, and taking his hand, "there might be some chance for this poor fellow if you could see him and give him your advice; will you?"

"I should be only too glad. I wish you had thought of it to-day, I must get home to-morrow."

The Doctor's momentary irritation quite disappeared as he read the wretched account of Osborne, contained in De Tressanay's letter.

"I wish we had, but we thought he was really better."

"How could I get there?" asked Dr. Malloney.

"If you did not mind starting early to-morrow," answered his sister, "you might take Durnstone on your way. It would be such a relief if you could see Mr. Osborne," and Mrs. Selby looked up at her brother pleadingly.

"I am afraid it must be a serious case," he mused. "Very silly to be sure of a man unaccustomed to horses to go and drive such a vicious beast. I do not see how he could expect to escape killing himself."

As Dr. Malloney spoke his eyes happened to rest on Ella, each word had seemed to pierce the poor child to the heart, and it was with the greatest difficulty she could keep back the tears which rushed to her eyes.

"It was such a pity," said Olive, in her quiet way, "everything was so amusing before, and we did nothing but laugh. You cannot think, papa, how nice it all was, and now it is so dismal," she added, breaking off with a sigh, "and it was so sudden his going and all."

"Can you account for his going so suddenly?" asked her father.

A crimson flush rose to Olive's face.

"I suppose he wanted to go—about something," she replied, confusedly, burying her face over some wools which she began disentangling diligently.

Ella could bear this conversation no longer, she left the room hastily, her father watching her all the time in his quiet observant way.

"It is not much of a compliment to your uncle and aunt, Olive, to say it is all dismal," he continued, without making any remark on Ella's hasty disappearance.

"I assure you, William," interposed Mrs.

Selby, "John and I feel just the same. I assure you, those two young men seemed to bring a fresh air of life into this sleepy old place. They are both original and genial, and Roger Osborne is so pleasant and amusing. Oh, you must see him," she said, breaking off with a gasp of entreaty.

The idea once suggested, Dr. Malloney was as eager to see if he could be of any use to Roger Osborne as his friends could wish, and early next morning he bade adieu to his sister and daughters, and set off to Durnstone accompanied by Mr. Selby.

De Tressanay was anxiously expecting them, but it happened that while he was talking for a few moments to Mr. Selby, Dr. Malloney found himself left alone with Ned Trotter, and he began to make a few inquiries regarding his new patient.

"He is altogether different, sir, from what he used to be," was the latter's report. "I cannot think what they've done to him down in this country. I wish he'd never set foot

in it. I've seen him ill enough before now, but he was always cheerful and ready for a bit of a laugh in an easy moment."

"You notice that he does not keep up his spirits so well now?"

"Spirits, sir? There's no sign of 'em. I don't believe he cares to get well, but just lies there as if dying would be all the same to him."

"Indeed," was Dr. Malloney's only remark; but he revolved Ned Trotter's information in his brain as he entered Roger's room.

De Tressanay awaited Dr. Malloney's verdict with feverish impatience. Mr. Selby had gone into the town, so he was left to endure alone, what seemed to him a long period of suspense. When the distinguished physician, however, returned at last to the sitting-room, he did not seem inclined to vouchsafe any opinion. He stood meditatively by the fire, apparently regardless of Julian's evident anxiety regarding the purport of the words to fall from his lips.

At last he turned to De Tressanay, and said gravely—

“I am inclined to think that Mr. Osborne’s mind is troubled by some care. It may”—

“But will he recover?” interrupted De Tressanay with uncontrollable eagerness.

Dr. Malloney frowned at this interruption of the thread of his ideas.

“I do not say I take an unfavourable view of the case, but”—

“Thank Heaven for that,” broke in Julian fervently.

“But it may help me,” continued Dr. Malloney impatiently, “to see through the case more clearly if you can enlighten me on the subject.”

De Tressanay was silent.

“Well,” asked Dr. Malloney irritably, “am I right in my conjecture or not?”

“Yes.”

“I am right?”

“You are right; Mr. Osborne had a—a—trouble on his mind.”

"An old-standing trouble?"

"No."

"Recent?"

"Yes."

"Very recent?"

"Yes."

De Tressanay began to feel very uncomfortable; his promise of secrecy was ever present to him.

"Money affairs?"

"Oh no!"

"What then?" asked the Doctor, turning and facing De Tressanay fiercely, for his patience was fairly exhausted.

"He was disappointed," said De Tressanay hesitatingly, "about"—he hesitated again.

"I see," returned Dr. Malloney, as if suddenly inspired, "love, of course."

"Indeed, Dr. Malloney," returned Julian with some warmth, "I am not at liberty"—

"My dear sir, you need not say another word," he answered.

And Dr. Malloney asked no more questions. He gave some directions concerning his patient, assured De Tressanay and Mr. Selby that there was reasonable ground of hope for his recovery, had a final interview with the Durnstone medical attendant, and hurried off to catch his train, Julian accompanying him to the station. Altogether Roger Osborne's friends felt reassured and comforted by his visit.

Many ideas connected with his stay at the Rectory and his short visit at Durnstone revolved in Dr. Malloney's mind as he journeyed home. He had to make another halt on his way, so that it was very late before he reached his own house. His daughter Jane was the only member of his family at home, and owing to the lateness of his arrival, he did not see her till the next morning.

They breakfasted together, and the Doctor, who had, he imagined, worked out clearly in his own mind the whole course which events

had taken at Marchcroft, proceeded to give Jane the benefit of some of the conclusions at which he had arrived.

After answering her first inquiries concerning the inmates of the Rectory, he proceeded to tell her about Roger Osborne's accident.

"It really spoilt my visit," he continued; "I am very sorry for the poor fellow, as, I confess, I take rather an interest in him in spite of myself, but I so seldom get a holiday that it was provoking of him to go and try and kill himself just at the time."

"I suppose he did not do it on purpose," replied Jane laughing.

"I am sure I do not know. I extracted from his friend that he had had a disappointment; really that fellow was most exasperating; he kept me there, wasting my time, I do not know how long before I could drag that much information out of him, and there is no saying, you know, what a man disappointed in love will or will not do."

"Oh! you mean a disappointment in love?"

“Of course, Jane. What else would be likely to produce such an effect?”

“But why did this accident interfere so much with your visit? I do not see why it should have made so much difference. He was not ill in the house, and he is no relation.”

“I was going to tell you. They all took this accident as much to heart as if he had been a very near relation; in fact, they did not seem able to think of anything else, which was rather a bore for me. This young man and young De Tressanay, who, you know, has come into the property there, seem to have become very intimate at the house; as for your uncle and aunt they are perfectly infatuated about them both; your aunt especially about this young Osborne. By-the-way, did the girls ever mention them in their letters?”

“Really I hardly remember. You know, they neither of them have the least idea of writing a letter, and I never expect any information of interest in their communications

beyond the fact that Olive has had a good morning's fishing, or that Ella has been arranging flowers. But now you mention it, I do remember Ella writing word that Olive, of all people, was hard at work drawing and learning German. I had quite forgotten it, and I do not suppose either occupation lasted very long."

"Exactly so," answered Dr. Malloney with the satisfied air of a man who finds a scrap of evidence in a new quarter to confirm a preconceived theory, "exactly so. This Mr. Osborne who was so nearly killed gave Olive drawing lessons; every day, I believe."

"Oh!" exclaimed Jane.

"Now, perhaps, you will begin to understand," continued Dr. Malloney, cracking the top of an egg with his spoon. "My idea is, and everything I saw confirmed the idea, that Osborne fell in love with Olive. Whether he actually confessed as much to her I do not know, but I am inclined to think that he did; that Olive refused him, and that in

consequence of this disappointment he drove off recklessly one morning, and came to grief on the way. I believe it was the very morning after some party at the Manor, where it was remarked that the two had a good deal of talk together."

"But I hardly understand now about Olive. Of course she did not care for him, if she refused him; but if she did not, what could have induced her to take up drawing and German? You know how lazy she is."

10 "And she has improved wonderfully in her drawing," answered Dr. Malloney; "but still I do not think she cares about Roger Osborne. I extracted casually from your aunt that he paid some attention to Ella at first, but latterly he seemed to have transferred his admiration to Olive, coming down nearly every morning nominally to sketch himself, but of course it was really for the sake of giving her lessons, and she had some of his sketches to copy. I saw them, and very good they were too."

"But, papa, it is so unlike Olive to exert herself."

"Well, Jane, I suppose the novelty amused her, and they say Osborne is a very pleasant fellow, and it probably amused her, too, to carry on a little flirtation under the plea of art. I do not feel so sure about Ella; she looked miserable, and was supposed to be suffering from the effects of a chill. They said she had been out in the garden without a hat, but she is so used to being out I cannot think it was that."

"I cannot imagine Ella in love," laughed Jane.

"I am afraid she is," said her father, shaking his head, "poor little Ell."

"Who with though? Young Mr. De Tressanay?"

"Gracious no! with this fellow Osborne, who is in love with Olive. A nice mess it all is."

"Did not Uncle John and Aunt Lucy see what was going on?"

“They saw the young people liked being together, but they evidently thought it quite unnecessary for them to interfere. You know they are both very simple-minded, and Marchcroft is an out-of-the-way—out-of-the-world sort of place, where people grow sleepy and unsuspecting. They ought to have been sharper and prevented some of this mischief, but I suppose they can hardly realize that the girls are anything but children; no more they were when they left us three months ago.”

“But you have not told me about Mr. De Tressanay; who is he in love with? Ella?”

“No, no. I believe he is unscathed, perhaps the only one of the quartett entirely so, and a very fine intelligent young fellow he seemed when I had not to pump him about his friend’s love affairs. I will ask him here some day, I should like to meet him again. He’s sound enough.”

“Are you sure?” asked Jane, quizzically.

“Of course I am. Do you suppose a fellow

who was in love, would care to discuss all sorts of political theories with your uncle as he seems to have done by the hour together? ”

“ I suppose not. I have no doubt,” continued Jane, trying to repress a smile, “ that it’s all very serious, but it is so difficult not to laugh at the idea of any one falling in love with either of those two children.”

“ You forget that they are growing older,” said her father, as he hurried away to begin his day’s work.

No wonder these children liked being at Marchcroft Rectory, where they were made so much of. At home no one could realize that they were really grown up.

CHAPTER II.

But the full sum of me
Is sum of something, which, to term in gross,
Is an unlesson'd girl, unschool'd, unpractised :
Happy in this, she is not yet so old
But she may learn ; happier than this,
She is not bred so dull but she can learn ;
Happiest of all, is, that her gentle spirit
Commits itself to yours to be directed,
As from her lord, her governor, her king.
SHAKESPEARE.

THE trees in the park at Marchcroft were losing their leaves rapidly, the russet tints shone in the brief hours of morning sunshine when the turf was grey with dew and glittering with white gossamer-like webs ; for the autumn days were far spent and nature was fast sinking into the quiet chill of early winter.

The Manor was still deserted, save now and then when Julian De Tressanay came over and spent a few hours at the house and hurried back to his friend. Roger Osborne was recovering, but the process of recovery

was long and weary. Perhaps Ned Trotter was right when he said that his master did not care to get well. He roused himself now and then, feeling how heavily the time must hang on Julian's hands, and awoke a hope in his friend's mind that his former spirits were returning, as he carried on a conversation in his old animated manner; but the effort would gradually fail, and again he would lie hour after hour silent and apathetic.

"My dear Julian," he would say sometimes, "it must be so hopelessly dull for you here; do go and leave me, I have everything I want, and I am getting well."

But Julian was deaf to these frequent entreaties. He was thankful to have his friend spared to him, and willingly bore the dulness for his sake.

He did not see much of Olive during this long, trying time. He called occasionally at the Rectory, but his visits were necessarily very short, and since the day that she came over to Durnstone with her uncle, he had

never seen her alone. Still it was so sweet to see her if only now and then, and he felt sure he could not misinterpret the look of welcome which brightened her face whenever they met ; altogether he felt content to wait, to cherish longing thoughts of her within his soul, and to delay the supreme moment which should determine the happiness of his life.

With this growing hopefulness on his own part, he took a more and more desponding view of Roger's affairs.

Roger still persisted in his conviction that Ella did not care for him ; and he seemed to have a morbid dread, heightened probably by the strange fancies of illness, of any of the associations of the last day he had spent at Marchcroft being revived. It is true that he saw the Rector occasionally, but then he always managed to confine the conversation almost entirely to topics with no personal bearing, and although Mrs. Selby had been twice in the town, and had offered to come

in and sit with him a while, he had begged Julian to say he was tired or to urge any plea to excuse him from seeing her. It seemed to Julian that Roger misinterpreted the whole course of events, and entirely misconstrued all that he occasionally told him of Ella's looks and words.

One day Julian had been absent for an unusually long time; he had been at the Manor and then at the Rectory, and there the time passed so quickly that he was surprised to find how late it was when at last, he tore himself away.

On his return he gave Roger an account of the proceedings of the day; after telling him something of his visit at the Rectory, he said, gravely—

“And Roger, we happened to be alone in the drawing-room for a minute or two, and Ella asked about you with the greatest anxiety. Her eyes were quite red, as if she had been crying, I assure you they were.”

“It is of no good trying to persuade me,

my dear fellow," interrupted Roger, "you know nothing about girls. They are so tender-hearted they cannot bear to hear of pains and damages. They—Ella would weep bitterly if she saw a sparrow with a broken leg, especially if she had often watched it hopping about till it had got quite tame."

Julian would have laughed at the whimsical simile, but he was too angry with Ella, and too indignant with Roger's most provoking behaviour in the matter.

The monotony of their life at Durnstone was broken a few days later by a visit one fine afternoon from Mr. Selby. Gratified to find Roger considerably better, he said—

"Really Osborne you will soon be able for a move into the sitting-room. Once there you will have to give a reception to celebrate your convalescence. I shall bring all my party over to congratulate you."

"You are very kind," returned Roger, warmly.

"Well, how soon shall it be? In a fort-

night, do you think De Tressanay?" and the Rector's face beamed with expectant pleasure.

"Do not think me ungrateful, Mr. Selby," said Roger, "but my first move must really be up to London. If I can move at all, why not into a train at once? I was thinking only this morning that there could be no reason why I should not get up to town almost immediately. All my affairs will be going to ruin. I shall lose half my winter's work."

Julian raised his eyebrows in astonishment but he made no remark.

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Selby, "go up to London as you are now? I am sure your doctor will not let you do anything of the sort."

"I shall not ask him," answered Roger with a laugh.

"But you are utterly unfit for work," argued the Rector.

"It would be the best thing in the world

for me, Mr. Selby, I assure you. There is nothing so bad for a man who has been ill as to lie doing nothing. It is the best thing in the world to be obliged to exert oneself."

"I hope you will not allow him to be so foolish, De Tressanay," replied the Rector seriously.

De Tressanay shook his head.

"What can I do?" he said.

"The only reasonable thing to do, Osborne," continued Mr. Selby, "would be to come back to the Manor, we will say in about three weeks. The change and additional comforts will be the very thing for you. I daresay when you have been there for a month, you may think of getting back to London. My good fellow, the journey would kill you now."

"I did not say I was going to start to-day," answered Roger, still secretly cherishing his intention, but touched by the Rector's kindly interest.

"No, no," replied the latter soothingly,

imagining that he had gained his point, "we shall get our own way, De Tressanay, and manage him as we wish."

The moment Mr. Selby was gone Roger called Julian, and said eagerly—

"Julian, I must go as soon as possible. You know they will be sure to come over, they are so kind and good, and I could not stand it now, indeed I could not."

Roger was still very weak, his face was flushed and his voice trembled with excitement.

"Very well, Roger," answered Julian, "we will get away as soon as possible," but his heart sank at the idea of a journey as he looked at Roger's sunken form and wasted hands.

Mr. Selby was not a little disappointed when scarcely a week after this interview he received a note from Roger Osborne himself, announcing that they were to start for London on the following day. He was to have an invalid carriage, and declared him-

self quite equal to the exertion. He begged his kindest remembrances to all at the Rectory, adding that he should never forget the kindness he had received from Mr. Selby and his wife.

The letter ended rather abruptly, as if the hand which had guided the pen had grown suddenly weary.

"Now they will both be gone quite away," said Olive, when she and Ella found themselves alone.

"Yes," answered Ella sadly, "but Mr. De Tressanay will come back."

"So may Mr. Osborne."

"I do not believe he will, or why should he not have come now?" returned Ella in a choking voice.

She had been brighter of late since she knew that Roger was recovering. It had seemed enough for her at first that the awful shadow which had loomed behind the hope of life in those dark days after the accident, had slowly vanished. She had felt too happy and

thankful as that terror had lost its hold upon her to realize any other feeling.

When we are subject to any great mental strain, or are living through some phase of overwhelming, passionate feeling, we are apt to forget that we shall sink back again to a less intense frame of mind, when we shall be no longer upborne by this abnormal exaltation of spirit. While it lasts, it seems comparatively easy to us to be patient and strong, but when the tension is at last relaxed and we awake to find ourselves in the same old groove, with the same monotony of details recurring with the same fretful persistency, the same tediousness of slowly passing hours, and the same unavoidable association with indifferent and perhaps uncongenial acquaintances, it is then that the trial penetrates to the soul with the sharpness of thrice-tempered steel ; it is then that the heart realizes the full depths of that suffering which still remains to be endured, although the bitterness of death may be passed.

This was what Ella had now to realize. All her hopes seemed fulfilled when she first knew that Osborne would recover and take his place in the world as before; but now she had to learn to live as if she had never seen him, and to learn to think of him as one who was dead to her for ever. She felt that he would never see her again if he could help it; that he loved her too well to bear that, she now instinctively divined; she had deliberately put away this love with her own hands, and having quenched its light, she must abide by the darkness she had chosen for her portion.

The journey to London did not kill Roger Osborne as Mr. Selby had prophesied, but the fatigue told so severely on him as to retard his progress considerably.

“Still, Julian,” he said one evening, when his friend had been pointing out to him that the slowness towards recovery of which he complained was to be attributed to his own rashness in moving so soon, “if it has done any harm, which I do not believe, it is better

up here than in that little wretched room at Durnstone," and his eyes rested complacently on the fine engravings and other tasteful objects which adorned his rooms. "I cannot think how you survived that time," he added; "this is far better for you as well as me."

Julian made no reply. He was willing to make sacrifices for his friend, but at Durnstone he heard of Olive sometimes, and saw her occasionally. To him that atoned for the dulness of the quiet old town and the dreariness of the inn. Now he heard her name no more, nor caught a glimpse of the face he had learnt to love above all other on earth.

In the state of convalescence at which Osborne had arrived by slow degrees, the lapse of a fortnight makes a good deal of difference. At the end of that period De Tressanay really thought him well enough to fare by himself for a time, and decided on returning to Marchcroft.

"I shall miss you dreadfully, Roger," he said, "the place will seem deserted without you."

"Yes," answered Roger, "we were very happy there, and I trust you will be very happy there again," he added with a sigh. "I am glad you are going, Julian; I know you have sacrificed a good deal staying away so long with me."

"Don't call that a sacrifice, Roger."

"But I do; especially under the circumstances. I shall miss you perhaps; it would sound ungrateful, you know, if I said I should not; but I shall have a constant excitement in seeing how much more I can do every day, and I shall not want for visitors. So take my blessing and go."

And Julian really went the next day.

He did not reach Marlsham till late. How different was this dark, lonely second home coming, from his first arrival with Roger on the warm August afternoon. But as his new horses, more carefully selected than his first

unlucky purchase, flew along the hard roads, and the stars glimmered in the frosty air, Julian fell into a dream. He thought he was hastening home, as he was doing in reality, and the night was sharp and cold, but as he neared the house he saw the lights glistening through the windows, the door flies open, a slight figure rushes to meet him, warm hands take his numb fingers in their soft grasp, and a face glowing with sweet welcome is raised to meet his own; the whole house seems pervaded with light and suffused by a vivifying air of gladness and hope.

Suddenly the carriage stops, but no opening door reveals a flood of light or sound of tender words; it is but the heavy park gate which rolls back creaking on its hinges, and Julian is roused from his delicious reverie.

The door opens at last, it is true, as the carriage stops at the foot of the broad flight of steps, but no face welcomes the belated traveller save the impassible countenance of old Job, and within all is silent.

At every step, at every turn, Julian missed Roger Osborne. He could hardly help expecting to see him standing on the hearth, he could hardly help looking to see the finely cut profile against the old coloured glass in the hall window, Roger's favourite seat, where he loved to lounge away a spare half-hour, and he found himself almost listening for the echo of his voice on the stairs. But no sound fell on his ear that evening but the regular ticking and musical chimes of the old clock, and Job's slow footfall as he paced to and fro waiting on his master.

Next morning Julian walked down to the Rectory; he received a warm welcome there.

"This is something like old times," exclaimed Olive gaily, as her uncle insisted on his staying to luncheon.

Julian could not forbear a smile; Olive looked so young, so fresh, it seemed as if her bright young years could know nothing of age.

Ella tried to seem animated like the rest

of the party, but it struck De Tressanay that the childlike look had fled from her brow, and looking up once or twice he met her eyes anxiously fixed on his face as he spoke of Roger Osborne. Their wistful expression haunted his mind for a long time afterwards, and seemed to plead with the hard thoughts which he could not help harbouring against her in his inmost heart.

The Manor seemed less dreary that afternoon to Julian. He fell into many reveries as he sat idly in the hall and watched the flames flicker round the burning logs, but his thoughts were happy and full of hope. This evening too the quiet old rooms and silent staircase are full of a beloved presence and echo to the sound of a familiar voice, but the face which he sees and the words which he hears are other than Roger's.

The days passed pleasantly. Seeing Olive constantly, and reading fresh hopes in her face day by day, Julian almost dreaded any change in this delicious dream in which the

whole world was steeped for him ; no opportunity presented itself for venturing a step farther towards the climax of his desires, and he almost shrank from touching the airy edifice which he had built up, and which rose in such fair symmetry before his eyes. It was not within the tendencies of Julian De Tressanay's character to bear any period of suspense with equanimity or resignation. Roger Osborne would dally on the brink of a decision, playing with the chances which rose uppermost, unwilling to face the final conclusion ; but Julian could not bear for any momentous decision to waver in the balances. Certainty was to him essential ; disappointment more easy for him to bear than elusive shadows which wearied and sickened his soul. In this case, however, he could not bring himself to believe that uncertainty existed. Even the warning of Roger's fate was forgotten.

Absorbed in these pleasant visions, Julian was almost sorry that he had asked a mutual

friend of his and Roger's to come down for a Sunday; he did not now care for his solitude to be disturbed.

Mr. Molyneux arrived, however, according to Julian's invitation, but he found so much to admire and interest him at the Manor that De Tressanay had not much trouble in entertaining him. Towards the close of the afternoon they walked down to the Rectory. Julian introduced Mr. Molyneux as Roger's friend, as well as his own, and naturally enough Osborne's name was a frequent theme of conversation.

After hearing the latest accounts that Mr. Molyneux could give of Roger's returning health and strength, Mr. Selby said—

“He was so anxious to get back to London. I suppose now he is better he is really hard at work.”

“Who? Osborne?” asked Molyneux.

“Yes.”

“That would be delightful, Mr. Selby. Osborne hard at work!”

The bare notion of such a thing sufficed to make Mr. Molyneux laugh heartily.

"But," returned Mr. Selby seriously, "he gave me to understand that he was most anxious to be at work again. In fact he was in such a hurry to be back to his professional business that he insisted on starting up to town before he ought to have thought of moving. Was not that the case, De Tressanay?"

"He certainly ought not to have travelled when he did," returned Julian, turning over the leaves of a photograph book and vainly racking his brain for a subject to give a new direction to the conversation.

"No, of course not, and he was much the worse for the journey."

"Yes, much the worse."

"I told you so, Mr. Molyneux," continued Mr. Selby triumphantly.

"He may have been anxious to get back to town, I do not attempt to dispute that fact," returned Molyneux, "but as to his being

keen about his work, or anything else in life, it is too utterly unlike the man. Excuse my laughing, Mr. Selby, but it is such a delightfully new view of Osborne's character. I assure you he is the most easy-going, *fainéant* fellow in the world. He would hardly think his life worth the trouble of saving if it cost much effort."

"But," interposed the Rector with a puzzled expression of countenance, "he surely must work, for I understand he holds a good position in his profession, and that is not to be attained, I believe, without some exertion."

"That is very true, and he gets plenty of work, but how he ever gets through it is a standing wonder. He thinks far more about his rare books and old engravings than anything else. I believe if anything could excite him, it would be a close competition for some curiosity. He has the most wonderful collection of all kind of objects of virtu in his rooms, has he not De Tressanay?"

“ Yes,” answered Julian ; then hurrying on rather hastily, he asked, “ By the way, did you read that account of the new excavations in the neighbourhood of Athens ? ”

“ No, I did not see it,” returned Molyneux ; then he continued persistently, “ I shall have such a laugh at Osborne when I get back ; I shall be sure to see him in the course of a few days, and I shall ask him what he means by passing himself off as a hard-working fellow upon you all. I shall just inform him of the way in which I have been able to unveil the deception, and show his character to you in its true light.”

“ We were very well satisfied with him as we knew him,” returned the Rector.

Ella could have embraced her uncle for these words. The conversation had been very embarrassing to her at first, but she soon forgot her embarrassment in the boiling indignation she felt at Mr. Molyneux’s way of speaking of Roger Osborne. He did not know him, she thought proudly to herself ; it

was they at the Rectory who knew him; she herself perhaps best of all, not this flippant acquaintance.

"I was mentioning these excavations," broke in De Tressanay, making another desperate effort to change the subject. "I see they have brought to light a fine statue, unfortunately somewhat imperfect, and some ornaments of exquisite workmanship."

"I did not fancy you would be interested in the subject, De Tressanay," answered Mr. Selby. "I thought neither archæology nor art had any attractions for you. Perhaps we have mistaken your character as well as Osborne's," he added with a quizzical smile.

"No, indeed. I do not claim to know much about such things, but you would not debar me from taking a certain amount of interest when the creations of a people like the Greeks are brought to light, after being buried in the earth for hundreds of years."

"Really, Mr. Selby," Molyneux began again, "I can hardly recognize either of my

friends. I assure you this is quite a new line for De Tressanay to strike out. I have seen him pass by the most interesting memorials of antiquity; I suppose I must give them some such name to emulate his ready eloquence, without vouchsafing a look to their beauty or uniqueness; in fact bestowing a sharp hint on those who tried to enlighten his really gross ignorance on all such matters, to the effect that the living beings outside the museum halls were far more worthy of our interest, whatever their deficiency in pose, in beauty of feature or form might be."

"I hope you will not accept Mr. Molyneux's views of either of us too literally," said De Tressanay with ill-disguised impatience. "I think it is time for us to start," he continued, rising, "we shall have a dark walk home."

"It is very odd, Lucy," said Mr. Selby, that evening to his wife when they were alone together, "it is very odd that Roger

Osborne should have been in such a hurry to get back to his work, if he is so indifferent about it as this Mr. Molyneux seems to say."

"I always doubted his business being the real reason," answered Mrs. Selby.

"Did you, Lucy? Why? What could have been his motive?"

"I used to fancy that Ella took his accident more to heart than we might have expected, but as she seemed much brighter when he began to recover, although she did not see him again, I suppose I was mistaken, but I do not know, John; I have given up trying to puzzle it out."

"I do not see that Ella's being upset about the poor fellow's accident has anything to do with it," said the Rector quite bewildered.

"No, John. I do not suppose it has. We must just let things alone."

"We must, indeed; the issue is not in our hands," replied her husband solemnly.

The disturbing effect which Mr. Molyneux's visit seemed to have had on the minds of his new acquaintances had hardly subsided when Mrs. Selby received a letter from her brother, Dr. Malloney, saying that he was sorry to shorten his daughters' visit at Marchcroft, but that he wished them to return home the following week. Some old family friends were coming to stay with him, and he wished his younger children to be at home to assist Jane in entertaining them.

A general chorus of regrets echoed round the breakfast table when Mrs. Selby announced the contents of the letter. Olive seemed the most depressed.

"I can't bear going away, Aunt Lucy," she said.

"And we can't bear your going," returned the Rector, stroking her hand tenderly.

He was so fond of these two children, and he could not bear to see the tears rising to Olive's eyes, though she struggled hard to keep them down.

"It will be so dull," she said, "and I do not want to see the Cummingses at all; I wish they would stay away."

"You are very good not to find it dull here with your old uncle and aunt," said Mr. Selby.

"I am never dull here, Uncle John," she returned, blushing, although there was no apparent reason for blushing.

"I suppose Lucy, William would not be satisfied with one of them," suggested the Rector, "then we might keep one here, but I do not know which we could choose," he added, as his eyes wandered fondly from one face to the other.

But the sisters were never separated.

"Oh, no!" said Ella, "we must be together."

"No, Uncle John," said Olive, loyally, "I could not leave Ell."

"Then I fear there is no help for it," sighed Mrs. Selby.

There was one person in Marchcroft whom

this intelligence affected very deeply, and that was Julian De Tressanay.

During this, his second stay at the Manor, he was endeavouring to become better acquainted with his tenants, and he spent many an hour visiting the farms on his estate. His walks were not always solitary, for sometimes he was joined by Mr. Selby, and once or twice not only by Mr. Selby but by his nieces also.

One day, however, De Tressanay had been walking alone ; he had taken a long round through sheltered lanes and across wide spreading meadows. He came at last to a turning which would have led him straight home to the Manor, but Julian was not at all tired, and turning aside from the direct path, without a moment's hesitation, struck into a narrow road which he knew would lead him round by the Rectory. The sun was setting, sinking like a fiery ball in the pale wintry sky. The road was dry and hard and Julian, who had been walking along

rather slowly with the careless gait of a man absorbed in some interesting subject of meditation, suddenly gathered himself together. His step grew firmer and more elastic, he held his head erect, his whole bearing became that of a man, who ceasing to revolve a decision in his brain, feels himself inspired with a momentous determination.

On he walked with long swinging steps, but the distance was considerable, and the last reflection left by the setting sun had faded from the clouds which floated above the horizon, before he entered the Rectory-gate, and the moon had begun to shed a clear glimmering light.

Notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, Julian was told in answer to his inquiry for any of the family, that no one was in. He had counted so confidently on seeing them, that he could scarcely realize this at first, and stood incredulous at the door till the servant again repeated the unwelcome assertion. Not till then did he turn away

and walk down the drive with unwilling tread.

But before he was half-way to the gate, a light step struck his ear ; he paused and his heart beat quicker in keen expectation. The step came nearer, a figure advanced round the curve of the gravel drive. It was Olive. The sharp air had lent a warm tinge of colour to her cheek ; she looked the very type of bright and lovely maidenhood, the ideal embodiment of youth and hope.

“ You see there is some one at home after all,” she said, holding out her hand, then with a sudden return of her old imperious manner which she had almost dropped of late when she spoke to Julian, she added, “ and so you will not be able to get away just yet, if you want to ever so much.”

“ I do not want to go away,” he answered.

“ You know you had better make the most of us,” she continued, the exhilarating walk in the frosty air seemed to have imbued her with an irrepressible spirit of mirth, “ because

we have to go away so soon, so very soon. I know I am very sorry, only I cannot feel sorry about anything just at this minute. It is so clear and bright I feel as if I could do nothing but dance," and she danced round and round, and then laughed at her own childishness.

"You must be ashamed of me, I am so silly," she said, with a sudden penitence. "I shall be ashamed of myself presently, Mr. De Tressanay, what is it that makes one feel so very glad just for a little while sometimes?"

"You ought always to be glad just as you are now."

"Then you do not mind?"

"Mind? How could I mind?"

De Tressanay had come close to Olive, a deep tenderness quivered in his voice as he spoke and gleamed in his eyes as he looked down upon her.

"Why, I know you think one ought to be serious and learn German, and all sorts of things, and I do try to."

But it was probably the look on his face that made her suddenly take another little dance, and this time she went away across the narrow strip of lawn, and De Tressanay had to follow her.

The moonlight had grown bright and wide in the pale blue sky, and glimmered through the branches of the old cedar. It was quite still, not a breath of wind stirred in the clear quiet of the garden.

Julian stood by the dark cedar boughs, but he did not step into the gloom under the great branches. Olive stopped in her wild little dance, she came near and stood beneath the tree, leaning against the massive old trunk. She glanced up at the silvery light which shone through the dark dome above her and lighted the tall figure standing near, and glistened on the eager face which had looked down into her eyes with such strange intensity. She stood quite still. She did not wish to dance any more.

For an instant nothing broke the silence ;

a bat wheeled silently near, a leaf fell noiselessly to the ground ; the light of the moon seemed to bathe everything in a luminous stillness.

Another instant and there came one word, and that but the naming of a name, from Julian's lips. He did not follow her this time, he merely said—"Olive." And this one word so uttered, seemed to break the silence, and to flutter out on unseen wings into the garden ; and the branches stirred softly, and the leaves rustled as if they must echo the syllables in faint response.

For Olive made no answer. She left that to the spirits of the trees and flowers which seemed to be moving abroad in that wonderful garden world. But if her lips gave no answer, she came, obedient to Julian's voice, and stood still for an instant before him. Her eyes were cast downwards, and downwards hung her hands clasped loosely together. Her whole attitude seemed to say, "Call, and I come, for you are my master for ever." She

did not seem surprised that he had called her by her Christian name. It was as if he had a right to bid her come to him when he thought fit, and hearing such voice she must surely obey.

“Olive,” he said again, and stooping low he took both her hands in his.

Still she did not answer, the heavy eyelids drooped still more heavily over the beautiful eyes, the little head sank still lower, but she did not attempt to draw away her hands though Julian felt they trembled at his touch.

“Look up at me once,” he pleaded.

And slowly the head was upraised, and slowly the long dark lashes lifted from the glowing cheek; obedient to the letter of his word, Olive looked up once into his burning eyes; she looked but for a second, and then she buried her face on his breast.

The moon shone on, and the evening star shed its light, but Julian De Tressanay and Olive heeded not the splendour of the one,

or the far luminousness of the other, for the light of a pure and deep love shed its all-surpassing glory in their hearts.

Mr. and Mrs. Selby and Ella did not return till very late, and consequently the evening was considerably shorter than usual. Olive escaped to her own room as soon as possible. When Ella came up she found her sister leaning against the window, looking out into the bright moonlit world. A light which Ella had never seen in her sister's face radiated from her deep lustrous eyes.

"What is it, Olive?" she asked, going up to her and folding her arm gently round her. "I am sure something has happened!"

And Olive told Ella what had happened.

"I am so glad," said Ella, stroking Olive's warm white hands, "I am so glad," she said again with a sigh; "but when he asked you, did you not feel frightened, and as if you did not know where you were?"

"Frightened? no Ella. Only a strange wonderful feeling came over me as if my

heart could not bear so much happiness all at once."

"And what did you say?"

"I do not think I said anything for a long time, but afterwards I told him I was not half good enough or clever enough for him; but that if he would have patience with me I would learn and do everything he wished."

"That is true, Olive. We are neither of us clever, and we have learnt so little, and they are so clever; I mean he is."

"Yes, Ell, so clever and so wise; I know nothing, I told him so again and again; but Ell, nobody can be happy in the world unless some one cares for them very much, and you know I can do that as well as any one who knew a great deal; and he said the more I could like—love him, the happier he should be."

"Are you going to tell Uncle John and Aunt Lucy?"

"No. He is coming to-morrow, directly after breakfast, to tell them. He could not

come this evening because some people were coming to dine at the Manor, and he had to go away in such a hurry when he remembered about them. He said he should write to papa to-night after they were gone. But for this one night, nobody knows but us, Ella. You and I, and he."

CHAPTER III.

Hath there been such a time, (I'd fain know that,)
 That I have positively said, 'Tis so,
 When it proved otherwise ?

SHAKESPEARE.

THE principal actors in the scenes which had been taking place at Marchcroft had grown so absorbed in the interests which filled their daily lives, that they had almost forgotten that another world lay beyond their own small system. This other world however had been fully conscious of its own existence ; its denizens had gone on their own way, forming their own conclusions with regard to the little circle at Marchcroft.

Dr. Malloney had been fully occupied as usual, but happening to be called to London, about three weeks after Roger Osborne's return home, and finding he had an hour or two to spare late in the afternoon, he be-thought himself of his former patient, and made up his mind to pay him a visit.

The door was opened by Ned Trotter, who informed Dr. Malloney that his master was at home. Roger was not in his sitting-room when Dr. Malloney was shown in, and being left alone for a few minutes, the whole character of the room was scanned by his observant eyes during that short space of time. First he noted the pictures and engravings, and being a great judge and eager collector of art productions, they inspired him with a high opinion of their owner's taste and discrimination in their choice. Secondly he observed that a great variety of books lay about the room; some were open on the tables, others were lying closed on chairs as if cast aside, but here Dr. Malloney's solitary meditations were interrupted by the re-entrance of Ned Trotter, who busied himself in making up the fire.

"Mr. Osborne will be in directly, sir," he said.

"He is much better, I hope?"

"You will see him able to get about again,

sir," but Ned Trotter did not give his report with the cheerfulness with which a servant, attached to his master, might have been expected to speak of such progress.

"I am glad of that," replied Dr. Malloney, "I hope his spirits have improved as well."

Ned Trotter stood up with the coal box in his hand and looked at Dr. Malloney for a few seconds, apparently the Doctor's face inspired him with a feeling of confidence, for he then said, emphatically—

"I would willingly see both his legs broke instead of one, sir, if he was only like himself."

"He would be much obliged to you, I am sure," was the Doctor's reply.

"Well, sir, it cuts any one to the heart as was used to him in old days before he went down to that blessed place in the country, to see how altered he is. He never speaks if he can help it, and don't care for nothing. I see him, I comes in pretendin' as there's things to be done in the room after he comes

in, and there he is, sure enough, lounging in a chair or on the sofa, as if day and night was all the same to him; and he will take down twenty books and just look at them and put them all away again."

"It looks like it," muttered the Doctor, but further conversation was interrupted by the appearance of Roger himself.

"I am glad to see you are so much better," said Dr. Malloney, after the customary greetings had passed between himself and Osborne, "but you are still very lame."

"Oh! I can get about," was the answer, "it is rather slow work perhaps, but it does not matter you know, one gets accustomed to most things and there is no hurry."

And the same key sounded on his visitor's ears throughout all their subsequent conversation. Osborne talked agreeably, wittily enough, but a spark of genuine interest was not to be roused. As the Doctor admitted to his daughter, he had felt a degree of interest in Roger, notwithstanding the slight grudge

he owed him for having cast a gloom over his stay at the Rectory, and now in this second interview this interest grew stronger and more decided, and Dr. Malloney rapidly gave way to the charm which Osborne generally exercised over those with whom he came in contact.

The whole room too, and its contents, seemed to take Dr. Malloney back to his own youth, and his own old aspirations for culture, and for a life harmoniously surrounded by everything which could attract the intellect or delight the eye ; a life to be consecrated to science and soothed by art. But these aspirations soon soared away, like far-off vanishing clouds ; for marrying in early life, he had a hard struggle to maintain a family in the uncertain days of his first apprenticeship to his profession.

He had grown famous in the slow course of years ; he had grown rich and could again indulge his cherished tastes, but he never lost a wistful regret for the best years of his

early manhood, when he had to forego the refined indulgences he longed for to recreate his keen faculties in leisure moments, for the months and weeks he had passed in unbroken drudgery.

With some men, affection, love, the brightness of a home, even though the walls are bare, the fare frugal, is such as to atone for any deprivation, and to be valued higher than all luxuries; but possibly, no such compensating happiness fell to Dr. Malloney's share in the early years of his married life.

This he felt was the home he should have keenly enjoyed; these, looking at the picture-covered walls, and the book shelves, the treasures and resources which would have delighted his life, but as his interest in the owner of these admired possessions grew stronger, he perceived more and more closely that they could give little or no pleasure where the fountain springs of joy were dried up.

Dr. Malloney plainly read in Roger Os-

borne's looks and words that some outer influence had suddenly altered the smooth current of life ; he could read an intense weariness of existence in every movement, and in every line of the handsome face on which he bent his keen, observant eyes.

And a strong current of regret stirred in his heart.

Roger's pictures naturally became one of the principal subjects of conversation.

"I wonder being such a connoisseur, Mr. Osborne, that you were not at the sale this morning, there were some choice things which would have delighted your heart."

"I believe I did hear of it," replied Roger.

"You ought really to have been there. You and I should have had a fight for the pendant to that picture," said Dr. Malloney, pointing to a small Dutch painting, "it was such a grand opportunity of making the pair complete ; you really ought to have had it. Did you know it was to be sold ?"

"No. I did not look over the catalogue."

“Really it is a great pity, though I am probably the gainer by it. But you must have been very keen to make such a collection as you possess.”

“Yes. I believe I was.”

Then Roger brought out a portfolio of engravings ; these and his comments upon them, interested Dr. Malloney so much that he could only tear himself away just in time to catch his train, for he was going to return home that night.

Dr. Malloney thought a great deal about Roger Osborne as he travelled down to Fenington. “Here,” he said to himself, “is a man in the prime of life, with unusual talents, cultivated tastes and the power of indulging them, distinguished in his profession, in fact with everything which makes life worth having to an ordinarily sensible being. But to this unreasonable mortal all these good gifts are turned to bitterness and are valueless in his eyes. And why? because forsooth a mere child fancies she

is not in love with him. Of course she does not know her own mind. I would do anything to set matters straight. I do not know when I have taken such a fancy to any one as to this fellow who limps about as if lameness were as pleasant as anything else. I shall soon bring Olive to reason ; ” and then the good Doctor’s imagination took a wider flight. He already pictured to himself a final reconciliation between the two ; and in the enthusiasm of the moment he found himself presenting the very picture he had bought that morning, and which he was taking home with such care and pride, to his future son-in-law ; and if presents are to be valued according to the worth at which they are estimated by the giver, the value of this was not to be reckoned in £ s. d., for it was the greatest sacrifice that Dr. Malloney could make.

It was certainly the case that Dr. Malloney at this moment was troubling his mind more about Roger’s than about Olive’s happiness.

This was occasioned in a great measure by the fact that the Doctor and his younger daughters led lives so apart from one another, that but little intimate sympathy had existed between them.

They had stood in awe of his swift judgments and severe censure, and he had scarcely thought of them save as pretty, amiable children who were quite satisfied with plenty of new clothes and occasional parties, and who it was Jane's business to look after. He had hardly realized the fact that they were grown up until this last visit to Marchcroft ; before that he would have been ready to laugh with Jane at the idea of their making a serious difference in any man's life. Now even it was hard to grasp the reality of such a fact.

Some people overvalue their own property, and have a vastly exaggerated idea of their own importance, of the wisdom and weight of their own ideas as well as of the superiority of their own children. Others, on the

contrary, have a tendency to depreciate everything that belongs to them ; they are modest as to their own possessions and attainments, and can hardly grasp the idea that their children can be worth seeing or can be measured even by the average standard they apply to others.

In this latter respect, Dr. Malloney belonged to this second and far less numerous class. He believed, it is true, that his own judgment was seldom at fault, but his younger daughters were but undeveloped, and somewhat frivolous children in his estimation.

His eldest daughter and himself usually discussed most of the affairs appertaining to the family and household over their breakfast, it was often the only time that Dr. Malloney had to give to such everyday affairs. After he and Jane had read some of their letters, Jane said—

“ And who did you see in London, papa ? ”

“ Well, I saw a good many people I knew, but amongst others, Roger Osborne.”

“Roger Osborne?” repeated Jane, indifferently. “Oh, yes! I know who you mean.”

“I always felt rather angry with him, you know, on account of the fuss there was about him all the time I was at Marchcroft, but the fellow rather struck me what with his bad hurts and his good looks, and I went to look him up.”

“Has he got well again?”

“That is a question I can only partially answer. His broken leg is well enough for him to get about again, and his head seems to have recovered, and I daresay his other injuries and contusions have entirely disappeared.”

“Why, what more could he have had the matter with him?”

“There is the question,” answered Dr. Malloney. He had taken up his newspaper, but he laid it down again on the table and looked at Jane over his spectacles, “there is the question.”

“If you do not know, nobody can, papa.”

"I do not pretend to heal people's hearts, my dear."

"Oh! is that all?" laughed Jane, rather contemptuously.

She seemed to think that people weak enough to suffer any trouble in the region of the heart, must be poor creatures.

"In some cases it means a great deal, Jane."

"But how do you know that it does in his?"

"I will tell you. I happened to mention Osborne's name to a friend I was lunching with, and I found he knew him very well, and told me a good deal about him, what an accomplished man he was and so forth. He went on to say that he was one of those lucky fellows who never take anything to heart; bearing unavoidable disagreeables with a languid indifference, and letting his life drift along as pleasantly as may be. I found the reality very different," said the Doctor, shaking his head gravely.

"But how could this friend be wrong if he knew Mr. Osborne so well?"

"Ah! he had not seen Osborne since his return from the country."

"Well, but what did you think of him?"

Jane was rather tired of the subject, and was surprised to note how much it interested her father.

"I thought," answered he, laying both his hands on the table before him, and speaking very gravely, "I thought he was a man who had suffered a blow which had made his life worthless to him, who had suddenly lost his interest in everything which surrounded him, and who, if he lives long enough, may become perfectly reckless, or else a misanthrope, 'and hate mankind!'"

"Really, papa?"

"Yes, Jane; and the reason I feel so strongly about it is, that one of my daughters is the cause of this change."

"Well, if you mean Olive, she seems to be captivating the other one now."

“Who do you mean?”

“Why, Mr. De Tressanay of course.”

“Nonsense, Jane. What reason have you for saying such a thing? You have no idea of the annoyance it would cause me if it were the case.”

Most people would have avoided annoying Dr. Malloney if they could help it, when they saw a certain ominous frown gather on his forehead and contract his bushy eyebrows.

“Of course, papa, I do not know anything about it, but Aunt Lucy has hinted it in two or three of her letters; but here is a letter from her to-day which I have not opened yet.”

“You ought to have told me of this; see what Lucy says.”

Jane glanced over the letter rapidly.

“I can see nothing about them so far. Oh! here, I see. Dear me! this is very decided.”

Then she read aloud—

“I must say good-bye, it is just past time. Your uncle and the girls are just in from a walk; they are saying good-bye to Mr. De Tressanay at the gate, who, I suppose, joined them in the course of their ramble. I have alluded to the subject before, and I do not think it right not to tell you that I imagine Julian De Tressanay admires Olive, and I should say she was not quite indifferent. One rarely meets a young man—and this is your uncle’s opinion—of such talents, so high-principled, and of such an elevated character. Everything, in fact, that one could wish. But, perhaps, I am mistaken in attributing anything serious to the pleasure young people naturally find in one another’s society. You know how dull it is here. My love to your father,” &c., &c.

“I must put a stop to this at once,” said Dr. Malloney emphatically. He was evidently extremely annoyed, and, rising from the table, he took a rapid turn up and down the room. “Write to-day, Jane, and say the girls must come home at once.”

"But what excuse can I make, papa? Uncle John and Aunt Lucy will be hurt if we are not careful."

"I suppose they will, by-the-bye. Well, say they must come home next week. What excuse? Yes, there must be an excuse. I would not on any account let it seem that their movements were affected by De Tressanay's proceedings. Say the Cummingses will be here; they are old friends, and I particularly wish the girls to be at home to meet them. That is settled. What does your aunt say," continued Dr. Malloney, taking up the letter and looking at the last page, with a glance of withering scorn, "'elevated, high-principled,' he shows that truly."

"I do not see why he should not be all that, papa."

"Then," replied her father breaking out angrily, "you think it honourable of a man to try and win the affections of a girl whom he knows his dearest friend is breaking his heart for. Very high-principled indeed to wait till the other poor fellow is safe out of

the way, and then down comes this talented piece of perfection and sets to work."

"But if Olive does not care for Mr. Osborne?"

"Nonsense about her not caring. I remember seeing her blush two or three times when he was mentioned, in a way which showed she was not at any rate quite indifferent then."

"But you told me she had refused him."

"I never told you anything of the kind. I supposed that she had done so, or had, at least, discouraged his addresses. But what of that? She is a perfect child, and I hope not entirely unamenable to reason. If it were put before her in a sensible way that she is ruining a man's happiness for life; a man, too, of whose regard any girl ought to be proud, I cannot but think she would see it in a proper light."

"And Ella?"

"Ah! Ella, I fear there is no help for her. You see Osborne is so madly in love with

Olive, that the kindest thing for her, poor child, would be to help her realize the hopelessness of her affections."

A certain degree of tenderness crept into Dr. Malloney's voice when he spoke of Ella. He could, he thought, quite understand a girl falling in love with his new favourite, Osborne. What seemed to irritate him so much was that a girl should not do so when he expected it.

"But are you sure you are right, papa?"

Jane ventured this question on the strength of her father's milder tone.

Dr. Malloney was not accustomed to have his assertions questioned.

"Right?" he asked, sharply; "right? What do you mean, pray?"

"Are you sure you are right about Mr. Osborne being so much in love with Olive and Mr. De Tressanay trying to take away his only chance?"

"You think perhaps, Jane," asked her father, cuttingly, "when I see certain symp-

toms that I am at a loss to what cause to attribute them."

"Of course, papa, you would know far better than any one if it were bodily illness," replied the unimaginative Jane.

"And of course practice has led me to discern a man's moral and mental condition quite as quickly and accurately."

"It seems so strange when we have heard so much of Mr. De Tressanay's devotion to his friend; he hardly left him for weeks when he was so ill."

"Oh, yes! devotion to a friend is all very well, as long as you are not in love, then friends too often become nonentities. There was that mystery, too, De Tressanay made out of Osborne's state of feeling, perhaps," and here the Doctor brought his hand down on the table as if struck by a sudden illuminating thought, "this explains his provoking reticence. I confess I am disappointed; I seldom expect much of people, I have seen too much of the world for that, but I thought

I might make an exception in favour of De Tressanay, I was not disposed to do so till I saw him, I confess, but when I did I was struck by his fine open face."

Jane might have retorted by telling her father he was making an exception in favour of Roger Osborne instead; but though she felt really sorry for these poor love-stricken young people, she was growing tired of the perplexing intricacies of the subject.

"Well, write decidedly to-day and say the girls must come home next week," was the Doctor's parting injunction.

"Yes, papa," Jane answered, "but what shall we do with them if they are both in love?"

"Oh! you must look after them," he replied, with a frown.

Dr. Malloney frowned because he considered that Jane did not show a sufficiently lively interest in the matter. It was not for a man like himself, he thought, to trouble greatly about the feelings and fancies of a

couple of girls, "but," he grumbled to himself, "it is just what a woman likes. I hope she will not be heartless to poor little Ella."

Perhaps he did not quite understand Jane when he attributed to her, in common with the generality of her sex, an absorbing interest in all love affairs, but although he had a strong belief in his own power of insight into character, he could, as we have seen, be mistaken sometimes as well as less gifted mortals. Not only did he err in this instance in all the principal points in the history of his daughters' lives at this epoch, he also persistently deceived himself on another point.

He imagined that he was always ready to suspect evil, and to anticipate it more surely than good, but in many instances, besides the case in point, he had often at once accepted the highest view of character or conduct which could be imagined, and had acted in the most generous and quixotic spirit, griev-

ously puzzling his matter-of-fact daughter by behaving in a manner quite opposed to the cynical and worldly views he professed.

So now, Dr. Malloney was eager to sacrifice, without a moment's hesitation, the prospect of a fine property and fortune for his youngest daughter, because the man who seemed inclined to lay these advantages, usually esteemed and coveted in the world, at her feet, had, he imagined, failed to realize his first highly favourable expectations. He believed that this man was acting hardly towards his friend, and having taken a sudden fancy to this imaginary victim, himself, Dr. Malloney was all the more inclined to resent conduct so base in his eyes; his resentment taking stronger root from the notion, deeply implanted in his mind, that the happiness of this ill-treated friend was being ruined by the fancies of a wayward child.

It might have been well had Ella and Olive returned home immediately after the long conversation which had just ensued between

their father and eldest sister. They might have corrected their father's views on the subject, and spared him and others many hours of bitter perplexity; for nothing less than hearing the refutation of his idea of the state of affairs from the lips of the principal actors themselves, would have convinced him of error. Nearly a week, however, was to elapse before their return home, and every day Dr. Malloney's opinions assumed a more decided form.

Such was his frame of mind, when one morning, a few days after the interview just described, he received a letter from Julian De Tressanay, formally asking his consent to an engagement to his daughter Olive, whose affection De Tressanay was happy to inform Dr. Malloney, he had already been fortunate enough to gain.

Dr. Malloney was not at home when this letter reached him; as was frequently the case, he had been summoned to a distant and remote part of England, consequently a con-

siderable delay was necessarily caused in his receipt of so important a missive. An impartial reader could not fail to have been struck with the high tone, the frank and simple manliness of Julian De Tressanay's letter. It was a letter which would have made most men rejoice in the prospect of confiding a daughter to one who was animated by noble sentiments, and who could express them in such a manner without reserve or exaggeration. Unfortunately, when interpreted by the light of Dr. Malloney's strongly rooted prejudice, every word seemed to confirm the mistaken notions which had sprung up in his mind, and every word seemed to him but a disguise for treacherous hypocrisy. He read the ill-fated communication a second time, and then, with a gathering frown, sat down to pen his answer. He was not long writing his reply.

"I think this will do," he said, half aloud, as he re-read his composition, and a sarcastic

smile of satisfaction played around his lips as he sealed the envelope.

Nothing, meanwhile, had occurred at Marchcroft to disturb the hours radiant with youth, and new and trustful love, which flowed on but too quickly for Julian De Tressanay and Olive Malloney. The first cloud which hung on the horizon was the prospect of parting; for the day had nearly come on which Ella and Olive were to return home; but it was scarcely a cloud, for was not their separation to be brief, and soon to be forgotten in the rapture of meeting again.

But three days had passed since the evening when a new aspect of life had dawned for both. Mr. and Mrs. Selby had received De Tressanay's announcement on the following morning with warm interest, and evinced a cordial approval for their part. At the same time, Mr. Selby absolutely forbid Olive to consider herself engaged to Julian, until the arrangement had been ratified by her father's consent.

"I can see no reason," he said, "not the slightest, for doubting your father's immediate approval, but till you receive it, you must wait."

De Tressanay was allowed, however, to come down to the Rectory, and to him and Olive, the fast-shortening winter days were bright as if lighted by the summer sun.

Not a doubt ever crossed the minds of any one at Marchcroft that Dr. Malloney's letter would bring aught but willing words of consent, and fair pictures of an unclouded future floated before the enchanted eyes of these two to whom love had so lately revealed itself with an all-absorbing reality.

"The day after to-morrow you will be gone," said Julian to Olive, as they found themselves once alone in the twilight over the drawing-room fire at the Rectory; and he sighed sadly as he spoke.

"But you will come to Fennington very soon—next day I should think. No, not the next day, it would be better to wait till the

Cummingses are gone. They would want to talk to you, and I could not spare so many words to them."

"I cannot stay here after you are gone."

"What shall you do?"

"I shall go up and stay with Roger."

"I do not think we shall leave you time, even if these tiresome friends are with us. Papa will surely want to see you directly, and so will Jane. They will have to write and ask you at once, papa has scarcely seen you, you know. Will you come directly they ask you?"

It is needless, perhaps, to repeat the assurances that Julian gave that he would go to Fennington the very day on which he was invited, and as early in the day as possible.

When this important point was quite settled he continued—

"I ought to hear from your father to-morrow, Olive; I might have heard to-day."

"I daresay he was away," was her reply.

"Still I shall surely hear to-morrow. I shall

come down to the Rectory immediately with the letter, then you will be mine."

"You said I was that now."

"Yes, my darling; but mine, then, before all the world."

"That is all I care for," she said, nestling her head for a moment on his shoulder.

The next morning brought no letter from Dr. Malloney.

Julian went down to the Rectory, as had been agreed, but there was no look of exultation on his face.

"Anything wrong?" asked Mr. Selby, who met him in the hall.

"There is no letter from Dr. Malloney," De Tressanay answered.

"Is that all?" returned the Rector, cheerily. "I was afraid there was something really the matter by your face. Osborne ill again, perhaps."

The quick colour rushed to Ella's face.

"Papa is so often away," she said, with assumed indifference.

"Indeed, Mr. De Tressanay," interposed Mrs. Selby, "I should have been almost surprised if you had heard so soon. My brother was probably from home when your letter reached Fennington. There is always a degree of uncertainty in his movements, so my niece may not have forwarded it, and his return may have been delayed."

"Yes," continued her husband, "and even if he had returned home, he may not have found a moment to write, so occupied as he is."

It was difficult for De Tressanay to realize this last hypothesis. His hopes and interests now seemed centred in the one form, the one individual—Olive; he could not understand that this adored being might not occupy the whole thoughts of those connected with her, in something of the same absorbing manner in which she filled the whole horizon of his own mind.

It was very consoling, however, to hear their kindly assurance that all was well, and

to see their utter absence of anxiety on the subject. Olive, it is true, was a little disappointed at first, but her disappointment was not caused by any feeling of doubt as to her father's answer, but as she told Julian, "The sooner it is quite settled, the sooner you will come and stay with us."

The charm of Olive's presence soon dispelled the slight cloud which had cast its shadow over Julian that morning; in a little while his anxious thoughts were forgotten, and he was again sailing down the full stream on which he had embarked the sum of his love and happiness.

When we float along in this manner, lulled by the gentle splash of the ripples, and fanned by breezes which sigh as they waft softly past, it is very unpleasant to be suddenly touched by a chilling hand, and for harsh and discordant words to jar on our ears. We are startled out of our delicious dream, and see a glimpse of a world other than the one we fancy exists around us. A

dread seizes us that this cold, strange world may be the reality; our paradise but a dream; but slowly the grasp slackens its hold, the words die on our sense, we lapse again into our own magic circle and float on, happy and incredulous, till, perchance, we are disturbed by another rude awakening.

Again the following morning the post brought no letter affecting De Tressanay's future destiny, but his disappointment was less acute this time for Olive was going home that day. She would know the reason of the delay, and in a short time all would surely be explained.

"Uncle John says I may not write to you," Olive said to Julian, just before they started, a deep blush rising to her face at the bare idea of writing to him, "not till I have seen papa, but if he is not at home I will write at once to Aunt Lucy, so you will know."

"Then you must write by the early post to-morrow," he replied, "because I shall be with Roger in London the day after that,

but I think you might write direct to me."

But Uncle John was inexorable.

Julian drove into Marlsham with Mr. and Mrs. Selby and their nieces. He and Olive did not talk much during the drive; their minds were full of many thoughts.

Julian watched the train which bore Ella and Olive away till it was out of sight. His own carriage was waiting for him; he said farewell to Mr. and Mrs. Selby, and started homewards.

He soon passed the outskirts of the little town, and was in the country again. It was a clear, frosty day; the trees, with their leafless branches, stood out distinctly against the sky; the air was sharp and exhilarating. The bright sun rays glistened on the hedges, and lighted the berries and many-coloured leaves, which still shone amongst the brown branches, and gleamed on the trunks of the trees; there was no sadness in the air as of decay or decrepitude, it seemed rather as if

the earth were joyfully preparing for sleep, laying aside its bright vesture but for a season.

The whole world seemed glad to De Tressanay as he drove rapidly along the hard white roads. Although the recent parting had cost him a pang, the separation was to be so short, and he was full of exultant life and hope.

As he approached his own village, he drew out his watch, and found it was already time for the second post to be in. He might possibly find that the wished-for letter had arrived. Julian drew up at the post office; a packet of letters was handed to him. He drove on hastily without stopping to look at them. Between the village and the park lodge was a short piece of road free from houses, and, arrived there, De Tressanay pulled up the horses to a walk, and looked through the packet. His heart beat quicker as he came to a letter directed in a strange hand. It did not bear the Fennington post

mark. He opened it and glanced at its contents. A glance was enough. His brain reeled, the ring of the horses' hoofs seemed a distant sound, the trees swam before his eyes.

"Take the reins," he said to the groom, "I am going to walk."

He got down from the box, not actively as he was wont to do, but like a man suddenly lamed in every limb. The carriage went on. Julian did not read over the letter again immediately; he walked slowly through the gates, then leaving the broad drive, he struck across the grass. There, amongst the trees, he re-read the missive which had stunned him as with an overwhelming blow.

Dr. Malloney's letter was frigidly cold and polite; he declined altogether to allow any engagement to take place between De Tressanay and his youngest daughter. He expressed a hope that De Tressanay would not urge the subject again, as nothing would induce him to sanction such an arrangement.

He had no doubt, he added, that De Tressanay, and any one acquainted with the facts of the case, would quite understand his decision, and he need say no more, save to express his regret that absence from home had prevented his sending an earlier reply. From beginning to end the letter was an enigma to Julian.

He walked on with rapid strides utterly unconscious of the direction he was taking. His mind was in a whirl of disappointment, bewilderment and rage.

It has been seen that Julian De Tressanay and Roger Osborne were very different in character. The difference between them never showed itself more strongly than now, in the way in which they were affected by disappointment in the love to which they had given their whole hearts.

Roger, accustomed to take life easily and pleasantly, and not exciting himself greatly on any subject, had turned away from his old amusements and interests; he would if he could, have buried himself somewhere far

away from friends and acquaintances, and brooded in solitude over the regrets which embittered his existence; declining to consider any course of action which in time might be expected to ameliorate his fate, although it is true his fate had not brought an insinuation of dishonourable conduct to sting him to action.

Julian, on the contrary, was seized with almost ungovernable fury. Why this man should of his single will interpose a barrier to the happiness of two individuals, such as himself and Olive, he was at a loss to conceive; and in the midst of his own wild feelings, the picture of Olive, broken-hearted, disconsolate, flashed across his mind, adding a sharper poignancy to his grief. Suddenly he stopped. He had already reached the boundary of the park farthest from the house. What was he to do? He would not go on in that aimless manner. Something must be attempted. The idea of going straight to Fennington crossed his mind, but

he dismissed it after a moment's consideration. His pride rose against such a step. He inferred that for some unguessed at reason, Dr. Malloney considered him unworthy of Olive. He would not go to her father's house as a suppliant. Some extraordinary misconception must lie at the bottom of the Doctor's extraordinary refusal. He would not go and humble himself by provoking an explanation. If the Doctor chose to believe him capable of any act of meanness, he would not say a word in his own defence.

He stood still and looked round. The world which had been so glad and full of hope seemed suddenly dark and cold. He could not stay an hour in that great lonely house, he would go to Roger. And he yearned for the friend who had shared his troubles and joys so faithfully for many a year.

He walked back to the house, and found he should be in time for the evening train to

London if he started at once ; and ordering the carriage immediately, he was soon on the way back to the station, leaving old Job and the other inmates of the establishment in a state of bewildered conjecture as to the motives of his conduct. Before leaving he found a moment to write to Mr. Selby. It was a short, incoherent note telling the Rector of Dr. Malloney's refusal to allow any engagement between himself and Olive.

The very fact of the swift passage of the train brought a degree of relief to Julian. He could not have borne to have remained passive at the Manor ; action of some kind was an imperative necessity.

The darkness fell and shut out the exterior world from De Tressanay's eyes, but within his brain, gathered racking thoughts and conjectures. How Olive would learn this ; how she would bear it ; what would be the end of it all ? These questions were still tormenting his mind in unsolved problems when he arrived at Roger Osborne's door.

It was past midnight, but Julian did not stop to ask any questions when the door opened, but strode at once up the stairs to the old familiar rooms. He did not seem to realize that it was late to arrive on an unexpected visit; no facts of the outer world had any meaning or importance for him that night. He entered the sitting-room. It was rather dark, the lamp was shaded and the fire low, and there in an arm-chair, without even the pretence of any occupation, sat Roger Osborne looking listlessly at the dying embers. He turned his head slightly as he heard a step, but Julian was almost by his side before he saw who it was.

"Julian," he exclaimed in a voice of genuine astonishment, "this is a pleasure."

But his words died on his lips as he saw his friend's pale haggard face and disturbed expression.

"For heaven's sake, what is the matter?" he asked.

"Read this," Julian replied, handing him Dr. Malloney's letter.

Roger's astonishment and indignation were only surpassed by Julian's own excited feelings.

"It must be some extraordinary mistake from beginning to end," he said. "Dr. Malloney seemed most kindly disposed towards the world in general when he took all the trouble to come and see me the other day. I suppose neither you nor I can call him the hard names he deserves for causing all this misery; but Julian, don't despair, it must and shall be set right."

"How can it be? It nearly kills me to think of what she must be going through, but I have nothing to explain; if he thinks I am a villain, I cannot stoop to undeceive him."

"He will discover that, you may be sure, without your having to intimate the fact. Do take heart, there's a good fellow; believe me, it will all be right; but when did you get this letter, and when did you start?"

"I got the letter by the second post, and

started about an hour afterwards. I was only just back from Marlsham. I had driven in with them and the Selbys to see them off."

"And have had nothing since breakfast, I suppose," returned Roger, ringing the bell.

"I don't know," answered De Tressanay, "it all seems a blank since then, as if one had taken a leap down a chasm in the dark," and he put his hand over his eyes. His face was deadly pale.

Roger seemed suddenly animated with a spirit of hopefulness and activity. He ordered up some supper, and in spite of Julian's refusal and remonstrances, made him eat and drink; then placing him in the arm-chair before the rekindled fire, he soothed and consoled him as he would a sick or sorrowing child, till at last a dim ray of hope actually began to dawn on his friend's desponding face.

"The shock pretty nearly did for you all at once, Julian," Roger said, "but you will get

over that and see your way through this affair. I feel as if I could wring Dr. Mallo-ney's neck if he were only any one else. Now come and rest."

"But, Roger, we must do something; let us settle what we can do, first."

"No, Julian, try not to think. I am certain you will have a letter to explain it all to-morrow, so don't waste your energies on settling what perhaps need never be settled. Some good counsel, if it is wanted, will come with sleep. Good-night, my dear old fellow, and do not be downcast."

"It is all very well your preaching cheerfulness to me, Roger," rejoined Julian as he walked slowly towards the room which had been hastily prepared for him.

"It is not preaching, Julian," was Roger's reply; "you ought to be cheerful, your case is not hopeless."

CHAPTER IV.

For lovers be the folke that ben on lyve,
That moste disease han, and most unthrive,
And most enduren sorowe, wo, and care.

CHAUCER.

ELLA and Olive Malloney arrived home late in the afternoon after a prosperous journey. To Olive the hours spent in the train had passed very quickly. Each moment was steeped in the sunlight of her new happiness which wrapped her round with a delicious consciousness of independence of the outer earth and anything it could offer her, so complete and secure did she feel in the little world in which Julian De Tressanay and herself were the only needful inhabitants. Only one regret dimmed the fulness of her joy, that Ella could not be happy as she was herself.

Very different indeed were the thoughts which filled Ella's mind, as her eyes rested dreamily on the landscape as it fled swiftly

past. She could hardly realize that she was the same individual Ella Malloney, who was travelling over the same ground as she had done hardly more than four months previously.

Her fresh, simple enjoyment of life was gone, her dread of sorrows and care had gone too, for she had grown used to silent suffering. Perhaps she had become acquainted with suffering in one of its hardest forms, for the keen sting of remembrance that it was her own act, her own word, which had marred the old brightness of her days, was never absent from her thoughts. This consciousness, forbidding complaint and precluding hope, was locked in the deeps of her almost overburdened heart.

Olive's first inquiry on reaching home was for her father. She learnt that he was still away, but Jane expected that he would return that evening.

Jane was apparently unconscious of the event which was so momentous to her

youngest sister ; and the whole party, including Mr. and Mrs. Cummings, who had arrived the day before, sat round the fire, the latest arrivals recounting the various incidents of their journey, and hearing all that had been happening at home, as if no fateful decision hung tremulously in the balance.

The evening drew on, still Dr. Malloney did not arrive, and they all went down to dinner without him. They had not been long seated, however, before he made his appearance. Every moment seemed to drag with a leaden weight to Olive.

There sat her father at the head of the table, with ready consent hovering surely on his lips, yet for a while these lips must be silent to her, speaking not the happy words for which her ears thirsted. She could not ask the question upon the answer to which hung the happiness of two lives. She did not doubt for an instant what that answer would be, but simply hungered for its utterance ; meantime she was forced to control

her impatience and take part in the conversation which was going on around her.

At last the dinner, which had seemed interminable to her, was over, still there would be a long interval before the gentlemen would come up into the drawing-room, they would be sure to have a long talk together, and when her father did come up it was doubtful if she would be able to speak to him alone.

After the long conversation concerning her sisters which had taken place between Dr. Malloney and Jane, the latter naturally looked at the subjects of this discussion with unusually observant eyes. Certainly some change had passed over them both.

Ella was thinner and a grave expression now generally prevailed in her face, replacing the child-like look which was formerly so bright and attractive. The new expression, however, heightened her beauty and added a chastened sweetness to her face. It was as if she had passed from a joyous child with loving winning ways, to a woman who had

fathomed some of the griefs and joys of life, and who was learning to bear either without a murmur, although her cheek might grow paler and a wistful expression quiver around her lips whilst this hard lesson was sinking into her soul.

Olive, although tortured with impatience, was in the height of glowing loveliness. Her overflowing happiness shone in her deep, dark eyes and irradiated from her young unclouded face. No wonder that Mr. and Mrs. Cummings looked again and again, marveling at the beauty which seemed to outshine even its early promise ; but Jane looked deeper still, and thought she could read in the eyes that were almost feverishly bright, and in the nervous, impatient movements of the hands and head, that the crisis of the gathering events of which she had heard so much, had come.

At last Dr. Malloney and his old friend appeared in the drawing-room. Olive looked eagerly for an opportunity of speaking to

him, but no opportunity came, and the minutes slipped away with the same torturing slowness.

At last Jane and Mr. and Mrs. Cummings fell into an animated discussion on the subject of some local improvement, in which Jane was deeply interested, and Olive going up to her father, who was standing with his back to the fire, laid her hand on his arm and looking up, asked whisperingly—

“Have you written, papa?”

Dr. Malloney was struck with the intensity of her expression. It was no longer the child Olive’s face into which he looked, but the face of a woman stirred by passionate emotion.

“Come into the other room, I want to speak to you, Olive,” he answered quietly.

She followed him through the closed folding doors into the smaller drawing-room. Dr. Malloney sat down in an arm-chair. Olive stood in front of him leaning one hand on the table.

"I received a letter from Mr. De Tressanay," Dr. Malloney announced gravely. "You probably are acquainted with the nature of its contents."

Olive made a sign in the affirmative.

"Considering what the conduct of the gentleman in question has been, I could not entertain the proposal for a moment."

"What, what do you mean?"

A sudden paleness spread over Olive's face, it was with the greatest effort that she could bring out the words.

"I mean," continued her father, speaking as gently as he could now, "that I cannot allow any engagement between you and Mr. De Tressanay."

For a second Olive remained as if spell-bound ; her great eyes were dilated, her lips slightly parted ; she tried to tighten her hold on the table, but the whole room swam before her, and in another instant she had fallen in a dead faint on the floor.

It may be considered that it was a weak

thing for Olive Malloney to faint at this juncture in her history, but those who would judge her harshly must remember that she had been in a state of growing excitement for some days, that she had had a long journey that afternoon, that the whole evening had been spent in an agony of impatient suspense, and lastly, she had never experienced a shock of real disappointment or sorrow before in her short and calmly flowing life.

The sound of a fall, succeeded by a sharp peal of the bell, surprised the rest of the party in the inner drawing-room.

Ella, whose impatience to know her father's reply was only second to Olive's, was the first to rush into the adjoining room. She helped her father to lift Olive on to a sofa, and although trembling with consternation at the sight of her sister's pale face and helpless form, was the readiest of all in carrying out his directions.

After a considerable time Olive began to re-

vive, but she seemed half stunned, and did not attempt to speak. Dr. Malloney had her carried upstairs.

In any case of sudden emergency hitherto, it had always been Jane who took the lead and who managed all subsequent operations, but this time it was Ella who thought of everything and arranged everything as if inspired by a new spirit of skilful helpfulness.

“I did not know you were such a good nurse, Ella,” said Dr. Malloney, to her in a low voice.

But Ella answered with reproachful eyes and quivering lips—

“What could you have said to nearly kill her?”

Dr. Malloney signed her imperatively to be silent. What a change had come over Ella to transform the gentle child into a self-contained, indignant woman, ready to bid him defiance; and how had he set both his children against him!

A little time elapsed, Olive seemed to be slowly recovering. Suddenly she raised herself up, passed her hand over her face and looked all round the room as if she were trying to gather her senses together.

“Lie still,” said her father laying his hand on her arm. But Olive was not going to be obedient. She drew herself up and said in a forced, unnatural voice,

“I must speak to you directly, papa; tell every one else to go away.”

Dr. Malloney made a sign to the others to leave the room, they all obeyed except Ella.

“I shall stay,” she said looking defiantly at her father.

But her father laid his hand on her shoulder.

“Can you not trust your sister to me?” he asked.

Ella had never seen such a look of tenderness on his face; it disarmed her resentment and she left the room noiselessly.

“Now my child,” said Dr. Malloney to

Olive, "you know I only care for your welfare; let us talk over this quietly."

But Olive was not so easily soothed.

"How could you speak of him like that? What did you say?" she asked, and her voice quivered with indignation.

"Then it is true that you return,—that you wished for this engagement?"

Olive buried her face in her hands.

"It is all I care for in the whole world," she said in a broken voice.

"I am very sorry Olive, very sorry; for I do not think you quite know what Mr. De Tressanay's conduct has been."

"I know it can have been nothing but perfect," she said dropping her hands and looking her father full in the face. "What can you mean? Of course if you mean I am not good enough for him that is quite right. I know you think I am silly and ignorant; you have often said so, and I would rather die than do him harm, if it would hurt him—would it hurt him?" she asked piteously.

Dr. Malloney had no idea that his often half-laughing criticisms on his daughter's want of learning had made such an impression.

"On the contrary," he replied, "I believe Mr. De Tressanay is not worthy of you."

The fire flashed again in her eyes.

"Do tell me what you mean! Who has been telling you stories about him? they are utter stories, falsehoods."

"Listen, child, for a moment. Mr. De Tressanay had a friend. He knew that this friend had fixed his affections on a — a girl. Anyone may see that he is just breaking his heart for her; do you consider it honourable the minute this friend is out of the way, laid up, lamed body and soul, for him to come and use every art to win her love, cutting off every chance that the other unfortunate fellow might have had eventually?"

Dr. Malloney had begun to speak in a quiet persuasive tone, but his indignation at this, as he imagined, dastardly behaviour, gathered

new strength as he went on, till when he concluded his voice was sharp and angry.

Olive remained silent for a second or two, her eyes fixed on her father's face in speechless amazement.

"You believe that of him?" she asked at last. "You believe he is capable of thinking such a thing?"

"I fear it is only too true," her father replied shaking his head.

A strange new power seemed to possess Olive, she was so unutterably indignant at the idea of such baseness being attributed to Julian, that the strong passion of anger which pervaded her whole being seemed to give her perfect coolness and self-command. Her voice was clear and sharp as she said—

"Who do you mean by this friend?"

"Olive, Olive, you must surely know," said her father reproachfully, "of course I mean Mr. Osborne."

"Mr. Osborne? What can you mean? He would sacrifice anything for Mr. Osborne.

He spent weeks and weeks with him when he was ill."

"Till he fell in love with you"—

"But that has nothing to do with Mr. Osborne."

"Only that Roger Osborne is nearly heart-broken; did he never ask you to marry him?"

"Me, papa?"

"Yes, you."

"How could you have such an extraordinary idea? He never cared the least in the world for me. Indeed he was always trying to find fault with me."

"Really?" asked her father anxiously; but he could not doubt the absolute truth of the candid face before him.

"You must tell me who it was imagined such a thing, and who made up such a wicked story about him," said Olive with a fresh burst of anger.

"No one made up a story at all, Olive, but I was sure Osborne had had some great

disappointment, and everything I heard confirmed what I have been telling you. For instance, how about the drawing lessons he gave you?"

"He did not teach me because he cared about me. I never thought at first why he did, but I have thought since that it was because he knew Ju—, Mr. De Tressanay, cared about me," a crimson blush spread over her white face, "and I know he thought I was not nearly good enough, and if I could draw a little, it would be something. That was why, papa"—

"I am ready to believe everything you say implicitly, but if Osborne is not in love with you, who is he in love with?"

"I cannot tell you, papa."

"But do you know?"

"Yes, but I may not tell. I may not, indeed."

"I suppose De Tressanay told her as a secret," thought the Doctor to himself.

"Well, then I suppose I have been entirely

wrong," he said aloud, "and of course, Olive, under these circumstances I can offer no reasonable objection to your being engaged"—

But he was interrupted by a passionate outbreak.

"You think," she exclaimed, "it is nothing to have believed such things about him, and to have written and told him so, as I suppose you did. He can never forgive it. I could never look at him or speak to him again after such a thing had been thought of him."

"I will write my dear child and explain."

"What can you explain? Explain that you thought he was—was—I do not know what, one minute, and now you have changed your mind? It is of no use, he can never forgive it," and the fierce anger gave way to a flood of tears and Olive buried her face in the pillow and her whole frame shook with convulsive sobs.

Her father was quite alarmed at the

violence of her feelings ; this Olive was indeed very different from the child he had been thinking of who did not know her own mind. He tried every means of soothing and consoling her in his power, but his efforts were vain. She would not raise her head or speak to him ; nothing but a moan for Ella passed her lips and grievously regretting his mistake, the Doctor at last left the room and called for Ella to take his place.

That same night he sat down and wrote to Julian. Dr. Malloney was a man of strong impulses. It was useless to argue with him if he was thoroughly convinced of the soundness of his own opinion, but when he once saw that the opinion or act was wrong or mistaken, no man could retract his judgment more fully or atone more generously for a misguided utterance or action than he could.

In this instance his regret was deep and sincere ; it was expressed with equal frankness and depth of feeling. He made no allusion to a renewal of De Tressanay's pro-

posed engagement, feeling that that was a point on which the offended suitor should be left to act with entire freedom.

Olive spent a sleepless night, perhaps the first entirely sleepless night she had ever experienced. As soon as it was light she found ink and paper and wrote the following letter :—

“DEAR MR. DE TRESSANAY,

“Papa has found out all about it. Of course it was all a mistake. He ought never to have believed such a thing about you when you care more about Mr. Osborne than *almost* anybody, than *anybody* now. He said he should write but he can never make up for it. Of course you will never speak to us again. You ought to be ashamed to, I mean we ought to, if you did. You could never forgive it. I shall never care for anything in the world again. Some people do die of a broken heart, I hope I shall. Do

not mind about me, only I can't bear to think of your caring about any one else.

"Still I want you to be happy.

"Good-bye. I thought it was to have been good-bye for such a short time, and now I shall never see you again.

"Yours truly,

"OLIVE MALLONEY."

Olive wrote fast, without stopping to weigh her words; her eyes were so blinded with tears she could hardly see what she wrote. She did not read over her letter when she had finished it, but sealed it at once, and sent it to the post as soon as possible. Then she lay thinking to herself bitterly how different it was from the first letter she was going to have written to Julian. She had written and rewritten this letter in imagination as she travelled homewards in the train. But it was only like all the rest; life itself had become a burden, and Olive again hid her

face in the pillows in crushed and speechless misery.

Roger Osborne looked rather anxiously for his friend's appearance next morning. When Julian came down to breakfast he looked pale and haggard, but the first frenzy of disappointment seemed to have subsided; he was calmer, though very desponding.

"You must try and get through the day somehow, Julian," said Roger consolingly, "then there will have been time for the mystery to be cleared up."

"I do not see that it will do much good if it is," was the hopeless answer. "I have been thinking over it all night. What can I do even if that man finds out that I am not a rogue?"

"But if he apologized and begged you to reconsider the subject on bended knee?" returned Roger.

He could not resist a flash of gaiety in the midst of all this dolefulness.

But no smile could be conjured up on Julian's face.

"He won't do anything of the sort," he replied gloomily; "and it is just this doing nothing, being able to do absolutely nothing, which is so unutterably wretched to me. The more I think of it the more I see that I can do nothing, and that to me is the hardest thing to bear."

"I know it is. Really one's misfortunes should be adapted to one's personal characteristics, then in course of time one would develop rudimentary tendencies or certain capabilities of endurance; these would grow more pronounced, and our distant descendants might be able to bear their griefs quite comfortably. The early form of giraffe probably suffered much from hunger, while his longer-necked descendant grew fat and well-liking. Our troubles, as it is, just catch one, and weigh on some weak place till one's limbs totter, and perhaps one's heart strings may crack some day."

"Yes, Roger, I know, I know," said Julian, looking at Roger, over whose face a spasmodic look of pain passed quickly; he felt quite penitent at thinking so much about his own troubles, while his friend was equally unhappy. "But," he went on, lapsing again into his own circle of thoughts, "if it were anything I could go and work at, I should not mind so much; if it were to wait, I would wait patiently, if there were any hope at the end, but this"—and he sank into a kind of stupor, from which no words of Roger's could rouse him.

Late in the afternoon Dr. Malloney's letter arrived.

"I told you something would turn up," exclaimed Roger triumphantly.

The colour rose to De Tressanay's face as he read the letter.

"He apologizes amply enough," he said, handing it to Osborne, "but he does not explain anything, only says he was mistaken from beginning to end concerning the course of events."

"No," was Roger's comment. "I wonder what extraordinary notion he had got into his head; I could imagine it's sticking there fast, whatever it was."

"You see you were wrong, Roger; he makes no attempt to—to—no suggestion of a renewal of my wish."

"No, and I think that very fact of his making no allusion to it, shows the most delicate feeling on his part. It is part of the entire *amende* that he would make to you, to leave you entirely free to give up, for his part, every chance of an alliance which would be all gain to him."

"Roger," ejaculated the unhappy Julian in a tone of remonstrance.

"Now he leaves everything to you," Roger went on unheedingly; "after his idiotic mistake he throws himself upon your mercy."

But Julian could not be brought to see the matter in this light.

"He cannot expect me to write and ask again with the chance of another flat refusal,"

was the burden of his answer to all Roger's arguments.

"If you knew he were perfectly willing to consent, would feel gratified in fact by your still wishing to become his son-in-law, you would condescend to take some steps, I suppose?" Roger asked this question at last as the evening grew late.

"Yes, if I were quite certain."

With that assurance Roger was content. Some course of action seemed to have occurred to him, for he became quite cheerful and so active in making various arrangements, that if Julian had not been absorbed in his own troubles he would have wondered at the change in his usually indolent friend.

Nightfall was already closing the day so long and dreary to Julian, when by the last post Olive's letter arrived.

Perhaps Jane was right when she said that her sister was not a good letter writer, but the most eloquent and best-compiled composition could not have had a more tremen-

dous effect than her incoherent and wild epistle.

Julian was nearly beside himself.

"You see, Roger," he said, "her father must still forbid her to have anything to say to me, else why should she say we shall never meet again? You may be sure that he will never allow it, though he may not think as badly of me as he did at first."

"What in the name of fortune I can have had to do with it I cannot imagine," rejoined Roger.

"She says good-bye for ever," groaned Julian, without attempting to understand the puzzle any further. "What am I to do," he continued as he buried his face in his hands in sheer despair, "what am I to do?"

"Nothing," answered Roger in a very serious voice.

Julian looked up in surprise.

"Absolutely nothing," repeated Roger. "I feel morally certain that if you will leave things alone for another twenty-four

hours, you will see your way clear and straight."

"Nonsense, Roger, that is always your way 'to let things alone.' I am not a fatalist, as you seem to be, or a fellow to drift along as you always do."

Roger was not angry at these remarks.

"Well, twenty-four hours is not long to drift," he rejoined; "just try it this once."

"No, Roger. I feel I ought to have been doing something all to-day. I cannot endure this passively any longer."

"Well, what do you propose to do?"

This question again plunged Julian into a maze of despairing speculation.

"I do not know. I feel as if I could not think, but something I must do."

"Well, then, write to Mr. Selby, a long explanatory letter. I am sure he is a true friend to us both, as well as devoted to his nieces. Write and see what he can do."

"Yes, Roger, of course I will. Why did

you not think of it before? I will write at once."

"Be duly grateful to me for suggesting it now; but, Julian, you look worn to death; do write the first thing to-morrow instead. You know it is too late for the post now, and, unlike me, you always say the morning air inspires you," but Roger thought to himself that it would be something to occupy Julian the next day.

"Well, perhaps I will; my wits may be clearer," replied Julian unsuspectingly.

"And you promise me to do nothing but stay quietly here till this mysterious period of time has passed?"

"I might as well, I suppose," assented Julian drearily; "I don't know what else to do."

And Roger was satisfied.

It was after midnight, and Osborne persuaded De Tressanay to go to bed and try and get some sleep. As soon as he was out of the way, Roger called Ned Trotter.

"Look out the earliest morning trains to Fennington for me."

"There is one, sir, which leaves at two, and gets in soon after seven."

"That is too early. What is the next?"

"A very slow train, sir. It starts before three and gets in at ten."

"That will do exactly. I must start in about an hour."

"Brown portmanteau, sir?"

"No, I shall return immediately."

Ned Trotter looked up at his master with a horror-stricken expression of countenance.

"It's a very bad night, sir, snowing hard."

"Look here, Ned," continued Roger, without noticing the hinted remonstrance; "you may tell Mr. De Tressanay that I was obliged to go out early; don't say what time I went, on account of some letters I received. Don't let him know where I have gone. Tell him I shall be back about six in the evening, perhaps before. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir," was the unwilling answer.

“Look after him all day; prevent his going out if you can.”

“Yes, sir; I quite understand.”

Ned Trotter had been pleased to see that there was still something left which could stir his master once more to life and activity. Mr. De Tressanay's misfortunes were nothing in comparison with any advantage which might accrue to Roger Osborne; but now the worthy servant felt anything but charitably inclined towards Julian, as he was sure that Roger, still lame and easily fatigued, was going on such a journey through the cold and snow, solely on his friend's account.

Reluctant as he was, Ned Trotter had to assist at his master's departure, and in less than three hours Roger was in the train, whirling through the blinding sheets of snow and sleet down to Fennington.

When left alone to his reflections in the train, Roger began to feel more and more strongly that he could hardly have put himself to a harder test than in undertaking this visit to Ella's own home.

“I shall be sure not to see her, but the house will seem haunted by her presence. I hope I shall not make a fool of myself, but I cannot be so sure of myself as when I was strong before this abominable accident. Still, something must be done for my poor Julian. What a situation! A father repenting some foolish delusion, and too delicate to offer a renewal of the proposal; a distracted lover, hurt on his most sensitive side, and too proud and too delicate at the same time to force a claim he imagines unpalatable, and a girl too passionately adoring, to think it possible that the man, her father has offended, should condescend to speak to her again. It would rather lower him in her eyes if he did, in fact. Truly, only some personal influence could relieve such a state of tension. How I wish fate had not fixed on me.”

But though secretly dreading the end of his journey, Roger was being hurried on towards its inevitable conclusion.

The train arrived punctually at Fenning-

ton ; although the snow fell thick and fast as Roger drove from the station, the streets were full of people, and vehicles hurrying to and fro. He reached the house, and was shown into Dr. Malloney's study, having sent a telegram to the doctor about two hours before, requesting a private interview with him at ten o'clock. Dr. Malloney did not keep Osborne waiting long.

"You must be surprised to see me," began Roger at once, after he had shaken hands, "but I naturally take my friend, Mr. De Tressanay's affairs a good deal to heart, and I have come down in the hopes of being able to help him."

"He is staying with you I understand."

"He came up to me directly he received your letter. No words can express his crushing disappointment."

"But surely he has received my second letter?"

"He has ; but Dr. Malloney, a man like Julian De Tressanay cannot at once get over

the fact that you imagined him capable of any unworthy act or feeling."

"Well, I deeply regret my mistake, but we are all liable to err sometimes."

"It is a mystery to us both what could have given rise to your prejudice against him."

"A perfect network of circumstantial evidence, my dear sir," replied Dr. Malloney, leaning forward eagerly.

"Is there any reason why I should not hear some of this evidence?"

"Well," said the Doctor, looking piercingly at Roger, "perhaps it had better all come out. I thought he was treating you badly, trying to cut the ground from under your feet in your absence. I imagined it was you who were in love with my daughter Olive."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Roger, the quick colour rushing to his face, "what on earth made you take up such an idea? Nothing could be farther from the truth."

"There were many circumstances to lead me

to such a conclusion, even my sister thought you admired her, and the pains you took with the child's drawing was, I confess, a convincing argument."

"How utterly the simplest things may be misunderstood," said Roger, in a tone of utter astonishment, "but I am beginning to understand what you thought of De Tressanay, starting from such a basis of belief." He was silent for a moment, then he said, "Perhaps it may be my duty to tell you what I hoped need never pass my lips; it is all past and done, but it may help to clear your mind thoroughly with regard to the whole affair; the feelings, you supposed me to entertain, were not towards your youngest daughter, but towards your daughter Ella!"

"Ella?"

"Yes," continued Roger, in a steady voice, and looking straight at Dr. Malloney, with his clear grey eyes, "I proposed to her, she refused me; now I hope you will understand that my friend never stood in my light."

“But Ella, I could plainly see was—was—not indifferent to you.”

“Dr. Malloney, pray not allude to this side of the question. Your daughter was so distressed that she could not—not return my feelings, that it may easily have misled those around her. The subject is never to be mentioned again between us—never.”

It was so hard for Roger to have to combat the idea, always being forced upon him by others, that Ella was really in love with him.

“I would not pain you, Mr. Osborne, by referring to it unnecessarily, but I am perfectly convinced that”—

“I would beg of you, Dr. Malloney, not only never to allude to it to me again, but I ask that you should never allude to it to her. I know nothing would cause her such vexation. It is all I ask as any compensation for what it may have cost me. I assure you I am fully borne out in my request by the way she received my proposal. Will you do me this favour?”

“Well,” continued the Doctor, “I am more surprised than I can express, but I readily promise, as you must know best.”

He spoke regretfully, but the discussion was evidently causing Roger exquisite torture, notwithstanding his strong effort to appear calm, and for that reason Dr. Malloney was glad for the subject to be abandoned.

“Now,” continued Roger, speaking more at his ease, “all is clear so far with regard to De Tressanay.”

“Yes, it is, indeed. I have been grievously mistaken, and would do anything I could to repair the mischief I have unwittingly occasioned.”

“You did not hint that in your letter.”

“No; I thought the least reparation I could make would be to leave Mr. De Tressanay free in every sense of the word, free to give us up entirely, if he chooses, but I am far from wishing that. I would give anything to make him and my poor Olive happy.”

"I was sure that was your motive, but I could not persuade my friend to see it quite in that light."

"Will you assure him of my entire regard and confidence in him, and that I am ready to give my sanction to his engagement. I can understand that he was deeply wounded; he must be generous enough to forgive an unintentional injury."

"There is another person whose consent must be obtained," resumed Roger, "the consent of your daughter Olive herself."

"Olive? She has been nearly distracted, poor child; she will hardly know how to bear this sudden return to happiness. I really have been quite alarmed about her. I feared brain fever."

"Then you do not know that she wrote to De Tressanay—you see I know all the secrets—giving him up for ever, saying they should never meet again, and that she would never speak to him again because you had misjudged him. Scarcely logical," continued

Roger, with a smile, "but strongly insisted on."

The Doctor passed his hands through his hair till it stood up on end.

"A fresh perplexity," he said, with a puzzled air. "Ah! I have it, you shall speak to her."

He rang and told the servant to ask Olive to come down at once.

Roger looked at his watch.

"I have only a quarter of an hour more," he said.

"What?" exclaimed Dr. Malloney.

"My train starts in half an hour."

"Where to?"

"Back to London."

"Nonsense; I won't hear of such a thing. You must stay here, and we will telegraph for De Tressanay to come at once, and we shall be a happy party altogether."

The Doctor had been absorbed in thinking of Olive and Julian, and carried away by the warmth of his feelings, he had quite for-

gotten for the moment that Roger was not so fortunate in his wooing as his friend. He would have given a good deal to recall his words.

“Thank you very much, I must go, and by this train. Julian does not know I have come down here, and I assure you he is not in a fit state to understand anything; I must go and assure him of your good feelings towards him. Nothing else would do. You have no idea what he was like last night.”

“Last night? Then in the name of fortune what time did you start to come here?”

“Very early this morning.”

“You don’t mean you have travelled best part of the night?” But the Doctor’s inquiries were interrupted by the entrance of Olive.

Roger could scarcely have believed that so short a space of time could have left such an impress on a vigorous young frame as these days of trouble had on Olive.

She was very pale, and there was a hope-

less look on her face as if she were very weary of the world. She did not see Osborne when she entered the room.

"Here is an unexpected visitor," said her father.

Olive gave a start, and looking round saw Osborne ; the colour which had rushed to her face died away again, she put out her hand, but did not speak.

"You see as my name was mentioned, I had to come and see what you were all saying about me, and besides that, I wanted to know if you thought you would speak to Julian if you met him again some day," said Roger gently, as any one might speak to a frightened child.

Still Olive made no answer. She turned her face away and looked out of the window as if his words belonged to a future in which she could have no part.

Her father went up to her and putting his arm round her, kissed her tenderly.

"My dear child," he said, "everything is

explained. Mr. De Tressanay is nearly broken-hearted to think you have given him up."

"But, papa, he cannot forgive us."

"Only say that you wish it and he will come at once," continued Roger, in his winning voice, "and all will be forgotten, and you can be as happy as the day is long."

Olive still looked incredulous.

"When did you see him?" she asked Roger.

"Last night, you know he is staying with me."

"And did he send you?"

"I know exactly what he wishes," replied Roger, rather evasively. "We talked it all over, he would not have let me come if he had known, because of the cold and my lameness."

"Can I believe it?" she said, clasping her hands together.

"Believe it, the sooner the better. What shall I tell him from you, because I must go this moment."

"Do go," said Olive, with delightful disregard of the fatigue of such a hurried journey, "then he will know the sooner."

And Roger knew by the light of her eyes and the glow which had chased away the paleness of her cheek, that she believed at last.

"But what am I to tell him?"

Olive looked round for a second as if she could not think of anything which could quite express her feelings.

"Give him this," she said.

She drew a signet ring off her finger and gave it to Roger. Then she hid her face on her father's shoulder.

"I may, papa?" she whispered.

"Yes, my child. I am thankful for you to be happy."

"Now good-bye," said Roger to her.

"Pray remember me to your sister."

"I don't like this, Osborne," remonstrated Dr. Malloney urgently, "you are not fit for such a journey."

The flush of excitement had left Roger's face, it was very pale, and there were lines about the mouth which were not there when he went to Marchcroft.

"It won't hurt me, Dr. Malloney," he replied. "Good-bye," and away he limped, leaning on his stick out of the room and across the street into his cab.

It was bitterly cold and quite dark when Roger reached home. De Tressanay was awaiting him with an anxious expectancy which he could hardly have accounted for himself. He did not know that Roger had gone to Fennington, but he had an intuitive feeling that the moment of his return would be a turning point in his fate, for then something more decisive than merely writing to Mr. Selby must be resolved upon. He could be inactive no longer.

He heard Roger's voice the moment the door was opened, and rushed out on to the landing. Roger had already come a few steps up the stairs ; he looked up and saw Julian.

"I am coming, old fellow," he said cheerily, "I wish I could get up quicker. I suppose the cold has made me stiff."

He did not seem as if he could climb the stairs.

"Come on, Ned," called Julian, and in an instant they had taken Roger up bodily and were carrying him along as they had so often done when he was ill. They deposited him in a large arm-chair in front of the fire.

"Now," said Roger, "I have lots to tell you ; go away, Ned. Now, Julian," he went on, "Dr. Malloney is ready to go down on his knees to you or perform any other penance you may wish to subject him to, provided your serene mightiness will consider the past as obliterated."

"Roger, don't make a joke of me. I cannot bear it," and Julian stood up, his dark brows contracted by a frown.

"My dear fellow I was never more serious in all my life. Sit down close by me, that's

right. Now may you be as happy as you deserve, I cannot say more than that."

Roger had taken Julian's large warm hand in his cold hands and grasped it heartily, he had begun to speak gaily, but his voice suddenly faltered.

"I told you," he went on, recovering himself, "that in twenty-four hours you might see your way clearly. Now it is exactly as I told you ; Dr. Malloney is repentant and only longs for everybody to be happy, the daughter is consenting and consoled ; what more can you wish ?"

"You are the most maddening fellow ; how can you know ?"

"Because I have seen them and heard the words from their own lips."

"Seen who ?"

"Dr. and Miss Olive Malloney."

"Where ?"

"At Fennington."

"You have not been there ?"

"Yes."

"When could you have gone?"

"After I sent you to bed last night."

"Roger!"

That was all Julian could say. Then Roger began at the beginning and told him all that had passed in his interview with Dr. Malloney and Olive.

Julian took some time to realize the fact of his recovered happiness, but the truth began to dawn on him as Osborne went on with his history.

"Now," the latter concluded, "unless you are a hard-hearted brute, you will hasten to relieve the sorrows of a distressed and beautiful damsel. I said you would probably arrive to-morrow afternoon."

"Earlier than that," exclaimed Julian.

He was like a man overcome by some tremendous emotion, carried off his feet as it were by the great wave which had broken over him.

"No, no, I cannot allow you to go travelling at all hours of the night. About four

o'clock is the earliest hour that a visitor has any business to arrive. You can write by to-night's post and say you will be there to afternoon tea," and Roger looked at his friend with such a pleasant, quizzical smile that Julian was once more nearly overcome.

"My dearest Roger," he said, "how can I ever thank you?"

"You and I need never thank one another, Julian. You must always remember," he continued, with mock gravity, "how important it is to take my advice, and to entrust your affairs to me, who am older and so much wiser than you."

"Now tell me, how did she look?"

"Look? Well, rather as you have been doing since you have given me the pleasure of your company here. Pale, very pale, dark circles round her eyes, a general haggard expression."

"My poor darling!"

"Another point of resemblance to you, I observed, was that directly she realized that

there was no absolute necessity for her to die of a broken heart, her appearance at once changed for the better. A warm colour returned to her cheek, her eyes regained their lustre; in fact, she reminded me strongly of what she used to look like when I had the pleasure of seeing her at Marchcroft Rectory."

Roger stopped, and Julian heard a half-smothered sigh.

"I am thankful she looked better, Roger," he said, fervently, though with an inward pang of regret for Roger, "but tell me, did she not send me any message?"

"By the way, I believe she did," replied Roger. "What was it?" he enjoyed evidently watching his friend's impatience. "No, not a message; she did not know apparently what to say, so she sent you this," and he felt in his pocket and produced the ring. Then he said, seriously, "Here it is, Julian; and if I were you I should always wear it."

It would be hardly necessary, perhaps, to record Julian's effusive expressions of delight and rapture, especially when he discovered that the word "Olive" was engraved upon the sardonyx in the ring.

"I should advise you to sit down and write at once," said Roger, "and seal the letter with your new toy."

He treated Julian that evening just like a great grown-up child.

"I was so puzzled," said Julian, when the important letter was at last despatched, "to know where on earth you had gone to to-day. I confess I thought it rather hard of you to go and leave me all alone; and I wanted you, of course, to see that letter to Mr. Selby, which I took at least two hours to write."

"That's just why I suggested it, I thought it would be the very thing to keep you quiet,"

"It was too bad of you, Roger."

"But did you not want to know where I was gone?"

“Of course I did, and I asked Ned, and he declared you had gone into Kent; you had gone there several times lately, he said, on some business about a large property for which you were a trustee. I wonder Ned,” he continued, for that worthy had just entered the room, “that you should tell such unblushing crams.”

“Master gave me orders not to say where he was gone,” answered Ned, with a triumphant smile.

“And I told him,” interposed Roger, “not to let you go out if he could help it; I was afraid you would go off wildly somewhere and get into mischief.”

“Ah! then now I understand,” exclaimed the victim of these deceptions, “I was late in coming down, I could not sleep all night, and late this morning fell into a sort of stupid doze.”

“Poor fellow,” interrupted Roger compassionately.

“Well, I had some breakfast, and wrote

that letter, and abused you, and tried to get through the day. This fellow kept pottering in and out of the room, and I wondered to myself if he went on like that when you were at home. At last I could stand it no longer, I thought I must go out, where, I had not the least idea, when what on earth should he do but bring me a whole pile of papers and tell me some rigmarole story about your having given them to him to find out a reference to some man's will, George Smith, that was the name. He could not find it, and was so sorry for you to be troubled to search through them, your head got so bad if you worked hard at anything now, it was from the 'cussion he supposed."

Roger was laughing heartily.

"Did you find George Smith's will?"

"Find it? Good gracious no! but of course I could not refuse to look, as it was by way, I innocently imagined, of helping you, so till about half an hour before you

came, there I was searching those abominable papers through and through."

"And he gave me no more trouble, sir," remarked Ned to his master.

"You managed splendidly, Ned, I shall be able to trust you again in a delicate business like this."

"You are an awful humbug, Ned," was Julian's sweeping condemnation as this valuable servant left the room.

Julian De Tressanay could hardly sleep again that night; but he was so happy that he would have been well content to lie awake for twice the number of hours, provided his waking dreams could always have been as bright as they were on this occasion.

CHAPTER V.

The god of love, ah! benedicite,
How myghty and how grete a lorde is he!

CHAUCER.

DR. MALLONEY and Olive stood at the window watching Roger as he crossed the street and climbed slowly into the cab. Not that Olive really saw Roger, or noticed anything that was passing before her outside. She was conscious but of one thought, that the past was gone for ever, and that the future, as far as it lay in their hands, belonged to her and Julian. But a few short hours must pass, and she should see him once more with the glad look on his face, she knew so well. The dark days since her return were already fading from her mind, their sharp poignancy was already half forgotten. How long she would have stood there would have been difficult to determine had not her father

gently touched her on the shoulder, and, rousing her from her absorbing meditations, bade her go and tell Ella what had just occurred; then he wished them both to come and speak to him again, he said.

“ Oh, yes ! Ella,” said Olive, as if suddenly recalled to another world of which Ella happened to be a denizen; but there was such a light on her face when she found Ella upstairs that her sister hardly needed to be told what a happy change had occurred in her fortunes. Ella received the intelligence with a rush of joy. It was a sudden weight taken off her heart, for she had felt as if it were her fault that this trouble had fallen on Olive; but when Olive told her of the way in which the difficulties had been dispelled, and who it was who had made everything straight and easy again, the announcement was so astonishing as almost to paralyze her. She sank on to a chair and gasped for breath. Gradually she realized that Roger Osborne had been there in the house, and had gone

away again without seeing her. He had begged his remembrances to her—that was all.

“Cruel, cruel,” she said to herself in the first rush of bitter thoughts; but an instant after she reproached herself for such injustice towards him. What else could he have done? It was not his fault; she had told him she would have none of his love; probably by this time he had ceased to care for her. Perhaps he wondered how he could ever have cared for her, or, perhaps, as her heart ached to remember, he was so kind and gentle he might have thought it would vex her to see him, even if he wished it. But most likely he did not wish ever to see her or speak to her again.

Olive had also lapsed into a long train of thought; she stood looking out of the window, lost in happy visions, forgetful of everything around her. At last she remembered, with a start, that her father wanted to see them.

“We must go directly, Ell. Papa wanted

us both in the study ; we must not keep him waiting."

" In the study ? "

" Yes."

" Where you were before, just now ? "

But Olive was already half-way down the passage, and Ella had to follow. It seemed to her as if she must see some visible trace of Roger's presence, must hear the clear tones of his voice sounding within the walls of this room where he had been scarce half an hour before. No wonder that she looked pale and agitated when she entered. The quiet room with its numerous bookshelves and pictures looked the same as it had done of old, but to Ella's questioning eyes it told of one well-remembered presence ; the very air seemed to vibrate with palpable tokens of the one haunting identity.

Their father was sitting in his arm-chair when Ella and Olive entered the room ; he seemed absorbed in some subject of meditation, and it must have been a pleasing topic

which occupied his thoughts, for although his face was grave, a smile played around his lips. He took his daughters' hands tenderly in his as their entrance disturbed him from his reverie.

"Now," he said, "I hope you will both forgive your poor old father for the blundering mistakes he has been making."

"Papa!" burst from both the girls' lips at once; it was so astonishing to them to hear their father talk to them in this way.

"Well, I hope you will," he continued. "You, Ella, were just as angry with me as Olive was."

"Oh, papa," began Ella.

"It is quite true, my child, and I was all wrong, wrong from beginning to end."

"Never mind now, papa," said Olive consolingly; and encouraged by his new gentleness, she laid her pretty dark head on his shoulder.

"I am quite sufficiently punished, I assure you, by thinking of the trouble and con-

sternation I caused you ; but how was I to know you would take it so seriously to heart ? My own days of romance are so far off," he continued, a little sadly, " I suppose I had forgotten what a serious thing it is to be in love."

" Poor papa ! " said Olive.

" So you are sorry for any one who is not in love ? "

" Yes, so sorry."

" And you, Ella ? "

But Ella's lips trembled ; she could only say evasively—

" I am so glad about Olive, papa."

" I used to try and make you children always give a direct answer," he returned with a slight contraction of his eyebrows, " but I suppose I have failed in that as well as in many other things ; but I am not scolding you, Ella," for a flush of vexation had come over her face. " The days for scolding are over ; if I could have been more with you children, you would not have been afraid

to come and tell me everything that you thought and felt, but, you see, I have been too busy to see very much of you, and I fear you both think me a fierce old ogre."

But here the Doctor stopped. In fact it would have been difficult for him to have gone on talking with two pairs of arms clasped tightly round his neck, and his whole head buried beneath two young faces which nearly smothered him with kisses.

"There now, children, that will do," he said, disentangling himself gently, "I do not think we shall misunderstand one another again."

Ella and Olive felt that a cloud had melted from between them and their father, and that they stood on a new footing towards him.

"Now, Olive," he said, smoothing his hair as he imagined, but really making it stand up more erectly than before, "go and tell Jane your good news; she ought to have been here too, and not left out in the cold like

this; and, Olive," he continued as she was just leaving the room, "you had better set to work at once, and learn to be as clever and sensible as she is, else this poor Mr. De Tressanay will wish he had seen her before he was silly enough to propose to you."

But a peal of clear laughter was the only answer vouchsafed to Dr. Malloney on this occasion.

The Doctor remained for a moment with his keen eyes fixed on Ella's face.

"Of course you approve of this young man as a brother-in-law, Ella?"

"Oh, yes papa."

"Nice enough even for Olive, eh?"

"Even for Olive. There is no one so nice—hardly," she added after a second's pause.

It was a dreadful effort to add that last word; it seemed as if her secret had floated abroad on the tell-tale syllables. But in that room where Roger Osborne had been his very self, but a short hour before, it seemed to her

disloyal to say that no one was nicer than Julian De Tressanay.

"Hardly?" asked her father, looking inquiringly into her face, which was overspread by a crimson flush.

"I meant that—that Mr. De Tressanay was nicer than anybody for Olive."

"Well, I hope so," returned her father. "I wish you were not quite so thin, Ella," he continued; "I am afraid Marchcroft did not do you so much good as usual."

"Oh, yes, papa, it did," she answered nervously, "only I was so sorry about Olive; let me go now and help tell Jane."

Her father shook his head, but he released her hand, and she escaped from the room with more haste than he thought needful under the circumstances.

After she was gone, Dr. Malloney still sat in his arm-chair lost in thought. It was a most unusual proceeding on his part to sit in his study during the precious morning hours and do nothing. Perhaps such a thing had

hardly happened since his far-away days of romance. But the Doctor's thoughts were not travelling back to those long-past years, he was thinking of Ella.

What was it which had changed her bright, childlike face with its sunny smile to that of a grave woman with wistful eyes? Yet she could not have given her heart to Roger Osborne. If Mr. or Mrs. Selby, or even Olive had stated that she had refused him as a suitor once and for ever, Dr. Malloney would not have believed them; but when he heard it from the rejected lover himself, then, surprising as it was, he could not refuse his credence. Ella could never have cared for Roger Osborne, that the Doctor must try to accustom himself to look upon as an established fact. Otherwise, why on earth, he asked himself, should she have refused him, and not only refused him, but persisted in winning from him an assurance that the subject should never be alluded to again? Yet Dr. Malloney was surprised

at himself for not feeling as angry with Ella as he had done towards Olive, when he imagined her guilty of the very offence which Ella had actually committed, and after the interview that morning Dr. Malloney felt more strongly drawn than ever towards Roger Osborne. His devotion to his friend, his explanation of his own share in the course of events, his generous delicacy towards Ella, the effort to conceal any personal regret, all this strengthened the strong liking which the Doctor already felt for him. Still there was something in Ella's face, in her nervous dread of the most distant approach to questioning which threw him into a new maze of speculation and disarmed his resentment. Besides, since the explanation of the morning he stood on a new footing towards his younger children, a new understanding, which forbade irritation, had arisen between them.

Dr. Malloney mused on, sorely puzzled. He was strongly tempted to lay some inter-

pretation of his own upon the whole affair, and would have spun out some ingenious explanation to reconcile the conflicting elements of the case before him, had it not been for the utter failure of his former theory and the confusion and grief which had followed on his rash insistence on its infallible correctness.

Still he could not resist clinging to the idea that Ella had probably made some great mistake; she must have cared for Roger Osborne, or who could she have implied when she disallowed an absolute preference for Julian De Tressanay? Perhaps she was startled at a sudden revelation of Osborne's feelings towards her, and tried to escape from the perplexity of the moment. Perhaps they would meet again and be reconciled some day; but he had been wrong once, he must be careful now.

"I am getting old and stupid, I suppose," he said to himself, "so I will try and meddle no more with things which I conclude I do

not understand. I must let matters take their own way, and trust that time may set them straight. I cannot help hoping they will be thrown together at some future time, that would be the best chance."

Thereupon the Doctor roused himself from his perplexed meditations, and went out to pay a round of visits.

Roger Osborne was not the only unexpected visitor at Fennington that day, for Mr. Selby, equally unexpected, arrived late in the afternoon. He had heard nothing since he received De Tressanay's incoherent note from the Manor, and determining to bear the suspense no longer, he set out to see how matters were going on for himself. His appearance was hailed with general acclamation, and no one took a livelier interest in the happy prospects of Olive and her intended than her warm-hearted uncle. He had, however, to ask many questions and to hear long explanations before he could quite master the whole chain of circumstances and the various

considerations on the part of Dr. Malloney, which had caused such trouble and consternation to the two young people.

“Now I think I have a fair understanding of it,” he said at last, “and as to your father being mistaken, well I confess both your Aunt Lucy and I myself were much puzzled. In fact we are still rather puzzled about Osborne. Of course, if your father had known De Tressanay better it would never have happened.”

“Of course not,” replied Dr. Malloney, who had just entered the room and overheard his brother-in-law’s last remark, “but as, unfortunately, I had not had that inestimable privilege, my daughter has kindly and graciously forgiven me.”

“You must be very careful in future, papa,” put in the daughter in question with an air of condescension.

“I mean to be, I assure you; most careful.”

“This is delightful,” thought Mr. Selby;

“here is William laughing with his children just as I do ; if it is the result of this trouble, its short-lived sorrow was worth suffering.”

It was growing dark ; the curtains were drawn to shut out the wintry scene, and they all sat round the fire. Dr. Malloney and Mr. Selby sustained the principal part of the conversation, and their remarks were limited to the mention of one person, Julian De Tressanay. Olive sat on a low stool close to her uncle, holding one of his hands in hers whilst he poured forth a long encomium on this favoured individual, praising him from the first day of his arrival at Marchcroft, and foretelling a brilliant future for a man of his talents and earnestness of purpose. This led on to a long discussion concerning his estate and property ; a subject naturally less engrossing to Olive, but still she heard Julian's name constantly mentioned ; it shone indeed like a golden thread through the common woof and warp of their talk, and listening to its frequent repetition, she was content.

Ella too sat and listened, but the conversation brought no such deep satisfaction to her. One bitter thought vexed her mind, nobody spoke or thought of Roger, nobody thought of any one except Mr. De Tressanay. No one seemed to care about Roger now, or to remember that it was he who had reconciled his friend to her family, and who was really the cause of the gladness which brightened their house that evening. It was only a pleasant journey she supposed they thought, all the way to London and back; he could hardly have reached home yet. Ella was sitting near the window; she drew the curtain and blind softly back, and looked out into the dusk. Wreaths of snow were whirling down the street, and the wind howled drearily.

The most anxious thoughts crowded on her mind. Perhaps the cold and fatigue would make Roger ill again. Perhaps the snow would be too deep for the train to make its way through it, there would be some ac-

cident likely enough, in which he would be killed. If he were, it would be her fault. It was her fault that these days of perplexity had come at all. If she had told her father or her aunt of Roger's proposal to her, Olive's bright dream of happiness need never have been disturbed for an instant. But how could she know? She thought it would not have made any difference; that everything would have gone on brightly and smoothly as before.

Now life had grown so difficult; there never used to be any need for puzzling over what was right or wrong, it had all seemed clear and simple. Yet she did not wish to fly away from troubles and difficulties; she used to be terrified at the bare idea of perplexities or responsibilities; now she would gladly bear them, welcome them indeed if they could but drive away the dull, dead pain which was always weighing on her heart.

Then she listened to the talk again and

turned her eyes away from the dreary snow-covered street ; they were wet with tears, but no one could see them for the firelight flickered but dimly. Still it was all De Tressanay, and yet again De Tressanay and Marchcroft Manor, and then again De Tressanay. At last Mr. Selby said—

“Now, Olive, tell me about Mr. Osborne. How is he, and how is he looking?”

“He must be well to travel so far and so fast,” she answered gaily, “but he looks quite different, much older and so”—she stopped suddenly, remembering Ella.

“Quite different, Olive? Older?” asked Mr. Selby, weighing each word as he spoke; “dear me, I am sorry to hear it.”

“I really do not know, Uncle John, I scarcely saw him; I do not know how it was.”

“He is terribly lame still,” said Dr. Malloney, “it was most unwise of him to undertake such a journey. Now let us go and dress for dinner.”

It would have been as well for Ella's peace of mind if her father and uncle had continued to talk exclusively about Julian De Tresanay, and had not mentioned Roger Osborne at all.

CHAPTER VI.

Defaulte of slepe and hevynesse,
Hath sleyn my spirite of quyknesse,
That I have loste al lustyhede ;
Suche fantasies ben in myn hede,
So I not what is best too doo.

CHAUCER.

A GREAT poet tells us that when in misfortune, there is no greater pain than to remember past happiness, but no poet seems to have told us in equally familiar words whether present happiness is chilled by the remembrance of past sorrow.

For Julian De Tressanay and Olive Malloney, trouble had been short-lived ; the buoyancy of youth, the reality of love, swept away its recollection as with a strong wave of joy.

Julian naturally arrived at Fennington the very next day after Osborne's hasty journey thither, and when once face to face with Olive's father, and listening to his warm

words of welcome, any lingering antipathy which might still pervade De Tressanay's mind towards the only individual who had cast an obstacle in his path, faded like a dream from his memory.

Fortunately Julian made a favourable impression upon Jane on the first day of his arrival. She scrutinized his countenance severely, and inwardly criticized every sentence he uttered. She had heard, as we know, a good deal in his favour, but Jane was not accustomed to accept second-hand opinions concerning people or things. She always deferred her verdict until she was in a position to judge for herself.

On this critical occasion Julian passed the ordeal successfully ; her manner soon became cordial towards him, and when she found in the course of conversation that they had not only many common interests, but that De Tressanay could give her a good deal of information of which she stood in need, he gained her unqualified approval.

"Really, Olive," she said that evening, when they had retired upstairs, "you are most fortunate as far as I can see. Really," she continued, with a look of astonishment, "to think of a man with a mind like his, taking a fancy to a child like you."

"Why not?"

"Why should he?"

"I should say there was every reason why he should," answered Olive, with a sudden assumption of excessive vanity, as turning slowly round she looked at herself in the tall pier glass in front of which she was standing; the pretty figure and face reflected in the mirror would have been a sufficient answer to most people, but Jane always affected a stern disregard for mere beauty and grace.

"Gracious, child!" she said, laying her hand on Olive's shoulder to stop her slow evolutions, "how can you be so frivolous when you have everything to learn? I fear that poor fellow is sadly deluded about you."

“Poor fellow !” was the mocking answer, “I am so sorry for him.”

“Olive, be serious for a moment if you can. Do you wish to ruin the whole purport of his life? Is he to find his wife a mere doll, a plaything, not a companion? Are you going to learn to be sensible? It is indeed time for you to begin to change.”

“He likes me just as I am,” replied Olive, with a provokingly defiant toss of her head, “and so I think I had better not change, not the least bit, Jane.”

And off she ran, leaving her sober-minded sister to ponder over the follies of vexatious youth.

Olive could not resist showing herself at that moment as the heedless wilful child Jane had known of old ; but the question her sister had asked and which she had answered so lightly, was in reality the one which pervaded her happy being with anxiety.

When the morning came waking her to

glad expectations of a long glad day, when she heard Julian speaking wisely and earnestly, when she saw old and young listening to him with admiration, when he talked to her of their future life, and of his undying love in the dim twilight, when she looked out at night and saw the stars shining in the quiet heavens, this one burning question arose in her mind, pressing with almost painful eagerness for an answer ; how could she be good enough and wise enough to satisfy his high ideal, to be a worthy friend and companion ?

She meant to try to be, she could do no more. But Olive had the best of teachers—a pure and aspiring love.

De Tressanay had not been long at Fenington before he began to beg that the time of the wedding might be fixed. Dr. Malloney seeing there was no reason for postponing it to a far future date, turned a compassionate ear to Julian's pathetic representations of his loneliness in his large empty house, and con-

sented to the event taking place early in the new year. It was a disappointment to Olive to learn that Julian had resolved to spend his Christmas at Marchcroft.

"I want to see something of the people at home, you know," he said, in answer to her remonstrances, "I have seen so little of them as yet."

"But you will be so lonely there," was Olive's answer, and Julian read such deep compassion for himself in her dark eyes that he really felt he was going to do something very heroic.

"It will not be for very long," he replied, consolingly, "and I shall try and get Roger to come down—and then there will be New Year, and then—I shall be lonely at the Manor no more."

A few days more passed bright with undimmed gladness, and then Julian returned to Marchcroft.

There was so much to be done at the house, he thought, before it could be fit

for the wife he was to bring there. Yet this question was one which puzzled him sorely. He came to the conclusion that he must be entirely guided by Roger in this matter of rendering the Manor as perfect as it could be made for the precious jewel soon to be enshrined in it.

The quaint antiqueness so dear to Olive must not be disturbed, but the house was too dark and sombre, it needed to be lightened by a touch of rich colour here and there ; the bright young face which was to smile in those large lofty rooms must be relieved by something less like decay than the old withered hangings which had hung mouldering silently for so many years.

The alterations and renovations commenced almost immediately after Julian's return, and cost him many an anxious hour. He paced up and down the house, note book in hand, fervently wishing that he had paid more attention to these kind of subjects before ; he was afraid that, as Roger had said, his own

uneducated taste would have been satisfied with deal tables and benches, but now he saw that such rude simplicity would harmonize ill with the beautiful figure which he already saw with the eye of imagination flitting from room to room.

How he wished he could have had Roger at Marchcroft to help him; Roger would have seen in a moment everything that was wanted, and told him exactly what to do, but he could not come just yet.

Julian had been horrified to learn how dear the long and rapid journey to Fennington had cost his friend. Roger had appeared at breakfast the next morning, interested himself in all Julian's affairs, and laughed at the latter's fears of the ill effects which might follow the previous day's exposure, but as soon as De Tressanay was gone Roger had been forced to retire to bed, and it was many days before he could attempt to move again. He had promised, if possible, to come down and spend Christmas at the Manor, and he

was trying to recruit his strength for that time. Julian had to content himself with writing long accounts of what he supposed to be wanting, while Roger in return sent him the best advice in his power, and bales of merchandise from which to select the things needed. So the decorations proceeded with varying success.

“I know Roger will have all this altered,” muttered Julian to himself, as he watched the painting of a wall and ceiling, “I am sure it is not right, though it is what he says ought to be done,” and he again referred to a lengthy document in Roger’s handwriting. “I wonder what is the matter with it,” he continued, “I wish I knew,” and he turned away with a sigh, and wandered off to other parts of the house.

Somewhere in the course of his peregrinations he was almost sure to light on his old housekeeper, who, animated with a spirit of extreme importance, frequently emerged from her usual dignified retirement under the im-

pression that nothing could be done properly excepting under her own immediate superintendence.

Both Mrs. Mitten and the other old servants would have felt injured and aggrieved had Julian set to work for his own fancy to make changes and alterations, but the prospect of his marriage gave quite a different direction to their feelings. Of course, they thought, everything must be new, or brightened up for a young lady to come to, and nothing seemed too good or too much trouble to be done for the sake of the beautiful girl they had seen grow up.

Julian's heart quite melted towards the awe-inspiring old matron, when he saw the interest which she took in all the preparations, and he was truly grateful to her for the immense amount of trouble and fatigue she seemed to undergo. Like Mrs. Mitten herself, he had a vague idea that she did a great deal, what, he never attempted to realize. Nevertheless he secretly dreaded

the frequent encounters with her from which he could not escape, for she would ask the most searching questions about the allotment of and the arrangement of rooms, and persist in obtaining definite answers concerning details which it never entered his mind to dream of. Poor Julian, driven to bay at last, would open his note book, and say—

“I will see about it, and let you know, Mrs. Mitten.”

“How long before you will let me know, sir?”

“What is to-day? Oh! I shall get an answer by the day after to-morrow,” he would reply, incautiously, without realizing her question; intending mechanically to refer it with all the rest to his untiring counsellor.

“From Mr. Osborne, sir?”

“Yes,” Julian replied, with mild surprise.

“I only made bold to ask, sir; because I know well as Mr. Osborne is a very great judge as to paintin’ and such-like, but I would

say, sir, at the same time that in things like this, he could not know no better than yourself, sir, not being married and ignorant of ladies' ways."

And Julian could not deny the truth of this argument, and had to decide for himself on some important details of furniture, thinking to himself with a sigh, that it would probably be all wrong.

Mr. and Mrs. Selby were ever ready and willing to give advice, and Julian in despair, would often drive down to the Rectory and fetch Mrs. Selby to help him out of some unusual difficulty. He felt that her knowledge was practical, and her advice seasoned with praiseworthy common-sense, but even here, he was haunted by a lurking suspicion that her views were not altogether sound, not what Roger would call sound, he said to himself with a feeling of bewildered helplessness. Mrs. Selby would pronounce one thing to be "substantial and serviceable," another she would declare "sure to wear

well," but those were not the terms of approval he ever heard Roger apply to hangings or draperies, and Roger's judgment was his one standard of belief.

Sometimes after a severe cross-examination from Mrs. Mitten, Julian would take refuge in his study, and refresh his mind by writing to Olive, and there as he paused now and then in his writing, his eyes fell on the books so absorbing to him before he came to Marchcroft. They seemed to bring back a time which had grown very distant to him, the time before he had known and loved Olive. How different was he now under the influence of this new affection from the Julian De Tressanay who had come to the old Manor absorbed in theories, whose aspirations tended wholly towards the partial realization of these theories, and whose first pulsations of pleasure in knowing that the estate had become his own, were caused by the knowledge that his opportunities of pursuing these theories were more than doubled. He thought this all over deliberately.

"Yes," he said to himself, after he had faced every aspect of the seeming change within him, "yes, I am the same, my hopes and aims are unchanged, they are only swept aside for the moment by this strong current which has burst across my life. When this current has ceased to tear and dash along in its wild channel and is flowing smoothly on, a wide, swiftly rushing stream, then there will be fresh strength for attaining, a new glory in hurrying on to the goal. There is a time for all things, as was said of old; life would be poor and bare without the fulness and fragrance of a love like ours." Then such a crowd of happy expectant thoughts would surge over Julian's brain that he would suddenly push back his chair, and springing up, pace the room with eager steps.

For it was true, the dream that dimly floated in De Tressanay's mind when he first met Olive Malloney and gained a fleeting glimpse now and then of the deep eyes revealed so sparingly by the heavy, languid

eyelids. The soul was there; it was not absent, only sleeping. It awaited but the touch of awakening life to rouse its slumbering powers, and to call forth its aspiring energies. To some, the touch brings a painful awakening, a sudden knowledge of undreamt-of woes and trouble untold; but to Olive it came as a sweet and gentle magic.

And in Olive herself Julian found more than even he with his great love, had dared to hope; such strength of character, such quick apprehension, such fine qualities of mind seemed to unfold with astonishing rapidity under the influence of her new destiny.

Julian was not left for long periods to his solitary meditations, or to his anxious thoughts about the fitting preparation of the house. He paid various visits at Fennington, sometimes spending a day with Roger in London on his way. Every time he saw Roger, the more vexatious were his thoughts;

seeing that the pleasant current of his friend's life had been disturbed, turned to dreary wanderings amongst the waste, shifting sands of disappointment, and the harder grew his judgment of the shallow girl, as he thought her, who had perturbed the easy, if never eager, tenor of his way. Even the fact of Ella being Olive's sister, was not enough to excuse her in Julian's eyes. Coming to Fennington after one of these brief visits to his friend, Julian happened to find himself alone with Ella in the drawing-room in the evening after his arrival. A sort of constraint seemed to have fallen on them. There were so many subjects of urgent interest common to both which they might have discussed, but they seemed to find it extremely difficult to start any topic of conversation. At length the number of times that the train stopped between the nearest great junction and Fennington suggested itself to Julian, and the subject was discussed for some minutes with tolerable

success. At last even that was exhausted, but time wore on and the gong sounded. It was time to dress for dinner. Julian rose, glad of an excuse to end the interview ; Ella rose too, but instead of going towards the door, she said—

“ Mr. De Tressanay.”

Julian stopped and looked round in surprise, but he could not see her face.

“ Yes,” he answered.

“ I want you to tell me how is Mr. Osborne ? ”

“ Oh ! better : decidedly less lame,” he replied, abruptly.

“ I am very glad,” answered Ella. She hesitated for a moment or two, and Julian stood still, wondering what was coming.

“ Then you think he is nearly well again ? ”

“ I said he was better.”

“ Not quite well then ?—like himself ? ”

“ Not the least like himself. He looks wretched, as you ask me ! ”

He knew he had spoken in rather a brutal

manner and wished he could have recalled the words which escaped him over-hastily ; but was it not all her fault that Roger was gloomy and listless ? It was but fair she should suffer a little as well.

Ella looked up as if she would make some reply, no words came, but Julian was touched by a slight feeling of remorse at the sight of her face and the anguish it expressed.

“ Roger talks sometimes of going abroad,” he said opening the door, “ perhaps that will do him good.”

To the successful and the unsuccessful, to the poor and the rich, to those who are fortunate in love and to those who suffer irreparable damages from their encounter with that capricious deity, time rolls on with the same unhurrying though untiring relentlessness. The days pass to return no more ; lost for ever to those who would fain recall their sweetness and live once more through their past delicious hours, lost gladly for

those to whom every dawn brings a fresh consciousness of enduring weariness.

And as in every corner of the earth, amongst every section of the numerous families of mankind, so was it with the passing of days amongst those whose histories are partially recorded here. Julian and Olive would gladly have lengthened the days they spent together; the elders of Olive's family at Fennington and Marchcroft would willingly have prolonged them as the hours were filled with their busy and benevolent activity, while to Roger and Ella they seemed weighted as with a leaden dulness.

The time passed however and Christmas was at hand.

It was a real old-fashioned Christmas when Roger Osborne came down to Marchcroft. The snow lay deep on the ground, crisp and sparkling; the air was clear and still, and the trees were covered with hoar frost so that each twig and branch glittered

in the sun in feathery splendour. The rooks flew slowly over the white fields, the "frosty feldefars" wheeled about in busy flocks and the robins chirped plaintively in the bare hedges.

Julian was anxious to celebrate the season by some entertainment for the people of Marchcroft.

"I think we might try a lecture," he said when talking it over with Mr. Selby.

"By all means," was the Rector's reply. "I think," he continued with a mischievous smile, "you were anxious to give a course of lectures on the inestimable value of the franchise."

"No, no," answered Julian laughing, "not now; that shall be later on; no, we will have something light and popular."

"Very well; only I should like to remark that we do not hear so much of your political economy or some would say extravaganzas, as we used to," was the Rector's bantering answer.

By the time that Roger arrived, Julian had decided on giving a lecture on his travels in America. He and Roger had crossed the Atlantic together about two years before. They had visited the principal cities of the United States, they had crossed the prairies, seen the Rocky Mountains, done in fact in the way of sight-seeing, all that is generally expected of young English travellers. Julian divulged his project to Roger with considerable satisfaction.

“Mr. Selby thinks it a capital subject, Roger,” he added.

“It is eminently commonplace, my dear Julian,” objected this fastidious critic.

“Why? America commonplace?”

“By no means, but it is what every one has done so often; everything has surely been said about the beaten track we took that can be said.”

“So it may, but it will be all new to the people here.”

“Well, of course you must consider your

audience, and it would be a pity for you to get out of practice; when you can at last tear your thoughts away from one subject, and take up some of your old hobbies again, you will feel quite shy if you do not get up on a platform now and then in the meantime."

"I should consider the audience indeed if it were composed of such hypercritical fellows as you: it is very kind of you to think of my good, but as it happens this performance is entirely for the benefit of the people here, and as they almost all have some relations who have 'americated,' as they call it, they will like to hear something about the country their belongings have gone to."

Roger acknowledged the truth of this view of the subject, and made no more objections. The next day, however, when Julian was looking over his notes of their travels, he pronounced that the lecture would never be intelligible without plenty of pictures.

"How can you expect the people to follow

you when they have never seen the sea or a ship, and the wings of their imagination are hardly developed ? ” he asked, and he began a series of enormous illustrations. He had only three days before him so he had to keep pretty constantly to his task. He was glad to have the excuse of staying in. He had resolved that his own lack of spirits should not overshadow his friend’s first Christmas in his new home, and Julian was delighted with the improvement which he saw and imagined to be genuine, and repented of having spoken so gloomily about him to Ella, consoling himself again by remembering that she would see Roger at the wedding and be able to judge for herself. But when Roger was left alone his brush would hang idly in his hand, and he would gaze out over the frozen fields and dream again of the days he had spent at the Manor, when his whole life seemed stirred by new hope, and a new happiness gilded the hours. In whatever direction he turned his eyes there was some-

thing to recall Ella's presence ; the pathways through the park they had trod side by side, he could fancy she might be standing on the broad flight of steps with her hands full of flowers, the notes of the old piano in the drawing-room recalled her voice. It was but a vain dream he would say, half angry with himself for allowing its glamour to steal over his heart ; real once, dead now and cold as the earth in the chill wintriness. And again he would lapse into this dream, simply by force of contrasting the Marchcroft, he saw before him clothed in its white shroud of snow, with the sunny aspect it wore when he first knew it in those far-away autumn days. No wonder that Julian remarked that the work got on slowly.

"Slowly for you I mean," he said, "for you always seem to do these things faster than any one else."

"It shall be done in time," Roger replied cheerfully.

He did not give his whole time to these

paintings; he had to criticize all Julian's alterations and as the latter had anticipated, many were the reproofs he brought down on himself by his lack of artistic knowledge. Many were the remonstrances of the work-people and Mrs. Mitten at the various pieces of painting and papering which Roger decreed must be entirely removed and done over again. Julian stood by him manfully, however, agreed blindly to all his suggestions and his instructions had accordingly to be followed with minute exactness.

The lecture was not the only entertainment which was to delight the people of Marchcroft. Julian in the fulness of his heart and overflowing happiness, prepared to feast old and young. Old men and women had dinners, younger men and women suppers, children teas and treats, but those perhaps who fared the best were sundry young couples about to be married, they were provided with useful and delightful presents to help them in setting up house.

Nor was it to the villagers alone that De Tressanay showed such unbounded hospitality. The large lake in the park was frozen hard, and as had been the invariable custom for years, it was crowded from morning till the early twilight with skaters, and after hours of vigorous exercise they possibly enjoyed the luncheons and refreshments sent down from the Manor to the side of the lake, as much as those who feasted in the schoolroom.

Julian used to go and watch the skaters, and chat with the numerous acquaintances he found amongst them. He did not join in the skating; when pressed to do so he always replied that he had not time, not that he could have given a very exact account of how he spent the hours; but the fact was he was so happy that he was pervaded by the idea that he had not time for anything, although he did little but stroll about from one place to another, forgetting almost that it was winter which was pressing with so iron a tread upon the earth, and forgetting

that trouble or sorrow could cloud the happy contented faces he saw around him in the prosperous homesteads.

Neither did Roger often favour the skaters with his society. He shrank from the cold as he could still move about but slowly, and the visitors were strange and indifferent to him. He clung much to Julian during this visit.

“Leave all those people to take care of themselves,” he would say, as Julian looked out and saw fresh arrivals coming up the drive. “Come and sit down and talk to me, I must finish this splendid representation of our ship in a gale in the Atlantic before dusk. Sit down there by the fire ; you know it is the last time I shall have you all to myself.”

That feeling was ever present to him. Julian would care for him he knew as before, unchangingly ; but it would be different, their familiar, intimate life, their daily companionship would be gone.

He did not grudge his friend his happiness, he would not have had it otherwise ; but the thought would cross his mind sometimes how much Julian had gained within those few short months, while, though he himself had suffered no outward loss, all enjoyment of life had gone. None of his old tastes could rouse the slightest interest in his mind, "and never will again," he thought despondingly. "One might as well expect to see green leaves suddenly shoot out in the midst of this frost and snow."

Everything that Julian undertook at that period of his life seemed to prosper. The lecture, in accordance with this prevailing rule, was a great success.

He described the journey and the scenes he had witnessed in the West with graphic simplicity. The audience were carried easily from one scene to another, and the large pictures appealed to their minds with telling effect. A general hum of applause greeted the close. The plaudits were not so loud as

Julian had often heard greet the end of his addresses ; but their feebleness was caused by no want of satisfaction on the part of the people, but simply from a want of experience in the method of showing their feelings. They made, however, hardly any move to get away ; they were sorry it was over, and wanted to hear more. Mr. Selby divined their wish. They confirmed his suggestion with unanimous, and this time far louder applause.

“You must tell them something now, Roger,” said De Tressanay to him.

Roger demurred for a moment, but as Julian still insisted, he stood up. The audience, evidently delighted, settled down again in their seats in an instant.

“There are a few things that Mr. De Tressanay has forgotten to mention,” Roger began, and going back to two or three points which Julian had only touched upon in his discourse, he gave them a short series of anecdotes, and descriptions of ludicrous occurrences, and situations not unmingled with

danger, in which he managed to bring in the new master of the Manor in ever-varying scenes, but always as the truest of comrades, the most cheerful in hardships, the most imperturbed in danger.

Julian had prepared the picture in the minds of his hearers, Roger filled it with the living figures they saw before their eyes. His listeners went nearly wild with excitement and delight, they forgot their previous shyness and reserve, and the room echoed with roars of laughter and confused applause. The speaker himself was quite forgotten, for the whole enthusiasm of the multitude went out to De Tressanay, who had suddenly become a hero in their eyes—a hero who had endured undreamt-of perils, and who had been through the most unheard-of adventures. Yet so delicately was their new squire introduced on the scene, that Julian's modesty could feel no injury, and he found himself laughing as heartily at the recollection of some adventures he and Roger had gone

through as the villagers, to whom the history of such experiences had the exquisite charm of novelty.

It was a thoroughly cheerful, successful evening, touched with the magical happiness which made all the world radiant to Julian De Tressanay at that period of his life.

Still the snow lay on the ground, and the white branches glittered in the sun, but Christmastide was over.

The church bells rang out their chimes in the clear, still air; the stars looked down with their cold, solemn splendour; the moon rose, and the trees cast their long, black shadows across the palely glimmering snow-covered ground: the new year had dawned.

A few more days and Julian and Roger left Marchcroft together. Roger went to London, but Julian went to Fennington for one more short visit, then he was to spend a few days with Roger; after that they were both to come down together to Fennington the afternoon before the wedding.

The long frost had broken up at last, the snow had disappeared, and the sun shone faintly over the green fields and brown bare woods as the two friends travelled down together on the eve of the eventful day.

They were both to stay at the house of an old friend of Dr. Malloney's that night, but naturally they were to spend what remained of the afternoon and evening at the house of the bride-elect. A good many near relatives and friends had assembled in honour of the occasion, and the house was full of life, being pervaded by such unusual stir and activity, and the arrival of Julian and Roger seemed the signal for fresh excitement.

It seemed like a dream to Roger, the girls' voices sounded so familiarly in his ears, and there were Mr. and Mrs. Selby with their kind, pleasant faces; but it was a dream which had been bereft of its charm for him. He was determined, however, not to let any gloomy recollections cast an untoward shadow over his demeanour and the strangers

that evening looked upon him as one of the gayest of the wedding guests. "Such a capital man to make a party go off well," was the verdict passed upon him by more than one of the visitors.

The course of the afternoon and evening, however, was enough to show Roger that the long months passed since he had seen Ella and Olive had left their marks on them as well as on others. Ella had grown far more beautiful he thought. Her face was very sad notwithstanding her attempts at smiles and gaiety, but, was it not natural that the parting from her sister should be very grievous to her? Was it not natural that the thought of losing her on the morrow should lie very near the smile that now and then crossed her lips. She and Olive had never been separated in their lives, it was only natural that she should feel it more than any one, and be unable to conceal her regret, and Roger heard this from so many lips that he ended by believing it himself.

And Olive? Olive too was altered. The languor of her face was gone, the deep eyes were full of radiant light which showed that the very depths of her being were stirred by new hopes and new purposes, while the defiant haughtiness she had so often assumed seemed to have given way to a gentle and gracious dignity. Roger found himself sitting by her in the course of the evening.

"Mr. Osborne," she said, "I have gone on with my drawing, although I had so much else to think of."

"I am very glad you have," he replied, "I shall have to take care or you will get ahead of me."

"But I have done other things too, I have so much to learn. I know you do not think me half good enough for Julian; it is of no use your contradicting me," she went on, as Roger attempted a remonstrance, "I have seen it in your face again and again, and you are quite right; but I am going to learn."

“Learning is hard work,” said Roger, wearily.

“It is hard work; I should not have liked it once, but it is all different now.”

“Yes,” he answered, looking earnestly at her, “I know it is all different to you, and I can trust Julian to you now.”

A flush of pleasure came over her face, she wished for Julian’s dear friend not to despise her.

“You must be my friend as well as his now,” she said, as a smile struggled with the sudden quivering of her lips. “And we must not quarrel quite as much as we used to.” But as might be expected, Roger and Olive had little opportunity of testing their new bond of friendship that evening, or for seeing how long they could converse without falling into their old habit of disagreement.

Roger was resolved that his promise to Ella should be carried out to the very letter. As far as was possible she should feel perfectly at her ease in his presence. The idea

that his society should cause her perplexity or distress, caused a fresh tenderness to swell his heart. So resolutely did he carry out his intention that even when talking to her, Ella thought she realized more and more clearly that he had become indifferent to her. She came to the conclusion that when not actually conversing with her, he was scarcely aware of her presence, for he seemed scarcely to spare a glance to her side of the room. Once, however, she looked up and met his eyes fixed intently on her face. There was such a sad reproachfulness in the clear grey eyes which met her own, the silent mouth seemed to accuse her of so deep a wrong, that she coloured violently, and seized with a sudden agitation, her gloves and fan fell from her hands on the floor in the moment of confusion. Notwithstanding his easy-going exterior Roger was very sensitive, and he watched this little scene with a storm of wounded and angry thoughts. "Of course," he said to himself, "she thinks

I have forgotten my promise, and imagines that I am hovering on the point of vexing her with renewed entreaties. How little she can know me when she cannot even trust me so far. A mere look annoys her." And with a new, hard feeling he had never experienced before, casting sullen roots in his mind, Roger affected a fresh exuberance of spirits, and devoted himself during the rest of the evening to a fair-haired, insipid girl, the daughter of his and Julian's host.

Even those who have followed the fortunes of Julian and Olive from the day on which the former inherited Marchcroft Manor, would hardly care to dwell on their wedding with too great minuteness. There was the usual flutter of veils, and rustle of satin, the usual alternation of expectant stir and solemn hush in the church, the usual number of spectators who took a hearty and genuine interest in the proceedings, the usual sprinkling of those who declare they dislike weddings, and pronounce them an unendurable

bore, but who yet may be found accepting invitations to be present on these important occasions to the end of their lives. There was the same mixture of cloud and sunshine, the same happiness in mutual love, and bright hopes for the future, the same clinging regretfulness to old ties, the same pangs of parting, as make every wedding, when a marriage between equal minds and noble hearts is celebrated, a moment of thrilling emotion, a crisis in the tide of the life of a man and woman.

The parting cost Olive more than she had expected even in the midst of the happiness which filled her whole soul. She knew it would be very bitter to part from Ella; but she did not know how dear others had been to her, and how much there was which she had half unconsciously cherished in her old home. She thought of it all early on her wedding morning, and wished she had felt its truth in the years she had spent in the old house.

“I ought to have thought much more about it,” she said to herself, “and I ought to have been quite different; but then, perhaps, Julian would not have cared for me, so it is best as it is.”

It was hard, however, to say good-bye to her father, who had become so gentle to her, and to Jane, who hung about her with loving solicitude; but Julian was waiting, and Roger was close by his side saying his farewell, and in another moment Olive was passing the threshold arm in arm with her husband, and those who remained behind watched the last glimpse of the carriage which bore them away, from the open door.

CHAPTER VII.

So fathers speak (persuasive speech and mild)
Their sage experience to the favourite child.

THE ODYSSEY.

JULIAN and Olive were not to be away many weeks on their wedding tour. Julian was anxious to feel really settled at Marchcroft. His visits there had been so short and interrupted, and he proposed that they should have a longer trip in the ensuing autumn. Olive thought this far the best plan; but perhaps she would have considered any scheme that her husband was pleased to make, the wisest and most wonderful suggestion that could have been thought out.

Roger gained a hasty glimpse of the lately married pair in London on their way home; it was but a glimpse, but enough to satisfy him that his friend was likely to suffer from no disappointment in his happiness.

The whole population of Marchcroft vied

with one another to do due honour to the return of their Squire and his bride.

“I feel as if I hardly knew the place,” said Mr. Selby, on the evening of their arrival, when the excitement was still unabated, “it seems to have been in a continual state of festivity ever since you first set foot in it.”

“That is only owing to the novelty of my appearance on the scenes. You will see in a little time everything will have settled down, and we shall go on at a common-place jog-trot to the end of our lives.”

But Julian De Tressanay did not look like a man who could ever become merged in the monotonous prosaicness which pervaded the lives of many of his neighbours in the vicinity of Marchcroft.

While Julian and Olive found that every new place they visited seemed to belong to the same fairyland which hid the old troubled world from their enchanted eyes, the same happiness was far from falling to the lot of other less fortunate beings.

At Fennington Ella had been struggling with a constant sense of misery. She missed Olive every hour of the day. The house was so quiet, so dull, there seemed no object in living; the hours which passed so wearily one day were renewed with the same exacting pertinacity on the next. At last she began to try to take an interest, or at least a part, in her sister's pursuits. Jane wonderfully entrusted various commissions and errands to her, generally warning her that she would find their execution difficult and disagreeable.

"That is just what I want," she would answer, "I want to get accustomed to everything that is disagreeable."

"What is this?" asked Dr. Malloney, one day, when he found her going out in heavy rain, laden with a basket and a pile of books and papers, "Ella taking to Jane's district! What is it all about?"

And the Doctor was evidently disturbed in his mind for the rest of the day; for did he

not make irrelevant answers, as he always did when he was working out some new theory in his brain, and did he not persistently contradict every remark which Jane happened to make at dinner time, always a sign that there was an under-current of dissatisfaction in his mind which would probably make its way to the surface before long.

Dr. Malloney had a deep current of dissatisfaction pervading his mind, and what perplexed him the most was that he could not see how he should proceed to remove the cause of his annoyance. Notwithstanding the great mistake into which he had fallen in a previous part of this history, he persisted in believing, in the face of all evidence, that Ella was hopelessly in love with Roger Osborne, and it pained him to the heart to see her face growing thinner and paler every day. That Roger was devoted to her, Dr. Malloney had heard from his own lips; the problem was how should the shadow, which

had cast itself between them, and which had now assumed such an impenetrable aspect, be dissipated. The Doctor came to the conclusion that the only chance would be for them to be thrown together ; under the mutual influence of each other's presence, any flimsy protestations he thought, made in the heat of the moment, would be forgotten ; but that opportunity must be waited for.

Great was his satisfaction, therefore, when he received a long letter from Olive one morning, about a fortnight after her arrival at Marchcroft, telling him, amongst other events of interest, that they were expecting Roger Osborne there on a visit the next day. The Doctor read over the letter very deliberately, traced out in his own mind a plan of action, and proceeded at once to carry it out.

“Jane,” he said, “it is a long time since you and I have had a little holiday together. I see by this notice that the Encyclopædic Congress opens the day after to-morrow at

Brighton ; we will take a little trip there and see what they are doing."

"But, papa, I am so busy, I do not see how I can get away."

"Nonsense, Jane ; you must come."

"Really, papa, I do not see how I can spare a day."

"Well, Jane, I think you might remember that I am getting old, and we cannot expect to have many more jaunts together."

A few grey streaks, it is true, tinged Dr. Malloney's hair and bushy beard, but they were the only sign of advancing age ; it was, nevertheless, rather a favourite idea of his that he was merging on extreme senility, and on occasions like this he always found it a plea he could urge with telling effect.

His daughter was devotedly attached to him, and could never resist such an appeal for a moment.

"Oh, papa !" she exclaimed, "do not talk like that. Of course I am only too glad to come with you, all my business must wait ;

but I thought you said yesterday that nothing would induce you to go, it would be such a dull meeting."

"It is very inconvenient of you to remember it," said Dr. Malloney to himself, glancing at her furtively over his spectacles, but he continued aloud in an unmoved tone, "I believe I did say so, but now I find it is likely to be the most important meeting. I see the celebrated Von Donderdunsten is going to give a paper, and the equally celebrated Nebbia is to be there, so there will be a great deal to hear."

Jane was duly impressed with the sound of these weighty names, and made no further objections ; she merely asked—

"Is Ella to come with us ?"

Dr. Malloney was ready with his answer—

"Oh, no ! it is not the kind of thing that would interest her at all. How late the child is this morning," he added with perfect ingenuousness, as he cast a look at the clock, "she must go to Marchcroft."

"But Uncle John and Aunt Lucy are turned out of the Rectory this week by painters and masons, they are staying at the Manor."

"Yes, I know that. I meant that Ella should go to the Manor, of course; Olive wanted her to go whenever she liked."

Ella received her father's intentions respecting her gladly.

"I shall like to go very much," she said, quietly, and a letter, informing Olive of her sister's intended arrival on the next day, was despatched that afternoon.

So far the preliminaries of the Doctor's grand scheme ran smoothly.

Roger Osborne found that he was obliged to postpone his visit to the Manor for one day, and as Julian was obliged to go to Durnstone on business, he decided to return by Marlsham, where he should meet Roger, and bring him home. He had to start very early that morning, before the post came in, and great was Olive's perplexity, when, after

his departure, she received her father's letter, and found that Ella was also to arrive that very day. She compared the arrival of the different trains, and found that Ella ought to be at Marchcroft about an hour after Julian's return with Roger. There was barely time to telegraph to stop Ella; it was doubtful if the message would arrive in time, and if it did, a sudden alteration in their plans would be embarrassing to her father and Jane at the last moment. It was very perplexing, however. She and Julian had discovered that they each shared Roger's and Ella's secrets, and Julian had told her in London that Roger, when gladly assenting to a pressing invitation to come down to Marchcroft, had said, "Do not ask me when she is there," and Julian had assured him that his injunction should not be disregarded. Roger would learn, of course, that Ella's visit was quite unexpected, but it would be painful and embarrassing to all, and much as Olive longed that the misunderstanding between her sister

and Roger should be cleared away, she began to despair of any change in their relations, judging from the frame of mind she observed in the latter, and the morbid reserve to which Ella clung more firmly than ever.

These considerations weighed heavily on Olive's mind, and for the first time since her happy wedding day, a look of anxiety hovered over her face. Julian was to be home in good time in the afternoon, they were to have a large dinner party, and Olive was glad to think that the crowd of strangers would prevent the awkwardness which would inevitably have shown itself, had the circle only consisted for the first evening of their own immediate family circle.

Julian duly arrived, and Roger with him. After a hasty greeting Olive called her husband aside. She told him of Ella's expected arrival, and awaited his judgment of her decision with some anxiety.

"It is really very embarrassing," he said, passing his hand over his eyes as he always

did when anything puzzled him, "but you could not have put her off. Of course you were quite right, I will speak to Roger, and we must hope for the best."

Roger coloured with surprise on receiving the intelligence, but he replied in an instant or two with perfect composure.

"Of course, my dear fellow, you could not help it. Do not distress yourself. I shall not, you may be sure, disturb her enjoyment of her visit."

Julian's mind was relieved so far. He had half feared that Roger would start off again and travel back to London that night, or do something else equally hare-brained. He knew him to be capable of any such unreasonable action. But thinking it over afterwards, Julian almost wished that Roger had evinced some such desperate intention, he would have liked it better than this new off-hand manner his friend had assumed.

In about an hour another carriage drove up, and out of the blowing wind and drizz-

ling rain Ella came into the warm, brightly lighted house. She looked very pretty in her dark furs; her face was lit up with animation and excitement at entering the Manor for the first time since it had become her sister's home.

Roger had disappeared as the sound of wheels first grated on the gravel, and the rest of the party all stood round the large fire in the hall, a happy laughing group. There were so many questions to be asked, so many answers to be given that at last they had to disperse hurriedly to dress and prepare for the coming guests.

Then Ella learnt from Olive that Roger Osborne was there, a visitor in the house as she was herself.

Instead of making the most of the short space of time left to her to unpack and dress, Ella sat down and buried her face in her hands. She had been, as we have seen, unutterably miserable since meeting Roger again at Olive's wedding.

At first she thought he had ceased to care for her, but the conviction gradually stole across her mind that his love for her had not passed away, but that he was trying to crush it out by degrees, and she now realized how effectually she had with her own words, cut away every chance of explanation. If even her face betrayed her inner trouble, he would think it was a warning that his promise must be kept to the very letter ; if she seemed indifferent, it was a confirmation in his eyes of her supposed disregard for his feelings.

Yet the very fact that Roger was there in the house, roused a wild train of conjectures, and the certainty that she would see him again immediately and hear his voice, set all her pulses beating with a throb of joy that would not be quelled by hopeless arguments.

At last Ella was dressed and made her way along the well-known old oak-panelled lobbies and down the broad staircase. The drawing-room was already full of people ;

Olive wearing the beautiful jewels De Tres-sanay had given her on her wedding day, was acting the hostess with the quiet dignity natural to her, and which became her so well. Ella spoke first to some old acquaintances, but she knew almost without seeing him that Roger was in the room, and she knew without looking up that he was coming round to shake hands with her.

Roger had determined to act his part well that evening, better, he thought, than he had done at the wedding, and so distantly courteous did Ella think his greeting that her own pride rose to the occasion, and she stood and talked to him for the few moments which yet remained before dinner was announced with a coolness which almost equalled his own.

Her spirit was roused, and as she sat nearly opposite to Roger at dinner, she took care to carry on an animated conversation with both her neighbours.

The evening passed on, the company re-

assembled in the drawing-room. Music was suggested at length, and Ella sat down to sing. Roger had not approached her again, he lingered at the bottom of the room talking to some of the gentlemen.

Would nothing, thought Ella, make him speak to her again that evening, or make him give her as much as a look? Would he not even come near her when she sang? Could he be so hard as to seem indifferent to that? And Ella sang that night as she had never sung before.

The wild pain which wrung her heart found utterance in the plaintive old air she chose, and so full, so rich was her voice, so pathetic its expression that the most careless grew attentive and perfect stillness pervaded the room.

Still Roger did not come and linger by the piano or turn over the leaves of the music and utter fastidious and fanciful comments on the melody or the words, and beg for another song. Away as he was at the other

side of the room Ella could not see his face while she sang; all she heard was a "Thank you," formal like the rest of the applause which greeted the close of her singing.

That night when Ella Malloney was in her room and the house was still, she looked out into the wintry, windy night, she heeded not that the lights burnt low and the fire grew dim, for her heart was heavy, nigh unto breaking.

None of the guests of the previous evening stayed at the Manor, only their own small party assembled at breakfast next morning, Roger, late as usual, had not yet made his appearance.

"Is it true, Julian," Mr. Selby asked, "that Osborne is going abroad? Where did I hear he was going, was it Japan or Java?"

"Yes, he is going," answered Julian, "he has talked about it for some time."

The day before the intelligence thus suddenly announced as a certainty would have been a severe blow to Ella, now she listened

quite calmly. It seemed as if nothing could add to the misery she already endured ; and if Roger had been going to start that very morning, she felt as if it would scarcely have roused her from the despairing lethargy in which the excitement and conflict of the preceding hours had left her.

“ I hope it will be Japan not Java,” remarked Olive, then she continued, endeavouring to give the conversation a more general range, “ There is a great deal more of interest in Japan, is there not ? ”

“ Far more,” returned her uncle, “ and a much better climate. Osborne does not look now as if he ought to run any risks, and how lame he is still.”

“ He takes no care of himself,” returned De Tressanay gloomily, “ and now he cannot bear any one to notice his limping.”

At that moment Osborne himself entered.

“ I believe you were all talking about me by this sudden dead pause and your guilty faces. What were you saying about me,

Julian?" he said, stopping behind his friend's chair, and putting his hands on Julian's broad shoulders.

"We were saying that Java was a most interesting country, and a splendid climate."

"Was that all? I believe you were abusing me soundly," returned Roger, incredulously, as he sat down. "Well, I shall be able to tell you all about country and climate before long."

"Then you are really going?"

"Yes seriously, Mrs. Selby. I have, I believe, a tenant for my rooms."

"But what does Ned Trotter say to the plan?" asked Mr. Selby, "what are you going to do with him?"

"He is the most obstinate fellow I ever saw," answered Roger, emphatically.

"Does he know your intentions?"

"Yes, I told him I intended to go abroad for some time, to Java, in fact; I said also that I should not take him, and consequently he would have to leave me."

"I suppose he flatly refused," observed De Tressanay.

"Not at all. He simply said, 'Very well, sir.' I was rather surprised at his taking it so quietly, but I was very glad of it, for you know I hate a fuss and a scene. Presently I said when he had finished laying the cloth, 'I shall be glad to hear you are comfortably settled in a good place before I go, I have no doubt I shall be able to find you one amongst some of my friends.' 'Thank you, sir,' he answered very coolly, as if he had been thinking over his plans for a month. 'I'm not thinking of going to service again.' I asked what he was going to do, did he mean to set up in business, I thought I could help him if that were his intention. 'No thank you, sir,' he said, 'I'm not going into the business line.' 'What the dickens are you going to do then?' I asked, quite out of patience. 'I am thinking of travelling about the world a bit, sir, going to the East for a while. Maybe as you and I will sail in the same ship, sir.' "

There was a general laugh. Ella joined in it too, it seemed as easy to her to laugh as it would have been to cry that morning.

“But what shall you do with him?” asked Mrs. Selby.

“Do with him? I shall have to drag the fellow after me wherever I go, and pay his passage as well as my own. He is so pig-headed, it is useless to argue with him, and you know I could not let him ruin himself in travelling expenses. He would follow me about till his last penny was spent, and then I suppose he would humbug the people till they let him come after me.”

“You are very fortunate in having such an attached servant, Mr. Osborne,” said Mrs. Selby.

“Do you think so?” he replied carelessly. “It is a great bore in some ways, because it is impossible to get rid of him, and I always feel he is delighted when any misfortune happens to me, then he considers himself indispensable.”

"You ought to value him as he deserves," decreed Olive, reprovingly.

"I wish then he had a more appreciative master : devotion is a mistake in my opinion."

"Really Mr. Osborne," began Olive.

"Don't listen to him," interposed her husband, "when he talks such nonsense. I am glad it is so fine," he continued, looking at the gleams of sun which had struggled through the clouds and lit up the landscape, "it is a lovely drive to Tarlow."

Julian and Olive had accepted an invitation from one of their guests on the previous evening to go to Tarlow Castle to luncheon. They were all to go ; it was a long expedition, and would occupy the whole day. It is doubtful if Dr. Malloney, could he have been present, would have seen any immediate grounds of hope for the success of his deeply laid scheme. He thought that the somewhat desultory, idle life of visitors in a country house would be the very thing to bring about the desired crisis, and effect the happiness of

the two persons in whom he was so deeply interested; but unfortunately every hour threatened to be filled up leaving none of those vacant moments so conducive to sentiment in his estimation.

This was the case throughout the second day of Ella's visit. There was a large party staying at the Castle, and Osborne and Ella exchanged but few words. On one occasion, however, they were accidentally thrown together for a few moments. Their host and hostess were showing their visitors over the grounds, which stretching far in varied outline of hilly park and well-timbered dale, invited them all for an extensive ramble in the still bright hours of the early afternoon. They climbed a steep hill to see the view, the grey outline of the hills, touched here and there by the pale sunlight, bidding those who gazed to dream of summer hours amidst rocky hollows and bracken-covered steeps, while in the far valley rose abbey towers and cathedral pinnacles out of the blue haze

which hung over distant cities. They stood admiring the prospect for some time, and then turned again towards the house, going back through the beautiful gardens. Roger had fallen behind the rest, and happened to be walking alone, Ella and one of their host's daughters were not far in advance of him, when Ella's companion was suddenly called into the fern house by one of her sisters. Ella seeing Roger so near, stood still for a moment waiting for him to overtake her, and they walked on together.

"I am afraid you must be tired after that steep climb," she said, timidly.

"Oh, no," he answered, "not the least; only I can't get on quite as quickly as I could wish."

"That is very tedious for you."

"I am so accustomed to it now. I do not say I enjoy it, but I suppose there are a few unavoidable unpleasantnesses in the world."

"Yes; one soon learns there are a great many."

"You used to say you always found a way of escaping from them." Roger did not look at Ella as he spoke, he was apparently trying to distinguish the lark which was singing blithely over their heads from the background of cloud in the direction of the sound.

"Perhaps I used to," said Ella, "now I find it best to face them."

"I daresay it is the best plan, and then one generally finds these disagreeables less dreadful than one expected at first. Don't you?"

"No; not at all, perhaps worse."

"That is very sad, Miss Malloney. Is it not better to go back to your old plan of running away from them?"

"No," answered Ella, gravely, "that is the worst plan of all. I wish I had given it up years ago."

They had reached some of the others by this time, and their talk ended. Short as it had been, it puzzled Roger very much. What could Ella have meant, he asked himself by

words uttered with such grave conviction? He had not trusted himself to watch her face while she spoke, but the glimpse he had caught, revealed not the gay girlish face he had loved so well, but the face of a woman who had learnt to be brave and endure; whose beauty he recognized as far exceeding the bright fairness which had attracted him so strongly from the first.

Had he sought it, Roger would hardly have found an opportunity that day of renewing their conversation; they did not reach home till late in the afternoon, and more friends were expected to dinner.

Again the rooms resounded with animated voices, and the echo of laughter; they were brilliant with light, and the glittering of jewels, and again Roger Osborne and Ella Malloney played their parts and hid their troubles from the world, she by a ready flow of words, he by sparkling sallies of wit, shafts with keener points it might be than of old. But Ella excused herself from singing that night.

CHAPTER VIII.

Now, strike your sailes, yee iolly mariners,
For we be come unto a quiet rode.

SPENSER.

WITH this dinner party, the last of the series of entertainments which had marked the early days of Olive's wedded life at the Manor was brought to a close. The peace of the little party now in the house would be disturbed for the next few days at least, by no flow of visitors.

"I shall be tempted to say I quite enjoy the thoughts of a whole day with no other faces than those I see around me now, but of course it is different for you young people."

This was the speech the Rector made as his eyes travelled round the breakfast table on the following morning with a look of satisfaction.

"It would never do for us, Uncle John, to

be so gay always," answered Olive, with her grand air of dignity and importance, "we have a great deal too much to do."

"Olive is quite right," continued Julian, "you may laugh, Aunt Lucy," and he could not resist a laugh himself, "but she is quite right, I assure you."

"I was not thinking of contradicting her, Julian, I only laugh sometimes to see how wonderfully busy the world has grown since my young days."

"But is it not better?" asked Julian in his earnest voice, "is it not better that we should be stirred up to aim at doing something with our lives, even if we fail?"

"How utterly illogical," returned Roger, "you propose a tremendous expenditure of effort and grant with the same breath that it is entirely thrown away."

"No, Mr. Osborne," said Ella, with unusual decision, "it can never be entirely thrown away."

"I only said if we fail, granting the

possibility of it, not the probability," argued De Tressanay.

"I shall certainly lean to the side of possibility then, and take good care not to exert myself uselessly," returned Osborne, leaning back in his chair and folding his arms with an inimitable air of indolence.

"So you may, Mr. Osborne," put in Olive, "but please remember what became of the man in the story you told us once a long time ago. I forget his name; but he did nothing while his friend did everything. Do you remember?" and her eyes rested proudly on Julian's face.

"I am sure I have forgotten. I daresay whatever his fate was it was too good for him."

"He lost his head."

"That was rather too hard; don't you think so, Miss Malloney?"

"It was his own fault," she answered.

"You are very severe; you would have been sorry for the poor wretch once; but I

suppose," he went on with a curl of his lip, "you gave up compassion when you began to practise your new theory; one should be hard to enjoy disagree—"—but here he broke off suddenly. "I beg your pardon, Miss Malloney," he went on again hurriedly, "but I forgot, perhaps you have had hardly time to test it yet."

Mr. and Mrs. Selby wondered why Ella coloured so violently, and why Roger looked so annoyed and disturbed; they did not understand his words in the least, naturally; but the tone in which he spoke surprised them. Turning, however, to Julian, Roger said abruptly—

"I suppose you will carry on your old *rôle* of a hard worker to the end of your life? What are you going to do to-day?"

"I was going to tell you," answered Julian, glad to break through the awkward constraint which had taken possession of them all. "I want you to come and look over a quantity of plans for a new building in the

village. It will take the whole morning to go through them all."

"This will be a splendid opportunity. I am quite ready," replied Roger.

"And after dinner we will all go for a drive," said Olive, and they adjourned forthwith to their various occupations.

Julian and Roger spent a long laborious morning; Julian eagerly explaining his views, and unrolling plan after plan till the study table was covered with a mass of curled-up papers which resisted any attempt to restore them to order. Roger exerted himself to follow Julian's arguments and explanations, and by luncheon time a plan had been decided on, and most of the details actually settled.

"There never was such a good old fellow to help one as you," Julian said as they were leaving the room, and he laid his hand affectionately on Roger's shoulder.

"It is all very nice for your side of the question, there is little chance of my getting

"much return from you now," was the jesting answer.

Julian was in high spirits all luncheon time. The long morning's work had given him fresh zest for an afternoon to be spent in the open air and with Olive, and he arranged that they should take a long and beautiful drive as the day was bright and sunny.

His anticipated enjoyment received a check, however, when he found the carriage at the door, and saw Roger quietly reading in the hall instead of being ready to start.

"I do not feel inclined for a drive, it is so cold, Julian," he said in answer to the remonstrances addressed to him, "leave me behind to-day."

"But what shall you do? It is positively wrong to stay in all this glorious afternoon."

Roger shrugged his shoulders.

"I think it is a glorious afternoon for staying beside a glorious fire."

De Tressanay could press him no further.

He knew very well why his friend preferred to stay alone at home. Ella's face betrayed no disappointment; everything seemed the same to her during those dreary days. The carriage drove away, but it was some little time before Julian recovered his former spirits.

Roger uttered something like a sigh of relief after the departure of his friends. He sat some time idly by the fire, then he got up and went out. The sun shone brightly, the distant views were wrapped in soft grey mist, against which the trees, with their bare, brown branches stood out in strong relief. The birds, encouraged by the warmth of the sun, flew about twittering cheerfully in the hedgerows, but Roger walked on heedless of all around him. He was lost in thought; but his reflections were the same as those which had crossed and recrossed his mind with unvarying and bitter pertinacity ever since he had been at the Manor. How much longer could he bear the strain? How much

longer could he show himself a sociable laughing guest? Such was the ever-recurring burden of his thoughts. Then came the answer always in the same terms, and beset with the same difficulties. He could not endure the effort much longer. The fact of trying to seem cheerful and indifferent created an irritability which drove him to say bitter things which he could see vexed Olive. He regretted them himself as soon as they had passed his lips. Had he not blundered that morning at breakfast and thrown Ella into a state of confusion, and probably wounded her feelings, and made a fool of himself, as he imagined, by his rash allusion to a past which he had promised to bury out of sight? It piqued his pride to feel doubtful of his power of carrying out what he had deliberately promised; yet he did not know how to trust himself at the Manor much longer. The sweet face and pathetic eyes, pathetic over any sorrow he might feel, but touched by no response to his passionate

affection, he persisted in thinking, drew him with a power, the force of which he could never have imagined. He feared he should forget himself and say some mad, wild, words which would vex Ella anew and throw the whole household into a state of embarrassment, while now and again there came a rush of angry feeling, even against Ella herself, imagining that her face occasionally betrayed some fear of his renewing his rejected proposal. Yet what could he do? It was no use for him to tell Julian he was so busy he could not stay any longer at the Manor, Julian would know it was only a vain excuse. That would lead to arguments and remonstrances; perhaps the real reason would be touched upon, and in his morbid state of mind, there was nothing Roger dreaded so much as that. And if he did stay on and pay a reasonably long visit, what should he do when he found himself back in London, and when the time came to start on his travels? Even the torment of the

present would be preferable to the dull, hopeless monotony he would lapse into as he had done before.

He walked on without paying any heed to the direction he was taking, when he was suddenly roused by finding himself at a gate which was securely locked. He looked up and was surprised to find that he was close to Ruddock Farm. He had walked a long way, and now that he was recalled to himself, he found that he was extremely tired. He decided that he would go on to the farm and have some rest there. He climbed over the gate with some difficulty and walked slowly up to the house.

Old Mr. and Mrs. Bowen were delighted to see him. They were afraid he must be tired walking all that way, and being so lame, and they were not satisfied till they had induced him to settle himself comfortably in the old farmer's own arm chair in the bright, cheerful kitchen.

Roger sat and chatted with the good old

people. It was so calm and quiet there, it seemed as if no perplexities could be reflected in the brightly polished chairs and tables and the shining crockery on the shelves. Nothing, surely, had crossed the hearty, beaming faces of the farmer and his wife to set them out of tune with life; the world seemed a cheerful abode to them; no jarring tones, no longings that could never be satisfied had disturbed their thorough enjoyment of the good things which had fallen to their share during their sojourn in it.

Roger did not mean to make a long stay at Ruddock, pleasant as it was; but just as he was thinking of starting, the door was opened and in toddled the Bowens' little granddaughter. The old man took her upon his knee with great pride.

"Dolly," he said, "won't 'ee speak to the gentleman?"

Roger tried to make friends with her, but she feigned extreme shyness, and buried her face on her grandfather's shoulder at every

fresh attempt. Children, however, always made friends with Roger Osborne, and before long this little maiden began to cast furtive glances at him from under her long eyelashes.

“Eh, going to make friends, Dolly?” asked her grandfather; but this brought on another fit of shyness.

At last the mysterious attraction that Roger seemed to possess for her overcame her bashfulness, she struggled down from the old man’s knee, and stood for a moment as if doubtful what course to pursue. Roger dangled his watch before her. That decided her. She came up to him and climbed on his knee, and the mysteries of the watch were thoroughly investigated. Roger showed her her own little round face reflected inside the gold rim.

“Is s-at Dolly?” she asked.

“Yes, that’s Dolly.”

“Where’s ’oo?”

Then Roger had to fit his own face in the

gold mirror for her to see it too ; this was a complicated process, and took some time.

“ Now bose of us togedder,” she said when she had satisfied herself by stroking the reflection of his face with her little fat finger.

“ There is not room for both of us, Dolly.”

“ Ess, make room.”

Even Roger could not manage that ; but Dolly forgot her fancy, and while the watch was still dangling open in Roger’s hands, he suddenly found her arms clasped tightly round his neck and his face smothered in baby kisses.

“ Stay here wis we,” she said, releasing him at length.

Dolly monopolized the whole of his attention for some time longer. At last he gently attempted to put her down, and said something about starting, but Dolly screamed loudly, wound her arms tightly round him, and said he should not go. They all tried to pacify her ; Roger promised he would stay a little longer, and at last she was

partially comforted, and sat again quietly on his knee, but she held his hand tightly in both hers, and watched him with the big tears shining still in her eyes. Roger did not like to provoke another outburst, but the old people saw that he wanted to go. A bright thought struck Mrs. Bowen.

“Come and see the horses and cows, Dolly,” she said.

This was Dolly’s daily delight. Every evening she ran to watch them being driven into the fold yard. She jumped down from Roger’s knee, and was just going to run off when she stopped, and stamped her little foot.

“Coam too,” she said.

“He’ll wait here till you comes back, Dolly,” said her grandfather.

Dolly still hesitated; she longed to go and see the cows, but she was afraid she would lose her new friend if she once lost sight of him; she looked the picture of perplexed distress.

“I will come too, Dolly, if you will take me,” said Roger, rising.

The cloud vanished as if by magic from the child's face ; she held out her hand and hurried Roger along the passage into the porch, where climbing up on the bench she could see into the fold yard.

The slanting sun rays which still lingered above the horizon lighted the group as they stood in the old wooden porch watching the team of horses as they came jangling their loose harness, and the long string of cows leisurely trooping into the fold. Dolly was leaning back against Roger, her dark head, eager eyes, and flushed cheeks standing out in marked contrast to his fair hair and pale face with its wearied composure.

“Zere's Tip,” cried Dolly suddenly, leaning out as far as she could.

Bowen touched Roger's arm and pointed to the door ; the fresh excitement of seeing the dog made her forget Roger for a moment, and gently patting her curly head he unwillingly escaped.

The grey mist had crept nearer, a pale pink and yellow light gleamed above the horizon, a hard frost was setting in, and it was dusk and cold when Roger reached the Manor. The others had returned before him; they were sitting round the fire in the hall chatting about their drive, and Olive was making tea.

"I thought nothing would tempt you away from the fire, Mr. Osborne," remarked Mrs. Selby as Roger came in and laid aside his hat and stick.

"I felt obliged to try the 'glorious afternoon' Julian talked about."

"We have had a lovely drive," and Mrs. Selby proceeded to tell him where they had been, and all they had seen and done.

"I hope you enjoyed it, Miss Malloney," said Osborne when Mrs. Selby had finished.

"Oh! very much," answered Ella indifferently.

"Of course she did," interposed the Rector, with a malicious twinkle gleaming in his eye; "she met a great friend of hers."

"Now, Uncle John, you know he is nothing of the kind," exclaimed Olive, but Ella was silent.

"It is always pleasant meeting friends," said Roger quietly, but there was something in his voice which made Julian look up quickly.

"And this is such a charming friend," continued Mr. Selby, unable to resist teasing Ella a little. "I believe you met him, Osborne, several times, and I remember you seemed to take to him very much. I dare say you have not forgotten him—young Churton, of Brew Hill."

Roger had a peculiar aversion to this young man; he was harmless enough in reality, but he had attempted to devote himself to Ella sometimes in Roger's presence, which naturally he was inclined to look upon as a personal affront. Now he only answered coldly—

"I hope I should always admire any friend of yours or Miss Malloney's."

"Do leave that unfortunate young man alone," broke in Julian. "I believe Roger despises him from the depths of his heart because he has no ideas to speak of, and rides very well; but what have you been doing, Roger? You look so awfully tired," he continued. "For goodness sake, lie down on the sofa instead of sitting perched on the edge like that. I wish I had stayed at home and looked after you."

"I have been to Ruddock," answered Osborne, taking De Tressanay's advice, and leaning back against the cushions.

"To Ruddock?" was the general exclamation.

"Yes, and back."

"I might have known that you were not to be trusted," said Julian.

"I should have been back early, and then you need not have known anything about it," Roger went on. "The old people were at home, and I had a nice rest there; but then their little grandchild came in, and I could not get away."

"Was it Dolly?" asked Mrs. Selby.

"Yes, it was Dolly. She took a sudden fancy to me, and was so miserable at the idea of my coming away that there I had to stay."

"How did you reconcile her to the separation at last?"

"There was the difficulty," continued Roger with a sigh; "her grandmother remembered she liked to see the cows coming home, so in the midst of the excitement I crept away by the back door like a thief."

"How good of you to spare her feelings," said Mrs. Selby.

"Good? Not at all. There she was half clinging to me, thinking I was there quite safe, and in an instant I was gone. The thought of her cries and tears haunted me all the way home; but what was I to do, Mrs. Selby?"

"You really could not have done anything else," she answered.

"I don't know," he went on; "if you had

seen her clinging to me with the most absolute belief, you would have thought differently, I am afraid."

Roger's voice had become very tender at the recollection of the passionate entwining of the little arms and the tearful face.

"Poor little Dolly," said Ella, bending low over the fire as if to warm herself.

"There is one consolation," continued Roger rather sharply, "Dolly is probably fickle, young as she is, and will grow more so like many of her sex as her years increase, and I can have the credit of having given her her first lesson in the folly of wasting her affections; I have no doubt she will profit by it."

"You have no right to speak like that, Mr. Osborne, not even about poor little Dolly," said Olive, leaning her face on her hand, and looking at him reproachfully.

"It is no use arguing with him when he is tired and cross," decided Julian. "I wonder what was the use," he continued to Roger,

"of my wasting so much time and trouble in getting you well when you go and make yourself as bad as ever again. If you would not have our company, there were plenty of other horses, you could have driven out all alone as far as you liked."

"The walk did not hurt me, Julian."

"Oh no! Of course not."

"It did not really," and Roger could not resist a laugh at De Tressanay's indignation.

"What has then, I wonder? I insist upon your telling me."

"Since you will be so inquisitive, I slipped down some awkward stairs the day before I came here, and hurt myself a good deal."

"What on earth did you go up and down awkward stairs for?"

"Well," answered Roger, driven to bay at last, "why do you go and leave your poor decrepit old friends to look after themselves?"

"Oh! was that what you were doing?"

said Julian seriously, "then I suppose I must not scold you."

"Who are these people?" asked Olive.

"They are a poor old couple who have seen better days," answered her husband.

"Their days have improved again considerably since Julian became acquainted with them," explained Roger. "I should say the least he could do now would be to settle them in a nice cottage in the village. It would be a little difficult to arrange perhaps as they are both bedridden, and live up in an attic I don't know how many stories high. They have never been out of London, so would probably think the country a savage, dreadful sort of place. But all that would be a trifle; it would be a charming plan in theory, and therefore would just please Julian."

"It would be better than for you to go tumbling about on those dreadful old stairs."

"It will make no difference to me. I shall be in Java, you know."

"I was going to ask, Mr. Osborne," struck

in Mrs. Selby, "are you going to travel in all these out-of-the-way places by yourself?"

"No, I hope not. I have written to a man I know out there and hope to hear where he is soon."

"Who is it?" asked De Tressanay.

"Do you remember Louis Kennedy?"

"Oh! that fellow, I could never take the least interest in him, but I know you did."

"Because your interests are so narrow; your mind is terribly one-sided."

"Mr. Osborne," began Olive indignantly.

"It is of no use interrupting me. It is only to my constant criticisms that Julian owes the little he has attained to, and if I may not speak plainly now when you make a point of admiring all he says and does, he will be completely ruined."

A smile struggled over Olive's still aggrieved face and Roger went on,

"Louis Kennedy is a great naturalist; he

can tell you the history of every little beetle that ever was seen, not to talk of birds and beasts. He is writing a big book which is to make him a celebrated man some day. He is now wandering about in the Malay Archipelago, looking for unusual blue-bottle flies and beetles I suppose, and I have written and told him I am coming out there."

"But the Malay Archipelago is a large place," said Mr. Selby.

"That is why I suggested Java; I thought it would be a good rendezvous and I fancied it was a pleasanter place than, we will say, Borneo. I have not read up much about that part of the world lately, but I have a lingering prejudice against the Dyaks, and against the idea of my head being turned into an article of personal adornment without my consent."

"How horrid!" exclaimed Olive.

Ella said nothing, but she shivered as she looked intently into the fire.

"I should say the whole country was

most untempting," said Mr. Selby shaking his head, "don't you think so, Julian?"

But instead of answering the Rector, Julian took the whole company by surprise by walking straight across to the sofa and pulling away the pillows against which Roger was leaning. Then piling them on the top of his victim,

"You will be worse than idiotic if you go," he said, and strode away across the hall saying he must go and finish some letters, leaving Roger to struggle up as he could amidst half-smothered remonstrances.

Olive soon followed her husband into his study. She found him walking impatiently up and down the room.

"I have never been so angry with Roger all the years that I have known him," he said.

"Julian, what are we to do? Did you ever see any one look like Ella did just now, and we—we are so happy."

"Yes," said Julian earnestly; as he sat

down and drew Olive's arm through his own, "it makes one long all the more to do something to set things straight; but our hands are tied utterly; Roger winces if I, even, make the least allusion to the matter as if I had touched him with a red-hot poker."

"Uncle John and Aunt Lucy asked me so many questions after what happened at breakfast, it was so difficult to know what to say to them and Roger says such hard things now," she added with a sigh.

"Yes, but he does not mean half what he says, and one cannot help loving the fellow even when he is most provoking," answered Julian; and they sat and talked it all over by the fire as well as many other things, and it is to be feared that Olive's society somewhat delayed the writing of the letters which Julian had said were so important.

Ella disappeared as soon as Olive left the hall. What she had heard as they sat round the tea-table, had awakened all her old passionate feeling and roused her out of the

state of torpor into which she had sunk. For the last two days a despairing indifference had possessed her. She remembered as a positive fact that she had felt wild vibrations of hope and overwhelmingly acute pangs of disappointment, but she had seemed of late, unable to realize either sensation. She had been persuading herself that Roger was in earnest when he uttered bitter sayings; she was nearly believing in a kind of dull way that he was ceasing to care for anything, that he was different from what he used to be; he could be sarcastic even to her, was not that a certain proof? He might think she cared for that dull young man if he liked, she would not take the trouble to undeceive him. It would make no difference to him or to her. But now she had seen Roger in the old light which had once rejoiced her eyes; she saw that he was the same tender-hearted Roger still whom no one could help liking, who felt for the passing sorrow of a little child, who was even haunted by the recollection of its

grief, who would seek out wretched attics to cheer Julian's poor old friends. The current of her feelings, checked as by some dull and heavy touch, was suddenly freed and her whole being quivered in sensitive response to the old flow of doubts, regrets and pain which had perpetually agitated her for so many months. Of course she thought it was all her fault. Roger had loved her, he had been disappointed ; she was there to remind him every moment of his misplaced, discarded devotion, his strength had been severely shaken by his long illness, it was only natural he should show some degree of irritation. And to crown all he was going to this dreadful country where if he escaped the effects of the climate he would be sure to be murdered by savages. The acuteness of her misery seemed more than she could bear ; she could endure the burden of her reflections no longer and with a strong effort to assume an outward appearance of calmness she came downstairs again.

When the other members of the family had dispersed after tea, Roger stayed quietly on the sofa for some time, then he got up and went into the library. He did not want to read but he thought he should be alone there. He threw himself into a large armchair which stood on the rug, he was suffering considerable pain after his long walk, he was weary of the mask he assumed, of the talking and of the cheerfulness he tried to seem to share. The wood fire burnt brightly but the chair into which Roger had sunk was of unusually large dimensions and he was almost lost in its shadow. He sat there some little time when the door opened and Ella came in. She had found the hall empty but concluded that Roger was in the study with Julian, for the library was seldom occupied at that time of the evening. She did not see Roger for she walked straight up to the bookshelves on one side of the room and stood looking up as if to single out some one volume. Roger watched her as she stood straining her eyes.

to read the titles on the backs of the books. At last she seemed to have singled out the volume she required; she moved the light ladder, always kept in the library, and stepping up on it drew out a large quarto. Roger felt it was very heavy for her but he made no move to help her, he had sunk into a state of passive fascination as if the waves of life's trouble were closing over his head and he was resisting no longer but letting them carry him wheresoever they would.

Ella laid the book on the table and opened it but it was too dark to see its contents. She struck a match and lit a candle. The light fell on her face troubled by the storm of feeling which surged within her. She turned over the leaves of the large book; Roger could see it was an atlas. At last she seemed to have found the map she sought.

"Java," she said in a low voice, "here it is," and she laid her finger on a spot on the page, "so far, so very far away," she went on, and Roger saw the great tears roll silently down her face.

He could not sit there unnoticed any longer.

"It was so dark, you could not see me," he said, as quietly as he could not to startle her.

Ella was startled, but she did not turn and rush away as he expected she would do ; she stood for an instant quite transfixed, as if dominated by one absorbing idea, her lips were parted, her eyes wet with tears.

"Why will you go to Java?" she asked.

"Why not?"

Roger stood leaning with his back against the mantelpiece, and trying to speak indifferently. His passionate love, but also his wounded pride, and an obstinate conviction that Ella's agitation was only occasioned by a suspicion, on her part, that her act of rejection influenced his movements, and by no wish that that act should be recalled ; all these feelings strove together in his heart, and struggled to master, even at that moment, the tenderness which welled up

afresh at the sight of her distress. Added to this, he was tired and in pain, and the Rector's jesting words about poor young Churton, of Brew, jarring on his irritated frame of mind, had roused an unreasonable feeling of jealousy, and effaced the lingering effect of his visit to Ruddock, and the soothing influence of that peaceful interior.

So all he said in answer to her pleading voice was—

“Why not?”

“It is so far off—and such a climate, and so many”—

She could not go on.

“Distance is nothing in these days, and life is the same sort of chance, you know, everywhere. One may break one's neck over one's own door-step.”

“And you will leave everybody for so long.”

“There is no everybody for me,” answered Roger bitterly, “scarcely anybody.”

“You know Mr. De Tressanay will miss you.”

“He will at first, but I hope he is much too happy for my going or coming to make much difference.”

“But it will. Why do you speak as—as if nobody cared about you?” and a sob threatened to break her voice.

A mocking spirit seemed to possess Roger.

“I daresay some people do, a little, you know, enough to make them pleased to see me when they think I shall amuse them, not enough to spoil their appetites for breakfast if they heard that I was in my grave. They would say, ‘Poor fellow, I wish he had lived over our next dinner party,’ and then they would go to their business as usual.”

“Mr. Osborne,” the accents were enough to soften the hardest heart, but Roger went on mercilessly—

“The world would go on just the same. No one has time to stop and look round and shed a tear for one who may fall out of the race. The question is, who is the winner? That is all that matters in the world, the one

who wins," and he laughed a loud, bitter laugh.

His words were an inexpressible torture to Ella; it was worse to her than anything else to find Roger could seem a hard, cynical man, cruel and reckless in his speech.

"Don't talk like that," she said, putting her hands over her ears as if to shut out the echo of his laugh, "don't talk like that."

"Why not? What should I say?" he continued, wildly. "Say how the sun is setting on a world where everything is lovely and delightful, and every one so good that they are sure to be happy, and where every"—

"Oh! do stop; you might when I pray you to," and Ella came a little nearer, and looked up at him.

The wild look slowly softened on his face; he let go the back of the light chair he had been swinging to and fro in his hands. The fierce excitement of his mood seemed to subside, and he leant back wearily against the mantelpiece.

"I always do what you wish," he said; "what sort of things do you like me to say?"

"You never used to talk like that, Mr. Osborne," and the reproach in that voice seemed to penetrate his very heart.

"Perhaps not," he said, sadly, "perhaps I am not what I used to be."

"But you must be," a fire came into Ella's eyes, the leaping firelight touched her face and fair hair, she looked like a delicate but inspired spirit forced into speech by some power higher than herself. "You must be what you used to be, and more too. People who do not know you would believe you cared for nothing; it is unjust to yourself, and helps other people not to care. And it is not true. You are kind to a strange child and old people; you must not change; you must be the same always and better too."

"Perhaps I will try," he answered, in a toneless voice, "if you wish it so much. Have I not always done exactly what you wished?"

The momentary fire had left Ella's face. She was but a woman again, with a deep despair in her heart; there was a surge of sobs in her voice as she struggled to say—

“Why did you do as I wished? It is the unkindest thing you can remind me of.”

“Is your wish to be unsaid?” asked Roger; he bent forward and a sudden light sprang to his face.

The flame leapt on the hearth, and it crackled and flickered in the silence of the room; the silence lasted for a second or two, then it was broken by one low sound, one low “Yes” from Ella's lips which broke on Roger's ears with an overpowering surprise.

“Am I to take back my promise?” he asked.

He had not moved, but his voice was tremulous and eager.

“Yes,” she said, again, but he could not see her face, for it was buried in her hands.

“Ella, Ella, forgive me,” he said, but he still dared not touch even her hand, and her

whole frame shook with convulsive sobs. "Forgive me, Ella; forgive me," he pleaded again, "I must have been mad : I do not know what evil spirit possessed me ; but you do not know what I have gone through, and what my promise has cost me," and then at last he took the fair head in his hands and soothed her like a child.

"Forgive me ; it is I who must be forgiven," she said, at last, "I did not know, Roger ; I did not know then—that, that—I cared about you so very much ; I did not know then."

"But you are sure now ?" asked Roger, and something like one of his old smiles played about his lips ; and then he stooped and kissed her, so that question was never answered.

The minutes sped away swiftly now. The flame leapt up still more brightly from the burning logs as if to celebrate the new joy which had dawned that evening on Roger Osborne and Ella Malloney. If they were

more sober in their joy than Julian and Olive had been, it was not that their happiness was less deep, but the memory of the long dark months which lay behind them would not be effaced in a moment, and they both felt they had something to forgive one another.

They were very late in going to dress, and they met outside the drawing-room door. Every one was down. The room was but dimly lighted, and when Roger opened the door he could just discern Mrs. Selby standing alone near the fireplace. He walked across the room and stood on the hearth by her; Ella followed him.

"You will think me very changeable, Mrs. Selby," he said, "but I am not going to Java."

"Well, I suppose, not to-night," she returned, with a smile.

"No, not at all. Ella has looked it out in the map, and says that it is too far away," and, as he spoke, he took Ella's hand in his, and she did not attempt to withdraw it.

Then the truth of the case flashed on Mrs. Selby's mind. She caught Ella in her arms and embraced her, then she stretched out both her hands to Roger, and, with a rush of glad, motherly affection, kissed him also.

"My dear boy," she said, "I am more glad than I can say."

Mr. Selby, Julian, and Olive were standing in a little group at the other end of the room.

"Hulloo," exclaimed Mr. Selby, suddenly seeing what was going on, "what has come to your aunt? Why, Lucy, what has happened?"

But the Rector's amazement at this unprecedented conduct on the part of his wife soon subsided when he realized what event led to its occurrence. He shook Roger again and again by the hand; he was so overflowing with happiness that he scarcely knew how to express his feelings, and at last, looking at the two young men, he said—

"I am a lucky old uncle to have two such

nephews given to me in my old age ; I might as well say sons by adoption."

His kindly face beamed with joy, and his eyes gleamed through a dimness curiously like gathering tears.

"Do not be too confident, Mr. Selby, you may yet wish you had never set eyes on two such troublesome, good-for-nothing fellows."

"At your quips and jests as usual, Osborne; now I understand why they have been somewhat fewer of late, and your shots not aimed quite so straight as they used to be. Ah, Ella! you will have many a teasing to bear, I can see that; I hope you will soon grow hardened to it, or else you had better change your mind before it is too late. Your father is hardly likely to say 'No' this time, after the severe lesson he received not long since."

"She told me yesterday," answered Roger, "that she was quite prepared to face disagreeables," and Ella only glanced up into

his face with a look which seemed to imply that he might say anything he pleased just then, while Julian exclaimed in his deep, earnest voice—

“Thank Heaven, he will be his own real old self now, let him say what he likes.”

There could hardly have been a happier party anywhere in the wide world than that assembled at Marchcroft Manor that evening; but if there was one individual more than another in that happy circle who was made much of on the occasion, it was Roger Osborne. Every one felt that it was their bounden duty to show him how very sorry they had felt for his sufferings from his accident, and also for the gloom which had so long pervaded his spirits, although he imagined he had concealed it so skilfully that no one had noticed it. Mr. Selby made a great deal of Ella too, but she was so happy that she wanted nothing but to feel how true and real it was.

Roger's face was very bright that evening,

he hardly knew how to realize all at once that the shadow had disappeared for ever.

"You are all very good to me," he said, as they bade one another good-night.

"Do you really think so?" asked Ella with a smile, "I thought that hardly anybody cared about you, or troubled if you were alive or not."

"That time is gone," he said very gravely, as if the bare recollection of his words brought back too much of the old trouble, "that time is gone and can never return."

Whilst these events were taking place at Marchcroft Manor, Dr. Malloney and Jane were at Brighton attending the Encyclopædic Congress. Jane wondered at the eagerness with which her father asked her on the second morning of their stay, if she had had a letter from Marchcroft. "We had a line yesterday evening you know, to say Ella had arrived all safely," she said guilelessly, "I do not suppose we shall hear again till we go home."

But after the same question the next day, she said the following morning, "I will answer your usual question at once, papa, I have no letter from the Manor again to-day."

But to her surprise her father's face was beaming with delight.

"I have," he replied, "and it contains the most important intelligence, I will tell you all about it presently, and Jane, we will pack up and start home at once. The Congress is not nearly so interesting as I hoped it would be. Von Donderdunsten is verbiose and laboriously dull, and Nebbia's conversation and speeches are singularly wanting in perspicacity. Let us pack up and be gone."

There was another wedding at Dr. Maloney's house at Fennington before the end of the year. The concord of the community was disturbed by a great division of opinion which arose as to which of the two sisters who were given away that year ought to be considered the more beautiful. The dispute

was never finally decided, for the one portion of the community who admired dark beauties persisted in awarding the palm to Dr. Maloney's third daughter, Olive, while the remainder asserted that on her wedding-day Ella looked still more lovely.

Mr. Molyneux was best man on the occasion. He had gathered up several fragments of information respecting the course of Roger Osborne's history since his first visit to Marchcroft, and when he met Mr. Selby again on the evening before the wedding, his first triumphant remark was,

"You see I was quite right about Osborne's extraordinary zeal for his profession."

"Yes, yes," was the answer, "we understand all about it now."

Roger had quite recovered his health and strength. Mr. and Mrs. De Tressanay both believed that his personal vanity induced him to postpone the wedding until he was cured of his lameness, but he himself declared that

he could not get a house ready for his bride's reception any earlier.

Dr. Malloney and Jane felt rather deserted when both Ella and Olive were gone. They took a trip abroad to restore their cheerfulness, but it was a long time before Dr. Malloney again attended a scientific congress.

It is to be supposed that Julian De Tresanay and Roger Osborne looked upon the event of their respective marriages as the crowning point and crisis of their lives. A great deal, however, happened during the course of their existence which was of importance and interest besides that fact of exceptional moment.

Julian never realized the prediction that Roger had made concerning him when he first succeeded to the Manor. He never lapsed into a common-place landowner with none but local interests. He became a distinguished politician and speaker. The old Conservative country gentlemen would shake

their heads gravely and say, "A talented young man, it is a misfortune he should hold such dangerous views." Some of these grave personages, however, lived to find more than one of his audacious theories carried out and benefitting the community at large, although it was not to be expected that they should recognize the good these theories had effected after the dismal forebodings to which they had given utterance.

In course of time high honours and distinctions fell to De Tressanay's share. It was on the occasion of the value of his services being publicly acknowledged that Mr. Selby said to old Job who was still alive and active—

"We have good cause Job to be proud of our squire."

"Well, yes, sir," was the reply, "with some one to keep him straight, he'll do well enough, but there, he needs a deal of good advice."

From which remark it may be gathered

that Job did not grow smoother in his speech as years rolled on.

Julian used to say all that he accomplished was owing to the perfect happiness he found in his home. The troubles and vexations of public life were always forgotten when he re-entered his house, and found the bright trustful face of his wife awaiting him. Olive sympathized in all his ideas; her strong, direct nature untroubled by subtle intricacies of thought, her perception of things in a clear direct view unaffected by changeful side-lights, and above all her unwavering reliance on the wisdom and purity of his intentions, ever re-established in times of trial or depression, that confidence in himself and in the goodness of his cause which was the main spring of his working powers.

Nor were the people of Marchcroft forgotten. If the inhabitants of that parish were not more virtuous, better educated, more prosperous than any of their neighbours, it points to a greater lack of latent

power, to a more hopeless want of intelligence than we could impute to the British peasant.

As years rolled on, Julian and Olive De Tressanay watched with much pride and affection, the growth and development of their two children. The elder was a tall fine boy, whose name was Roger, the younger was a girl. They called her Juliet after Julian's own mother.

This was considered a personal affront some time later by Roger Osborne, when a daughter was born to him and Ella. It was ridiculous, he said, for the two cousins to be christened alike, but Juliet was the only name he cared for in the least. It was vain to enumerate to him a long list of euphonious girls' names; he turned a deaf ear to them all, and sullenly persisted in calling the child "Blight" to commemorate the affront he declared she had received so early in life.

Although Ella had made up her mind to

face all kinds of disagreeables, it is wonderful how few she was called upon to bear as far as we have any records of her history. She found a charming house prepared for her reception, when she and her husband returned to London after their wedding tour. In the place of honour hangs the Dutch picture presented to Osborne by his father-in-law on the day of his marriage, and by its side, his own companion picture. When looking at the two pictures sometimes Roger would say in his wife's presence, that it was all owing to this painting that Dr. Malloney had unfortunately insisted on his marrying his daughter, that the doctor did not know how to induce Roger to part with his, and it was deplorable to the mind of a collector that the pair should not hang together.

From which it might be gathered that Mr. Osborne was allowed a considerable freedom of speech in his own house, but he himself asserts that he is entirely ruled and managed by two designing and strong-minded persons—his wife and Ned Trotter.

It may be remembered that when Roger first found himself falling in love, he made a feeble attempt to resist the tendency, reflecting that his income was scarcely sufficient to provide for a wife and household. He was surprised therefore to find after he married that he had still enough for all his wants. Thereupon he founded a theory which he liked to expound on some occasions. He assured his friends that the only way to economize was to marry, that his wife had never given a thought to domestic economy till after her marriage, but she succeeded admirably in it nevertheless, for a knowledge of household management, he maintained, came naturally to a woman directly she set foot in a house of her own, and as he never happened to hear of the lessons Ella received from her sister Jane before her marriage, he was disturbed by no misgivings as to the latter portion of his theory.

Notwithstanding the unexpected suf-

ficiency of his resources, Roger took it into his head now and again that he would do great things and become a distinguished member of his profession. He thinks that so remarkable a member of society as Ella, ought to have a celebrated man for her husband; but in reality it is Ella who is ambitious for his sake, and who stirs up the sparks of activity which flicker fitfully through his *fainéant* tendencies.

"It is a great deal of trouble, Ella," he would say, after a few days of more arduous application than usual.

But she would stroke his hand gently and reply--

"It is very good for such a clever idle man to exert himself."

Roger's friends shook their heads and smiled at the idea of his making such unwonted exertions, and they were quite incredulous as to his carrying on the effort very long.

"You do not know Mrs. Osborne," they

would say, "what a hard life it is to be in the front ranks of the profession."

But Ella would look up proudly with her clear, sweet eyes, and answer—

"Yes, I daresay it is for most people, but my husband can do anything he pleases so easily."

Then they would smile again and say it was no use to argue with so infatuated a lady.

But we do not know if Roger Osborne ever became Lord Chancellor.

THE END.



















