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A STORY OF WAIFS AND STRAYS.

BY

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AUTHOR OF
"THE BURNISH FAMILY," "GLIMPSES OF REAL LIFE," ETC.

"LOST, STOLEN, OR STRAYED."

"Oh! is it a weed, or fish, or tress o' hair,
A tress o' gowden hair?"
KINGSLEY.

GLASGOW:
SCOTTISH TEMPERANCE LEAGUE.
1880.

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DRIFT.

CHAPTER I.

THE RAVEN—A STRANGE GUEST—THE TROUBLE THEY HAD TO WAKE HIM.

"Prophet," said I, "thing of evil,
Prophet still, if bird or devil!
Whether tempter sent, or whether
Tempest tost thee here ashore—
Desolate, yet here undaunted,
On this desert land enchanted,
In this house by Horror haunted,
Tell me truly, I implore,
Is there—is there balm in Gilead?
Tell me, tell me, I implore—
Quoth the Raven, 'Nevermore.'"—EDGAR POE.

FOR many years after the great trunk lines of railway were laid down through the length and breadth of England, there were still routes where a good long day's coaching could be had for those who liked it,—and, indeed, must be had whether they liked it or not, if business called them into such districts as those between Dorchester and Exeter, or Truro and Plymouth, or Bude and Launceston. Even yet there are nooks where the iron wedge of civilization has not found entrance—valleys that have not echoed the panting neigh of the fiery horse, as he tosses his filmy mane and snorts out his clouds of steam. In such an old world region, some twenty years ago, or thereabouts, stood the ancient

borough of Boveycum, a famous posting-town—a sort of metropolis of a rich agricultural district. In the middle of Boveycum, with many straggling streets converging to it, was an irregular open space, called, in memory of the sports of the good old times, "The Bull Ring," but used in these degenerate days simply as an open market-place; and in the centre of the north side of this space, the very heart of the town, as it were, the principal inn displayed its ample frontage of goodly windows, its open courtyard, shaded at the entrance by a fine lime tree, its enticing-looking bar just within the yard, where rows upon rows of gilded bottles, wearing gorgets on their necks, as if they were majors (as no doubt they were in King Alcohol's army), winked and sparkled at once an invitation and a welcome to all comers; while fragrant lemons reposed in jaunty little netted bags, and rows of glasses of all shapes and sizes stood ready to do duty. Nothing was incongruous on the outside of this inn but the sign: it was called "The Raven;" and there, sure enough, over the gateway hung an effigy of a great, black, ominous-looking bird; though, fortunately, for seven months of the year the thick foliage of the lime tree hid the ugly, dolorous sign. Not that any one, at the time we are writing of, particularly disliked the symbol, or thought it out of keeping with the look of ample comfort promised by the full larder, fuller cellars, and glittering and enticing bar. Indeed, there was a tradition that the "Raven" was lucky to the house and the town; for a former landlord had once changed the name and sign of the hostel, because, as the post of the old bull ring stood, as he said, "right afore the door, it was nat'ral that the name of the place should be arter a beast, and not a bird," so he called it "The Bull," and nothing but disasters followed the change. A stack of chimneys fell through the roof of the assembly room at the

back of the inn, and for a time destroyed the only place in the town where a ball, or Bible meeting, or what not, could be held. And worse than that, the landlord was thrown or fell from his horse—a creature never known to play any pranks before—at his own door, and never spoke again; and about the same time, the lightning struck the steeple of the church, and such a number of strange accidents followed, chiefly to the men folks of the town and neighbourhood, that every one was glad when the new landlord took down the "Bull" that had the reputation, in a hypothetical sense, of goring so many to their deaths, and, returning to the old sign, set up the "Raven."

The good folks of Boveycum never permitted any one to question or account for this series of accidents, by hinting that the stack of chimneys was old, and over the oldest part of the building; that poor Pottlemore, the landlord, seldom returned sober from races, and had for years owed his safety to his horse—much the more sagacious animal of the two on such occasions; that a new horse rather resented the mode of riding Pottlemore thought fit to adopt on his return journeys, and so took the liberty, after a long gallop, to avenge his bleeding flanks and galled mouth by suddenly, when he was brought to a stand, kicking up his hind legs, and sending his rider over his head. Neither was it ever received graciously by the parish clerk when any one suggested that it was the hottest summer that had been known for years, and the thunder-storms were of tropical violence. "Pshaw! don't you tell me. I knows better. Ain't I been a reader; and don't I know as there's a girt church abroad where the scent comes from as the ladies puts on their hankerchers, O—what d'ye call it? It wa'nt in Ireland, tho' it begins with a O,—well, in that place when they on'y so much as took a crane down, and left off going on wi' the building

on the church—there was that thundering and lightning as had like to a burnt up the whoal place." Of course, when no reasoning on these principal matters was permitted, there was no use suggesting that all the minor cases of loss of life and limb arose from the great gatherings and talkings about these calamities, a tremendous thirst at that time afflicting all the visitors, whether parlour or tap-room guests, who frequented the inn, and there discussed something even more potent than rumours.

So it happened when Tom Huggett took the house and restored the Raven, all went well, at least outwardly, for some years. Huggett and his wife didn't exactly agree, it was whispered. There was dismal croaking at the Raven sometimes; but as nobody could make out who was in fault, and each was able for self-defence, in deeds as well as words, not much was said about it. Some of the wives were inclined to give Mr. Tom Huggett "a bit of their mind," when they saw his little girl limping about the house, and to ask how she came to be such a cripple. But they were propitiated when Mrs. Huggett died, and her husband gave her a very fine funeral, and ordered a very grand headstone, with a verse composed especially for her by the schoolmaster. To be sure, as the latter was paid for the number of words in the verse, it was rather of the longest; and as Chippit, the mason, loved his half pint, and worked and drank leisurely, as became his grave occupation, it was unfortunate that Mr. Huggett's grief, duly represented on stone, was not openly manifested in the churchyard until the very week before he brought home a new bride to preside over "The Raven." Poor Huggett! the wits of the commercial room would perhaps have been hard upon him. But he escaped by that door which so often opens unexpectedly, and closes with such a heavy spring that there is no resist-

ance. In short, he died; and his widow, dutifully following the example he had set her, married the poet schoolmaster before he had finished the monody to Huggett's memory, which, as it was too long for the little space left on the tombstone, Mrs. Huggett intended to have framed and glazed, and hung over the parlour mantlepiece. But, like many greater works, the monody was not completed. Stillwell, the quondam schoolmaster, preferred reposing on his laurels, and singing the praises of wine in his own parlour, in such full-throated ease that some wags altered a letter in his name, and by substituting *w* for *t*, dubbed him Swillwell, and hailed him as the jolliest toper in the county. "Never out of temper, not he. Give him drink, and it was all he asked, the comfortable, contented soul! and to see how it agreed with him. Why, from a lath of a man he plimmed out like a raisin in a Christmas pudding; ah, and had such a pair of cheeks as fairly, or rather rosily, cushioned up his eyes, and put his nose—a modest, flattish little feature—out of countenance. Talk of good ale and wine, and a drop of something short hurting anybody; why the landlord of the Raven was for seven years a flaming protest against any such heresy—look at him!" But somehow, when the said landlord, making a bet about a horse, one fine day among a group of farmers, that stood by the old bull post under the lime tree, chanced, in his vehemence, as he cried "Done," to strike his big soft hand hard down upon the post, a nail that some mischievous urchin had driven in, gave him a long jagged scratch—yes, a scratch, nothing more; but it was enough. Some men's souls want a wide rift to let them through; Stillwell's, perhaps, being of the very smallest kind, could creep out of a little scratch. Whether, as his body expanded, his soul diminished, it is needless to inquire, seeing strong drink works very opposite wonders. Indeed, it is like Professor

Faraday's definition of electricity—an axis of power, with equal and opposite forces. Certain it was, in three days after the poor fat fist thumped itself down on the post to the ominous word, "Done," Stillwell in fiery haste had left the Raven for ever.

His disconsolate widow had learnt a few lessons in the seven years that she had lived with him, and seemed likely to enjoy the dignity of "Going to bed mistress and getting up master," as her neighbours said, for "one while, anyhow."

Yes, at the time our story opens, the Raven had for some years been kept by, or kept, the Widow Stillwell. Her incumbrances were a cripple daughter of her first husband's, now grown up, and one only boy of her own—an infant when his father died, now a sturdy spoiled urchin of some eight years old. There was also one elderly inmate of the house, that seemed to have grown to the place like a limpet to a rock, a sort of decayed gentleman, who was called Captain Flammerton. No one exactly knew whether he had served in the army or navy. Certain he had been in foreign parts, and was very good company, very; always ready with a joke or a story. He had come to the Raven an invalid about a year before Stillwell died. He took up his quarters as a settled inmate, making himself both useful and ornamental to the place; and when the widow was left desolate, he continued to reside there, and though calling himself a lodger, to favour her with his advice and assistance in the management of her business, and the entertainment of her customers. In one matter he never interfered, wisely perceiving that he risked his interests if he touched on it; that was having anything to say, other than flattering, about little Master Stillwell, the precious darling! His mamma's feathers were ruffled more swiftly than those of the most sensitive hen in the poultry yard if

an adverse hint was given about that interesting child—her doting piece. Captain Flammerton, it was pretty clear, knew his ground. Whether the nation really rewarded him with a pension adequate to his merits, or whether he had, as was once rumoured, sold his half-pay, and retired upon nothing a-year to the Raven, was an open question. Widow Stillwell, being a quiet woman, rarely spoke of the captain's affairs or her own. She had been a lady's maid when Huggett married her; and whether she knew anything more than how to dress her mistress and herself was doubtful. No one had ever seen her hold a pen, or look into a book; but she understood how to keep her servants in order, and looked so comely as she loomed large in the bar, that the commercials called her the finest landlady in the county. She was a portly lymphatic blonde, with sleepy blue eyes, a face as settled and expressionless as a dish of clotted cream. Wholesome, doubtless, and handsome. She had one strong feeling—love for her boy; one strong determination to be very genteel. She remembered, and copied pretty accurately, certain outer marks of ladyhood which the mistress she had served in her young days possessed. She spoke little; wore the very best silks and softest merinoes that fools' pence could buy; and regularly arrayed herself in morning and evening costume; hiding in the after part of the day her large hands in the tightest of kid gloves. Since her widowhood, as black suited her, she constantly wore it, and the very jauntiest widow's caps, perfect little filmy turbans of white muslin and crape, that Madame Millefleur, a Regent Street milliner, could devise. Yes; actually no provincial artist in ribbon and gauze could possibly construct fitting caps and bonnets suitable to display the widow's sense of what was becoming to poor Stillwell's memory and to her own placid face.

Placid—it was well that a sort of slow, ruminant, cowish nature belonged to her; for a quick-tempered nervous woman could never have borne two such inflictions as Huggett and Stillwell, or since her widowhood the many "topsy-turvy things," to quote Captain Flammerton's phrase, that were always happening in a house with such a business as the Raven. Not that Mrs. Stillwell liked to be thought without feelings, or believed herself devoid of them. When anything very unusual occurred that demanded any special manifestation, she always fainted away, which was a quiet, ladylike demonstration, gave a due amount of trouble to others, and vindicated her claim to fine feelings and delicate nerves. It happened that this manifestation of gentility was called into requisition by an incident that occurred at the very time we are speaking of.

Everybody, great and small, from scullery-wench to chambermaid, from head-waiter to hostler, was busy at the Raven, making preparation for that great annual event which was to take place on the morrow—the Cricketers' Dinner. The western mail duly arrived, and with it, as was expected, Mr. Twitterly, a commercial in the drapery line, who alighted, followed by a foreign-looking gentleman with a quantity of black hair on his head, and a flourishing beard and moustache on his face. The latter personage carried in his arms a very unusual appendage, a sleeping child, a little girl of some three or four years old. Miss Grig, the barmaid, as she curtseyed her welcome, strained her neck over the bar and peeped through the window, gazing up the yard, expecting a lady to follow; but no, the gentleman was alone, except, indeed, as he seemed to have accompanied Mr. Twitterly, who was well known at the Raven, coming as he had for some days of every spring and autumn for years past. However, this was no

time, this busy October evening, to be noticing children. "There's no accounting," as Grig said to Annice, the chambermaid, "for some men's whims. Wasn't Mr. Moth, the curate, as handy with a child as a nursemaid. To be sure he had plenty of practice, there being in his house never a time, at least for ten years, when there were not two little Moths in arms." Certainly this gentleman, with his fierce black hair, and eyes that gleamed like a Scotch terrier dog's through his shag, didn't look much like poor gentle Mr. Moth.

It was not the etiquette at the Raven, perhaps it never is in any such establishment, to venture any remark on a gentleman's condition—that is, if he has money in his pocket; and therefore no notice whatever was taken of a little excitement in Mr. Twitterly's manner as he gave his orders to the waiter and bustled into the bar to pay his compliments to Mrs. Stillwell, who was quietly eating her muffin and sipping her tea, and who serenely bowed her acknowledgments. Mr. Twitterly fidgetted out as fast as he had fidgetted in, being noted as a fussy little fellow, and inquired for "the captain;" then, without waiting for an answer, toddled back into the commercial room, saying as he went "Milk, cakes—and here, Annice—chambermaid, come and see to this child." The woman he spoke to was waiting at the foot of the great stairs, like a sentinel guarding her territory; but she smirked her usual set grimace at a well-known customer, and followed him into the room, where the waiter was bringing a tray with a cup of milk and a plate of hot tea-cakes from Mrs. Stillwell's table. Annice approached the gentleman, and offered to take the child that he was waking up out of her sleep, and to feed her for him; but the little creature, opening wide two round eyes filled with sleep, cried, and struggled, and stretched her dimpled limbs. "Go away,"

said the man, waving off Annice, "strange faces will frighten her." Then, changing his tone, with a woman's gentleness he added, "Birdie pet! drink this," he put the cup to her mouth; she drank as if very thirsty, but yet not awake, and then turning round, the milk upon her lips and chin, nestled to his bosom, and was cosily off into the downy land of sleep.

Annice, who had literally gone out of her way—for she never entered the commercial room to proffer her services to the gentlemen—did not like being ordered to "go away." She felt the indignity to the very ends of her cherry-coloured ribbons, that fluttered rarely as she ran up stairs to her own domain. She had noticed that the gentleman spoke thick, and her own honest comment was, "Ain't fit to have the care of a dog—a great, black, fierce looking ——." She did not finish the sentence, for there was the recess room to prepare—so called because a little bed in a curtained nook was suitable for a child; and Mr. Twitterly, knowing of it, had ordered it. Before it was ready the dark gentleman stumbled up the stairs with the child in his arms, and asked for his carpet bag. Then came the fact that it was Mr. Twitterly's bag that had been brought to the room; and, when restitution was made, no other bag could be discovered, and it was decided the mail had taken it on to the next town.

"Pleasant—very;" muttered the stranger, with an impatient stamp of his foot.

"What name, sir, was on him—the bag I means?" said the Boots, coming to the chamber door, and pulling his forelock.

"None, you stupid brute," roared the angry guest, venting all his rage on the man who ought to have seen to the unloading of the mail—any way, it was convenient to have some one besides himself to blame. The child roused up with

a cry from her sleep, the Boots retreated down the stairs, and Annice stood aloof, watching with grave satisfaction the stranger breaking the hooks and strings of the little creatures outer clothes, and at last putting her down on the pillow in her little white petticoat. "I'd have offered to a got the child a nightgown of some sort," Annice remarked to Miss Grig; "but my gentleman was so crusty, I thought I'd let him ask for it. One ain't quite a going to be snubbed, and took up short for nothin'—no thank you—I'd rayther not, 'taint pleasant no how." Gown or no gown, mattered not to the little child. Her head was deep in the pillow as her stern, dark father, if, indeed, he was that fair child's father, stood a moment looking at her.

He did not seem to be softened at that most beautiful of all sights—a sleeping child. On the contrary, the veins on his forehead swelled up—a flush mounted to his sallow cheeks—he raised his arm high above his head—clenched his fingers tight, and, shaking his fist at some imaginary adversary, he said—"I'll make them, ay, I will, by ——."

Whatever was the word, profane or angry, with which he meant to end the sentence, a sort of spasm seemed to gurgle up in his throat and check his utterance. Annice, who had planted herself in the passage, and looked through the crevice of the door, noticed that he undid his coat and waistcoat with convulsive energy, threw himself on a chair, struggled and panted a minute, his face suddenly turning a livid hue, and his eyes working like one looking about for help.

It was a momentary thing—whether passion of mind or agony of body, she could not tell. He rose soon after, drank a great tumbler of water, dashed some over his face, threw off an overcoat, and tossing his head till his fell of hair shook out like a mane, he strode out of the room, and down stairs, a strong, bold-looking man, whom they all took for a

foreigner, for at that time a beard was not a common appendage to an Englishman.

The commercial room was filling when the stranger re-entered it; for the news of Mr. Twitterly's arrival had spread to some of the principal tradesmen in the town, with whom he was a favourite, not merely as a commercial man, but as a boon companion. There was some lamentation made for the death of a certain Will Joice, who sang better than any other townsman, or, indeed, than any one between Salisbury and Exeter, and the cricketers' dinner would come off but badly without his voice. Mr. Twitterly began to tell, in his rapid way, that he thought he had brought a substitute, at least as a singer, for Will Joice—saying the landlord of the Three Choughs, at Claydip, had been a passenger, for a stage of the way, on the mail, and knew the gentleman, and had whispered as much to him, Twitterly, on parting from him. He was going on to explain that all the conversation had been of musical and theatrical matters, and that "tip-top, out-and-out knowledge of such affairs was possessed by ——." Mr. Twitterly's further communications were stopped by the entrance of the subject of them, who was not a man that a half rustic company would talk of before his face, even by remotest hints and innuendos. His broad shoulders, firm tread, and sombre beard, were certainly impressive; and though many glances were cast towards him as he lingered over his evening meal, no general conversation ensued, until, by common consent, they adjourned to another room, "sacred," as some one said, "to conviviality," and where, by common consent, Captain Flammerton did the honours.

The stranger, as he seated himself, seemed to have some inconvenience with his left arm, for he lifted and rubbed it occasionally; and the hand, that lay rather listlessly on the table, it was afterwards remembered, had a pale and rigid

look. However, amid the confluence of voices, and the kind of "view-halloo" which greeted Twitterly, there was no special observation made.

Captain Flammerton, in his clear-cut words, grouped into short sentences by intervening whiffs at his pipe, related the gossip of the town; how Vosper had died, and, for all so high as he held his head, had not left what would pay a shilling in the pound; ay, he was deep, and more shame for him, in the Raven's books. But that was nothing new. If ever a fellow, living or dying, swindled his creditors, he was sure to owe a pretty penny to his wine merchant—and she a widow! as the captain added, turning up his eyes; for he was sentimental, and had a gift of oratory that was considered superlative by the worthies of Boveycum. Then there was pretty Jessie Bud had jumped out of the frying-pan into the fire. She had run off and got married to a bit of a lad, a clerk, or a something, with not enough a-year to find a decent fellow in cigars, let alone something to moisten them. To be sure, old Bud was given to carrying things too far. He didn't enjoy himself, or manage his drink right. He let it overset him, which no wise man should, particularly the father of a family. The captain stiffened his back and set out his chest in a particularly imposing manner when he delivered any moral reflection. "I've nothing on my conscience, gentlemen; I told him so—yes, many and many a time. I wanted him to change his drink to something that would agree with him better. Rely on it, Twitterly, and friends all, if what is taken makes any gentleman cross, and angry, and forgetful of what is due to the fair sex, be it wife, or daughter, or what not, the gentler sex—mind-shoo"—this was an interjection which Captain Flammerton always accompanied with a whiff of his pipe, and a serious fixing of his eye on some person in the

company, that was felt to be very impressive—"the gentler sex—mind-shoo—then, gentlemen, what is needful is a change—a change of liquor."

"Ay, ay, Bud was too fond o' that purl stuff; when he was here, or when he was to-hum, no matter wear, purl he had, and purl he would have; and I always said, and I stand to it, that Bud 'ad a niver turned his darter out, and laid the weight of his hand upon her, if it warn't for purl," said Mr. Stirrup, the saddler; adding, "no, not he, noo-how."

"It's a hot, heavy, ungentlemanly composition," said the captain, "ungentlemanly—mind-shoo."

"Ah, mixtures puts me in mind of doctor's stuff or French cookery. Give me the real thing neat, or a leetle, a very leetle water," said Mr. Goss, the auctioneer, a steady old toper, with fishy eyes, and a nose like a lobster's tail. The captain took out his pipe, and waving it, bowed his head approvingly. Then followed discussions about the forthcoming cricketers' dinner, and that introduced singing. The captain sang, in a high cracked treble, his favourite song, "Had I a heart for falsehood framed;" and as a rejoinder to the applause which it was the established custom of the room to give, related the triumphs that in his young days he had won in that song, in which—mind-shoo—gentlemen, I was thought to resemble Braham."

Wonderful continuity of purpose or endurance must certain clubs of topers have; for it is certain they will laugh at the same jokes, applaud the same songs, drone over the same anecdotes, and wrangle over the same arguments, when the said jokes, songs, anecdotes, and arguments, are palsied with age, and too withered even to rot into forgetfulness.

But Twitterly was called on for his song; and being, after several efforts, too husky, with the combined effects of cold

and copious libations of punch, to get through the first verse, he called upon his fellow-traveller, who had been in earnest conversation with Mr. Vellum, the bookseller and postmaster, during the preceding colloquy. It was remarked that the stranger drank deeply, with a thirsty eagerness, greater than any one in the room, seasoned as they all were. He did not make any apologies, or require any pressing for his song. Casting his eyes round, and with a shake of his wild head, that seemed a characteristic attitude, he opened wide his waistcoat, as if some pressure at his chest annoyed him, and began in a full, rich voice, of vast compass, to sing "The Storm." The company were taken by surprise. "Who is he?" "Is he a singer from foreign parts?" Twitterly, who was the person appealed to, never liked to confess himself ignorant on any point. He did not really know the stranger's name. It had never occurred to him that he had not asked it until he was now questioned. He replied, "Oh you'll know by-and-by—those professionals like to travel incog. They don't go about the country docketted with their names, like a policeman with his number." The impression that they had a very wonderful singer with them stimulated the company to ask for another, and yet another song. Dibden's sea songs were the specialty on that evening, and between every one there was a more than ordinary libation. Both singing and applauding seemed thirsty work. The time wore on; and, when at length the songster of the evening rose to retire, it was by reason of his strength, rather than his "moderation," that he was not stretched on the sofa as Mr. Stirrup was, or led home by his confidential clerk, like Mr. Goss, or haranguing in the street as Mr. Vellum did, supposing it was election time, on the immediate necessity of repealing the Malt tax. No; the stranger walked up to bed, and therefore he was sober—of course he was. He

dragged his legs a little after him, and the arm that had seemed to trouble him hung rather rigidly at his side, but there was nothing the matter with him—nothing. "As *compos mentis* and gentlemanly—mind-shoo—gentlemanly, sirs, as I was myself," was Captain Flammerton's testimony, given many times in the next few days.

On the landing, from which the passage diverged, in which the recess-room was situated, Twitterly, holding tight by the rail of the bannister, took leave of his "dear friend." He had in the last hour become very familiar and cordial.

"Stay the dinner—the dinner? by—by all means; noth—nothing wi'out shoo."

"I don't know; I've a confounded visit to pay to some infernal people. But I'll see." And so with a rolling lounge the stranger went into his room, tossed out his boots a minute after with an angry dash; slammed to the door and turned the key. Annice paused a moment at the end of the gallery, expecting to find that the noise he made had awoke the child, but no sound of childish restlessness was heard.

The last reveller had stumbled into the streets; the last door had slammed in the galleries; and, except that chorus of snores which, like the rumbling of a slow waggon-wheel, kept growling through the house, all was still in the Raven.

The next morning the servants were early astir. Mr. Twitterly meant to go over in a gig to a town fourteen miles distant, and return for the dinner, and he was called to a seven o'clock breakfast. Very white and shaky he looked; very cross and snappishly he spoke to Annice as he passed her, when he replied to her question.

"Is the gentleman and the child to be woke, to go with you, sir?"

"With me! simpleton? No. Let the gentleman sleep. Lucky dog that he is," he added in an under tone to himself

as he descended the stairs, "that he can sleep as long as he likes." Then he called out, "A bottle of soda water! and be quick; it makes one's head ready to split calling after you drones."

"Bacon, sir?" said Twirk, coming forward for orders for breakfast. "Bacon, augh!" A cold bilious shudder ran all over Twitterly at the mention of food. The yellow tint spread over his face like scum rising to the surface. Dim looked his dreary eyes in their hollow cavities, heavy his dingy brows, shaky his listless hands, while a chill, as of death, kept rattling his teeth. Poor wretch! as he crawled up into the gig, buttoned to the throat, and holding his head stiffly in one direction, to counteract the dizziness that seemed to throw all things around into a hazy whirl, he looked a pretty conclusive comment on the last night's great enjoyment.

Nine o'clock came. The stranger's boots and a jug of hot water was put at his door, Annice giving a good loud thump, and telling the hour. She listened a moment, and heard the child's voice singing: a little, bird-like, happy murmur, of half-waking, half-slumbering sweetness.

Rings at different bells, the coming of a morning mail, "The Rocket," and a stage omnibus, a heavy affair called "The Fairy," made the house busy, and it was full an hour when Annice came again into the passage, and saw that the jug and boots still remained on the door-mat. It was nothing new that gentlemen who had made "a night of it" should sleep far later into the morning than ten or eleven o'clock; but, somehow, Annice felt uneasy. The child, perhaps, might have caused the feeling. She leant over the balustrade on the landing, and looking down into the courtyard, spoke to Ben Boots—"Did No. 9—the Recess—give orders when he was to be called?"

"No. He may a' told Twirk; but he sed nothin' to me."

Annice went again to the door and listened. This time the child was certainly crying.

The chambermaid knocked, then tried the door—it was fast. Then she called, "Little missie, don't cry—open the door."

The child's hands seemed dallying with the lock in answer to Annice's direction; then her little feet pattered back to the bed, and she cried, "Wake up, Unky; do wake up." Then she came back again to the door, and, putting her mouth close to the crevice under the lock, said, in a clear, sweet, but yet half-indistinct childish prattle—"Tan't make Unky leave off seeping. Him eyes open."

"Annice instantly retreated to the bar for orders. Miss Grig, who was as quick as her mistress was slow, was for hurrying up stairs to speak to the child through the door, when Mrs. Stillwell said, placidly—"There's no need for any stir, Grig—let Twirk go up and call the gentleman."

However, there was no more answer to Twirk than to Annice. A ladder was taken to the stable-yard at the side of the house; but the window was found to be bolted, and the blind drawn. By this time, what with voices at the door and the window, the child was frightened, and had evidently retreated to the bed, where they supposed the gentleman to be sleeping. Captain Flammerton, who was leisurely sipping his breakfast in the coffee-room, remarking "that an eminent singer whom he once knew never allowed any one to wake him, and he slept often twenty hours at a stretch. Indeed, the only unfortunate thing in this case was the child being in the room." The womankind took this view, and balancing between the difficulties whether to offend a great singer by waking him, or to let the child cry herself into fits, they determined to hazard the former, and

accordingly drummed on the wainscoat right vigorously. Then Twirk, at Miss Grig's private suggestion, made a short run, flung himself with his full strength on the door, that yielded to the shock, and all the assembled group seemed suddenly as if they fell forward into the room. There was a dead pause of a moment, after which Twirk and Boots retreated into the passage, Annice and Grig ran screaming down stairs. Mrs. Stillwell, who had been standing on the landing, slowly advanced towards the chamber, and, walking with a heavy, measured tread up to the bedside, saw at a glance the man was dead!

Yes; there was the child sitting on the pillow, her little feet resting on the man's shoulder, her head bent over his, and her long curls of silky-golden hair mingling with the heavy masses of black, that, damp with the dew of death, fell about the rigid face, ghastly with its fallen jaws and wide-open, blank, staring eyes. The child's tiny fingers were pressing on the eyelids as if she wanted to shut them, while her wail was all the more piteous that it was in broken prattling accents between her sobs.

"Peek, Unky dear, don't seep so."

It was evident an awe of something equally terrible and incomprehensible was on the child, for she did not cry a loud, impatient, childish cry. She manifestly tried to check herself. Infant as she was, she felt the presence of death.

Mrs. Stillwell paused, and gazed in her slow way at the corpse and the child, retreated from the bedside and pulled the bell, walked deliberately out of the room and down stairs, and, when she got into the bar-parlour, fell into her easy-chair, saying, "Grig, fetch Doctor Strong, and my—my drops," and, with more cause than she often had, duly fainted away.

CHAPTER II.

INQUIRIES WHY AND WHEREFORE—THE CHILD'S ACCOUNT OF HERSELF.

"For sidelong would she bend, and sing
——————— a fairy song."—JOHN KEATS.

TWIRK had employed the interval in which Mrs. Stillwell had advanced into the bedroom in fortifying himself with a drop of "something stiff" from his private pocket-pistol, and, thus prepared, he re-entered the chamber just as she had left it; and while Boots had run off for the doctor, and the women were in the bar-parlour attending to their mistress, and Captain Flammerton was hovering between the coffee-room and parlour, and calling in turns on every one for an explanation of the cause of the confusion, Twirk took a cool survey of the dead man and his little child. As the waiter approached the bed, his foot struck against something that lay on the carpet, and was hidden by the end of the bed curtains: it was a small leather pouch; a glance told Twirk that it contained notes. He held it irresolutely in his hand, and then looked sharply at the child, who was putting her little rosy mouth, half-timidly, half-coaxingly, to the dead man's forehead, and saying, "Peek to Birdie."

The thought was swift—as evil ever is; no counsellor so ready as the devil—that the child was too young, either to notice his picking up the case, or to know about its contents, so Twirk determined—not to take it; no, not exactly; but to keep it secretly and safely until he heard whether any inquiry was made, he could always, as if by accident, find it, when he knew what turned up; for notes and gold were two different things. With all the personal property

that was marked and could be claimed he was very particular. Twirk was a scrupulously honest man in every one's estimation, and therefore, of course, in his own.

He shook for a moment as he reached over the dead man's shoulders to lift away the child. At his touch she clung closer to the lifeless head she was caressing, wreathed her little hands in the damp, black hair, and giving way to fright or passion, shrieked aloud. Twirk relinquished his hold at her screams, and leaving her until some of the women came, began examining the clothes of the deceased. There was a silver watch of no great value on the dressing-table; it had not been wound up, and was as silent as its master. It had stopped at four o'clock. Twirk shook out the pockets of the garments lying about. They contained merely handkerchiefs, pencil-case, keys, and purse. He piled all together on the table, and laid a towel over them—folded up the scattered clothes lying aside on a chair, the little frock and pelisse of the little one,—then he went to the door and called loudly for help; for the child fell again, as he came near the bed, into a passion of screaming.

The cook and a kitchen girl, in default of the "upstairs" servants, ran to the chamber, a rumour of what had happened having by this time penetrated not only the dwelling, but begun to spread in the town; so that just as cook arrived breathless up the back stairs, Captain Flammerton and some of the neighbouring townsmen came up the front way to the bedroom.

It seemed as though the living child, crying in her terror, with her hands so firmly grasped in the dead man's hair, was to some of the spectators as terrible a sight as the corpse itself. Childhood, so full of vivid feeling and restless life, was here brought into such familiar contact with death,—so helpless in its innocence—such a strange temerity in its

ignorance. The cook had been a mother, and something in the touch of her coarse hands, and the look of her broad pitying face, soothed the child, who, opening her hands and releasing that ghastly hold on the dead man's hair, allowed herself to be lifted, sobbing, into the ample arms that seemed to know how to cradle her. With a kiss that was none the less comforting that it was given with a loud, vulgar-sounding smack, Cook pacified the child, whose cries soon subsided into sobs. The entrance of the doctor, and the order to "clear the chamber of all strangers," reduced the number to the captain, Twirk, the medical man, and a rival practitioner who had been also summoned. Cook returned to her territory, carrying the infant, and followed by the scullery-maid, who had mechanically gathered up the child's garments. And by the rousing kitchen fire, the little creature, who was cold in the scanty garb that had done duty for a night-dress, was washed and comforted, and then seated at the table before a good basin of bread and milk; to which, between her fast-subsiding sobs, she did justice, with an appetite sharpened by a long night's sleep and a long morning's waiting.

"Pretty cretur, her's famished," said Cook, in a broad Devon accent. Meanwhile, all the helpers from the stables, the charwoman, and hangers-on, gathered round the kitchen door, and stared at the child with a slow, open-eyed gaze of curiosity.

"Be off!" said the cook suddenly, asserting the dignity of the kitchen. "Her's only a child; ha'nt niver seen one afore, eh?—Be off!" and she slammed the door on them.

Meanwhile, the influence of food and warmth effected a salutary change on the little girl. She began to look round her in admiring wonder at the bright kitchen furniture, so likely to delight a child. Her innocent, round eyes were

making their tour into every corner; but when she was spoken to with a question, she put her head aside with a pretty jesture of shyness, and, with a look, half-pout, half-smile, made no answer. How long this reserve would have lasted it was difficult to say, for the child's face was eloquent enough; but presently a kitten came bounding and capering on the hearth, and at once the silence was over. The child began to laugh merrily; ate up her breakfast with all speed, and was soon on the floor chasing "Tittie," and fondling it. A day's coaxing would not have made the little stranger so at home. The child's mirth half-shocked the poor cook, who, it must be confessed, owned a soft heart.

"Ah, dear sol, I can't a bear to hear her a-laffin," she said, with a slight shudder. "But her knows no better, poor babby. Is her four year old? her can't be more," she added, appealing to the scullery girl.

While the child was getting back her rosy glow in the comfortable beams of the kitchen hearth, and her smiles and prattle with her playmate the kitten, Dr. Strong had concluded his investigations—given his opinion, backed by that of the other medical man who had dropped in. The deceased was pronounced to have died from natural causes. Disease of the heart—been dead for hours. Captain Flammerton, in the presence of the medical men and the parish beadle, had, on the part of Mrs. Stillwell, called over the articles of personal property, of which an inventory was made, and they were then carried down to the bar-parlour to be locked up in a press there; and then Dr. Strong gave directions to the beadle to apprise the coroner, and summon an inquest; and then Mrs. Stillwell, being recovered from her faint, and her tumbled cap replaced by a new one, with the most graceful long muslin weepers falling from it, she ordered glasses, lemons, and spice and hot water,

and commenced to superintend Grig, who made some negus for the gentlemen who had the *entrée* of the bar-parlour. That Mrs. Stillwell was a woman intent on making herself comfortable, might be inferred from the most casual glance at the bar-parlour. The bar itself, which, as we have stated, projected into the yard, was like a conservatory attached to a drawing-room. A large Japan screen stood guardian of the privacy of the inner apartment, which was a square room, with a window that commanded the stable-yard, and another that overlooked a small garden. Between these windows there was a pianoforte. High oak presses flanked one side of the room; and the fire-place, with a cosy sofa on one side, and an equally cosy easy chair on the other, completed the arrangements, except, of course, a centre table, and one other article of furniture or fixture—a rather ungainly object. In one corner, at the right-hand side of the bar, but equally belonging to the room, was a high desk, enclosed like a sentry box, and with an open rail at the top, that reached nearly to the ceiling. A green curtain inside this rail effectually concealed from view any scribe who might be quill-driving in that retreat, and suggested the idea that if Mrs. Stillwell's business was so great as to require a clerk, he had the opportunity of performing his task, even in the bustle of an inn, without observation or interruption.

They were all seated at the round table, the widow presiding with a languid air, when Miss Grig suddenly exclaimed—"Where's the child?" and immediately the captain, the medical men, and even slow Mrs. Stillwell, were all aroused by the thought that she might help them a little to explore the darkness that surrounded the dead; for among his few personalities there was nothing—paper, card, book, or linen—that bore a name. So the little creature's romp with the kitten was interrupted by Grig coming to fetch her.

The child was evidently very wilful. She relapsed into great shyness, and showed signs of beginning to cry, when Grig, pursuing her to a corner, took possession of her. It was found necessary, as the only way to pacify her, to let her carry the kitten in her arms. Arrived in the bar-parlour, and set down in the middle of the room, the child hugged the kitten to her bosom, and letting her little face peer over its back, looked from one to the other as if expecting to see some one that she knew; then, with a sudden throb of disappointment, she dropped the kitten, and made a run to the door, crying, "Unky."

Dr. Strong seemed the best able to propitiate the little girl. He brought her gently back again to the side of the table, and, holding a lump of sugar in his hand, said, "Unky is not far off."

"Will he tum?" inquired the child, gulping down a sob, and looking from one to the other with an appealing gaze they somehow could hardly encounter. There was deep drinking all round for a moment.

As the little creature stood there, all expectation of her telling them much of the dead vanished. If she was a well-grown child—and her bright, fair complexion, clear grey eyes, small dimpled features, and full, round limbs, all told of perfect health—she could not be much more than three years old. She had the look of good training and intelligence—all her gestures, even of shyness, were graceful. Her little frock was of the finest materials; and while she had gazed with wonder at the bright pots and pans in the kitchen, she retreated from the centre to the side of the room, and leaned on a music-stool by the piano with an easy air, as if used to them.

"What's your name, my little dear," said Captain Flammerton?

She shook her long curls over her face like a radiant veil, and did not answer.

"Come now, dear, you and I are friends; tell me," said Miss Grig, "what *is* your name?"

"Birdie," said the child.

"Birdie. Ah, but your real name, you know. Mary—is it Mary? or Jane?"

Many names were at once suggested—the child again repeated "Birdie."

"Well, my dear, that's a pet name," said Dr. Strong.

"Ess, pet—pet and birdie—dat's me."

"Whew! Here's a fix," said the captain; "they don't call little girls "Birdie.'"

The child shook her curls with a persistent air of contradiction, and sitting down on the floor to resume her play with the kitten, repeated—

"Birdie; birdie, and fower."

"Oh, oh, flower, eh?"

"Ess; birdie, and fower, and pet, all dem!"

Her little arms were thrown up as she spoke the last two words with a long cadence; and then, with a roguish little ripple of a laugh, she added, with a confidential nod to Miss Grig, "Birdie ting!"

"What does she say? I can't understand her," said two or three voices in a breath.

Miss Grig, however, was more learned in baby lore, and she interpreted, "Birdie sings."

"Oh, you sing! let's hear you—come, sing away."

But the child, skittish as the kitten, was not to be so commanded. She drew up her little head stiffly; and, as if she feared the sound might come out involuntarily, compressed her lips till her mouth was like a little red bud. A perfect picture of playful wilfulness she looked, as her eyes,

demurely cast down, were evidently peeping out of their corners.

"What a pranksome little puss it is!" said Dr. Strong, drawing out his watch and looking half-impatiently at it. "Come, come, be good and sing."

Still mute.

Mr. Franks, a pale, middle-aged man, who had been leaning against the high, square desk, apart from the rest, and not partaking of the hospitalities of the table, now stepped forward, patted the child's head, twined one of her long curls round his finger, and, shaking it, said, "No, no, Birdie can't sing; can she kittie?"

The latent spirit of her sex was aroused by this; what no coaxing seemed likely to effect, contradiction did. The child half-turned round, so that she could not see the group at the table, and in the sweetest little liquid voice, fresh as a tinkling rill, began to sing—

"Ittle Birdie dot no wings,
Ittle Birdie tweetly tings,
Dear ittle Birdie!"

Then she paused, and, looking round a moment, as if she expected to hear another voice join in, hesitated; but the prompter at her side said, "Birdie can't sing any more," and then on she went—

"Birdie tannot fly away,
Birdie wit' mamma will 'tay,
Tweet 'ittle Birdie."

There was another pause, when at the words "Birdie can't sing any more," the little voice rung out again in a higher note,

"No, not a birdie, she's a fower,
Growing in a tiny bower,
Growing all alone."

Up went the little hands, and then again came the listening look into her eyes, and the pause for a rejoinder. Mr. Franks repressing, by a wave of his hand towards the table, any expression of applause, a contradicting word sent the child on in her playful ditty, the cadence of the tune, and the intense sweetness of the bubbling voice giving a wonderful charm to the simple words. We shall not inflict her baby prattle further on the reader, but at once translate her song:—

"Little Birdie's got no wings,
But little Birdie sweetly sings,
Dear little Birdie.

"Birdie cannot fly away,
Birdie with mamma will stay,
Sweet little Birdie.

"No, not a Birdie, she's a flower,
Growing in a tiny bower,
Growing all alone.

"A little flower, fresh and fair,
Blowing in the morning air,
She's my own—my own.

"No, not a flower on a stem,
She's a little sparkling gem,
Like a drop o' dew.

"Bird, flower, jewel, all in one,
Pet! of all sweet names there's none
Sweet enough for you."

When further urged, the child began it over again, and they therefore concluded that whether the strain were a fragment or not, she had finished all she knew; and it seemed pretty clear, from her manner and the words, that it

was a sort of duet, in which the last lines of each verse had been sung to or with the child by the nurse or mother. The spell once broken, the little creature laughed and prattled, went after the kitten, and danced to it with all the gay abandonment of childhood. How long the scene would have lasted—for all were irresistibly fascinated—it is hard to say; but it was brought to an abrupt conclusion by young Stillwell. He had clambered up behind his mother's chair and watched the proceedings over her shoulder; and now, in an attempt to reach some apples on a shelf in a high corner cupboard, upset a china bowl and some wine glasses that came down with a dismal crash.

In an instant there was a running to see the damage; even Mrs. Stillwell, moved by maternal anxiety, turned her portly form with unusual quickness, asking, "My precious! have you cut yourself?" The group at the table rose, and, headed by the captain, were preparing to separate, Dr. Strong pausing a moment to say stiffly to Mr. Franks, "There need be no *post mortem*."

"I should think the coroner would order one," was the rejoinder.

"Oh, long-seated disease," said Dr. Strong confidently.

"Aggravated, if not caused, by his habits."

"Pooh, pooh! what do we know of his habits? He drank freely last night, it may be; what of that? One swallow doesn't make a summer, nor a glass or so extra, a drunkard."

"Drunkard!" interposed the captain, with an air of offended dignity; "I give you my honour, my honour—mind-shoo—that he was no more overtaken than myself: don't say that, no, nor don't hint it, Dr. Franks, because—mind-shoo—I can flatly contradict it."

"Twirk, remember the day," said Mrs. Stillwell, evidently

wanting to break up the colloquy, and thinking of the cricketers' dinner.

"What's to be done with the child?" said Miss Grig, taking up the little creature, who was for running among the debris of broken china and glass. "What's to be done with her?" she repeated.

A voice, as if from the ceiling, said, in a concentrated tone that pierced all ears, "Wring her neck."

The group of men stayed their departing footsteps on the threshold of the door, and looked up, startled, in the direction of the voice. There was a face, known to them all, leaning over the railing at the top of the high desk. No one spoke for a moment; then the captain, rubbing his hands with an air of apparent pleasantry, yet a little constrained, said, "Very well, Rasp, that's your last, is it?"

CHAPTER III.

RASPBERRY VINEGAR—A DISJOINTED CHAPTER ON A CROOKED SUBJECT.

"She endured in silence, and unpitied,
Woes enough to mar a stouter breast.
. . . . . .
So she walked while feeble limbs allowed her,
Knowing well that any stubborn grief
She might meet with could no more than crowd her
To that gate whose opening was relief."—AMERICAN.

"RASP!" yes; that was the name by which Captain Flammerton addressed the speaker who proposed such summary dealing with little Birdie. No one else spoke, and the party dispersed their several ways, leaving the bar-parlour empty, except Miss Grig; for Mrs. Stillwell had retreated

into her bedroom to pacify her boy, and to assure herself that he was not hurt. The child and the kitten were playing on the sofa, when the desk door slowly opened, and a strange being descended its steps, and walked into the room with a creeping tread, keeping on the shadiest side, and seemingly avoiding the open space in the middle of the apartment.

Ah! well might the poor creature avoid the sunshine, for seldom have its beams fallen on a sadder spectacle. Scarcely the height of a well-grown child of ten years, a casual glance discovered that the whole frame was distorted and misshapen. No ingenuity of dress could conceal the fact, though a full, dark garment, like a cloak with sleeves, was the garb that hung loosely from the twisted shoulders, without any girdle to confine it at the waist. The arms and hands, in strange contrast to the dwarfed stature, were long, thin, and sinewy, though a bloodless tint of sickly white made the hands look delicate. The neck was so sunk that the head appeared to rest on the shoulders, and to be drawn a little back with a proud air—almost inseparable from an upturned face. The features were long and pinched, the sunk cheeks gave an appearance of age and narrowness to the visage. The eyes that looked out from this countenance were large, and seemed larger than they really were from the dark circles under them. They were lead-coloured and gloomy. The light in their depths—for there was light—looked like a dim ray in a cavern, or a flickering taper in a well, to show its depth. The eyelids that covered these deep eyes were full, drooping, and heavily fringed. The complexion was sallow, a waxen pallor on what nature meant to be a fair skin; and the hair, partaking of the strange colourless chill that seemed to pervade her like an atmosphere, was of an ashy tint, very silky, abundant, and beautifully kept; its folds, as they were wound about the

head, were strangely suggestive of a swathing for the tomb.

O beauty! in your pomp and pride, here was something for you to look at with a shudder. Not a feature of that face, so revolting in its sickly chill, its pallid gloom—not a single feature, as nature formed it, was wanting in fair proportion or delicate comeliness. Let the healthy blood circulate in those shrunk veins, and there should be colour on the cheek and lip—vivid light to quench the cold sepulchral gleam in the large eyes: a tint of gold should alchymize the dullness of the hair: and to a lover's gaze the drooping eyelids should look like white rose leaves, heavy with odorous dews.

Nay, more; survey the distorted form—take up that hand, so claw-like in its thinness—look at the length of the bony arm. The limb indicates that it belonged to a frame meant to be tall—the well-arched foot now, as it projects under the full skirt, looking so disproportionately long, was intended to support a goodly structure of nature's best workmanship, though now so crumpled up, twisted, deformed, and dislocated, that it is a living stigma—loathly, as the old ballads say.

We rejoice when the miscreant that wantonly destroys a work of art is brought to condign punishment. There is a stern satisfaction in knowing that the spoiler is taught by wholesome severity to respect what he has not the taste or feeling to admire. The lurking trespasser, damaging pleasure-grounds, the clipper, defacing the coin of the realm, are justly condemned to the penalty of suffering; but the wanton defacer of God's image, who turns beauty into deformity, health into disease—the inflicter of life-long misery—the poisoner of the wholesome currents of life, often escapes. The enormity of the crime is the culprit's safeguard against adequate punishment.

Moreover, there is a class of criminals that the law aids by putting weapons in their hands—furnishes with both motive and means for the commission of crime. What nerves the burglar for his midnight work—sharpens the knife, and prompts the hand of murder? Strong drink. What Mephistopheles, with insidious leer, panders to lust, aggravates anger into hate, jollity into brawling, hardens the husband against the wife of his bosom, and makes the mother "to forget her sucking child;" dabbles in the mud of impurity the fame of the matron, and the modesty of maidenhood? Strong drink. What is it makes "poverty to come like one that travelleth, and want like an armed man?" Strong drink. We license this drink, shrine it in seductive temples, invest it with the sanction of the law to tempt the drunkard, and to prompt the crime, and then—deal with the consequences.

The poor thing, furtively creeping along by the furniture, as if fearing or hating her own shadow, had been from her birth a victim, on whom was heavily visited the sins of her parents. Both Huggett (Mrs. Stillwell's former husband) and his first wife, in common phrase, "loved to make themselves comfortable." No one called them drunkards. The right name is no more given in our words than the right place in our institutions to those who merit it. But neither Huggett nor his wife liked each other's habits. They found things went wrong, and mutually recriminated. They had hot tempers, and they irritated them to a kind of chronic inflammation. The angry word and caustic jibe went on, until both degenerated into the brawl and the blow, given and returned in pretty equal measure. Each could, in their gossips' phraseology, "hold their own," and "stand their ground." Indeed, notwithstanding all the fine phrases about feminine dependence and weakness, as a woman generally is

either better or worse than man (no proof, by the way, of weakness), Mrs. Huggett was usually held by the gossips of Boveycum to come off conqueror in the dreary contest. One fault of hers, in her husband's eyes, was due to nature. Three children had blessed their union—as the phrase is. But as Huggett wanted a son, and these in succession were all daughters, he considered himself a very ill-used man. To be sure, these blessings—the two first of them—departed too soon to understand that they were deemed usurpers of a dignity that ought to have been possessed by a male candidate. The third disappointment came. Her mother gave her no blessing, and her father, muddled for a week, gave her openly many curses. He lost large sums in bets on this girl. Both child and mother were, for the time being, his aversion. Huggett was mischievous and tricksy in his drink. He resolved on calling this girl—as he never, seemingly, was to have a boy—by the name he would have called a son—"Asberry," the name of an uncle who had left him some money. He had a high idea of his mother's family—she was an Asberry—all the stock of them were well-to-do, monied people, so he had set his heart on a son Asberry. With the connivance of the nurse, whom he bribed, and before Mrs. Huggett left her chamber, he had the child christened.

There is no part of the outer ceremonial of our lives, whether marrying or burying, that is free from vinous aid; but christenings are proverbially occasions of jollity—ay, often open, tipsy jollity. There is no question, if a son and heir had come to the Raven, his introduction into the church of his parents would have been celebrated by a glorious revel. But Huggett was in no mood for revelry. He was cross, crabbed, vexed himself, and seeking consolation in vexing others. So, full of spleen and brandy, he took his way to the church one week-day morning, called the old pew-opener

to stand godmother with the nurse, and was himself the godfather. It happened that a new curate, who had only come the week before, did duty. Huggett's voice was thick as he spoke the child's name; the clergyman paused, asked it again, but, being new to the place, did not venture a remonstrance. He knew there was no accounting for people's whims in the matter of names, so the poor child was christened, not Asberry, but Raspberry. Mr. Huggett, irritated by the old pew-opener's compassion that "it was only a gal," had flung out of the church before the register was made, unconscious of his blunder. The nurse, amid the cries of the child—for the little creature had strong lungs, and gave an indignant protest to the whole proceeding—did not offer any other comment when the clergyman said to the clerk—"A strange name for the little fellow," than, "It 's a girl, sir."

"A girl! dear me, girls are often named after flowers; but I don't remember any called after fruit before."

"Perhaps, sir," said the matron, lowering her voice to a confidential whisper, "it's along o' the missus hankering so arter Raspberry Vinegar."

The curate gave a puzzled stare at this mysterious remark, and concluding that he had some very strange folks among his parishioners, made no comment, and the poor unconscious baby was carried to its home, the subject of that life-long injury, a ridiculous nickname.

That trouble would have been light but for what it brought in its train. The news somehow flew to Mrs. Huggett pretty quickly; and though she would have resented the little girl being called Asberry, her irritation was unspeakable at the actual name. By that strange confusion of ideas and feelings that often leads unreasoning people to wreak their anger on the consequence rather than the cause, Mrs. Huggett conceived an absolute aversion to the child.

The little creature constantly reminded her of her husband's stratagem. The name, too, recalled his relations, all of whom she detested, and was in itself so absurd as to be the constant subject of jests and laughter.

The irritation of the ill-assorted pair had reached that stage when the antipathies of the one were the partialities of the other. If either showed a preference for an acquaintance, a servant, or an animal, the other instantly disliked them for that cause alone. Huggett saw his wife's aversion to the child. He was bitterly conscious, in his sober moments, that he had by his blunder done his little daughter a great injury, and therefore his affections, such as they were, went out to her more than to any human being. He liked her as well as his horse, Valiant, and better, it may be, than Holdfast, a famous bull dog he had. His love, if so it might be called, brought no blessing to the child. In all the quarrels of her parents she was the subject of contention; and as their potations increased, and made inroads upon the health of Mrs Huggett, the life of the poor little thing, indulged by the one parent and oppressed by the other, was terrible. There came a night when Huggett, flushed with drink, heard the cries of the child, and, entering the bedroom, found she had been beaten for some baby fault. He rushed like a wild beast on the mother, who just as savagely caught up the child and threw it across the room at her husband, who, in his tipsy endeavours to save the little creature, fell upon her, and increased the injury that the sharp edge of an iron fender had inflicted on the child's spine.

The amount of injury was not apparent at the instant; the child was much hurt—how much, time revealed. Each of the parents blamed the other in their mutual quarrels; each had so much caution as to represent to others that the child's fall was accidental.

From that time poor little Berry, as she was generally called, lost colour and flesh, withered into something that looked like old age, and became dwarfish and distorted. From henceforth life to her was one long disease, though from some great tenacity of vital power, she did not have absolute helpless sickness, nor was she thought likely to die. Nature's good gifts of beauty, health, and strength, were all perverted; but enough of the latter remained to enable her to bear the burden of life.

From the time that the child was thus martyred by her parents' vices, Mrs. Huggett's habits gained fresh power. Whether conscience secretly reproached her as she saw the child whom she had worse than murdered, dying many deaths in her daily sufferings, certain it was that she fell into ill health, and aggravated her disorder by alcoholic remedies. The notion that when appetite failed, stimulants, if they were not exactly food to build up, prevented the waste of the tissues, was that which Dr. Strong entertained; but Mr. Franks, being called in to a consultation, was for banishing what he called "the potent aids to disease, and pioneers of death," that the invalid and her doctor relied on. There is no question she did not wait for, or care much about the scientific reasons Dr. Strong professed to give. The prescription was as pleasant as anything now could be to her. Oblivion, if not removal of suffering, was gained; and that was something to a frame racked with pain and a heart tortured with remorse. Little Berry used to creep into the invalid's room, gather herself up in a corner, and watch her unnoticed for hours; no one took much account of the child, she was so quiet that she was likely to be overlooked. But once, when she was seen in the twilight gazing from her corner on her sick mother, something in her look maddened the invalid; the room rang with her shrieks; the sufferer insisted on it that

the weird child haunted her. The poor cripple was turned out from what now was soon to be the chamber of death, being quite old enough to remember, and of a disposition to brood on the fact, that her mother, on her deathbed, turned from her with a loathing that rose to frenzied disgust.

A few days ended the struggle. Then came the funeral ceremonial and the *amende* to the memory of the departed, by stony monumental lies, duly ordered and paid for by the widower.

Little Berry took every opportunity of secretly visiting her mother's grave. She would elude such vigilance as was used by her attendant, and whenever the house was busy would go in the evening twilight as if to a favourite spot. Indeed, the churchyard became her dreary play-place. No other walk would she take except by a compulsion that was wearisome to those who had the care of her. By a strange custom it was the mode in those parts to put upon the tombstone of a parent the number and names of the living children they had left; and an elfish look of satisfaction would fill the large deep eyes of Berry when she read her own name on the headstone. Her long talon-like fingers travelled lovingly over the letters. She evidently seemed of more importance in her own estimation from this register of her name among the dead.

When her new mother came home, Berry neither manifested joy nor grief; nor, in her turn, was she either indulged or oppressed. She was let alone to follow her own devices. Her quietude and freedom from any habits of mischief secured her from blame. And no one ever particularly noticed that the child was poring over books; that in her favourite retreat in the churchyard she sat for hours over some volume. Mr. Franks was the first to observe this, and the only person who ever invited the forlorn little

creature over the threshold of the door. Mrs. Franks, compelled by the scanty income of her husband—for his patients were few and poor—kept a school; and when Huggett died, and the widow married again, she was induced to let Berry take lessons of Mrs. Franks. As to regular school, Berry shrunk dismayed from companionship with healthy, happy children. Her affliction made her a creature apart from others of her kind. In the very thoughtlessness of childhood there was the infliction of many a pang to Berry. She heard her deformity commented on, not always kindly. The little street urchins ran from her with disgust, and, at safe distance, taunted her, with malicious cruelty; so it was out of school hours she became the pupil, not only of Mrs. Franks, but of her husband, and very rapid was the progress that she made.

Mrs. Stillwell had been some months a widow when she learned the extent of Berry's acquirements, and, surprised that "the poor, crooked thing should be called clever," allowed her to keep the books of the Raven. Berry mounted into the desk—which had been an auctioneer's rostrum—contrived her curtain within its railings, and there, undisturbed, not only did the book-keeping—which to her swift pen and calculating brain was a *bagatelle*—but made her retreat a study, where she could pore over her books out of sight, and yet within call, and thus pursue both her occupation and her pleasures. She talked with no one in the house; if ever she did converse with any one, it was with Mr. Franks. No one ever saw any expression of either joy or sorrow vary the pain-worn look habitual to her face, except once. Two years before our narrative begins Mrs. Franks died, leaving her husband to fight the world for himself and his son—a boy of six or seven; for a fight it had been, and would be, with Mr. Franks' un-

popular opinions, rigid truthfulness, and total inability to temporize or flatter. When the wife, who had been in every good sense her husband's help-meet, was gone, then a passion of grief shook the feeble frame of poor Berry. She could not hide her anguish, much as she tried to do so. She glared angrily at any one who ventured to console her, shook them off with her proudest air, and crouched in her desk, taking even her meals there, or crept in the twilight to the churchyard,—always, as had been her custom as she grew up, keeping as much as possible under the walls and in the shade, as if she actually dreaded to cross the sunbeam's track, or see her shadow projected on the footpath. And there, among the tombs, she wept at will, creeping behind the loftier monuments whenever any stray footsteps or chance passenger approached, which was but seldom, as the churchyard was not a thoroughfare.

She rarely took much notice of the little motherless Herbert; but it was observed she did more needlework than at any former time—spent her pocket-money, which she had the reputation of hoarding; and when gliding into the poor doctor's house in the twilight, she, who knew its ways so well, went through a garden gate in the rear, and managed often to put some little garments of her own making to replenish Herbert's scanty wardrobe. It was understood that they were like fairy gifts, attended by a condition that any notice or mention of them would offend the donor.

Such, in the loneliness of her affliction, increased by her habits and character, was Berry—Rasp, as the captain most frequently called her: a name she indeed merited from him; for, if she ever condescended to speak to him, it was in some thorny phrase whose jagged ends annoyed him. He had tried to assail the widow on that side of her character, at once the strongest and the weakest—her boy, whose

mingled terror and aversion for her had been sedulously cultivated by Berry's ways of staring at and avoiding him. But so long as no active malice was manifested by Berry against Mrs. Stillwell's darling, that good matron knew too well the value of her accurately-kept books, the check which the observant, and yet apparently unnoticing eye, of Berry kept on the domestics; the truthfulness and sincerity, however hardly or oddly shown, of her step-daughter's speech and actions, to think of adopting the plan Captain Flammerton had hinted, of pensioning her off. And as to making her contribute in any way, as that gentleman afterwards suggested, to the amusement of the guests of the house, that was found impossible.

"Why, how could she contribute to any one's amusement?" is the very natural query of the reader. Her musical talents were great. Unnoticed by all but the Franks, her teachers, those long sinewy fingers had found the way to draw out the hidden soul of harmony from the piano. She could not sing. The sunk chest forbade that; but her spirit revelled in the wild combinations—the weird melodies of many of the great German composers. A poor musician had once left, as security for the payment of his bill at the Raven, and never reclaimed it, a quantity of the music of Beethoven and Von Weber; and on an old piano that had been removed to her sleeping-room—an attic in a gable of the roof—Berry had practised, from the dawn of many a summer's morning far into the day, the strains that seemed to express her own feelings of loathing, anger, grief, or desolation. Seldom a purely tender—never a lively melody—was evoked by those skilful fingers, which nature, more than art, had marvellously gifted.

This one talent she cherished with a love all the more intense that it was secret. She played, after Mrs. Franks'

death, for no one. If she touched the instrument before Mr. Franks or Mrs. Stillwell, it was as a mere matter of course; and any request or thanks that referred to her playing, sent her off in a moody fit. Indeed, all notice of any kind irritated her, and it was fortunate that Mrs. Stillwell's love of ease left Berry unmolested.

With this sketch of her twenty years of life, the reader may fancy her as she crept down from the desk, and round by the chairs to the sofa where the child and the kitten were busy at their play. Berry drew near, and, half-concealed by the scroll-end of the sofa, looked attentively at the two young things. A deeper gloom came into her eyes as she gazed. The child glanced up, and, startled at the pale face looking at her, paused in her play, and returned the gaze with a somewhat alarmed gesture.

"There now, cry; of course I frighten you," said Berry.

The child clutched the kitten as if for protection, half-hid her face in her pretty, shy way; and, after looking for a moment earnestly into the deep eyes fixed upon her, burst suddenly into a merry, babbling, infantine laugh, full of mirth.

"Oh! not frightened. A laughing torment, I suppose; quite as bad, or worse than a shrieking torment," said Berry, pausing between the short sentences, and still eyeing the child; then adding, as a sort of general proposition—"Laughter! is there any cruelty, any insult so bad as that which has a laughing chorus; and when 'tis mirth, as they call it, what is it but the cackling of geese?"

The child by this time became serious, wondering at no response to her laughter,—for even a baby looks for interchange of feeling, and needs sympathy. She lifted up her kitten, and tried another plan of establishing intercourse—"Love my tittie."

"Love! little fool—she's been used to that kind of talk," said Berry, turning abruptly away. As she turned, she suddenly thought of something, for she crossed the room, still on the shadiest side, looked up at the clock, as if to assure herself that the hour was favourable for not being interrupted, and then opening a drawer, took out a picture. It was of herself when an infant—a crayon drawing very well executed. She had, by dint of entreaty—the only favour she had ever asked—got Mrs. Stillwell to take this picture down from its place on the wall, where it had served all her childhood as an instrument of torture to poor Berry. For, as if her deformity was a blot that could be erased or modified by contrast, Mrs. Stillwell was for years in the habit of showing "what Berry was before she met with her 'accident.'"

With a furtive gaze around, Berry now drew forth this picture, looked at it, and then at the child before her, as if deciding which were the lovelier of the two; and, in truth, that decision was not easily made. The picture represented an infant of the most delicate fairness, adorned with clustering rings of flaxen hair—the tint of soft pink on the cheeks—the large black pupils of the eyes, and long brown fringes of the eyelids, redeemed the face from the insipidity of its extreme fairness; and though there was a slightly deeper glow of colour in the little stranger on the sofa, and her hair in its sunny hue fell about her shoulders in ray-like brightness, few would have said that she was lovelier than the child in the picture. Berry looked from the living face to the lifeless drawing with strange and painful interest for some moments. Then her quick ear caught the sound of footsteps; she shrunk back with her usually stealthy tread, and heaving a heavy sigh, put the picture away in the press drawer from which she had taken it. Miss Grig entered the bar, followed by Twirk, who came for orders as to whether the corpse was to be re-

moved. It was very awkward that on the day of the cricketers' dinner there should be such a ghastly guest in the house—not that he anticipated any fewer attendants at the dinner, or any less revelry. Indeed, already, the news having spread through the town, the parlour was filling, and the bells were ringing in coffee and commercial room, so that Twirk, hanging up the key of the death-chamber on a key-board in the bar, said—"I s'pose, Miss Grig, it is as Dr. Strong and Slumly the beadle say, the body must not be moved afore the inquest."

Mrs. Stillwell re-entered the bar-parlour by a door at the side of the fireplace that communicated with the back stairs, and said, in her usual languid way, "Leave the recess as it is; lock the door when nurse Stalker has gone, and leave it."

Twirk, pointing up to the key, hastened to say he had already so far fulfilled her wishes.

"You have carefully searched the clothes?"

"Yes, 'um, yes," said Twirk, twisting his face into a look of concern, and heaving an elaborate sigh.

"Brought down everything?"

"Everything," re-echoed the man, turning to go with sudden alacrity.

"It's very odd," said Mrs. Stillwell musingly.

"What's odd?" said little Berry abruptly, from her nook by the end of the sofa, where, unseen, she had been scrutinizing the countenance of Twirk as he gave his hasty answers.

Mrs. Stillwell was too used to Berry coiling herself in corners and speaking from nooks to be startled, though Miss Grig exclaimed, "Deary me! Miss Berry, how came you down there?"

"What's odd?" repeated the cripple, without heeding any interjections.

"Why, there's not more than four pounds in the man's purse. It's strange that he was taking a journey with a child and no more money with him than that."

"If he was a singer on his way to Exeter for that concert they are to have there next Wednesday, he wouldn't, perhaps, have much money; them singers and musicianers seldom has—least-ways they seldom carries much," said Miss Grig.

"Well, we shall hear all about him in time," replied Mrs. Stillwell, settling down with a yawn into her easy chair.

"That's not so certain," said Berry, creeping round the room and up into her desk.

"Oh, you never thinks like nobody else, Miss Berry," said Grig testily. "You're one of Job's comforters; you are."

"Well, well, Grig, leave Berry alone. There's enough to do to-day."

"Enough to try Job's patience," said Berry, shutting her desk door with a sharp click.

The child, wearied with the kitten, and evidently looking about surprised at so little notice being taken of her by the human personages, suddenly either felt her loneliness, or remembered her relation, for she began to fret, at first in a subdued tone—"Unky, Unky;" and then gradually rising to a sharp cry, Mrs. Stillwell rang the bell, and said to the housemaid, who answered it, "Take this child away, and keep her quiet."

Had any one looked, they might have seen Berry's eyes peering through a corner of the curtain with an undefinable expression, as the now screaming child was borne away, and Miss Grig was busily attending to the orders brought by Twirk; for the catastrophe of the past night, as had been hinted, was pretty certain to bring plenty of customers to the Raven, and form the excuse, if indeed any were needed, for

moderate men, as they called themselves, taking a morning glass, and hearing Captain Flammerton's account of the matter. Several steady-going old *habitues* of the parlour would have liked to see the child, but she was wilful; and, whether her nurses were awkward, impatient, or indifferent, they could not pacify her long together.

"Children are born despots," says one who, to the poet's fancy, united the mother's experience; and as yet poor "Birdie Pet," as she called herself, had not learned to subdue her own will, or to think with fear of the will of others. That lesson was to be taught her in a stern school.

CHAPTER IV.

NIGHT SCENES.

"The wind that swept them out of life
Hath ruffled all our vesture;
On the closed gate that shuts them in,
We beat with frantic gesture."—MRS. B. BROWNING.

MR. TWITTERLY duly returned, the better for his drive over breezy hills, and for the abstinence his bilious attack had enforced. He began, as he rattled up the street to the door of the Raven, to think, with reviving appetite, of the cricketers' dinner, and to glorify himself not a little on the aid to the harmony of the evening that he had provided in the person of the songster he had introduced. He was taken quite aback when he bustled into the parlour, by the captain saying, with an air of unusual importance, "Oh! you're the very man that has been wanted all day. I should have sent after you—that is, Mrs. Stillwell would have sent a messenger—but we knew you would return before night.

Now, answer this question carefully—mind-shoo—what was the foreigner's name that you brought with you, and where did he come from?" The tone in which this query was put, and the look that accompanied it, assured Twitterly that something unpleasant had happened, and his first panic-stricken thought was that the songster of the past night had decamped without paying his bill. In a moment it flashed through Twitterly's mind that he knew very little indeed of him; and he was instantly as ready to avail himself of that circumstance as he had been a few moments before to boast of his musical acquaintance. "His name! where he came from?" he repeated, gaining a moment's time, by retorting Flammerton's words, "How should I know? He travelled by the mail as I did. I know no more of him than you do. Why?"

"No more than I do? Mr. Twitterly; why, didn't you say, or hint, or something, that he was Herr somebody or other, and call him your friend? Yes—mind-shoo—your friend. I'm positive you did."

"Oh, bother! What do you mean by bringing up my words?" The landlord of the Choughs, at Claydip, said, now I think of it; yes, he said that it was Herr Reichberg, going on for the concerts next week at Exeter. Yes, and I was then on the outside of the mail. Treboozy, at the end of a stage, got down. It began to rain, and I determined to finish my journey inside; and so I got in and began talking a bit about professionals to this—this gentleman. Indeed, now I recollect, I amused the child, and that was how we first got into conversation; and he was asking about several families here away. He was intending to make a visit hereabouts, and I recommended this inn. I certainly did that; I always do. Why do you look so confounded glum, captain, and ask a fellow

questions with such a magisterial air, as if you meant to say, 'On your oath, now?'"

"Because, sir—mind-shoo—the man is dead."

"Dead! said Twitterly aghast, shocked certainly, but yet in a minute or two relieved that he had not exposed himself to the laughter of the commercial room by having picked up and introduced a member of the swell-mob, thief, or swindler to the Raven.

"Dead! What! did he kill himself, or how was it? Dead!" Then came the intelligence of the contents of the stranger's purse; how there was no mark on his linen, except, indeed, a blot in marking ink undecipherable. How the child called herself by all kinds of fanciful names—none of them rightful Christian or surnames—the doctor's opinion about heart disease—and all the gossip that had circulated during the day. Twitterly's ignorance of the name of the stranger, except as he had gathered it from Treboozy of Claydip, removed the identification of the body a step farther off. The landlord of the Choughs, at Claydip, must be written to before the post went out, and asked over to the inquest. Mr. Twitterly adjourned to the bar and dictated—at the door of Berry's desk—a letter that she wrote; Mrs. Stillwell meanwhile saying, peevishly, "I certainly thought, Mr. Twitterly, you knew all about him and the child."

The mail that had gone down the previous day returned, just at this time, bringing with it the stray carpet bag. It was brought in with all due importance, and opened before the captain, Twitterly, and several witnesses. It contained nothing but night clothes for himself and the child, slippers, and a travelling dressing-case, as if a visit merely of a night was intended. But puzzled as they all were, and half-inclined as some felt to resent Mr. Twitterly not knowing more of the stranger, the proceedings of the evening were too im-

portant to be interfered with by anything. The rattle of plates and dishes, bottles and glasses; the odour of the viands, prepared in due abundance; all admonished the frequenters of the Raven, that for one night at least they must postpone their inquiries, get rid of the ugly fact of death being in the house, and eat and drink their fill as true-born Englishmen. Never was there a more jovial dinner. There was certainly a deficiency in the vocal department. Will Joice was missed; and his life and deeds in the cricket ground and at the festive board diversified the conversation, which otherwise turned too exclusively on the dead man. There was an unexpected guest at the dinner—a nephew of Squire Pendrainly—who was introduced by the president of the club, and who gave very animated accounts of matches he had seen played at Lords', and seemed a very free, cheerful young fellow,—nothing certainly to compare to his elder brother; who was now understood to be at variance with his uncle, but of whom the eulogium given indicated much more than it expressed. "Ah! Mr. Fred. Pendrainly *was* a fellow! no better bowler in the county. He was first-rate, he was—no one could come nigh him." "For bowling or anything else," said Captain Flammerton—"mind-shoo—he was up to everything."

Mr. Vesey Pendrainly was a long-limbed, fair-haired, round-faced young man, whom rustic belles called handsome. He had a great idea of the importance, as well as the antiquity of the Pendrainly family; and as those claims to consideration were more willingly yielded by the trading class and yeomanry of the district, Mr. Vesey preferred their company. He could talk freely among them, which he was never able to do with the gentry. To be a great man among small people was his aim, in which, however, he only very partially succeeded—the said small people having a tolerable faculty

of discernment. Mr. Vesey did not reply much to these commendations of his brother. He had not the skill to turn the conversation, but he evaded it, and in so doing left the impression that the differences known to exist between the old squire and his nephew and heir were as great as ever. It was said that Mr. Frederick Pendrainly's debts had been paid on the express condition that he should live abroad, and nothing had been heard of him for the past three years; at least, nothing that had transpired beyond the precincts of the squire's house—Boveycum-bury.

The captain had the tact to lead the conversation into other channels. The cloth was removed, and the usual toasts were given, the usual speeches made—not quite the usual songs sung—but even more than the usual drink consumed. The mirth grew fast and furious; and when the bottle had pretty well circulated, there was some talk about the strange little child and her singing, and she was sent for just as—weary with alternate playing and crying—she was being made ready for bed.

Mr. Twitterly, who on the previous day had established something like intimacy with the little tricksy sprite, was asked to come; and, by his gift of persuasion, he did so far succeed that she sang him a nursery rhyme, a pure bit of doggerel, guiltless of any meaning, and, therefore, perhaps a favourite; but she refused, though prompted by Miss Grig, threatened by Mrs. Stillwell, and coaxed in turns by all, to sing the song of the morning. As Twitterly carried her into the dining-room the child looked extremely beautiful, for she was flushed by the excitement of the day; and, moreover, she was struggling to be set free from Mr. Twitterly's arms, and fought him with a vehemence half-real, half-assumed, calling loudly for her "Unky." They promised, if she would sing, that Unky should come—for,

of course, telling awful lies to a child was only a common custom—and so the poor little thing trilled out her bit of senseless jingle in her sweet, bird-like notes—

Head niddle noddle,
Feet tiddle toddle,
Mouth gibble gobble,
Hands dibble dobble—
Birdie's never at rest
Till she sleeps in her nest.

There was, of course, plenty of laughter and applause; but the child, now thoroughly aroused to expect her uncle, renewed her clamour; and, being provoked to passion, beat Mr. Twitterly with her little fists right heartily, and kicked and screamed as she was carried away, so that the housemaid declared that "she had never seen such 'a limb,'" and prophesied that, if the friends did not come and take her away, "there'd be no bearing the house for her." Poor little thing, she soon exhausted her impotent rage, and sobbed herself to sleep, being put in a cot in one of the servants' bedrooms.

Meanwhile all the house resounded with songs and shouts of merriment, and all were gay and busy with ministering to the revellers—except one. True, she never was missed, and so it did not much matter how she, after taking due note of the gross amount of wine and spirits brought out for the dinner, employed herself. Leaving her desk, little Berry took her way, with her usual stealthy tread, up the back stairs. She mounted to the attics near her own chamber where the women-servants slept, and entered the room where the stranger-child, the tears yet wet upon her cheeks, was sleeping. Berry had lighted a little taper at the gas on the staircase, and shielding its tiny ray of light with

her hands, she seemed, not merely to look at, but to study the child. Every now and then the little chest heaved, the lips quivered, and she sobbed even in her sleep. Her rich tresses, all uncombed, were in a tangle of thick curls round her flushed face, and her little dimpled hands were clenched, as if ready again to strike. "She sang about her mamma," said Berry, as she stood looking at her; "I wonder now if this child's mother loves her—is thinking of her—waiting her return." It was evident from the tone in which Berry put these queries to herself that she fully understood a mother might not love her child. There was no expression of pity in Berry's face; her eyes were gloomy as usual; but when the child turned in her sleep, she put the bed-clothes carefully over her; while, as if despising herself for the tenderness of the action, she said, "She may as well be warm; the world will be cold enough to the wilful little brat." Then, like some gnome, she crept out of the room as stealthily as she had entered it, and with noiseless footsteps descended the stairs, pausing to assure herself by the continuance of the ringing of bells, the running of feet, and the resounding shouts of the revellers, that there was no danger of encountering any one. She stopped at the door of the dead man's chamber, and drawing a key from her pocket, unlocked it and entered.

Berry paused a moment on the inside of the door to lock it, and to adjust her little taper, and with an unfaltering step, yet as creeping as was natural to her, she approached the bed.

There, rigid on the mattress, a sheet thrown over it, lay the corpse. The height and size of the body gave the outline in full relief through the sheet.

The head of Berry was very little more than on a level with the height of the bed. She walked up the side from

the foot, and with a steady hand turned down the sheet, and gazed earnestly at the face. That peculiar look of tranquillity that comes over the countenance during the first twenty-four hours after a death that has not been marked by much suffering, characterized the features that met her gaze. The marble whiteness of the face, the quantity of black hair, the perfect composure, gave a look of intelligence and comeliness to the man. He was evidently in the prime of his years—not more, if so much, as thirty-six—and of a frame that in every limb seemed moulded for health, strength, and long life.

Berry's searching gaze took in all these details.

"And this was the man that passed me as I hid in the recess on the stairs last night," said she, musingly. "So tall, and straight, and strong; ay, and gifted. Did I not hear those lips pour out a tide of song? But what matters? the coarsest of all vices takes its votaries from high and low, and uses them all alike. A ruined name, an untimely death, a dishonoured grave, that's their doom. And they invite it; they tempt it," she added, as a louder laugh of the revellers rang through the house, and seemed to circle round the bed. "Laugh away, fools. He laughed with some of you last night; and now here, nameless, neglected, robbed—yes, I am sure of it—robbed," she repeated; then, slowly replacing the sheet, she began looking very carefully round the chamber. The clothes of the deceased were folded, and lying on a chair, though his smaller valuables and personalities had been removed. Berry examined the garments minutely. There was not anything that gave testimony of the stranger's name, though the texture of the garments by no means indicated that he and the child were likely to be taking a journey so poorly provided with money.

"I 'm sure of it, he has been robbed, and Twirk has robbed

him," repeated Berry. There is nothing more tantalizing than to have a conviction which cannot be confirmed or submitted to ordinary tests. To accuse Twirk merely on her supposition, if believed, which was unlikely, might but lead to his departure; and he was one of those domestics often found in a large establishment, and to some extent valuable to their employers, who compound for their own dishonesty by the sharpest observance of the conduct of subordinates. With them the privilege of lining their own pocket is purchased by stinting the pockets of others. Not that any one, Berry excepted, thought Twirk anything but a most trustworthy and thoroughly respectable man. The little cripple, from her retreat, noted much, and came to private conclusions about many around her very different from the estimate in which they were generally held. She knew Twirk, and he had an uneasy consciousness of the fact, and always shunned her, if by a rare chance they met.

Berry, after her examination of the clothes and chamber was complete, left the room, and with a dissatisfied air descended the stairs. She paused a minute in the hall, took a hooded cloak from a closet, and crept out into the street. Walking rather faster, but still so close to the wall that she could scarcely be seen, she went on to the outskirts of the town, and entering the garden gate of a small detached house, turned round to the back, and tapped at the kitchen door, more as an announcement than as waiting for admission, for she instantly opened it and entered. A dog that was in the kitchen ran to her with an eager welcome, and leaped and fawned round her with a short bark of satisfaction.

A very old woman sat knitting by the side of a little fire that seemed all the more comfortless because it was in a large kitchen-grate. The night was not cold for the season; but the old woman looked chilly, and an indescribable air of

poverty pervaded her decent, cleanly, well-concealed, and yet most obvious poverty. Her neat threadbare garments were carefully patched. The kitchen was as orderly and clean as hands could make it; but it had none of those rows of bright covers, and dressers of handsome crockery and tins, that make a well-appointed kitchen as neat, and fully as brilliant, as a drawing-room. A patched drugget was on the floor; the walls, except for a wheezy old Dutch clock, were blank; and the deal table and chairs, though white as stone, were as bare and as cold.

The old woman looked up as the door opened and the dog gave his greeting. It was evident the motion, rather than the sound, had attracted her attention; for her face indicated that if she was not quite deaf, she was what is called "hard of hearing." Though a smile came for Berry, she said, with assumed anger, "Very late, Miss Berry; now the winter's a-coming on, you must not be walking out and about at sich kind o' outlandish hours."

Berry waved her hand carelessly in reply to the admonition, with a gesture that seemed to say, "Look at me; no one would molest me; I am safe." Then she spoke. "Dr. Franks, is he in the house, Dorcas?"

"Ay, ay," replied Dorcas, anticipating the question rather than hearing it, and making as if she would light the visitor through the passage; but Berry laid her hand on her arm, to indicate she was not to move, stilled the dog with a pat of her other hand, and, like one accustomed both to darkness and to the house, walked along feeling her way, and with a little tap on the door as an introduction, glided into the parlour, where, reading at a lamp, was Mr.—or as we will call him, according to general country custom, Dr. Franks. Seated at his feet on the hearth-rug was a young boy absorbed in putting together the pieces of a Chinese puzzle.

No fire cheered the room; but the books scattered about—the air of perfect neatness—the tranquil look of both man and child—took off any of the signs of poverty, if such there were, that seemed so obvious in the kitchen.

"So late, Berry!" said Dr. Franks.

"So late?" retorted she, pointing to the child on the hearth-rug.

"Ah, true. Herbert and I are such companions that I fear we forget all about time. "Dear me!" he added, as the church clock struck ten. "Why, child, you should have been in bed these two hours. You must go at once to Dorcas."

The child rose instantly, threw a half-reproachful look to Berry, and then, as seemed his custom, knelt down at his father's footstool and repeated his simple prayers; and at the close, receiving the benediction—"God bless and keep thee, my poor child"—a kiss, and away he went; Berry stooping meanwhile and gathering up the pieces of his puzzle, and seeming to take no notice of him.

As soon as he was gone, Dr. Franks said interrogatively—"Well, Berry?"

"Did that man die of disease of the heart?" she asked abruptly.

"I think there is no doubt of it. The spasm that Annice says she witnessed—the torpid arm that all now remember to have noticed, are symptoms. Why do you ask?"

"I'm uneasy about him; and this child, with her singing and crying—seemingly taught so much, and yet not taught her own name. I am suspicious of Twirk."

"Say you are suspicious of every one, Berry. It is your besetting sin."

"I've reason to be."

"What could poor Twirk do? You really let your morbid fancies obscure your reason."

"I live among scenes that justify my fancies; they are not morbid."

"Berry, it is a good maxim that a great man uttered—Never, without full evidence, believe anything to be true of a person that ought not to be true."

"That man did not live in a drunkery among drinkers."

"No; I grant your views of life are likely to be distorted."

"Certainly: they are like myself."

"Ah! my poor Berry, you make your world worse than it might be. Remember what I have so often told you. The world, like a mirror, reflects our own smiles or frowns."

"Indeed, sir—is it so? Then how comes it the world is so unkind to you?"

"I don't know that it is so, Berry. I am privileged to be of service to the poor. Their blessing is a great recompense. But you did not come here to talk to me of myself?"

"No; I wanted to ask what is to be done with that child supposing no friends turn up?"

"Oh, there's no doubt but the friends will be soon found."

"You think, then, that the dead man is the singer expected at Exeter—this Herr Reichberg?"

"No; I never heard that suggested, except as Mr. Twitterly's babble. Indeed, I am sure he is not that person; for here, by to-night's post, is the Exeter paper, and Herr Reichberg sang there last night. Depend on it, Twitterly got hold of some half story."

"Like enough. His talk is like a spider's web; touch it, and it breaks to pieces."

"Go you home, Berry; and make yourself content about the child."

"Oh, I care nothing about her; why should I?"

"I'm inclined to think both that you do care, and that you ought to care about the little, helpless, pretty thing. But rest

assured her relatives will be found—may not be far off. The preparations for the journey were so slight. Poor, pretty innocent!" he added, after a pause, as if to himself.

Something in his words evidently jarred on the irritable nerves of Berry. She muttered a hasty good night, and crept away, passing through the kitchen without looking at the old woman, who did not hear her; and when, outside the door, the dog would have accompanied her, she struck at him angrily, and the poor brute slunk away.

"'Pretty!'" she muttered, "Ah yes; she'll do well enough; plenty to admire, and plenty to love her. 'Pretty!' —a little wasp. She has buzz enough, and no want of sting, I fancy, 'pretty' as she is."

In this mood, the poor cripple seemed unable to go home, if home it might be called. She stood irresolute, heard the chimes of half-past ten; and, turning back, repassed the doctor's house and entered the churchyard. By this time the moon had risen, and a fitful, threatening wind swept a few torn masses of clouds over the troubled sky. A breath of winter was in the air, but only so as to be agreeable after the summer and autumn heat and languor. But she looked not up to the sky: she felt no cold in the air. Mechanically, as if knowing every step of the way blindfold, she crept over the grassy mounds, glided round the great tombs, and at length finding the one she sought, sat down, and burying her face in her long hands, rocked herself to and fro, as if in mortal anguish, muttering at intervals, "And this man, this good man, tells me—me—that the world is as we make it. Ah! did I make myself?—a blot, a scar, upon its surface, that every one would gladly dash away, rub off as something loathsome that has no business there! Mother!" she added, turning fiercely round towards the headstone, and striking her clenched hand against it, "what a long torment your

murderous hand has left me! how it lasts! It grows worse—it eats into my heart—it poisons my soul! Oh that I could lie down beside you! Oh that I could—" tears and sobs choked her utterance. She rocked herself, unconscious of the moaning wind that was rising into wild sweeping blasts, in which the autumn leaves rustled as they eddied round the graves. Suddenly the sound of a brawl broke on her ear. It came from a cottage on the margin of the churchyard. The *thud* of heavy blows was heard between shrill screams and brutal oaths.

"I'll teach ye to come to the Raven tap a'ter me; that I wool. Ye sha'n't goo there, nor noo whur else for wun while, ye ——."

We spare our readers the epithets that intermingled with the blows and threats.

Berry rose, and in her gliding way left the churchyard and went towards the cottage. With not a single touch of fear, she flung the door wide open, threw back the hood of her cloak, clapped her long hands, and uttering a wild, piercing scream that instantly made both combatants recoil, said, "The curse of God is on the drunkard and the oppressor."

"Lord, save us! what be that?" said the woman, cowering down and ceasing her cries; while the man, evidently thinking it some unearthly visitant, bolted into the back room. Berry covered herself with her cloak, and disappeared round the angle of the road where the cottage stood, just as the policeman, attracted by the shrillness of her scream, came to the place, and served by his presence to prevent further violence.

A certain strange triumph, that her looks could terrify, was, for a moment, in Berry's throbbing heart. Something of that wild, morbid love of power, which tempted the miserable and

the frightful in old times to play upon the superstitions of their neighbours, and to profess, at the peril of their lives, forbidden and supernatural powers, was working in Berry's mind. "If I cannot have love, I can have fear," she said. "Love!" The word to her was evidently a mockery or an anguish—perhaps in turns both. She spoke it with intense bitterness.

The route she took homeward brought her to the rear of the premises where the Raven tap was situated; and as she approached she noticed some of the ragged children, the stray waifs, of the town hanging about, their tatters fluttering in the rising wind and chilling some of them to the bone. They listened to the rough songs that were being sung within; for the jollity of the parlour was emulated by those who could not quite so well afford to play the fool in the tap-room. Among the group, Berry noticed a little girl with her arms coiled up in a ragged pinafore, who was shivering and crying, and saying to one of the boys, "Oh, Tom, do climb up and look again if he seems like to come; pray, do."

One of the boys clambered on the window sill and said, "'Tain't no manner o' use, Betsy; he's a gooin' to sing."

"Oh! what shall I do, and mother's so bad—her's like to die."

"Goo in, can't 'ee?" said a bold boy.

"I durs'n't; he'd kill me."

"Her's afeard—so beant I," said the boy, and bolted in.

"Humphrey, yoor wife wants you."

But the man, incensed at the mention of his wife's name, and the ready laugh of his companions, aimed a blow at the boy, who ducked down, turned head over heels with a wild shout of derision, and saying, "Yoo can't see to stroike stract; yoo can't," was in a moment outside laughing with his companions, while the little shivering girl, sobbing bit-

terly, turned to go home to her sick mother. She had but gone a few paces when a long, lean hand reached over her shoulder, and dropped a coin into the fingers that were rubbing her tear-bleared eyes. By the time the amazed girl could turn to see, or thank the giver, all that met her gaze was a something like a bundle, strangely creeping away towards a door of the offices of the Raven.

Berry, weary and sick at heart, mounted at once by the back stairs to her bedroom. Had she been able to continue her watch she would have seen many other phases of conviviality. One of the "boon companions," "the good fellows" of the parlour was being, by Captain Flammerton's direction, and under Twirk's care, carried up stairs to his room, where the faithful waiter, dismissing all help, undressed and put the "choice spirit" to bed in the very next room to that in which lay the corpse. A pocket-book—well-lined apparently—was carefully handled and weighed by Twirk. He took the opportunity before leaving the room to look at the contents; opened a roll of notes, and in tones of disappointment, said, "All fives." No; there was one ten, clean —without any writing on the back. He carefully undid his own waistcoat, fumbled in an inner vest, and brought out the leather pouch he had secreted; looked with eager eyes among the notes, and substituted an equally unsoiled ten-pound note from it for that in the pocket-book, muttering with intense satisfaction, as if he felt it a comfortable, virtuous suggestion, "Exchange is no robbery; here goes." Then opening a drawer, he put away the purse and watch of his senseless customer, locked them up safely, and thinking nothing of the grisly tenant of the adjacent chamber, hastened down stairs to be in readiness for any other gentleman that needed his assistance.

"Precious old toper that 'ere capting is, surely," he said to

Miss Grig. "Why, he makes b'leeve to drink as much as they, and leads 'em on in fine style—fust-rate. Trust him—he ain't a-going to burn out his old witals. Why he's been a-drinking toast and water this hour—you knows he have, and you've made it look as clear as rum. Ah, ah—I say, he's worth his board and bed, he is; for a better decoy—and I've knowed a many—than our capting is, never lifted a glass, nor give a toast."

It was late when the stupor of heavy sleep came down upon all the inmates of the Raven; and the roisterers, the traders, the cripple, the child, and the corpse, were all alike wrapped in the mantle of oblivion.

Meanwhile the wind rose, and, like a furious beast of prey, lashed itself into a rage. The lime tree felt its rustling blast beat down its last remaining leaves, and shake its stately limbs, as if trying to rend them off. The Raven swung to and fro on its iron gibbet, with a hoarse shriek that answered the angry howl of the tempest. The gas lamps, with a quivering gleam, gave up the contest, and left the town in darkness. The policeman crept into the porch of the old Town Hall, and gathered himself into the most sheltered corner, saying, "Any port in storm; and there's a pretty many out in this squall as'll make no port but Davy Jones's locker."

Yes; on the iron-bound coast, not thirty miles from Boveycum, there was many a disaster that night, all the more terrible that the wind had risen so suddenly.

O solemn, dreadful night, what scenes thou beholdest! not merely of tempest and storm, and the deadly struggle of the sea-beat mariner, the wild cry and bubbling groan of the drowning; but beneath thy veil of darkness the ruffian prowls for his prey, the vagrant sneaks to his lair, the drunkard sleeps his fevered, senseless doze, sickness languishes

on its weary pillow, honest toil takes its wholesome rest, childhood and health their dewy slumbers, the angels of death and life sweep over the earth on untiring pinions, both messengers of Him of whom none can stay His hand, or say, "What doest thou?" and poor human love and pity watch and pray, hoping for a brighter morn.

CHAPTER V.

THE CROWNER'S 'QUEST.

"But is this law?
"Ay, marry is't; crowner's 'quest law."—SHAKSPERE.

THAT the oldest of English courts of law is by no means the wisest, is an opinion rapidly gaining ground. Indeed, it would seem, from the manifest inefficiency of juries, particularly coroner's juries, that in the progress of education men were taught much that they may never want, but their judicial duties as citizens or as witnesses they are seldom taught. And our boasted trial by jury, so just and patriotic in its character, assuredly rests for its efficiency on the intelligence of the people. Multitudes of men there are, not fit to pronounce an opinion that would affect the character or liberty of a dog. Nevertheless, there was great interest and satisfaction expressed in Boveycum that "a jury was to sit on the dead man." It seemed to many minds not only a tribute due to the living, but a sort of recompense to the dead. One day, it was found, must elapse between the day of the dinner and that of the inquest. Particular inquiries had to be made about the deceased, though it was understood a clue to the enigma could be furnished from Claydip.

"Better," as Captain Flammerton said to Mrs. Stillwell, "to get up the evidence nicely, and have the case in a nutshell, so as not to delay the worthy coroner, or to have any adjournments—mind-shoo—I'm clear against adjournment."

"Oh, no adjournment; we want the room," said the landlady, with unusual animation; the loss and inconvenience caused by the dead body, to say nothing of the child, being great. Accordingly, in pursuance of Captain Flammerton's directions, the police were set on to inquire about the deceased "foreigner;" and two ladies, Miss Gibson and Miss Patterson, who represented the literary ability of Boveycum, came to speak in foreign languages to the child. The one tried French, the other German; but poor Birdie was wilful, and either did not or would not understand them. "Oh, she knows a great deal more than she'll own to," said Grig, now heartily tired of the child. "She could sing verse after verse quite clear off, for ever so long, the first morning, and since then there's no getting nothing out of her." The ladies departed, shocked at the artfulness of such a child. "Bred up among those foreign, theatrical people, most likely, and of course, cunning."

"Ah, yes; of course," was their mutual comment, as they left the impracticable child.

Some one said to Twirk—"Are you sure as he wur a furriner?" "Oh, certain—certain," said Twirk quickly, and, as if he snubbed the man; "there's no question about that, none at all: his speech told that to any fool as listened." The man wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, as he put down his glass, and went off quite extinguished. But from that time, when Twirk talked to the policeman or the beadle, and repeated the stranger's words, which he did with that amplitude of description common to his class, he always qualified his remarks with "Leastways, as fur as *I* understood

his lingo, I should say them was his words." Twirk had never read any books of philosophy; but he knew the fact—repeat a story often enough, and you will not only make others believe it, but you may believe it yourself.

The beadle, in going round to subpœna the jury, selected such as were known to be frequenters of the Raven parlour; and when, at the conclusion of his labours, in making the circuit of the Bull-ring and two cross streets, he called in to report to Mrs. Stillwell that "a most respectable jury was convened to sit upon the furrin gentleman, if so be as he was a gentleman—seeing as his money didn't correspond to sich—howsomedever, the furriner; that was right anyhow, and partikerlarity in speaking becomed a man as had a 'sponsible place, as he hoped he knowed and had ever shown sich, as in duty bound."

Mrs. Stillwell listened to this speech, and made the most satisfactory reply possible, by saying, "Pour out a glass of something, Grig."

"Your 'elth and 'appiness, mum," said the beadle, lifting the glass to his lips; "and may the next furriner as comes to the Raven—" he was about to say "be a better customer," but he hesitated, and wound up his toast confusedly with, "be some one as somebody knows summat about."

"And not saddle us with a child that there's no making anything of," said Miss Grig. "By-the-by, if she's not claimed, she'll have to come to your charge."

"Ah, there's a pretty many of them unclaimed ones, or as good as sich, for they're come-by-chance-nothing-to-nobodies, up yonder," said the beadle, pointing with his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the union-house. "The young varments makes the rates owdacious heavy; ay, and some as one 'ud a thought better on comes into the house as hungry as hunters, who

but they—the widder and six young 'uns of Tom Gulper, that 'ere drunken painter. Miss, don't you recklect Tom? He as had a shop in the Fore-gate wunst on a time?"

"I don't know any of the tap customers," said Miss Grig, loftily; adding, "there's a shocking deal of drinking among the lower orders. It's the fault of their wives; they should make their homes comfortable."

"Indeed! oh, foolish wives!" said a mocking voice from the desk. Miss Grig gave an impatient toss of her head, and busied herself arranging her rows of glasses. The beadle, looking up in the direction of the voice, said jocosely, as he took his departure, "Ah, Miss Berry, you must put a bit of a crooked word in now and agen. It's on'y nat'ral *you* should."

On the morning of the inquest came a letter from Mr. Treeboozy, of Claydip, saying that he knew "nothing whatever of the foreigner who now, it seemed, was lying dead at the Raven. All he remembered saying to Mr. Twitterly was, that the gentleman inside the mail had a beard and whiskers like Herr Reichberg—not that it was he; and it was well known that all the week the German singer had been at Exeter."

"Really, my dear Mr. Twitterly, really now, you should be more careful," said the captain, "you should indeed—mind-shoo—*I* don't say so; but, depend on it, it will be said that you were not exactly clear in your intellects. I never saw you other than as sober as a judge; but—mind-shoo—it's as well to be judicious; time your glass well, my dear fellow."

"Confound Treeboozy, what does he mean about beard and whiskers? And as to drinking, Captain Flammerton—if that's what you're driving at—I was as sober, ay, soberer than Treeboozy; and I defy him to say I wasn't.

He misled me, and I dare him to deny it. It was owing to his talk that I got inside, and made the acquaintance—that is, travelled with that black-looking ——."

"Foreigner," said Twirk, who was moving about the room, respectfully bowing as he spoke.

"Yes, that black-looking foreigner; and I'll make Tree-boozy own his words." Mr. Twitterly, like a good many people, indulged in a little bluster at times. It was a safety-valve to his vexation; and, when the subject of it was not present, it was a harmless mode of impressing by-standers with a due sense of Mr. Twitterly's independence and valour. So, during the interval, the poor little commercial trotted in and out of various shops, lamenting that he was delayed by "this awkward piece of business;" talked to Mr. Floss, the haberdasher, who was on the jury, and very likely to be the foreman. He was such a smooth, patient-spoken man that his neighbours had a high opinion of his fitness to investigate any matter. "Give him time, and put it plain before him, and he's the man—so sound." Whether this latter phrase referred to his health, his religion, or his judgment, it was impossible to say; but a sound man Mr. Floss was considered, chiefly on the testimony of his manner.

At three o'clock in the afternoon, the large drawing-room at the Raven was opened for the inquest, and the jury assembled. They had been refreshing themselves previously down stairs, all having a solemn conviction that it was needful to brighten themselves up, or sober themselves down, or give a fillip or a settler to their nerves, before entering on the important business of sitting on the dead man, to find out why he died.

Mr. Dotterly, the coroner, and his secretary, and Mr. Burr, the town-clerk, were there. The mayor had a fit of the gout, and could not come. After the jury had viewed the

body, Mr. Twitterly was examined; and by this time he had so muddled himself that all he could testify was that he understood the landlord of the Three Choughs, at Claydip, had said it was Herr Reichberg; but, when the letter was read, he admitted that "He thought, perhaps, the foreigner gave himself out as the German named. Certainly, now that he reflected, he was sure he did; and that was how he, Mr. Twitterly, came to take an interest in him. The man deceived him. He didn't want to speak against the dead—far from it. His being a foreigner might have caused the misunderstanding; but deceived he was, that he'd stand to." This last suggestion Mr. Twitterly had been helped to in the course of the morning by Twirk; though he used it as unconscious that he was speaking according to the waiter's prompting as that he was telling from beginning to end a tissue of lies. Nothing is so hard to tell as the truth, says one of the most competent authorities of the present day.* Only the clear-sighted see the truth. Only the clear-headed and honest know it, and can speak it. Without any intention to deceive, and therefore, let us hope, without the essence of a lie polluting the conscience or staining the eternal record, people do the work of the father of lies. They tell their fancies, they catch up stray items of talk, and weave up a tangled skein which they call—testimony. The skilful lawyer's business is to unravel this; though, for the most part, when lawyers do not twist and tangle it more, they cut through it, and make the best of the broken threads.

Then came the evidence of Captain Flammerton, who, having talked with Dr. Strong, gave an elaborate description of the symptoms observable over night, such as the benumbed arm and occasional hiccup. He added that the stranger was perfectly sober; which, as it was a lie direct, of

* Miss Nightingale's *Notes on Nursing*.

the conscious kind, he gave in a very distinct tone. Though, let us do him justice, his definition of drunkenness might be, that as long as a man could walk he was sober; and the stranger certainly walked up stairs to bed.

Mr. Vellum, the bookseller, was called on to state the purport of the conversation the deceased had with him. Poor Vellum was a nervous man at all times; and on this day he had a terrific headache, and was smarting under the well-merited but not exactly well-administered—reproaches of his wife, his conscience giving pungency to every caustic word. He was so afraid of not being back in time to sort the letters for an afternoon mail, that he took refuge in forgetfulness. All that he remembered was that the "foreigner" asked many questions about gentry that lived near the town, and the distance to their houses, but he couldn't recollect any names.

"P'r'aps he spoke 'em bad, being a foreigner," said a juror.

Vellum seized hold of that, and said, "Yes;" glad to escape.

The finding of the body and the testimony of Dr. Strong came next. Dr. Franks was there; and a juror, who knew that he had seen the corpse, asked that he should confirm Dr. Strong.

"Heart disease certainly. But I do not think the man was either habitually a sober man, or sober the night before he died."

"Oh!" whispered two of the jury, "Dr. Franks thinks no one sober;" so there was a suppressed titter when his evidence was given.

"I wished for a *post mortem*," added Dr. Franks.

"Why, there is no suspicion; not a shadow of suspicion of any foul play. No sign whatever of violence—all clear—clear as day, gentlemen," said the coroner.

"Hear, hear"—"certainly," said many voices—Captain Flammerton's and Dr. Strong's being loudest; and thereupon a summing up that amounted to naught. The jury brought in their verdict—"Found dead from natural causes, a foreigner, name unknown." Commending the police and the beadle to make diligent inquiries, and thanking the jury for their attention to the case, the coroner departed. The expense of the inquest was paid, and all adjourned to a nice little collation that they had ordered to be ready for them. Feeling particularly comfortable in the consciousness of their intelligent inquiry, and the compliments of the coroner, they drank with peculiar zest the toast, "Trial by jury;" and wound up the proceedings of the day by making "a night of it."

Berry, working her calculations in her desk, grimly reckoned up that, supposing the stranger's effects would not pay the hotel charges incurred by his corpse, and his niece, and the funeral expenses, yet the death had not been unprofitable to the Raven. An inquest was a very good thing for the house; for there was not only the expenditure of a convivial jury —but the hangers-on, the droppers-in, to say nothing of the poor revellers who were drinking at the tap, gloriously careless of expense as long as copper or credit lasted, and who had a better relish for their drink when a flavour of the mysterious or the dreadful was imparted to it, by any incident in the town they lived in, or the house they patronized.

The down evening mail arrived very full of passengers going on to the coast. No one alighted. The roads were heavy, the mail late, and the business of many both sad and pressing; for there had been several casualties, and great loss of life, among the shipping—one wreck in particular at Cape Cornwall was reported as very disastrous.

This intelligence varied the conversation in the parlour and

throughout the household, so that, when the inquest was over, and the jurors were taking their ease, no one missed little Birdie. Miss Grig and Twirk were too busy to think of "the little plague," as they both voted her. Mrs. Stillwell, glad that there was no adjournment, and that the "foreigner would be buried to-morrow," was comfortably asleep in her easy chair. The evening was deepening into night when the inquiry came from Annice—"Where's that 'ere little 'un?" and the answer was, after looking in the bar-parlour and kitchen—"Drat the child, her's always out o' the way."

Miss Berry, struck with a sudden thought, went up to the room where the body lay. The door had been left unlocked after the jury had been in, and there on the bed, fast asleep beside the corpse, was the child. She had been wearied by the day; and between the lights, guided by some instinct of memory, had found her way to the room, climbed once more upon the bed, and feeling for the long tresses of raven hair which she evidently knew, however incomprehensible to her the change in their possessor, and clinging to them as if they yet were a something for her to cling to, she had cried herself to sleep.

Berry lifted the child in her long lean arms, panting with the unwonted exertion, and gasping out—"Ah! it's a pity they cannot lie together in the same deep, dark bed, out of the way—a great pity,"—she managed, by slow degrees and frequent resting, to take the little creature up to her cot, and undressed her without breaking the deep sleep of health, fatigue, and childhood.

"Lor, here's the child and Miss Berry!" was the exclamation of the cook, who had now joined Annice in the search. "Who'd ha' thought, Miss, o' you a troubling yourself," added cook, evidently surprised at any manifestation of kindliness in the cripple.

"You are all of you neglectful—all of you," said Berry, in a severe tone, as she shrunk away into her own room; and soon after opened her old piano, and drew from its feeble, but not jarring notes, some strange combinations of weird tones, as of an unearthly dirge. To a fine ear, the ripple of a child's wail might be heard mingling with the deep tolling, at intervals, of a heavy funeral knell. Was Berry's dirge for the living or the dead? If any one had ventured to ask her, most likely her answer would have been—"For both."

CHAPTER VI.

BIRDIE MAKES AN ENEMY IN THE RAVEN'S NEST, AND IS WARNED TO GO.

"Many a spirit, through all life's track,
Has trials with patience borne;
Yet, like the sensitive plant, shrinks back
At the slightest touch of scorn."—F. M. Scott.

It is likely that the wonder and talk about the recent events at the Raven, which we have recorded, would have lasted the usual nine days; but another, and, to the residents of Boveycum, quite as interesting a circumstance had happened at Boveycum-bury. Miss Keziah Pendrainly's favourite lap-dog—a very beautiful Blenheim spaniel—had gone mad, and was obliged to be shot the very day of the funeral of "the foreigner." Miss Kizzy, as she was generally called, was unfortunate in her dogs: two in succession had died suddenly; and now this was a dreadful case, for he might have bitten his mistress. Indeed, the very thought of what he might have done had made Miss Kizzy so ill that she had taken to her bed with fright and vexation. Mrs. Gribber, who per-

formed the duties of lady's maid, housekeeper, and genera *factotum*, at "Cumb'ry," as the house was called for shortness, assured Mrs. Stillwell that "the way in which her lady grieved and went on about that dog was a sight to see."

Mrs. Gribber was a middle-aged woman, who piqued herself on being "a manager," whatever that might imply. She had a very erect figure, a strong, hard face, a Roman nose that she considered very handsome, and made the standard by which she measured the attractions of others; keen black eyes of a long, narrow shape, that had a way of looking out of their corners; and a lipless mouth, that shut up close and hard like a snap.

This personage frequently called upon Mrs. Stillwell, who was the tenant of Squire Pendrainly. The Pendrainlys of the last two generations had been declining in wealth; but this present squire had quietly—"Under the rose"—as Captain Flammerton said with a wink, purchased shares in a great brewery, and he was now understood to be rich. The Raven Inn had belonged for generations to the Pendrainly family. It was, in reality, the property of Miss Keziah, who took a very lady-like interest in Mrs. Stillwell, patronized the widow, and whenever anything happened at the hotel to vary the monotony of country life, it was always duly reported at the squire's seat, Cumb'ry.

The nephew, we have seen, was at the cricketer's dinner; and the report he took home to his aunt, and the statement in the county paper, both caused Miss Kizzy to send her maid, after a few days had elapsed, to make inquiries on the spot: a visit none the less agreeable to Mrs. Gribber that she believed her Roman nose, or her talents as a manager, had made an impression on Twirk, who was always most obsequious whenever she came.

He took care to let it be known that he thought the ladv's

maid at Cumb'ry "a very clever woman—a wonderful clever woman—such a manager; ah! with a look that kept people in their places, and made them know theirselves."

And Mrs. Gribber had also contrived that Twirk should know that she had said—"The head waiter at the Raven, for respectability, and a way of putting things on a table, and waiting, was far before any landlord in the county; and he was worth his weight in gold to the Raven."

By some strange mental process these two natures had recognized each other as having, if not similar talents, yet qualities that, combined, would lead on to fortune. Long before there was any actual explanation there was a secret understanding between them.

So the bar-parlour was the scene of a little quiet gossip between Mrs. Stillwell and the confidential manager of Miss Keziah, in which the affairs of "Cumb'ry" and of "The Raven" were interchanged.

Of course the child was produced as the living memorial of recent events. And as ten days had now gone by, and not a single inquiry had been made, nor a single tittle of information as to the little creature's name or friends had been obtained, there was an uneasy feeling in the mind of Mrs. Stillwell about what was to be done with her.

"If I was not a widow," she said, looking down at her rich black gown of heavy mourning silk, and playing with the long white crape strings of her cap, "why, I might take her."

Now, Mrs. Stillwell knew that she was far better off as a widow than she had ever been as a wife; but she liked to demand sympathy with her condition, and she was perfectly aware that it afforded her a plausible excuse for not giving shelter to the child. She was not by any means an ill-natured woman. Indeed, she was as kind as an indolent being,

accustomed to live by people's luxuries, if not vices, and whose every particle of interest was centred in one object, could be. It often happens that mothers who spoil their own darlings are not indulgent to the failings or weaknesses of other spoiled children. Either to justify their own folly, or to contrast, and so diminish or modify it, they invariably notice, with lynx-eyed vigilance, all the faults produced by over-indulgence in the pets of other people; and the words, "Talk of our Tom or our Polly after their Willie or Bessy," has become a sort of stock phrase. But besides the opportunity which Birdie's waywardness afforded Mrs. Stillwell for implied praises of her own boy, she had taken a dislike to the friendless child. The commendations of the little girl's beauty were annoying to her; and, as far as Mrs. Stillwell was concerned, the child had no arts of conciliation. Every servant who wanted to stand well with the mistress praised her son; but, somehow, her ear was acute to distinguish between the obsequious and the spontaneous praise; and as, even when the little creature was most wilful, something was sure to be said about Birdie's pretty hair, or fine complexion, or sweet voice, these praises seemed to the mother, insatiate for commendations on her own child, as disparagements of that idol; and, what was even more irritating, Birdie herself would neither be coaxed, commanded, nor scolded into any friendliness for young Jasper Stillwell. She shrunk from him at first with open dislike, afterwards with something of fear.

It was not to be tolerated that this little vagrant, whom nobody seemed to come forward to claim—this sort of impostor, with her airs and graces, her fancies and frets—should be getting commendations for her beauty, and giving in return, not only the trouble that a child of her age must naturally cause, but absolutely making herself disagreeable

to the "young master," as the servants called him. "An ill-tempered, cross-grained, little vixen," Mrs. Stillwell had one day called her with unwonted energy, and seemed disposed, only that it would have involved crossing the room, and perhaps pulling off her gloves, and displacing her cap, to accompany the words with some whipping that she deemed as salutary for Birdie as it would have been cruel if inflicted on her own boy. The difference in their ages, some four years—very great at that period of their lives, since it made the one nearly twice as old, and certainly twice as strong as the other—was never taken into account. "They were both children; only she was thankful that Jasper had none of those artful, cunning ways that the girl had. To be sure, Jasper was a lawful child, come of honest folks, in a proper manner, while nobody knew but what this bit of a singing thing, with her curls, was a base-born creature, squeezed out of wickedness, as one might say." On such occasions of disgrace, by Berry's command—always harshly given—the child was put into the desk,—a darksome place, as she grovelled crying at the foot of Berry's high stool; but generally, as a condition of leaving off crying, she was soon mounted up and made happy with a few beans or ends of paper to play with, and thus kept prisoner for hours in what was considered punishment.

She was in this retreat, to which she had somehow become reconciled, when Mrs. Gribber was listening to the story of Mrs. Stillwell's perplexities; and as Birdie formed a part of the theme, she was called for, and emerged into the bar-parlour just as Master Jasper was seated under the round table, stuffing himself with sweeties, a whole box being clutched in his arms, all the closer that he feared having to share any of them with Birdie.

The child was subjected to the usual cross-examination

about her name, which had become now so completely a catechism, that her answers had lost the charm of spontaneity, and evidently wearied the poor little thing. Her songs, too, were no longer trilled out with the gaiety and freshness of her first efforts. They had a touch of petulance, sorrow, and constraint, that entirely destroyed their charm. Yet so much remained of beauty, innocence, and friendlessness, that no woman could see and hear her at first without interest. Mrs. Gribber, not unwilling in her secret heart to annoy her dear friend, Mrs. Stillwell, and remembering that Master Jasper had once spoiled an embossed silk gown of hers, by deliberately sitting at her side, and with a pair of scissors cutting the flowers out of two breadths of it; recollecting this, she praised Birdie's "pretty behaviour—quite a little lady." Then becoming critical, she said, "Not that I call her pretty—that is, she won't be pretty when she's grown up. Look what a little bit of a nose she'll have—no profile; and what's a face without a profile?—and then she's fat. The squire and Miss Kizzy both say sich-like people are never 'distangay.'"

Now this was an offensive speech to our fat, fair landlady; and, clinched with the unanswerable French word, was as vexatious as anything could be.

"Well, fair or dark, pretty or ugly, she must go. The parish must take her, and find out who she belongs to. I can't keep her any longer," said the landlady.

"Indeed, mem," said Miss Grig, bringing a tray with decanters and glasses to the table, "there's not another lady at the head of a public establishment in this town as 'ud a behaved so generous as you hev done—noo, that there isn't."

While the elders talked, Jasper Stillwell amused himself under the table in showing Birdie his sweeties, holding them out to her, as if inviting her to take one, and then

opening wide his mouth and swallowing his sugary treasures with gestures of the most excessive relish, garnishing this pantomime with not a few scornful grimaces. The child having gone through the usual scrutiny, sat down, at Mrs. Gribber's request, on a stool at her feet, near enough for her not only to see the manœuvres of Master Jasper, but for her frock, and even a few of her long curls, to be twitched by that delectable boy at intervals. She had learned in the last few days that it was useless to complain of him, or to obtain compassion or justice by crying at his persecutions; but she had not yet learned to subdue the risings of a very hasty temper: that lesson it would require years to learn, if, indeed, she ever learned it. So, as the two ladies drank their wine, and became more cordial over it, Birdie's little chest was swelling, and the flush was rising, not only in her cheeks, but to her temples. At one more vigorous tug of her hair than usual, she rushed on her young tormentor, striking him on the face, and screaming, "Ugly boy, bad, ugly boy!" at the top of her voice. Jasper had hold of a corner of the table-cover, which he pulled with all his might, shouting, "Ma, she's a-fighting me again." With the tugging of the cover it slipped off. The decanters and glasses were all pulled to the floor with a great crash, the heavy stopper of one falling direct on little Stillwell's mouth, and knocking out a loose tooth that for days he had refused to allow to be drawn, and of course covering his lips with blood, which, when he saw, his shrieks were dismal.

"Oh! that child, that horrid child, she'll be the death of me," said Mrs. Stillwell, making due arrangements for fainting away; while Miss Grig, catching up Birdie and shaking her, screamed for help. Twirk came in and extricated the yelling Jasper from the folds of the table-cover, and held

him up such a dabbled spectacle of port wine and blood, that his mother, catching sight of him, was restored by extreme panic to consciousness, and did not complete her faint. Mrs. Gribber, proud of her talent for management, said very coolly, "There, screaming wont mend the broken glasses, nor gather up the wine that's spilled; but except that, there's no great harm done. Miss Grig, I'm surprised at you: for goodness' sake keep your senses about you—look at Mr. Twirk." The attention to the widow, her son, the broken glasses, and the table-cover, prevented any one noticing that when Grig, after shaking Birdie, had flung her towards the desk, whose door opening, two arms had clutched the little offender, and dragged her into what was fast becoming far more a refuge than a prison.

"Wretched little imp!" said Berry, seating the child in her lap, and stifling her cries on her misshapen bosom.

Mrs. Stillwell never for a moment doubted that Birdie had not only knocked out Jasper's tooth—its having been loose she conveniently forgot—but that she wilfully dragged off the table-cover; and Miss Grig was of course equally certain of those facts. The rest of the domestics, as in duty bound, believed it; and though Mrs. Gribber suggested that it was partly accident, the suggestion only inflamed the anger, not to say hatred, that the child had caused. Twirk, like a skilful general, when appealed to was able to keep on good terms with both his patronesses by saying that as he was "out of the room he couldn't speak exactly as to how the accident 'appened; but, sure enough, dear little master had lost a tooth, and the little girl was the biggest limb as ever was."

As soon as tranquillity was restored, Mrs. Gribber took leave of her dear friend, pausing awhile in the yard to say to Twirk, "Now that beast of a dog's gone I shall have a little peace. I'm determined there sha'n't be no more pets,

giving no end of trouble. Miss Kizzy's properly frightened this time; but her po'try and her nerves 'll keep her employed."

"Ah! Mrs. Gribber, you're the woman; you *are* a first-rater. Ha!" he added, dropping his voice into a whisper, "Ah! if such a manager as you was only at the 'ead of such a concern as this, there'd be a business! a fortin for the picking on it up!"

Mrs. Gribber elevated her nose with a dignified complacency at this compliment, gave a leer out of the corner of her eyes, and shutting up the clasp of her mouth with a rigid determination, as much as to say, "Fortune should not wait long for her," she nodded a gracious adieu, and walked with her most erect mien across the Bull-ring; nor was it until she reached an open common on the outskirts of the town, called the Lammas, that she unclosed her tightly-clenched mouth, and said, "If Miss Kizzy gets crusty, Twirk 'ud be the man."

While she was uttering these reflections, Captain Flammerton—by Mrs. Stillwell's urgent request, which she made with her boy's tooth in her hand and tears in her eyes—was to send to the guardians forthwith for an order for the admission of Birdie into the union. All that could be conceded was that, as night was now coming on, and ill-natured people might talk, and say it was hard to send the child away at a moment, she should remain until the next day. "But keep her out of my sight—a tiresome brat," said Mrs. Stillwell, looking up to the desk, "or I wont answer for myself."

CHAPTER VII.

A GRAVE INCIDENT.

"There affectation, with a sickly mien,
Shows in her cheek the roses of eighteen;
Practised to lisp and hang the head aside,
Faints into airs and languishes with pride;
On the rich quilt sinks with becoming woe,
Wrapt in a gown for sickness and for show."—POPE.

THOUGH Mrs. Gribber had made herself comfortably certain that no one would be calling on her mistress during her absence, it so happened that Dr. Strong dropped in, rather to have a word, as he said, with Squire Pendrainly, than to see Miss Keziah. The doctor wanted to inform his old friend and patron, that, from observation he had made of the affairs of the widow of Vosper, there would soon be utter destitution there—that the illness in the family was assuming a malignant type, and unless the house now occupied by them, and which belonged to the squire, were soon vacated, it might get a bad name, and remain a long time empty. So, though Dr. Strong was by no means, as the world goes, a stern man—nay, he was considered rather benevolent—yet, where a duty presented itself in two aspects, he would always take that which was most likely to assist him in keeping on what he called "the winning side," or "the safe side." Familiarity with sickness and sorrow had, to some extent, made the doctor callous to both. A man of great vigour and energy, living by rule, adopting in his own case an entirely different system to that he employed with his patients, he was proud of his health and industry, and the position of independence and influence that he had attained. He looked upon the majority of the world as fools sent for the

especial benefit of those who had the shrewdness to profit by their whims, if they were wealthy—by their services, if they were poor. He had the tact to make everybody of use to him in some way. In his youth he had married a lady, much his senior, whose money enabled him to buy the best practice in Boveycum. This lady, in ten years, left him a widower, with one son and two daughters in the nursery. Dr. Strong managed, as his children grew old enough to leave home, to place them at schools where his services as medical man were fully equivalent to the expenses of their education. Owen, the son, he placed with a clergyman who had two maiden sisters, neither of whom would have objected to console Dr. Strong for the loss of his wife; and he managed so exquisitely, that without at all committing himself, he was the chosen friend of each sister, neither of them believing it possible that they could have lived through some ailments they had had but for his skill; and they were proportionably grateful. While the widow lady and her daughter at whose school Jessie and Mabel Strong were placed, though less personally interested in him, were convinced that they had in him a powerful friend, able to promote the interests of their establishment, and therefore all attention was bestowed on his children, and all anxiety and expense spared him.

Dr. Strong was popular, not only with ladies, but with men. "There was no nonsense, no new-fangled whims about him," was the general testimony. Indeed, while in his secret heart the doctor had as much reverence for mother nature as a man of education and scientific attainments must have—and he did try, by very simple medicines, to give the said venerable mother a sort of chance in nursing her wailing wayward children—he never presumed to thwart those wilful nurslings in their appetites and pleasures. He knew that to stop the luxury, would be to stop most of the diseases

of the human race; and though in that bald way the subject never presented itself to him, and he would have resented even the whisper of his own soul that told him he fostered habits in his patients that promoted disease, yet the fact was certain.

He justified himself with the thought that it was no part of his business to regulate the morals of the community,—that department belonged to the clergymen. He knew people liked luxuries of eating and drinking, the latter especially, and he yielded to that liking. He was a perfect student of gastronomical science. Dr. Kitchener himself was not more so; and the delightful little dishes he proposed to his convalescents, and the appetizing dainties to his invalids, duly aided by the choicest wines and liqueurs, made him a great favourite, particularly with the more wealthy class, whether among the gentry or the trades-people; and as to the poor, knowing that the meanest insect may have power to hurt or annoy, Dr. Strong took care that the dietary of the union should be all that even topers would approve. He was firm in his assertion that strong drinks were good. From heavy porter and heady ale, from burning spirits to sparkling wine, he had a word of commendation for all, and even some old-fashioned cordials, as Peppermint, Lovage, and Noyeau—poisonous messes, made up of damaged spirits, syrup, and essential, medicated oils—wherever the doctor found a disposition in the patient to favour these, he prescribed them, and was popular accordingly. The only class with whom he did not so well succeed were struggling professionals, the humble, industrious traders and mechanics, and the decent, self-reliant, poor people, who could neither afford luxuries, sickness, nor Dr. Strong's remedies. With a sneer curving his well-cut, determined-looking mouth, and a twinkle in his quick, hazel eye, Dr. Strong would leave these classes to his rival, Dr. Franks.

There was a well-to-do, confidence-inspiring manner in Dr. Strong, arising to some extent from his temperament and his success. No one ever saw a shade of sorrow on his florid countenance. He would whistle, as he rode his fast-trotting mare along the country lanes, like a light-hearted boy; and his good humour rarely failed him, unless it was when he heard of any plan for altering or improving anything. "The world's a very good world," he said; "don't go against it; run with the wind, and you'll get along bravely; but leave all tinkering at it, and bettering it alone. It'll last our time, never fear."

Dr. Strong was not sorry to see, through the library windows, that the squire was sitting over his wine alone, and yawning as he languidly conned the newspaper in his hand. He felt sure he should be welcome; for, at a glance, he perceived the squire was tired of his own company, so that it was in his loudest tone that the unctuous voice of the master of Cumb'ry hailed the arrival of his visitor.

Mr. Pendrainly was a gentleman of great importance in his own estimation. He had been the only son in a family of daughters, and his parents and sisters had fostered his sense of his own greatness from the first dawn of consciousness. The early death of his father had added to this failing: by it the son became master, not only of his estate, but of his obsequious mother and sisters. For some time after Mrs. Pendrainly shared the tomb of her husband in the chancel of Boveycum church, her son kept his sisters round him; and they contrived, through pride in their brother and their family, and a touch of self-interest, to keep out any youthful bride. They strove to imbue their brother with the idea that there was no lady in the district exactly worthy of the honour he would confer in bestowing the ancient Pendrainly name upon her. In course of time, as one married

and went to India, and another sister died, each as they departed advised the squire to marry; and he, casting his eyes round on the daughter-full houses, went in due state, and with more than due confidence, to offer himself to a lovely girl of good family, and rather small fortune. As he could not obtain an heiress, he thought he would like to become a benefactor; but, to his amazement—an amazement so great he had never been able to comprehend, to forget, or to forgive it—the lady refused all the Pendrainly honours; gave a quiet, firm "No," that really meant "*No*," and not, as the negative sometimes does, "Ask again;" and to add to the mysterious insult, actually the next year married a poor clergyman at Screwtor, and persevered in her rudeness by becoming the blooming, smiling mother of the rosiest, happiest family that ever gladdened a home, bright with all sorts of good except wealth, and very well content with the exception.

The squire never condescended to make the same offer to any lady again. He was so mortified—wounded pride with him being far more than wounded affections—that he deliberately resolved on being a bachelor; gave his sister Keziah a wing of his house as her own territory; took his two nephews, Frederick and Vesey, as they were sent home in their childhood from India for education; and, when their parents died, adopted them and gave them his name.

It was whispered that the squire did not lead a very regular life; but in the elastic moral code of Boveycum a rich sinner was not too hardly dealt with. "Gentlemen will be gentlemen," said demure-looking matrons and spinsters, with a mild simper on their lips. Certain it was, Squire Pendrainly was the most active magistrate of the district—had a scent for poachers or tramps as keen as a ferret's for a rat. He was, moreover, a *bon vivant*. No better dinners in

the old English abundant style; no cellar in the county boasted a stock of older wine; and as to beer, the Pendrainly ale was noted, rather curiously, as genuine "knock-me-down stingo." By the time the squire reached his fifty-fifth year—which was his age at the time our narrative begins—he was one of the largest men in the county. The purple glow of many vintages had given their colour to his blood, so that his originally fine features wore a crimson mask that covered all the surface pretty equally, except that the tip, or rather the knob, of the nose, and the rise of the cheekbones had a rich arabesque of beet-root coloured veins to diversify the crimson. His head was bald and shining, and his thin fringe of hair was a sort of silvered-fawn colour. Whatever might have been the original colour of his eyes, they had paled before the splendours of his nose and cheeks, and twinkled rather weakly under shaggy brows. Indeed, so conscious was the squire that his eyes had a boiled look, that he wore glasses constantly, more to conceal, than to aid any weakness in those organs.

He flung down his newspaper, wheeled round his easy chair, and actually rose with great cordiality as Dr. Strong came in, standing a minute on his hearth until his guest was seated. Seldom was there a more vast expanse, both in height and breadth, than was flanked by the two outstretched arms that greeted the Boveycum Esculapius. Thick, as if they had slowly to ooze up through the pressure of a great load of the most full-bodied and rough-flavoured port wine, came the words of the squire.

"Haw, now, that's right; some sense in coming now. No confounded women likely to send after you, doctor? Here, you, Sims! bring more glasses, hot water, lemons—haw! Zounds, we'll have a bowl of punch."

Dr. Strong winced a little, knowing the result of the pre-

parations that were being made. The great seasoned wine-skin before him—a sort of animated amphora—made it his boast that he could carry comfortably more wine than any other man in the county; and he liked to lay traps for his guests, for which practice he had all his earlier life the highest example. Carlton House and the Pavilion had set the fashion, and in his West-country way he followed it, fining low fellows, nevertheless, for getting drunk—poor roistering wretches! they would have died outright of one such drinking bout as the squire often made,—and, of course, duly licensing houses that could not be kept open unless there was drunkenness. Whatever may be the true definition of moderation, nothing called by that name could keep open the houses in the district of which Boveycum was the centre. But as to any anomaly, who was he that he should be thinking of that? The law-makers, apparently, did not think about it.

However, despite his secret dread, Dr. Strong drew to the table, fortified by a long day's ride, plenty of plain food and wholesome water, which latter he drank on the sly, as much as some of his patients did their extra doses of wine. The case of the widow Vosper was disposed of. It was agreed by the squire to forgive her the rent on condition that she went away at once; and Dr. Strong would by this make not only a merit with the squire, that he got rid of a troublesome tenant for him, but poor Mrs. Vosper would believe the doctor had interceded that her rent should be forgiven. Then, in the course of conversation, Dr. Strong described the child at the inn. He praised her beauty; and, pointing to a picture on the wall—a dishevelled-looking, handsome woman, with just the resemblance that colouring gives, said—"She is like that."

There was the smallest perceptible start as the squire

turned his head and looked at the picture. "Like a confounded shrew, then," he said; adding after a moment, and with something as like a sigh as could heave up his chest—"If Kizzy would have taken a child, now, instead of her yelping curs of lap-dogs."

"Ah! it would be safer," said Dr. Strong.

Just at this moment Mrs. Gribber, who had not long returned home, came into the room, looking, for her, very much discomposed, and asked Dr. Strong to come and see Miss Keziah, who was fainting.

"Why, bless me, Gribber," said Dr. Strong, not sorry, now his business with the squire was over, to escape his dangerous hospitality; "how's this? you told me when I met you this evening, a short time ago, that Miss Keziah was recovered."

"And so she was, sir; but the housemaid must take upon herself to carry Miss Keziah something that she found wrote on a piece of paper, and stuck with an iron skewer—no lady nor gentleman can have sent it; howsever, stuck with a skewer it was upon Fido's grave—verses, sir; and Miss Keziah have been crying as bad as ever, and when she heerd you were in the house, sir, she fainted right off."

This explanation was given as the doctor and Gribber hurried across the hall, down a corridor to the staircase that led to Miss Keziah's apartment. Though both the medical man and the waiting-woman walked as if they were concerned, if not alarmed, yet there might be seen in the faces of each a little lurking smile, that indicated either that there was nothing to fear, or that they perfectly understood Miss Keziah. Each entered her room with an altered manner; Gribber in particular called up a most dolorous look into her long eyes, drew down the corners of her mouth, and in a half-whimper, said, panting for breath, "Oh, my dare mis-

tress, hear is the doctor; oh, how my heart do beat, my pore, dare lady." And Dr. Strong, advancing to the side of the sofa, which was drawn up before a most comfortable fire, dropped his eyelids, and taking Miss Keziah's hand, said—"Come, come, my dear friend, this will not do—it really will not—I cannot, indeed I will not permit it. I must scold you—you force me to scold you." As he spoke these sentences, with little pauses between, he was applying some pungent scents that Gribber, elaborately panting and sighing, handed to him. Miss Keziah, wrapped in a rich pink Cashmere dressing-gown, her little feet in the most sparkling gold embroidered velvet slippers, lay on the sofa; her cap of blonde and pink ribbons was very little tumbled, and her attitude altogether was so artificial—picturesque, we perhaps ought to say—that it seemed studied. She slowly opened her eyes as Dr. Strong spoke to her, and was beginning with, "O doctor! I've had such a shock; my poor shattered nerves are ——"

"There, there," said he, interrupting her, and speaking in a coaxing tone; "there, there, now, say not a word more—not a word; you'll be better presently; there, let us raise you a little. Suppose you stand up."

Thus adjured and assisted, Miss Keziah rose and walked, between Gribber and the doctor, up and down the room, heaving little panting sighs at intervals. Her form, as she walked, though small, looked wiry; and her face had a rigidity of feature that did not indicate weakness, at least physical weakness.

"O doctor!" she at length gasped; "I'm such a fragile creature, a breath destroys me; my feelings are too much for me; never was such a miserably susceptible nature. That dear, attached, faithful Fido, I think I see his gleaming eyes, rich as an opal in their glow; I think I see them now."

"Come, come, this will not do; I must scold again. You are made to inspire affection, you know that. Surely you are not going to make me scold; I'm always plain with you."

"Oh! you are always Strong," said Miss Keziah, suddenly rallying with a laugh at her pun—a well-worn one. "A strong, hard, cruel man, sneering at a woman's tender heart. Ah! you, Dr. Strong, you, if you would only once feel what I have felt for my beloved Fido, you'd be a ——"

"A what? I'm not likely, I think, to have my tenderness aroused by a dog while there's metal more attractive."

"Only a dog! Ah, there's your cruel qualification; so faithful as my sweet Fido was. I had been reading Lord Byron's lines; and I'm sure, when the word friend arises, I too can say,

"'I never knew but one, and here he lies.'"

"Pooh, pooh! mere wilfulness."

"But," she continued, not noticing the interruption, "the incident that has unnerved me, that has come like a message from my Fido's spirit—ah! I'm sure that dog had a soul—is that some lines—oh! such tender lines, soft as down—have been actually found, and brought to me from the grassy knoll that covers all that was mortal of my sweetest Fido. Sarah, one of the maids, found it. Some one, it seems, finds time to visit my Fido's last resting-place." This remark was accompanied with an angry glance towards Mrs. Gribber.

"I'm sure, Miss Keziah, I stood over the gardener as he planted that precious animal's grave; and a sweeter little garden than he made never was, no, never, not in that grand Paris simintry which we visited: but in your weak state, if I'd found them lines of verses (and them as finds often knows where to look), though that's neither here nor there; but if I'd found 'em, I don't think I should a-dared to give

'em to you—a-flurrying and a-agitating your nerves so dreadful. That's a liberty, I think, that nobody should a-put themselves for'ard to take."

"Oh! don't, Gribber, don't; your voice grates shockingly. These lines have indeed perturbed me—opened the fount of feeling; but some griefs are delicious. There, I'm better now; let me sit down—put the Turkish cushion just behind my head—yes, a little lower—ah! that will do; and now sit down, dear doctor, and I'll read these mysterious lines to you."

Dr. Strong and Gribber had duly arranged Miss Keziah's sofa pillows while she was speaking, and, with a puzzled air, Dr. Strong took the seat she indicated. Miss Keziah, adjusting her eye-glass, and holding a rather dilapidated paper in her hand, cleared her voice, and, screwing up her mouth, read slowly, in a half-whisper, the following lines:—

"Weep no more, fair Zia! weep no more;
Though all your care has failed to save
Your Fido from an early grave,
The pang is o'er, so weep no more—
No more.

"Evermore, sweet Zia! evermore
May gentle Fido's memory prove
A solace pure as faithful love,
To change no more, to die no more—
No more.

"Never more, dear Zia! never more
Let any of poor Fido's race
Fill in your heart his vacant place:
That time is o'er, to come no more—
No more.

"One word more, my Zia! one word more;
Pluck from the Raven's cruel nest
A child, to slumber on your breast,
And love restore, to fly no more—
No more."

"Raven! child!" said Dr. Strong, interested in spite of himself; "why, that refers to the little thing, Birdie, as she calls herself, at the Raven; of course it does."

"Of course it does, my dear doctor. Isn't it sweet? the refrain so long and lulling. I shall certainly go to the Raven. Yes, I'll go—for Fido's sake I will—and see this child to-morrow morning."

"She's going to the workhouse, Miss Keziah, to-morrow morning. I heard Mrs. Stillwell say so with my own ears this very blessed day."

"The workhouse! horrible; is it a common—a workhouse kind of child, doctor?" said Miss Keziah, her romantic interest apparently subsiding very quickly.

"By no means; a superior, refined little thing; some such child as you must have been yourself."

"And they talk of the workhouse for such a creature? Ah! well may my Fido call it 'The Raven's cruel nest.' I'm amazed at Mrs. Stillwell; but there, doctor, I've observed your real fine, tender feeling goes always with blood and breeding."

"Humph!" said Dr. Strong, doubtfully; adding, "there's no question there's a great deal—a very great deal in blood—I'm clear on that. But," he continued, "if you're to be strong enough for a drive into Boveycum to-morrow morning, you must retire at once to rest—at once; no reading and crying over those verses. Very strange; very, certainly. Retire, as I said, at once; and at noon to-morrow I will meet

you at the Raven. Gribber, your lady will retire at once. Give her a little mulled port wine and a poached egg, or any trifle she can fancy."

"Oh! I eat nothing, doctor, nothing; I'll take my wine and a biscuit; but as to anything more, you must excuse me."

"Ah! you're an ethereal creature; but remember what the song says—let's see; I'm not like you, an adept in these things; but I think the stave runs—

"'Lips, though blooming, must be fed;
And not e'en love can live on flowers.'"

"O doctor, what a man you are!" said Miss Keziah most graciously, evidently very much pleased; and the doctor took his leave, making, as he returned to the library, a hasty excuse to the squire, who grumbled out in reply:

"Hang those women! they're a fantastical set, from my sister Kiz to Molly the milk-maid. I wouldn't be you, Strong, to have to do with them and their whims. However, there's one good thing, you doctors help as many of them out of the world as into it. But here, drink another toast—just one."

"Ah! my good friend, if I could toast my toes at your fire, and warm my nose at the punch-bowl until the small hours, I should enjoy it. But as you say—woman—dear, delightful, exacting woman."

"Haw, dear enough! Well, if you wont, or can't, here goes. What does the song say?

"'"Tis not so sweet as woman's lip,
But, ah! 'tis more sincere.'"

"Ha! ha!" laughed the doctor, as he made his adieus,

and left the squire to the delights of that sincere enchantress—wine! who was repaying his devotion by filling his veins with fire, his joints with chalk, his skin with blotches, and his breath with taint; to say nothing of the leprous distilment that was turning brain and heart into a mass of impurity. To look at him now, as he lolled in his easy chair, every sense perverted, and to think that he really had in some corner of his huge frame a breath of divinity, a something immortal, and to consider whither that something was tending! "To heaven!" of course, he would say, if asked. What a heaven it would be if that mercy which some vaguely talk of, and which would be so unmerciful, opened it to the wine-bibber. Poor, pampered wretch! he was sowing to the flesh, and of the flesh reaping corruption.

But thoughts like these did not trouble Dr. Strong as he trotted homeward, glad to feel the night breeze upon his brow. His mind reverted to the scene in Miss Keziah's room, and the question arose, "Who wrote that sentimental stuff?" For a moment, Vesey, her nephew, was thought of, then instantly dismissed. "No; Fred. might have done a bit of foolery like that, knowing what a maw for flattery his aunt has; but Vesey, poor fellow, would bungle over the reading of the verses, to say nothing of writing them. As the doctor mused, a sudden thought flitted through his head; he reined up his horse short, and paused a minute to seize it. The gibbous moon peeping slyly out from under a long curtain of cloud, instead of beholding any of those romantic sights we generally associate with her presence, saw the doctor tightly holding the reins with one hand, and laying the forefinger of the other to the side of his nose, wagging his head with a very confidential and knowing air, as he muttered, "I have it, I have it, as sure as a gun. That termagant, whose picture he keeps, certainly had some hold on the squire. This

child may be hers, and she has planned these verses, knowing Madame Kizzy's ways—yes, yes." The horse snorted approval, and the doctor rode on with the satisfied air of one that had solved a problem. As he passed his neighbour Franks' house a sneer curved his lip; for there at the door was a poor-looking man, with a lantern in his hand, and a rough pony held by the bridle, who had evidently called up the poor doctor from his first nap, and was waiting to see him mount the jaded beast he had brought—for Franks kept no horse.

"Ah!" muttered Strong, "there's Stretch, the glove-cutter, come for Franks. Well, if there's a poor home in England, many mouths to feed, and little to feed them on, it's that Stretch's. I wish Franks joy of his patient in that house, whether it's Stretch's old blind mother, or another arrival. Ha! ha! I wish Franks joy."

And so, in all self-complacency, the prosperous doctor entered his large, airy, quiet house; took a great tumbler of soda water, and a sponge bath, grumbling as he did so at the squire's dangerous hospitality; and laid his head on his pillow very comfortably, while his poorer brother was jogging along on a sorry nag, over miles of wild heath, to the home of poverty and sickness. Yet, strange to say, when Dr. Strong breathed the words, "I wish him joy," Franks was realizing the wish. Something kept him from feeling the stumbling gait of his horse, or the chilling air of the night. What was it? A firm heart, warmed by a ray of heavenly love.

CHAPTER VIII.

A NEW HOME.

"Oh! would the fairest of mortal kind
Aye keep the holy truths in mind,
That kindred spirits their motions see,
Who watch their ways with anxious e'e,
And grieve for the guilt of humanity."—JAMES HOGG.

DR. STRONG was an early riser, and with the first plunge into cold water, he remembered all the incidents of the past night clearly. The decision to which he had jumped on the previous evening as to little Birdie did not seem to him so feasible by morning light. "That virago," he argued, "had been bought off; and what was there either to gain or lose by sending a child in so mysterious a manner?" However, that those who owned the child were watching the progress of events, if not guiding them, he felt certain, and he was amused and interested as he thought it all over. Suddenly he remembered that if Mrs. Stillwell really meant to send the child to the workhouse, she would employ the early morning for the purpose, and therefore, hastening his toilet, Dr. Strong was soon out of his house and on the way to the Raven—not a moment too soon. The beadle was crossing the Bull-ring from the opposite corner, and obsequiously saluted the doctor as they met in the Raven yard. "I think, beadle," said the doctor, "your errand here is over for the present."

"I'm coom for the unclaimed young 'un, sir."

"Yes—yes, I know; I'm going to speak to Mrs. Stillwell."

"Well, there's enough on 'em up yonder; we shall be

terrible full this winter. An' its boord-day to-day, and I onderstands as Dr. Franks is agooin' to complain about the spirits, and the wine, and the beer and sich, as hev been drunked. He's allays a squintin', saving your honor's presence, and I hope no offence, at what's drunked."

"Ay, ay, we'll see to it," said Dr. Strong, wanting to shake him off. "Go now; I venture to say you'll not be wanted here."

"Please, sir, Mrs. Stillwell have sent for the beadle to take away the child as is sich a incumbrance as can't be bore with no longer, noo how," said the chambermaid, coming forward.

"Miss Keziah Pendrainly is coming here this morning to see the child, Annice. Where is your mistress?"

The Pendrainly name worked wonders; Annice gave a supplementary curtsy to that with which she had first greeted the doctor, and without a word, led him into the bar-parlour, where little Birdie was sitting with her pelisse and bonnet on, on the step of the desk door. The landlady had not yet appeared; her breakfast, beautifully laid, with a due supply of ham, chicken, and brawn, and the egg-cup stand waiting to be filled, looked quite inviting. Dr. Strong eyed the preparations, and when, after a few minutes, Mrs. Stillwell appeared, he said, with his most cordial smile, "Ever blooming, ever young, Mrs. Stillwell; now you really must take compassion on a poor lonely fellow, and give me some breakfast."

The landlady dropped a languishing curtsy, and said in her blandest voice, "Certainly, Dr. Strong, if you'll honour me;" and then casting a glance towards Birdie, she added, in a very different tone—"Why, Grig, isn't that child gone?"

"That's what I came about, my dear friend," said the doctor.

"Ah! sir, you don't know what that bit of a creetur, mite as she is, hev made me suffer—she's awful."

"Dear, dear, hum! Well now, but suppose Miss Keziah Pendrainly should wish to take her, and—Are we alone?" he added, looking round, and lowering his voice to a whisper—"If there should be reason to think that—mind it's only a hint—mum's the word—I confide in your discretion—that the Pendrainly family have some interest in the child. Of course, you would not wish Miss Keziah, when she comes this morning—as I know she will—to find the little thing sent off to the workhouse."

There were too many ideas in this speech of the doctor's for Mrs. Stillwell immediately to receive. She merely repeated, in an alarmed voice—"Miss Keziah—family interested in this vag—, this child—law, sir!"

Dr. Strong nodded knowingly.

"Deary me—why, certently, that alters the case very much—very much indeed. Do sit down, sir—law! I'm so flustered—here, Grig, Annice, Berry—Berry, are you up there?—some of you do come."

Dr. Strong looked up and saw the corner of the desk curtain move. "Ah! Miss Raspy," he said, "always hiding. Talk of hermits—I think there's no hermitage so secluded as yours."

"Do come, Berry, and tell them to make the child fit to be seen. Why, how they've put her things on," said Mrs. Stillwell.

"They'll do for the workhouse," said Berry, opening the door and putting the child aside.

"Deary me, she's not going. Didn't you hear, Miss Keziah's coming?" said Mrs. Stillwell, testily.

"Miss Keziah coming for a base-born bit of wickedness like this!" said Berry, creeping along the side of the room, the child clinging to her full gown.

"Law! however can you speak so," whimpered Mrs. Stillwell. "You're always repeating words as was never meant, and remembering everything onpleasant."

"I've a crooked memory, I fear."

"Don't 'oo go away," said the child, in a frightened whisper that spoke volumes.

"Hush, this instant!" said Berry, raising her bony forefinger, and shaking it at Birdie.

"There, you needn't be cross to the child, if she *is* troublesome. She must be made neat, and ready to see Miss Keziah. You keep her in order best, Berry. I s'pose she's afeard of you—that's natural you know, sir," appealing to Dr. Strong. "My dear Jasper always is afeard o' Berry."

At this instant, as the cripple and child left the room, Twirk appeared with the coffee and eggs; and as he bustled about at the breakfast-table in respectful silence, he seemed to be listening, even with his eyes, to the tidings that he soon gathered.

Mrs. Stillwell, as she was pouring out Dr. Strong's coffee, was full of the one thought that had been hinted, and was on the point of alluding to it; but Dr. Strong made a gesture that restrained her while Twirk was in the room. "You needn't wait," said Mrs. Stillwell; and as soon as he was gone she began.

"Well, really, now, I couldn't think who it was as the child was like. I seemed to know the face, and yet not to know it, as the saying is."

"Whist! my dear Mrs. Stillwell, not a word; mind I say nothing. Such things in such quarters are not told to the town-crier. You know Miss Keziah's delicacy."

"Oh! the correctest, strictest lady as is," chimed in Mrs. Stillwell.

"Exactly; then, not a hint, however remote, not for

worlds; but I thought it as well to let you know the fact, the idea that passed. You understand."

"Law! yes; I'll be careful, sir; never fear; dear me, and the mamma now!"

"Hush! wholly unmentionable—mind I know nothing, and I say nothing." If nods could be interpreted, there were several passed across the breakfast-table, and a perfect understanding, that implied much and explained nothing, was established between Dr. Strong and Mrs. Stillwell.

The morning meal over, the doctor consulted his watch, and finding he should have time to see most of his town patients before the hour of Miss Keziah's arrival, he left the widow to her cogitations and arrangements, contriving to infuse a salutary caution, not only against uttering any hint of what he had so skilfully indicated, or of any of Birdie's faults, which the doctor concluded had been provoked by Master Stillwell, and exaggerated by his mamma. "There's no need," he said, "of saying much about the little perverse thing's temper; that's delicate ground, you know; family failings, eh?—you understand, no one likes any mention of such matters."

"Oh! certently; and it's very different a proper spirit a-showing of itself when its come of them as has a right to a spirit, or can afford it, as I says o' my boy. He'll want his spirit, and maybe he'll have what'll keep it up. Though times is bad, yet I'm thankful to say as 'The Raven' gets a share o' what's a-going, and there's nobody but my boy—for as to Berry, she'll never want nothin' but a trifle—a bit and a sup'll do for her—though I pay her for keeping the books, she's so queer and crusty."

"You pay Raspy?" laughed Dr. Strong.

"Yes, I pay her, and she must have a good hoard; she'll save enough most likely for all she'll want; so, as I was

a-saying, there'll be plenty for my boy, and he's a right to show a bit o' spirit."

"Ah! true; you're a mother, a real mother," said the doctor, drawing on his gloves; and with the friendliest nods, that included Miss Grig as she came simpering down the yard, he hastened away.

Meanwhile Annice, under Berry's direction, and up in her chamber, was giving a bath to Birdie. Her curly hair was duly arranged in shining ringlets; her little frock, now much the worse for wear, neatly mended and brushed; and Mrs. Stillwell actually sent for a pair of new shoes to replace those through which Birdie's toes were beginning to make their appearance. It made all the difference in the world, the child's destination. Toes that might soon tread the carpets at "Cumb'ry" must be protected; if they had to stand on the stones at the union, they could have gone naked.

The child, so suddenly again an object of interest, evidently enjoyed the change. Her bloom and her laughter returned with the quick impressibility of childhood, though a little touch of wholesome fear lingered, and subdued her manner into obedience. Berry was strangely stern, even for her. She sat down on the floor by the child, and pulling Birdie down beside her, held up that weird forefinger of hers, and in a deep voice demanded attention. She contrived to make the child understand that "a lady was coming, who would love Birdie if she was good, and if Birdie sang when she was asked, not a nonsense song, but her song about Birdie."

Thus adjured, the child looked very solemn; and when Berry demanded her song as a rehearsal, and rising from the floor, touched a few chords on the piano as a sort of prompting, the child very prettily began the strain, and with very few breaks, though even yet now and then with a pause, as if for another voice, sang it to the end. Thus schooled, down

came Berry and her charge. To prevent any accidents or offences, she took the little thing at once into her desk, and gave her some simple playthings.

The church clock had scarcely finished striking eleven when the Pendrainly carriage drove up to the door of the Raven. Dr. Strong was by the side of Miss Keziah. He had met the carriage outside the town, and accepted the lady's invitation to a seat. She was in tears when he entered, or at least was bathing her eyes with rose-water, her nerves had been so dreadfully discomposed by the carelessness of the servants "actually putting Fido's cushion into the carriage. There it was opposite her." She had not seen it at first, and the effect on her feelings when she noticed it was, she said, "excruciating." Dr. Strong could not discover in the kind of gallimatia that she talked, whether she had any idea of who the writer of the lines might be. She seemed to have adopted the notion of a communication between her dog and herself; and though, of course, if questioned, might have seen the absurdity of the fancy, she did not at present seem to go any farther in her thoughts than the suggestions of the lines of the poem.

Twirk, with his most lowly and elaborate bows, ushered Miss Keziah into what he called the "Hamber drawring-room;" and Mrs. Stillwell, in the most charming steel-grey silk gown, and a cap a little plainer than usual, with faultless black gloves and shoes, and massive jet ornaments, came with her most studied curtsy to wait on Miss Pendrainly.

"Stillwell, you look fit to be a bed-chamber woman to the Queen," said Miss Keziah, as the widow appeared.

Dr. Strong, however, kept his eyes fixed on the fair spinster's face, and seemed to take no notice of the widow.

Miss Keziah sat herself down with her back to the light. She wore a rich dark-blue silk dress, and her slender figure

was wrapped in the folds of a superb amber shawl; a blue velvet bonnet and bird of paradise feather served as a most becoming background to her fair, though rather rigid face; and the profusion of pale golden ringlets that she was indebted for partly to nature and rather more to art, gave a youthful look to her contour. The deepening lines of Miss Keziah's face were carefully smoothed by cosmetics; and it was whispered by malicious people, that she would not be so profuse of her smiles if it were not that she had two rows of as beautiful little pearly teeth to display as ever left the dentist's. Dr. Strong held her scent-bottle and embroidered handkerchief, and looked carefully about the room at the doors and windows to see that there was no draught—not ceasing in his attentions until Miss Keziah begged him to be seated, and declared herself very comfortable.

The actual purpose of the visit was not at first introduced. Miss Keziah commenced a most unromantic theme. "I hope, my good Stillwell, you are doing well—the business, the trade—I hardly know how I should ask—is it flourishing?"

"Yes, Miss, pretty well—pretty well—only, if I might make so bold, I hope the squire wont license no more of them horrid beer-houses; they're a-ruining the respectable part of the trade; they're so immoral, too, Miss."

"Oh! then, pray, Stillwell, don't name them to me. Nothing immoral, I implore. I ask about you because you're a widow, and—and my tenant; and I'm glad you've such a correct sense of morality. But I know nothing—absolutely nothing—of business. Certainly not. And my brother will do what he can, I'm sure, to punish immorality. But the lower orders in these times: O Stillwell, it's a subject I can't pursue!"

Taking her handkerchief fro Dr. Strong, she sprinkled

some scent over it, and holding it to her face, leaned back exhausted.

"I've had a great trouble, Stillwell, since I saw you," she faltered.

"O Miss, don't distress your poor nerves a-alludin' to it. Let me get you a little something that's very delicate and comforting; pray do. In course, Miss, I don't purtend to anything like what you can hev out o' the cellars at Cumb'ry; but, for a mixture, I will say there's nothing comes up to my 'composing drops.'"

"Dear me! ought I, Dr. Strong, ought I?" languidly inquired Miss Keziah.

"By all means—nothing after a drive; and when you're a little over-wrought, nothing like the elegant composition Mrs. Stillwell recommends."

"It's not strong—I hope not. I dare scarcely take anything, I'm such a poor creature. But, Mrs. Stillwell," she resumed, after orders for the drops had been given, "I came to speak about a child that—"

"Certently, Miss; I'll send for her."

Twirk, who had brought the liquor, which Miss Keziah was now sipping with affected repugnance, immediately left the room, and was about to tell Grig to take up Birdie, when, contrary to her usual custom, Berry, waving off Grig, took the child in her hand, and went with her up stairs, no doubt with the intention of exercising her influence, and keeping Birdie good.

"That cripple's as proud as Lucifer," said Grig.

"And as deep," muttered Twirk, making way, however, for her, and following them quickly up stairs, so as to open the door. There was a screen just within the drawing-room, which Dr. Strong, in his anxiety to protect the delicate Miss Keziah from draughts, had drawn across the door. It

was evidently a relief to Berry to find that she could put the child forward, and herself shrink behind the screen. To come into the middle of a room in the broad noon-tide light was more than she could attempt. The child, obedient to Berry's imperative gesture, stepped lightly round the screen, and stood making her little curtsy; and, with an action of the head natural to her, shaking down her abundant curls.

Miss Keziah had elevated her jewelled eye-glass as Dr. Strong said, "Here she is—here's Birdie;" but she dropped it instantly, and exclaimed—"Gracious heaven! what a lovely vision; what a creature of light!"

"Ah! I told you who I thought she was like," whispered Dr. Strong, secretly much amused.

"O you flatterer!" said Miss Keziah, aside; adding in a rapturous tone, "Birdie, come here, you love, you darling."

The child's heart seemed to give a strong bound as she heard the words. She looked up wonderingly—a quick tremor ran along her lips and eyelids—with a joyful cry she rushed forward to Miss Keziah, and flung herself against her knees.

"Don't be so bold, little missy," said Mrs. Stillwell, as much scandalized at the child's familiarity with Miss Keziah's rich silks as with herself; "you'll tumble the lady's dress."

Birdie gave a quick, questioning look into Miss Keziah's face, and then round, as if in a bewildering dream, repressed, with a pretty effort at self-control, a rising sob, and then catching something of Mrs. Stillwell's remark, put her hands admiringly on the dress, and said, "Pretty lady!"

If she had spoken a whole volume, she could not have used words so effectual as those her childish innocence and pleasure at bright colours, and at again hearing well-known pet words, supplied.

"You sweet pet!" replied Miss Keziah, affecting to try to lift her up.

Dr. Strong drew a chair next to Miss Keziah, and placed the child on it. Then began the usual words—"Your name is Birdie—what besides?" and the usual rejoinders, most delightful in her present mood to Miss Keziah; and then the song was asked for. For a minute the child seemed inclined to lay her head caressingly on Miss Keziah's lap and refuse; but looking round, she caught sight of Berry, who held up her finger, and at once Birdie trilled out her wild stanza, to the infinite pleasure of Miss Keziah, who was in raptures.

"This is no common child!"

"Oh! certently not—come, no doubt, of the best of blood, on one side leastways."

Miss Keziah stared at Mrs. Stillwell, and said haughtily, "I thought you knew nothing about her antecedents."

"Oh! dear, no; I don't persume so far," hesitated the landlady, frightened at the knitted brows of Dr. Strong, and a something she fancied odd in the manner of Miss Keziah.

"Mrs. Stillwell merely acquiesced in your remark, Miss Pendrainly," said the doctor. "Any one can see she is a very superior child."

"Yes; that was what I meant."

Miss Keziah opened a bon-bon box and gave the child a sweety, saying, "I have not opened that box since I lost my Fido. Ah! I've found you, my own pet; my dear Fido helped me to a new treasure. What hair—what loves of eyes! Mrs. Stillwell, I shall take this little singing-bird with me."

"I'm sure, Miss, that's kindness as it would be hard to match. Get down, missy, and make your curtsy directly—you're to go with the lady;" but Birdie, in a far more genuine and less orthodox fashion, clapped her little hands,

and burst into wild laughter, crying authoritatively, "My bonnet; me go now—now with pretty lady." Her call was so loud and peremptory, that a warning voice near her said:

"Not so loud; hush, Birdie." The child looked in the direction of Berry, and subduing her voice, still repeated—"Me go now."

Miss Keziah turned her eyes in the direction in which the child was looking, and seeing Berry's elfish face bending forward from the screen, and her lean forefinger raised, shrieked—"Oh horrible! what is that—whatever is that?" The child, alarmed at the lady's cry, nestled to her, and echoed it from sympathy. "Send it away; I shall die of terror," shutting her eyes, and clasping Birdie to her as she spoke.

"It's nothing but the poor cripple that you've heard of, surely, from Gribber," said Dr. Strong, soothing her.

"I can't look; I positively can't open my eyes while the thing is here," she whispered, but yet loud enough to be heard. "O Dr. Strong! 'the Raven's cruel nest;'" adding, "I understand it all now. The dear child is as frightened as I am."

Long before these words were all uttered, Berry had glided out of the room a little paler than usual, if that were possible. She crept up to her own chamber, muttering as she went—"O deformed soul; pitiful, distorted wretch, not a straight thought, not a comely feeling!" but, as she threw herself on the low ottoman at the side of her bed, she angrily plucked the combs from her heavy mass of hair, and letting it fall in all its pallid, ashy abundance, like a veil around her, seemed to try to hide even from herself beneath its folds.

Meanwhile, Miss Keziah recovered from her discomposure,

refused to release Birdie for an instant; and Miss Grig, quickening her movements at Mrs. Stillwell's prompting, put on the child's out-door dress, wonderfully furbished up in the last two hours; and the delighted little thing, to the great relief of all at the Raven, was lifted into the carriage, seated actually on the deceased Fido's cushion; and on the way home had her cheeks patted, and her long curls, as if they had been Fido's ears, twined around Miss Kizzy's fingers; and what was much more to the little girl's liking, was fed with bon-bons.

Dr. Strong, mounting his horse, rode at the side of the carriage a considerable part of the way, listening at intervals to the wearisome repetition of Miss Keziah's congratulations on her sagacity in discovering the meaning of the allusion in what she called Fido's poem, to "the Raven's cruel nest."

"O my pet! I've released you from the talons of that creature—that monster; what a horror—sickening!" she added, with a shrug of the shoulders that counterfeited a shudder.

Dr. Strong could not resist the desire to ascertain if there was any thought as to the real authorship of the lines, ventured to say, putting his head into the carriage window, "Well, but these lines that Fido sent you by proxy; who was the proxy, eh?" Miss Kizzy looked up a moment, half-testily, half-dreamily, as if recalled from a pleasing vision to an annoying reality. "Who was Fido's proxy? Oh! Dr. Strong, *you* to ask me that." The road diverged at this point; and the doctor, reining up his horse, and raising his hat, waved his adieus and turned in the opposite direction, saying, as he spurred his horse into a trot, "Why, the absurd old fool thinks I've written them. Oh! that's rich; I to be accused of writing sofa and lap-dog poetry!"

When Miss Keziah reached Cumb'ry she encountered a

rough-looking fellow coming out of the hall in the charge of the parish constable; and inquiring of Gribber, who came to assist her lady, what it was, received for answer, "Oh! mem, only a low fellow as was sarcy to Farmer Boozy, and he owns to being in liquor, so the squire hev fined him; but, as he ain't noo money, he's to be put in the stocks."

Miss Keziah shook her head dolefully at the depravity of the lower orders; but, in a moment forgetting it, said, as the footman lifted out the child, "Here, Gribber, see to this sweet creature; the darling; I call her Fido's legacy." Mrs. Gribber very demurely surveyed Birdie with a grim smile, saying, "Oh! the little—the young lady from the Raven. Yes, 'em; I've seen her before. What, 'em, did you say she were to Fido?"

"Bless me, Gribber! how horribly stiff and matter-of-fact you are! What is she to Fido? I said she was Fido's legacy; to me, I mean."

"Oh! mem, yes; I suppose so," said Gribber, trying to annoy her mistress by affected stupidity; and in reality quivering with anger at a new pet coming. As she assisted Miss Keziah up stairs, she said, compassionately, "How very weak you do seem, mem, surely! You're like a bird yourself; a bird as hev broken his wing. However in your weak state you're to bear with the noise of a child as is never still and always a-crying. If I may be so bold, mem, Mrs. Stillwell told me so with her own very lips; them was her words, and I don't care who heard me say 'em; for when I thinks of the weakness and sufferings of the best of mistresses, with nerves as fine as a spider's web, as I've heard you say yourself—cobwebbed all over—a child, even if 'twas so quiet as we could put it under a glass shade, 'ud want dressing, and feeding, and what not."

"Now, Gribber, you're at your dolefuls," said Miss Keziah,

sitting down in her dressing-room, and calling out, "Here, Birdie; come, kiss me, pet; come, perch here, my sweet." The little creature looked round the room with an air of great satisfaction, then came with all the pliant grace of childhood to the large hassock at her patroness's feet, and, seating herself on it, began taking, with evident admiration, the ungloved hand of Miss Keziah, and admiring its glittering emblazonment of rings.

"Will you live here, my own sweet one?"

"Ess, me live here," replied Birdie, fondling the hand.

"I must give her another name; I can't call her only Birdie. Let's see; there was that lovely little paroquet Mrs. Dickson gave me, that died through eating plum-cake—let's see; that was a Roselle; that's the only bird's name I know fit to call a child by; it's very pretty. Gribber, this young lady is to be called Miss Roselle. Tell the servants so; and don't be repeating that nonsense about her being noisy, and all that. I see she's goodness itself; ain't you, my pet? yes, you are, my sweet Roselle. Why, Gribber, at the Raven the child was frightened by a deformed monster—that creature I've heard you name—but never, never dreamt of such an object as it is. No wonder the darling was terrified; it's a mercy she didn't die of fright." And so prattling, Miss Keziah, quite in good spirits at her penetration, was divested of her carriage dress, and prepared to descend to luncheon, and talk to her brother, who was, she knew, fond of children—a weakness Miss Keziah never before had manifested.

CHAPTER IX.

PARISH MATTERS.

"I hate when vice can bolt her arguments,
And virtue has no tongue to check her pride.
Impostor! do not charge most innocent Nature
As if she would her children should be riotous
With her abundance. She, good cateress!
Means her provision only to the good,
That live according to her sober laws
And holy dictate of spare temperance."—MILTON.

WHILE Birdie—or Roselle, as she was to be called—was tripping gaily after Miss Keziah, and making acquaintance with the squire, who, though in a hurry to leave for justice business, swore a great oath that she was "as pretty a bit of flesh and blood as had ever been put together;" and while Miss Keziah was saying, "Fie, brother, fie! I've been absent, confined to my room, only a few days, and when you're left to yourselves, you gentlemen get so coarse," and then, as one would exhibit the tricks of an animal, or the ingenuity of a machine, began to put the child through her list of accomplishments, a very different scene was being enacted before the Boveycum board of parochial authorities.

Dr. Franks was there for two purposes: to back a petition made by a poor parishioner, and to take exception to certain items of expense in the parish accounts; and, unlucky investigator that he was, to inquire about some abuses that he had heard of.

It was plainly to be seen that the medical man was not popular with those who formed the parochial board. They bowed, or nodded to him stiffly, when he entered. Some elevated their eyebrows inquiringly, as much as to say—

"Oh! you're here?" and the few who shook hands with him did it from easy good nature, and as if half-ashamed of the courtesy.

Franks looked anxiously at the door of the board-room, expecting Dr. Strong to come. On some matters he might be counted on, Franks thought, as an ally; but we have seen that he preferred trotting by Miss Keziah's carriage. The beadle, with all the importance of his laced coat, was bustling in and out; and, at length, ushering in the rector, the Rev. Erasmus Aspen, the proceedings of the day commenced. Very gentle and benignant were the greetings that Mr. Aspen bestowed right and left of his chair. He was a meek-faced man, with milky-looking blue eyes, a soft, broad, pale countenance, flat features, and thin, straight, light hair, that fell in languid flakes on his shoulders; no beard or whiskers broke the monotony of the placid-looking cheeks, or hid the pendulous drooping of the lower lip. However, though certainly not a handsome man in the face, the rector was tall, portly, and possessed very fine white, well-fed-looking hands, which he duly flourished to the admiration of many of his fair parishioners. Miss Keziah had been heard to say that, "As to his eloquence, she did not think herself at liberty to give an opinion; for she disapproved of criticising sermons—what the church provided, that she took without inquiry; but she must say, Mr. Aspen's attitudes were so elegant, they always did her good; and he was a dear man—so kind—never offended any one."

Yes; that was the general testimony, and strange to say, the rector was proud of it. His idea of duty was to glide through life without wounding any one's feelings, cutting across the grain of any one's prejudices, or individually condemning any one's sins. In general propositions, he

could do something in the way of condemnation; but he shrunk from personalities, as if he were a sort of master of the ceremonies, and it was the etiquette of his sacred office to make every one as comfortable as possible, and to avoid all that could in any way disturb or annoy. At the most leisurely pace, with a calm, smiling, easy face, and wearing the very softest of velvet slippers to protect his own feet, and keep him from treading on those of others, did the placid rector walk the steep and narrow way.

Looking round, he saw Dr. Franks standing a little apart, and blandly smiling to him, he said, "Come here, my good friend, Franks; come here—there's plenty of room. Gentlemen, we can make room for our good friend."

"He doon't take over much for certain," said a huge man to the rector's right, who evidently thought stoutness and redness were signs of health, and who winked knowingly as he spoke, to several of his companions: a general laugh being the response to the remark, and a nudging of elbows, as if it was considered a capital joke, as Dr. Franks took his seat in the place the rector had indicated.

Certainly our medical man looked pale. His face was "Sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought;" sorrow, anxiety, study, rather than years or ill health, had given him grey hairs and a somewhat sallow face. But his clear eyes were full of vivid light. When he spoke they threw a lambent ray over his whole face; as for his thinness, none in that room, and few men anywhere, could equal the doctor in pedestrian feats. His frame was light, sinewy, and compact; tall enough to escape the imputation of being short; with that undefinable something pervading his bearing, which, for want of a better word, we shall call gentlemanly.

The rector felt this always when he was brought into contact with Dr. Franks; and though he knew well enough that

the medical man was what he called "an angular personage," with many upsetting theories, a troublesome man, a poor man, in the minority always, he was constrained to treat him with marked politeness.

"I expected to have met a colleague here," said Dr. Franks.

"Oh, Dr. Strong! are you two colleagues?" said the rector, a little surprised.

"I think he would back my appeal for the widow Vosper, who, gentlemen, wants assistance," said Dr. Franks.

"Her husband was a drunken sot," objected many voices.

"So much the worse for her."

"Held his head high, and paid no one anything."

"I wish he had held it higher, and owed no one anything," replied the doctor.

"Well, she can go into the house."

"If you allow her some help out, it will not cost so much as the maintenance of the whole family in the house, and the widow and her children can do some little for a living," urged Dr. Franks.

"No, indeed; there's nothing in Vosper's case to warrant it."

"Isn't it, my good friend," said the smooth voice of the rector, appealing to Mr. Franks—"Isn't it against your principles, you that go to such extremes—far beyond poor me—to help in an unusual way the widow and children of a man whose drunkenness brought about their ruin?"

"Sir, I would have prevented the man being a drunkard, and saved the ruin, if I could. I tried, sir. I see before me those who helped ——"

"Order, order—chair," said many voices.

"Permit me to say, no personalities, my dear sir, can be

allowed; your own excellent sense will discern that," said the rector appealingly.

"Well," resumed Dr. Franks, "the widow and children of the drunkard are innocent victims. They must be supported. I, in common with every sober man in Boveycum, must pay the rates made heavy by such cases. If I had tempted this man to his ruin, shared or benefited by his excesses, I think, sir, shame would have prevented my complaining of the pittance allowed to his widow. I ask that she may be assisted to keep a home and her children round her."

"It's a himmoral proposal," said a man, rising, to whom poor Vosper, it seemed, had been deeply indebted for loans borrowed at ruinous interest—"Himmoral, I repeat; and I'll not sit here to see such a hexample given. It ain't for us men and Christians to be a-preventin' the consekences as Providence appints. It's a-flying, as it weer, in the face o' Providence."

"It would be a sorry thing, gentlemen, for us all, if we, and those belonging to us, invariably reaped the consequences of our sins."

"Speak for yourself, Dr. Franks, and not for we," muttered one or two farmers uneasily. The rector took, as he said, "the sense" of the board, and the widow Vosper's petition was refused. Then followed the quarterly accounts of the union, and the sum for strong drinks formed a very large item. The parish officials looked at the gross amount of the whole, and were for passing it without investigation, when Dr. Franks rose, and his—

"Permit me, gentlemen," was a signal for many eyes to glare on him. He took up the balance-sheet, and, with his ruthless finger on the item he objected to, said—

"I protest against this. In the first place, if these wines

and spirits are supplied to the sick, they are unnecessary in ninety-nine cases in a hundred; injurious in eighty cases in the hundred. The mere fraction of cases in which—according to some judgments, not mine, I confess—they may be required, are such as we have not had one instance of in our sick wards at the union for a year.

"I further object to this item as a temptation to those nurses and others who have the charge of the infirmary, to cheat the parish, in the name of patients, on the false plea of giving the strong drink to the sick. I object that there has been a gradual increase each year in this item. I further object to giving beer to the able-bodied paupers. Good food in plenty they should have, but dangerous, tempting, unnecessary luxuries they have no right to, out of the pockets of the ratepayers, who are already sufficiently burdened."

"But we cannot debar these poor people, just because they are poor, of their beer, my dear Dr. Franks; that would be very hard. The union is not a prison, the people are not criminals," said the rector blandly; while a murmur of approval went round, and all looked wonderfully benevolent, and bent their brows at Franks as he stood pale and resolute before them. "Ah! as hard as a stone," said one; "Thinks the poor didn't ought to live," said another.

"Certainly they are not criminals, and for that reason I would remind the Rev. chairman that I objected to old married people, over sixty years of age, who are compelled to go to the union, being separated. I objected to the windows in the sick ward being so high that not a patient can see a glimpse of the face of nature out of them. I objected still more to ladies being refused the opportunity of visiting the inmates; and in each of these objections I was overruled. I say, as poverty is no crime, you have no right

to make your workhouse as strict as your prison; but you have equally no right to continue the temptations that have led to many being its inmates, or to provide expensive and pernicious luxuries out of the ratepayers' pockets."

The rector, sorely puzzled, looked left and right, for many voices were now raised; and as they could not put down Dr. Franks by argument, they naturally had recourse to clamour.

"Gentlemen, I'm very sorry, very; no doubt Dr. Franks means well; pray, gentlemen, be patient; yes, I know you feel for the poor—couldn't take away the poor man's beer—the sick—port wine—brandy—very good, gentlemen—not a question of pounds, shillings, and pence; no, certainly—question of human nature—does honour to your heart, Mr. Flint."

While the rector uttered his disjointed words, Dr. Strong entered; but there was a general determination not to renew the discussion. "The sense" (oh, merry fiction!) of the board was again taken; and of course Dr. Franks was so completely in the minority that no one would entertain his objections. The accounts were passed unanimously, and the board separated in some disorder.

On the same day, at the Town hall, some justice business was being settled. Squire Pendrainly was there; and the rector transferred himself to the bench, where some licensing business had to be arranged.

Dr. Franks attended this sitting also, and after some preliminary talk, said, "You surely, gentlemen, are not going to license any other drinking-houses in this town. There can be no possible plea."

"I shall license any house that will draw the Claydip Golden Brewery ale," said Squire Pendrainly decidedly. "I'm for the poor man having a good sound article. And I'm for extending the trade of the town and county. Once get

that ale into repute, gentlemen, and you'll find it will benefit the whole district. Why, what was Burton a few years back? and now, see. And isn't Alton rising, though it's got to compete with London, a mere nothing of a distance?"

"The Thames has been everything to the porter breweries; if it was not for the Thames, where would be London porter?" said the Rev. Mr. Shrewd, also a magistrate, who agreed with the squire.

"A good, rich body it gives, we wont ask from what," interposed Dr. Strong, laughing.

"Haw!" said the squire, "we can't, of course, have anything so rich as that; but our little Molesy drains Stevely Bog, and runs past three churchyards and two tanneries; so it's no doubt good, gentlemen. But I'm strong for licensing houses that mean to supply the Golden Brewery beer; I do it on public grounds."

A merry twinkle was in Dr. Strong's eyes. A stern look curved the brows of Dr. Franks. He fixed his penetrating glance full on Squire Pendrainly, and said—

"On public grounds only?"

"Oh! certainly, certainly," interposed the rector; "we know the public spirit of our friend and patron at Cumb'ry. His family for generations have been benefactors to Boveycum."

The squire was seized with a violent fit of coughing, that brought the purple tide in a more glowing fullness into his face.

"It really is very public-spirited indeed in Mr. Pendrainly coming to-day, poorly as he is," said Mr. Sharp, a lawyer of the district. "We ought not to keep him a moment longer than can be avoided. It grows late, gentlemen; three o'clock."

So, granting and renewing licenses, and ignoring all oppo-

sition, passing over offences against the existing laws with a light reprimand, if the brewery patronized were the right one, or the political bias of a landlord might at election times be depended on—they came to a swift conclusion of the business; and if no one else approved, the publicans left satisfied the squire and his brother magistrates promoted their interests, asserting that the drinking and the prosperity of the town were identical.

All who afterwards talked over the meetings of the day said, "That tiresome Dr. Franks was always putting in his nose where he was not wanted." In private and public it was all the same. Mrs. Stillwell had a fling at him,—"Didn't he tell poor Mrs. Sipley, the wife of the worshipful the mayor, (whose gout was really so obstinate that he was as good as no mayor at all, and a good job the ninth of November was not far off now)—Didn't he tell her that she could nurse her baby on water? Yes, nothing but water: didn't he say that, a hard-hearted creature that he was. And didn't he say it was drink that had brought on the pains and swellings that troubled Sipley, when every one knew he was eat up with rheumatism, he and his father before him; and to propose that the child of such a poor, shaky man should be brought up on water!" Mrs. Stillwell, like many more, considered that the only drinks worth naming were strong drinks. Yes; in parlour, bar, and taproom, Dr. Franks was voted hard-hearted, grinding, meddlesome, the enemy of the poor man.

Twirk, taking advantage of Berry's absence, contrived to run into the tap and give a spouting fellow there a garbled version of Dr. Franks' day's proceedings. "I owe him one," said this man. "Didn't he say, when I was in a little trouble that time in the lock-up, and when all I wanted was just to get out of the infernal oakum-picking,

and I tipped 'em a bit of the sick dodge, and was put snug in the infirmary—didn't he say that I was shamming? Ah!! Master white-livered bolus!—yes; I owe him one."

This worthy continued during the evening to exasperate the tap-room guests about the doctor, though one man ventured to say—"Well; drink or no drink, this I'll say, as Dr. Franks hev come any hour, by day or night, to my people, to hum, and I wont hear 'im spoke agin. He don't be over sweet on me, I knows; but never mind that, he's a good gentleman, with a heart as feels for the sick."

"Ay, ay," said many, approvingly; and this slight turning of the tide, as the evening advanced, prevented the malice that had been planned in one man's mind from taking full effect. But where was Berry?

"In her tantrums," Miss Grig said. Mrs. Stillwell was vexed at missing her services, yet knew it was no use interfering; besides, it was too far for the landlady to mount to the top storey, where Berry, her door locked, and with her pale tresses all unbound, sat wrapping them round her, and moaning at intervals.

"Nothing will ever love me. If I stretch my hand out in kindness, they will beat it off in disgust. I'm hateful to myself. Even the child went from me without a word or a look. She joined that poor empty head in shrieking at me. Oh! it is so bitter. I'll shut myself away from all. Why do I live?"

Thus moping, crouched on the floor, without food, or any refreshment but what her water caraffe supplied, the day deepened into night.

Then came the voice of Annice at the door. "Miss Berry, do let me in. Do 'ee come down. 'Tant no use noo-how a-mindin' what anybody do say. You didn't make yourself, nor yet break yourself, by what I've heerd. Miss Berry, now."

In vain, there was no answer.

Then came, at length, a man's voice at the door—Captain Flammerton's.

"Rasp! Mrs. Stillwell is amazed at you neglecting the business as you do. She's sent me up—mind-shoo—and I'm to break the door open."

"Begone; if you break my door, I'll leap out at the window."

"If you do, and succeed, why there's an end of you; and if you try it, and fail—mind-shoo—there's a strait waistcoat, and Hillsby Asylum. Remember, I can swear, and there's plenty to back me, that you're out of your mind. So come out of that megrim, Rasp, pretty quickly."

This threat had evidently power over Berry. It had years ago been nearly acted on owing to the trouble she gave in a paroxysm of her anguish. And wretched as the poor, lonely creature was, she dreaded the thought of having her liberty, such as it was, abridged—of being made the companion of lunatics. So, as Captain Flammerton's footstep retreated down the stairs, Berry rose from the ground, bound up her hair, bathed her hollow eyes and cheeks, and smoothing her attire, crept down the back stairs; and keeping watchfully by the wall contrived to get unnoticed into her desk.

Mrs. Stillwell had been for a few minutes into the commercial-room; when she returned, and flung herself on the sofa, she said, "The house is so full, Grig, what does Berry mean? Go and tell her, headache or no headache, come she must; say I asked her to oblige me."

"I'm here! what do *you* mean?" said Berry, in her harshest key; and immediately, without further comment, Grig began calling over, from a little book, items that had been supplied to customers; and then, as soon as this was done,

Twirk was called, and the swift scratch of Berry's pen was heard making up for the time lost in lamentations.

The house was late in getting cleared that night, and when at length Berry descended from the desk, she trembled with weakness. She took up a crust of bread from the supper table and ate it ravenously. No one cared to remember—none were interested enough to observe—that she had had no food since breakfast-time—perhaps not much then. She looked out of the window into the little garden, and seemed meditating one of her night excursions; but, with a weary sigh, she gave up the intention, admonished by her weakness that she was more ill and worn than usual that night. She climbed painfully up the stairs. The incidents of the morning had shaken her. Entering her room, she saw Birdlie's old shoes on the bedside carpet; she took them up and looked wistfully at them. It was evident that she thought regretfully, if not tenderly, of the little feet that had worn them. A rush of tears came to relieve her throbbing eyes. As they fell, she shook her head as if reproving a weakness; and then taking a sheet of paper, folded up the little shoes, and put them away in a drawer along with some withered flowers, and a few letters of Mrs. Franks, evidently treasures, for she locked them up carefully, saying, "No more weakness; tears and sympathies are luxuries I have no right to indulge in." She tremblingly undressed, and laid her aching head upon her pillow in complete exhaustion, for what shatters and exhausts like grief? "A wounded spirit, who can bear?"

Bitterly did she reproach herself when she descended on the following morning to her desk, and found that some revellers, on their return home, whether from the Raven or not was not known, had broken all Dr. Franks' front windows. "And no more than I thought would a-happened

long ago," said Twirk. Berry thought that had she been there, she would have wrought upon their fears to prevent the vengeance of the rioters. As it was, she heard with involuntary emotions of thankfulness that no one in the dwelling was hurt. Herbert, she knew, slept at the back of the house, as did Dorcas, and Dr. Franks was out attending to his professional duties. "The boy is safe," said Berry. Then, as if she despised herself for her weakness, she added, "What have I to do with it? Why need I care about them? They all detest me."

CHAPTER X.

THE COST OF KEEPING A CONSCIENCE.

"Every age, on him who strays
From its broad and beaten ways,
Pours its sevenfold vial."—T. G. WHITTIER.

ACCORDING to generally received opinions, there are some people whose bounden duty it is to make themselves agreeable, especially to womankind. The clergyman, who has to combat with the sins, and the medical man, whose experience lies with the sufferings of humanity, would be too suggestive of severe and painful thoughts, if they did not by their manner a little ward off, nay, frequently entirely put to flight, any gathering of dismal thoughts. Besides, the great crimes, like the great diseases of humanity, are, after all, rare; and there are pleasant ways, as some hold, of mitigating the lesser ills, physical and moral. A clergyman with a soothing, apologetic way, extenuating what he cannot defend, is as comfortable and lulling as a composing draught; and a doctor patiently listening to accounts of sensations and complaints—a doctor who pities while he encourages, and who

suggests nice little dietetic indulgences, and utters' implied compliments, either at the fortitude, or the delicacy, or the wonderful elastic power of his patients—whether these compliments are deserved or not—is sure to be considered "a nice, feeling, fatherly man, and *so* skilful!" Now,, in these little arts of conciliation, we have seen, Dr. Franks was deficient. He set out in life with a strong love of truth. He had been reared by parents who held to the opinion once expressed by Dr. Johnson, that if a child related an incident that happened in the street, and made a mistake whether the window were right or left from whence the incident was seen, that it should be taught to correct that error as leading to falsehood. Holding by this rule, Dr. Franks had studied his profession deeply, so that he might know, of his own knowledge, and from actual experiment, all he could attain to in the complicated mystery of the creature man. No prestige of great names, without his own investigation; no taking for granted, and leaping at conclusions, satisfied Oliver Franks, even in his student days. He loved his profession; but circumstances had made his father, once a prosperous merchant, poor; and this poverty, coming just at a time when funds were most wanted, was a sad barrier to the young man's success. Many careless young fellows, with merely quick memories, tact, and assurance, and plenty of funds for their expensive medical education, elbowed Franks in the course, and got before him. Thus, instead of continuing the study of his profession, as he had wished, in the great schools, this same poverty compelled him, physician as he was, to become, rather early in his career, an assistant to a general practitioner. There for years all the hard, unpleasant drudgery—the night-work, the accidents, the poor practice, devolved on him.

The practitioner to whom he was assistant was shallow

and indolent, but very plausible. Over and over again would Franks have left him, disgusted by what he saw of carelessness, incompetency, and insincerity; but there was an old father to maintain out of his small salary—a paralytic, more helpless than a child. There was also a distant orphan cousin, many degrees removed, whom Dr. Franks' mother had reared, and who could not be cast off when that mother died. Nor, it seemed—at least so their one servant, Dorcas, who had been Oliver Franks' nurse, let them know—could the cousin remain after Mrs. Franks' death, under the roof, without surmisings and remarks not very delicate in their over-delicacy. Perhaps Oliver Franks was not sorry that the censoriousness of a coarse-minded world compelled him to follow the bent of his own inclinations in making his cousin his wife, and prevented the misgivings as to the wisdom and prudence of that measure which he might otherwise have felt; so that the young medical man had, early in life, to maintain, out of his stipend as assistant, a sick father and a portionless bride. Hard work, therefore—perhaps the very hardest that can fall to any man, for it was night and day, all hours and seasons—was the lot of Franks during his early manhood. The death of his poor father, whose flickering ray of life had been prolonged with pious care, to the amazement of all for years, occurred at the time of other changes. Franks could stay no longer in his post as assistant. His principal had taken to dining out frequently, and was seldom after dinner fit to see patients. Mistakes in treatment, scarcely hidden from the world, were known to Franks. He remonstrated, found that of no use, and then threw up his situation; and, as poor as ever, but with a large experience, went forth, as the old story-books say, to seek his fortune. Part of Mrs. Franks' early youth had been spent in Boveycum, and thither they went. The leading medical man was

very old; but the same month that saw Franks established in a modest little house near the church at Boveycum, saw the arrival of Strong, who had bought the old doctor's practice, and who began by driving a good carriage in wet weather, and riding a capital horse in dry, setting up a well-appointed house and surgery, and having things handsome about him. He won the trades-people at once. A man with such a house, and who knew so well about horse-flesh, must be a clever doctor. To be sure, Madame Strong, his wife, was but a wizened piece of goods; but it was easy to see he kept her alive. Then the stores of wine he laid in—"Ah! he knew the vally of good stuff, he did."

"Dr. Strong's the man for my money," was the verdict uttered by the landlord of the Raven, then living, and re-echoed by the town's-people; while the few gentry and well-to-do farmers, in their widely-scattered houses, liked his cheery ways, and were by no means more indisposed than their humbler neighbours to his comforting doses. It was pleasant to many of them to have the drink prescribed as a cure that they took as a luxury. It was giving to inclination the dignified aspect of duty.

And there was that uncompromising Dr. Franks, drinking water himself, and recommending it; denouncing strong drinks, and telling plain truths to the over-fed, gouty, and asthmatic farmers of the district, who day by day left him, and went over to Dr. Strong.

An eminent modern surgeon is known to have told Mr. Buckingham, that if he had not been a man of fortune, "he would not have dared to be honest with his patients in the matter of strong drink; he should have been starved out for telling them the truth."

Still, starved or fattened, Dr. Franks held by his principles, and got the reputation of being a crotchety fellow. The

poor fell to his lot; and, in some very bad cases he was always appealed to; for the medical men in the county recognized his talents. But there is no obligation so soon forgotten as those incurred in illness. Like intense pain, it passes from the memory; and people who hailed Dr. Franks as their deliverer when they trembled over the dark gulf; and felt the re-assuring touch of his firm hand, and the deep insight of his calm eyes, as a new lease of life to them; when they were restored to health, wondered at their former weakness—doubted whether they had really been so bad—whether it was Dr. Franks that helped to cure them. "Any way, if he was a skilful man, he was very odd, and mighty whimmy."

So the years that had come and gone had brought no change in the circumstances of Dr. Franks. His accomplished wife, as we have seen, took pupils; garlanded over the rents of their poverty by her industry and her love. Whatever went wrong outside his door, all was right within. And when, after an interval of many childless years, there was an infant expected, the richest man in all the county could not feel more content with fortune than did Dr. Franks. He was so supremely happy that he might well dread his own feelings, and listen, amid the soft cooings of love and hope that lulled his little nest of home, for that touch of a pathetic minor that runs through the most jubilant hymn ever sounded in the human soul.

It came, this touch of sorrow—came blending with the new-born joy of parental love. His little son was dearly bought, for the mother paid the price of her health for him. Only the most watchful care and skill, combined with the sweetest patience in the sufferer, could have enabled her to rally to the measure of strength, never great, that she attained. She was an uncomplaining invalid for the rest of her

days. Indeed, her patience was so complete, that no indifferent eye ever thought her ill; and her husband, blinded by his love, considered that her constitution had received a shock certainly; but all would yet be well. Meanwhile, little Herbert grew a fine chubby fellow, full of mischief and fun; with such an amount of physical strength that he might be said not only to have his own full share, but to have taken all that had belonged to his poor mother.

Dr. Franks would not suffer his wife to fatigue herself with teaching in her weak state, though he was sorely puzzled to make up the deficiency thus caused in their income. Berry was allowed to come and go in the house, free as the wind: her afflictions made her sacred to them. To no one had the cripple ever so opened her heart as to Mrs. Franks. Those two were friends; not without certain drawbacks. At any manifestation of talent in Berry, even while Mrs. Franks assisted in its cultivation, she sighed at the thought that nothing could compensate, as to the outer life of Berry, for her deformity. She feared that her attainments, by increasing and developing her sensitiveness, would add to the morbid gloom that so often gathered over her spirit. There were times, too, when she doubted the wisdom of cultivating the musical gifts, and ministering to the poetic tastes of Berry. To be higher than others by her gifts, and lower by her infirmities, was a disjointed sort of state in reference to her fellow-creatures. During the many hours of weakness that Mrs. Franks was conscious of, her own soul, having expanded as widely as human love could spread it, began to reach upward into a higher region, and to enjoy a purer light. Gleams from the far-off world touched and warmed her with their radiance; and as such illumination is never hidden, she spoke to Berry of that land where there is nothing that offends—where all true believers

are presented "faultless before the throne of God;" spoke to her of the "Living way" to that land; but just then there was nothing in Berry's soul that responded to these words.

It might be so; she was glad—as glad as she could be at anything—that Mrs. Franks had found out the meaning of the Bible words, "In His light ye shall see light;" but all was darkness and gloom to Berry.

Even the tenderness the mother felt for her child sometimes wounded the poor cripple, pining with the thirst of the spirit for some full draught of love. She had known Mrs. Franks before Herbert came; she was sorry, as he brought so much sickness to her, that he ever had come. She was impatient at this infant-worship which, in different ways, she saw both at her home, the Raven, and at the only house where the least touch of home-feeling had ever come; she noticed how exacting, how selfish and tyrannical these little doting-pieces could be: and wondering, and murmuring, retired, if possible, more completely within herself.

There came a tranquil summer's evening when Mrs. Franks, rather more animated than usual, was playing with her child, and talking at intervals to her husband of Berry. "There is but one cure for a spirit so wounded," she said; "that is religion. As she grows to womanhood—let's see—poor little thing! she must be quite nineteen now; she will feel her isolation more and more if she shuts her heart against that heavenly guest who brings the peace that passeth understanding." "Thank God, my dear, that we have that peace," said Franks.

"Yes, thank God!" both husband and wife were silent. They sat at their window looking out at the setting sun. The pause was broken by Dorcas coming for the little Herbert. Then followed his evening kiss and prayers. Mrs. Franks was too weak to take the boy on her lap; but as he knelt

on his little cushion, between his father and herself, her gaze rested searchingly upon him. She added a few words to his little prayer. The ruddy glow from the western skies lighted up the childish face. The mother did not speak, but she raised her eyes full of supplication to heaven. In another minute, the child was gone, laughing and happy, to his rosy rest.

"Be careful of Herbert; bring him up well;" said Mrs. Franks, in a voice slightly disturbed with hiccup. Even as she spoke her looks changed. The peculiarly crimson light of the sunset prevented her husband seeing how pale she had become. Her wasted hands, as he took them, were startlingly cold.

"Oh! what is this, my love? You are ill—you are worse," said he, shutting the window, drawing the shawl round her, and clasping her close in his arms.

"No; not much," she faltered, tried to rise, and sunk back fainting, with a deadly chill numbing her veins. No power on earth could rally her. The springs of life, languid for years, were about to pause for ever. There was a little struggling pant at intervals; a slight moan now and then. Once, a few hours after her seizure, she opened her eyes, fixed them in a long, loving gaze upon her husband, and struggling to speak, uttered the words, "My dear!" That look, those accents, cleft the poor man's heart. He bowed his head, and the hot tears rained down upon the bed. He tried to pray; if throbbing pulses racked with anguish may make a mute appeal, he agonized in prayer. But the fiat was issued. The angel of death was in the dwelling. When the darkness of the night had fled the gentle wife and mother had gone forth to another morning.

. . . . . .

"Was it possible that ever, while that sweet presence cheered his home, he had felt poor, or depressed, or disappointed?" the widower asked himself, in deep surprise, some days after his loss. Had he been so ignorant of the treasure he possessed? so ungrateful for the wealth of her love? Ah! she was gone now! He was alone, and poor indeed!

The darkness that fell upon his house when the ray that had so warmed and lighted it was extinguished, seemed to have changed the place and all the inmates. Dr. Franks' thoughtful face grew stern and pale. Dorcas became suddenly old, her deafness increasing; for, as she said, "No voice was like hers; I could always hear that." And even little Herbert altered; the shadow of his mother's grave fell on him. He had, just before she died, mastered the mystery of reading, and now he entered with childish zest and wonder on the world of books. That appetite grows by what it feeds on; and, as he was admonished to be quiet, and quietude was impossible without books, he read away, uninterrupted by remark or reproof. By-and-by, as the child's mind opened, and his father's sorrow was something less bitter, though not less rooted, companionship sprung up between them. Herbert had been once his father's plaything; but play-days for the elder at least were over, and now he became his occupation. Lessons began, varied by conversation. Berry used her faculty of observation, and saw that all was going as right as it could go in such a shattered household. She came at odd times to superintend, in her own way, Herbert's wardrobe. She never had sought to love Herbert, and he rather shrunk from her, which she was quick to see and feel; yet in that house, from the dog to the master, there was always a welcome for Berry, as far as she would receive or appropriate a welcome.

The words of Mrs. Franks on the last evening of her life

had been duly told to Berry. She heard them with solemn awe, with a sense that the only person who cared for her was gone, with a belief that the admonition was most genuine, and that religion in Mrs. Franks had been beautifully embodied; but that it was a something too far off, too bright and good, too out of the way of all that she might expect as an experience in life, to be realized by her. The strange mystery of why her life had been permitted to be a martyrdom tormented her. It was the old question of the origin of evil put in the most urgent form; and Berry, like wiser and less excusable people, beat her poor head against that wall of adamant, with no other result than getting bruised and blinded, and stiff and hardened.

When the pot-valiant avenger or avengers of the wrongs which it was said on all sides Dr. Franks had sought to heap on the poor, by complaining of the allowance of strong drink awarded them, broke Dr. Franks' windows, it happened that Dorcas and Herbert only were in the house. The old woman's deafness prevented her hearing the crash, and the child was sleeping the deep sleep of health in a back room of the dwelling, and would hardly have been aroused by a gun going off at his bedside. The master of the abode so rudely attacked was absent at Stretch's, the glove-cutter, trying to mitigate the last agonies in the departure of the aged mother from that poor dwelling.

He had a long, rough walk back, and the night was cold; but he heeded these matters little. Cumb'ry lay in his way, and as he passed the lawn, and noticed a light or two moving about in the upper rooms of the house, he thought of the child whose removal from the Raven to the care of Miss Pendrainly he had heard of—such news flying quickly in country towns. That a lady noted for her whims, and who had lost in succession three pet dogs, should alter the object

of her affections was not remarkable; but evidently Dr. Franks did not think the child very well off, for the words, "Poor little thing!" rose involuntarily to his lips as he looked at the house; and he added, "a bird or a kitten would be pitiable, but a child—poor thing!"

While these thoughts were in his mind, he drew near the church as the chimes proclaimed the noon of night. There was a low whistle, and two or three men, as far as he could discern in the darkness, were running along by the wall. In a few moments more he passed the cottage where Berry's startling visit once terminated a brawl. The sound of sobs seemed near him. "Who is there?—what is the matter?" he said. A woman rose from the door-step, and in a trembling voice answered, as her teeth chattered with fright and cold—"I'm afeerd to goo in till he's asleep. He's coom home so terribel in for it, that I durstn't go a neer 'un noo-how."

"So you're hiding, Sally, are you? and Dorcas tells me you've a bad breast; you must get in from the night air. Shall I go in with you?"

"O Dr. Franks, is it you?" and the woman burst into tears, and seemed strangely agitated, saying between her sobs, "Never noobody was so tooked to, as me, I do think. I dunnow what to do, sir. There's my man gets wus and wus; and my boy has a gift like, and sings a bit, and h'eve larnt among the singers as practises for church—larnt proper. But, oh! it's very hard, as they up at the Raven hev had him into the parlour, and the cap'en ses he'll giv'n his drink free if he practises and goos there when they wants 'un for a stave. Oh! it's hard, and I've reared him a sober lad, and all I've suffered. I did say, sir," added she, lowering her voice to a whisper, and trembling as she seemed to crouch up to the wall, "as Bill's ways was enough to make

my mother rise out of her grave; and, bless you, sir, not a fortnight agone I b'leeve as she verily did come, and I thought that'd settle him. He said he'd drink no more; but, lor, sir, if a man's a drunkard, there's nothing wont hinder him as long as he can get the drink."

"Neither would they believe though one rose from the dead," was the thought that passed through the doctor's mind as he listened; but he said, "Sally, yours is a hard lot; but don't you fear the dead—you're safe from them: I wish you were as safe from the living. Come to me in the morning, and I'll see about you, and advise you what you can do about your boy. He must be prevented getting into a bad way; if we can't cure the one, we must save the other."

"Oh! I'm afeerd," shuddered the woman.

"I'll go in with you."

"Oh! thank'ee, sir; thank'ee kindly. I'm sure no one has any call to do anything wrong by you, sir," said the woman, timidly opening her door.

Dr. Franks looked in. A ray from the nearly-expiring fire showed the table overset, and the crockery broken; and amid the debris laid the man, powerless to rise, half-asleep, with a poker loosely clutched in his hand, and his lips uttering disjointed growls and curses.

"Where's your boy?"

"Not come in yet," said the woman.

Dr. Franks looked at the miserable creature on the floor, at the broken remnants that strewed the ground, and then at the woman, whose tall and powerful frame was gaunt, and her cheeks hollow. There was that worn expression that pain leaves on the face. "What a fate!" was the thought of the spectator as he pointed to the man, and whispered—"You are safe for the present; he cannot hurt you. Come to me in the morning;" and with deep compassion in his

heart, he left the place, as the woman, looking helplessly round, sunk down on a low stool to get a little strength and warmth, before she crept away to her miserable bed.

And such is life to thousands; a something to suffer, not to enjoy, to struggle with, not to hold calmly. Enough strength to labour on from year to year; enough health to feel the bitterness of pain, till the grave yawns, and the long wrestle ends in a fall into the dark chasm. And one vice it is that mainly makes this misery; one vice that might so easily be remedied. Oh! not in recondite sorrows and stately griefs lie our bitterest experiences, but in the daily-recurring, undignified common trials and vices of humanity. These it is that trail the slime of the serpent over our world, and envenom it.

A few minutes brought Dr. Franks to his door. He took out the latch-key as he entered the gate of his little fore-court, and was startled at finding a great crashing of glass under his feet. He looked up; the night was too dark to discern the damage. He entered, lighted his candle in the passage, and opening the parlour door that he usually made his study, was convinced of the truth of his suspicions by the wind instantly blowing out the light. He was weary with his long walk after his tedious day's work and worry; but a greater weariness fell on his spirits. The consciousness that he had toiled, unremunerated and unthanked, among his poor neighbours, made the present discovery very bitter.

"And this is how they treat me?" he said. But the thought of his boy roused him from his painful reverie. He relighted his candle and went up to Herbert's chamber. The boy was smiling in his sleep as if visited with happy dreams. He looked like his mother. As the father gazed thankfully and fondly on him, his spirit rose above the petty annoyance that had smote him. He looked grave and pale, indeed,

but the light of a strong resolution was in his eyes. He went to the door of his aged domestic's room, and ascertained that she was undisturbed, and then he visited all his front rooms. It was a heavy damage; too heavy for him to replace. No; for a time he would leave the windows as a memento. There were inside shutters to them, though these had been rarely closed; now he employed himself in shutting and barring them; the lower shutters he nailed up close. While his little household slept he removed his books and desk, and the furniture that would be needed, into the back parlour. From thence he could see his garden; and what was the town to him or Herbert that he should care to see it from his windows? As to retiring to rest, he felt he could not sleep. While he was thus employed, and was looking up his papers, his eye fell upon a page he had recently written. A sense of satisfaction nerved him as he remembered that some articles of his had been published by a leading scientific journal. He would work this new vein. Study, congenial study, brought its own reward, and for his very modest wants would bring also a sufficiency. And as he mapped out his future, he resolved to pursue his persecutors with no legal vengeance—to make no outcry—to do all the good he could—to utter his protest against intemperance, and win his foes, or shame them by his own consistency.

"Let who will get the guineas," said he stoutly; "I'll get, by God's help, the blessing."

When the chilly autumn morning dawned, the early market people coming into Boveycum noticed the broken windows and closed shutters of the doctor's house, and the path and fore-court strewed with glass, and marvelled as they saw the doctor come out to meet one among them whom he knew, saying, very mildly, "I want this glass cleared away care-

fully, Dick Summerfield, if you and the lads could stop a few minutes. I'm afraid it will hurt the horses' feet."

"Why, who ha' done it, doctor?" said the young market-gardener, amazed.

"Oh! some poor drunken fellows. You see," pointing to his windows, "that is the effects of intemperance."

"Confound 'em! If that ain't unfair I don't know what unfairness is; but coom Dick. Tom, call all hands as you can get, and fall to wi' a will. We doon't want the hosses lamed, and we'll straiten Dr. Franks' fore-coort a bit; for I'm fair sheamed to see it, so I am. If I thought as I should coom to do the like o' that, I'd never drink another glass so long as I live."

"A drunken man knows not what he does," said the doctor.

"Ah! sir, you're right; and though I ain't high larnt, I know what's right when I hear it. And when drink makes a fellow a coward and a fool, doin' all soorts o' mischief, down wi' drink, say I."

"Drink takes away a man's reason, and then he's likely to become, as you say, 'a coward and a fool.'"

"Ay, an' that's true, doctor. No person never said a truer word than that; I'm sure when I thinks o' taking a drop, this yere broken glass 'll come like sticking in my throat. I can't rightly say what I mean; but I feel as if I'd ha' no moor to do wi' it, for it breaks hearts as well as winders."

Dr. Franks stretched out his hand, and, clasping the broad palm of the young man, said—

"Dick Summerfield, keep to the good resolution that's rising in you, and I shall rejoice in my broken windows. You've a widowed mother and young brothers looking up to you; and you're a strong, kind-hearted young fellow, and want to do right. Now, give up the drink from this day."

"Well, doctor, I will, for I'm asheamed to see these winders—not as I ever took much, you know."

"No; it's the less to give up therefore, and all the easier."

And so the doctor's first convert was made that morning, and he felt as if a new era in his life was commencing.

CHAPTER XI.

UNFASHIONABLE MORNING CALLS.

"Goe, soule, the bodie's guest,
Upon a thankless errant;
Feare not to touch the best,
The truth shall be thy warrant."—OLD POEM.

IT was not easy to make Dorcas and little Herbert take a calm view of the dilapidated outside of the house. Surprise soon gave place to indignation. "And you, sir," said the old servant, "slaving night and day, wearing your life out on a set of ungrateful wretches."

"My papa, so good and kind as he is!" said Herbert, clenching his little fists, and with flaming cheeks that dried his starting tears, "I wish I was a man, I'd ——."

What Herbert would do was interrupted by his father saying, "There are some wrongs, Herbert, that it is more becoming to bear than to resent. When you are a man, and I hope before, you will learn that truth. How miserable must be the state of mind capable of doing this cowardly deed!—how odious the vice that prompted it!" And then the father explained to his child—for there were few reserves between them—the objections he had thought it right to make the previous day, and the popular vengeance that probably might thus have been excited. Afterwards the new arrangement of the house busied them all, and in

the midst of their work there came some poor patients—none too civilly received by Dorcas, who, in her anger, longed to have some one to find fault with; and even the dog seemed so far to understand matters that he sniffed suspiciously round the poor women, who, most of them, were bringing a sick child to the doctor. Rather more patiently and gently than usual the doctor made his investigations; and though there was no word spoken by the poor, awkward souls that, with open-eyed wonder, had surveyed the house—for the outrage and the doctor's reserve combined put them at a distance they knew not how to bridge over—yet their curtsies were lower, and they left the dwelling with a new-born kindliness throbbing in their hearts—a sense that Dr. Franks was their friend, and that he had been ill-used. But Sally Hood seemed the most cast down of all who came that morning to the doctor's. She shambled into the surgery, wrung with bodily pain, and some even deeper anguish, showed the hard bruise on what Tennyson has called "the sacred mother bosom," that night and day wore her with its ceaseless gnawing.

"A blow, or a kick?" said the doctor, compassionately; for he saw it was very serious. The woman did not answer; she hung her head; then, as if she must say something, she faltered out: "I'm cruel awk'ard, always a-hurting or a-knocking myself."

"I did not ask you how it was done. I know," said Dr. Franks, adding, involuntarily, "Life has been taken with a less blow, and far less suffering." He checked himself, and the woman not exactly comprehending him, was consciously silent, as if fearing to speak. Then he asked about her son, and the tears which old, long-endured agony had not wrung from her—perhaps that had wept itself dry—flowed bitterly at the new dread.

"Go you to Mrs. Stillwell," said Mr. Franks; "go from me at once; tell her your case; or stay, I'll meet you there in an hour."

Before that hour was up there had been many inquirers at the doctor's door; and, as he walked out, there was an expression in the faces of those that met him, that matters had been carried very far. Dr. Strong reined up his horse, and said, "The parish would offer a reward; that it was a barbarism that disgraced the town;" though secretly many asserted, "It was no more than they had long expected. Touch the working classes on the subject of their beer, and you touch them to the quick; they would be sure to wince, and turn rampant and unmanageable at once."

The quietude and serenity of Dr. Franks puzzled every one. When he entered the Raven, Captain Flammerton met him in the yard, and gave it as his opinion, "That there never would be any subordination among the lower orders of this country until there was something more like martial law in the management of them." There is nothing like a strong opinion, strongly expressed, when it is desirable to give an assurance of sympathy.

Twirk contrived to get out of the way, but eyed the doctor from a favourite nook by the pantry door, that commanded a view of the yard, wondering, meanwhile, what he wanted with that troublesome woman, Sally Hood, who had been loitering about, crying near the front of the house, and now followed the doctor in, and went after him to the bar-parlour, saying, mentally, "What's up now? The fool, she wouldn't split on her boy surely?"

Mrs. Stillwell was in a state of great comfort since she yesterday so very handsomely got rid of the child; and she even had been complimented on her benevolence by Mr. Aspen, who dropped in to say, "How pleased he was that the

interesting little stranger had found such protection; that an instance of such kindness, both at the inn and at Cumb'ry, was an honour to all parties—reflected great credit on Boveycum."

Soothed by this she had slept well, and taken a most luxurious breakfast, the flavour of which was not in the least impaired by hearing, on all hands, a variety of accounts of the damage done to Dr. Franks' windows. "She was very sorry, very; but it was just what she had thought would be the upshot of all the doctor's new-fangled ways."

To him, she expressed, in a genteel way, her regret at the outrage. "The lower orders is offal."

But Dr. Franks rather impatiently cut short her remarks, by saying, "I have come to you on business, Mrs. Stillwell. You know Sally Hood?" Thus appealed to, Mrs. Stillwell drew herself up, and merely said—

"Well, sir?"

"Her son, I hear, is a singer, and he has begun to come here."

"Oh! I know nothing of that; I'll call Twirk."

"No, it's you, Mrs. Stillwell, we want. Is it true that Captain Flammerton has promised to give the lad drink, and make him, as it is called, free of the house, in consideration of his singing?"

"Oh, dear! you must ask the capting: I have no jurydiction, certently none whatever, over the capting."

"Sally, come here and speak for yourself to Mrs. Stillwell," said Dr. Franks, taking the poor woman's arm and leading her forward. "Hear her, she is a wife and a mother, and is injured, I fear, for life, by her drunken husband."

"Ah! he've used this house for years, ma'am," said Sally, in a faltering tone, dropping her humble curtsy. "He was a sober man once, please ma'am, when he first come;

but that's long ago; and, Lord help me, I hardly know how the years a-come an' gone. But he's changed, and I be changed. We'd never a wry word once, and now we've nothin' else, except it's blows, and they falls heavy. It's hard, me as have nust his children, and carried many a baby's head soft and warm o' my poor breast, to feel it now burnin' like as if it wur a box-iron, with a red-hot heater in it; it's hard, ma'am; and wus than all to know how it cum. But there, I don't mean to accuse Bill; all I wants is that you'll not let nobody 'tice my boy. He's to Mr. Vellum's, the bookseller's, by day, and a good lad if he's let be. He's the only bit o' comfort I've got to look to, since my little Nancy died, and when I laid she in the grave, I said she's mayhap saved from a worl o' trouble; but my boy—oh, ma'am!"

"I've nothin' to do with it, good woman; I don't want your boy here. You've a rare tongue of your own. I daresay your husband comes to the tap, if he does come, for peace and quietness. It's all folly and nonsense your a-coming here. I know nothing of the customers even in the house, let alone the tap."

"Oh, dear, no!" put in Miss Grig loftily.

"Is that your answer, Mrs. Stillwell?" said Dr. Franks; "I shall see Mr. Vellum and the rector about this matter, unless you give orders that this boy shall come here no more."

"Upon my word, Dr. Franks, if it wasn't that you've been put about a bit, I should say it was unneighbourly you a-comin' to me, a widder, and talking like that."

"Sally Hood is equally my neighbour, Mrs. Stillwell."

"Equally!" interrupted Mrs. Stillwell, drawing back the folds of her rich merino gown, which in their amplitude were actually touching the scanty skirts of the poor woman. "Equally, indeed! You must know, Dr. Franks, that my

house is the first and most highly respectablest in the town. The clergy and gentry paternizes the Raven." She gave a gasping laugh, and, calling to Grig, fainted.

The doctor being beaten from the field, as he was leaving the room there came a hollow sound of dismal laughter from the desk, and, leaning over the rail, the pale face of Berry met his upward gaze, as a hissing whisper sounded in his ear—"You came here to appeal to heart—conscience? Void, void! Nothing can come of nothing."

Outside the Raven the poor woman curtsied to him, and turned disconsolately to her desolate home, carrying with her the weight, not merely of an aching bosom, but an aching heart.

"I tell you what it is," said Captain Flammerton, who had gathered hastily the purport of the doctor's visit, and now, crossing the Bull-ring to an angle, came up with him—"I think it's ungentlemanly to press matters of business on a widow, sir. Permit me to say, I think it indiscreet. These people that you patronize, and lift out of their sphere, how do they treat you, pray? Why, Dr. Franks, your windows might teach you something, I think."

"They do, captain; they teach me the benefits that the Raven and its compeers confer on the morals and manners of Boveycum."

At this moment up came the rector, wearing his usual open-eyed, wide-mouthed smile. He had heard the news about Dr. Franks' windows, and he caught the last words he had uttered.

"Ah! sad, sad. Morals and manners bad, lamentably bad—that is, in this case. With our schools, and our charities, and caring for the poor as we do; yes, we, gentlemen. I include you both. I know you're the friends of progress, It's surprising—very."

"Not to me," said Dr. Franks. "The root of the evil lies far below the surface."

"As low as the Raven's cellars, Dr. Franks thinks," said Captain Flammerton, laughing, as if he had said something very witty.

"Exactly. But I have no wish to dwell on any matters that may be my own special annoyance. I was purposing to call on you, Mr. Aspen."

"Very happy, always, to see you, my dear friend; but this morning I've an appointment. I must hasten; the days get very short."

"Yes, very short; we should make the most of them," said Dr. Franks abstractedly, as the rector turned and walked hastily in another direction; and Captain Flammerton, drawing himself up with an air of offended dignity, set his hat fiercely forward, and walked with his most martial air into Mr. Vellum's, the bookseller, where young Hood was skulking behind the shop window, and peering with an alarmed and guilty look at Dr. Franks.

The captain nodded condescendingly to the boy, and said, in an encouraging tone—"All right, my good fellow;" and though not another word passed, the lad felt sure that he had a confident and an ally in the captain. He paused a moment, and turned over a pile of pocket-books for the following year that lay on the counter, when a tall, slim girl, in shabby black, with a mild, pretty face, delicately tinted as a pale blush rose, entered the shop to buy a sheet of writing paper. Captain Flammerton looked at her attentively a moment, and then said in a bland, patronizing way—"Why, my little maid, you're growing out of knowledge; you're one of the Vospers, eh? Jane, Kate, eh?"

"Bessy, sir," said the young girl, with a blush and a curtsy, her eyes dilating as if with unshed tears; "I'm the eldest."

"Oh! the eldest are you? Yes, stay a moment, I want to speak to you. Would you like a nice situation, now, eh? Your mother must put you out, eh? Mind-shoo—I'm not certain, but I think Mrs. Stillwell wants a neat, handy lass, just to wait on her and to assist Grig. Suppose you step across in half-an-hour, and I'll speak to her about it, and see what can be done for you, eh?"

The girl had once or twice tried to speak as the captain was, with all due parade, making this offer; but her voice or courage failed. She looked downcast; yet as she was obliged to answer, she again curtsied, and said—"Thank you, sir; mother is obliged to part with me. I'm ——"

"Ah! yes, I thought so," interrupted the captain. "You'll do very well, very well indeed, no doubt." As he spoke he stretched out his hand and laid it half-familiarly, half-patronizingly, on her shoulder. The girl swerved aside, and added quickly—

"I'm going to Dr. Franks', sir, to help old Dorcas, who's getting rather frail."

"Dr. Franks!—help old Dorcas—a young girl like you; why, you can do better than that. I must see your mother."

"Mother can't see anybody while Jane and Willie are so bad, sir; and Dr. Franks has been very kind, very; and ——"

"Well, well," interposed Captain Flammerton, impatiently waving his hand.

"And I don't think mother would let me go to the Raven. I know she wouldn't."

"Hey-day! If you're only fit to help old Dorcas—mind-shoo—you wouldn't at all suit for the situation I thought of. A bright, smart girl—good-looking and well dressed. Ah, ah! win gold and wear it. That's the lass for my money." Captain Flammerton, more ruffled than he chose to admit even to himself, said, mentally, "Confound that Franks,

he's snapped up that slip of a girl of Vosper's. She's nothing now—a mere lath; but in a year or two that girl would draw custom; and Grig is all furbelow and haberdashery—nothing but a milliner's doll; and, hang it, our fellows know what's what. They like to see a fine lass in the bar; it's a trump card, though that Rasp—ugly toad—keeps her eye, I know, on the girls."

CHAPTER XII.

HOW THE STRAY BIRD FARED IN HER NEW NEST.

"Alas! the mountain tops that look so green and fair,
I've heard of fearful winds and darkness that come there."
WORDSWORTH.

LITTLE Birdie, or Roselle, as she was now called, was quite at her ease in her new quarters—at present. A small couch that stood in an alcove in Miss Keziah's dressing-room was improvised into a bed for the new favourite. There had been a grand game of romps between the lady and child before the latter, wearied out, retired to rest; and the state of the room almost justified the ill-temper of Mrs. Gribber. Packs of playing cards had been brought to build houses, to amuse her, and they were now strewed all over the carpet. Chessmen, and dominoes, and a portfolio of prints were scattered in confusion on the chairs. A heap of new prints and silks from a draper's were piled on the table; new shoes and hats seem to have been tried on and flung down anywhere and everywhere. Miss Keziah had dined with her brother, and was now playing cribbage with him in the library, and expecting the return of her nephew, Vesey, who had been visiting some sporting friends at the other end of the county.

The consciousness of having done a kind action, and the delight of possessing so pretty and engaging a toy as the child, had put Miss Keziah in such unwonted good humour, that she played her game with an animation so refreshing to the squire, that he drank off a succession of toasts which had Birdie for their theme, humming, as he emptied his glasses, the refrain of an old drinking song—

"Let the toast pass,
Drink to the lass;
I warrant she'll prove an excuse for the glass."

Meanwhile the feelings among the gentry of the second table were by no means so pleasant. Mrs. Gribber stood in the midst of the confusion up stairs compressing her lips until they were merely like the seam of a gash across her face. Her restless, sidelong glances went all round the room, and her hands caught up successively several articles, and then let them drop in disgust. The happy face of Birdie as it lay on the pillow in a deep sleep—the little fingers just relaxing their hold on a bright feather fan of Miss Keziah's, which the child had insisted on taking to bed with her—though a charming sight, gave anything rather than pleasure to Gribber. She knit her brows as she looked on the little bed and its occupant, and then, with an impatient toss of her head, rang the bell and summoned a young housemaid to her assistance, who began to murmur in bewildered accents, as she looked around, "Wherever shall I begin? It's all of a mixty-maxty."

"Whatever 'tis or whatever 'tisn't, it's your place, Patty, to kip these rooms in order, that's what it is; and if you follers your work all day an' all night, kip 'em in order you must. Miss Roselle 'ull hev to be waited on, hand an' foot."

It evidently comforted Gribber to have some one to worry; so she followed up poor Patty in her folding, and sorting, and arranging, with a keen vigilance and tart invective, which so tormented the girl that she blundered continually. Mrs. Gribber was much too clever to express openly a word of impatience either against her mistress or the new favourite, and when the girl ventured to say, as she looked at the sleeping child—

"Her's a pretty dear surely; but her'll be oceans worse 'an Fido."

"Worse! what do you mean? Don't let Miss Keziah hear you a-speaking agen that blessed dog or this precious child. Didn't you put yourself forrard a-fetchin' and a-carryin' from Fido's grave. I'm for lettin' the dead rest, I am; but sum folks is abov askin' their elders."

The girl began to cry in her perplexity and vexation, and said apologetically—

"Why, you was out, Mrs. Gribber; and the bit o' paper seemed to hev been fixed so cearful-like, with that girt skewer, and was written so fine, how should I know?"

"In coorse, how should you? Ain't that what I'm sayin'?" And so, while Mrs. Gribber arranged her mistress's toilet-table, she contrived to make the new favourite as unpopular as possible, for Patty was fain to seek further help, and there were the usual interjections and prophecies among the kitchen authorities as they came to look on "the bedlam broke loose," in Missis's bowdwah, as they called it; and dismal forebodings were whispered that the house would be unbearable. "Dogs wanted no clothing, and told no tales, and was easily satisfied."

This question had no sooner been settled unanimously—except, indeed, that Gribber cautiously reserved her opinion, allowing it to be inferred—than there was the sound of Mr.

Vesey's voice in the hall, and many conjectures were hazarded as to how he would like the new arrival that had come in his absence.

This was a very natural inquiry. Mr. Vesey Pendrainly was not a very active or acute young gentleman. He had the idea—not altogether unfounded—that he had all his earlier years been rather snubbed by his uncle and aunt, and thrown into the shade by his clever elder brother. Such self-indulgent persons as the squire and his sister were sure to make favouritism the rule in the family. They had not the sense of justice that ought to regulate the treatment of the young, nor the largeness of heart that could embrace and love for their different qualities the different descendants of their now small family. Indeed, the only basis for either justice or love, in the highest sense, is Christian principle; and of that they were too deficient even to suspect their deficiency. Common sense and kindly feeling may often be a kind of substitute for higher principles in the regulation of family affections; but these were the attributes of neither the squire nor his sister. Blind followers of blind impulses, they had each lavished praises and indulgences on their elder nephew; felt a gratified vanity in the commendations bestowed on his person and his talents; brought him into society earlier than was good for him; given him expensive tastes, and fostered dangerous habits; heard with complacency of his feats in horsemanship, sporting, drinking, and rioting in general. It was not until heavy debts, the consequences of this career, resulted, followed by his slighting Miss Dignum, a young lady of great wealth, who was on the point of an engagement with Frederick Pendrainly, that the squire took an aversion to his nephew, as strong and unreasoning as his former liking. Miss Keziah, who had, as she said, "set her heart on the match," was

even more incensed with Frederick than her brother was. She exhausted her own vocabulary, and enlisted all the poets, from Shakspere downward, in expressions of horror at the ingratitude of "that disgrace to his name, Frederick Pendrainly."

Neither brother nor sister for one moment blamed themselves. They mutually resolved on never naming or seeing their elder nephew more; and Vesey was brought from the background he had hitherto occupied in the family, and from the college—where he was pretending to study—to fill his brother's place. It must be owned that though Vesey had a willingness to propitiate his aunt and uncle greater than ever the wayward Frederick had shown, he was but a dull companion. When he had discussed the merits of his favourite horse or dog, and given the statistics of the stables of his friends, or told the history of some cricket or rowing match, his topics were exhausted. He tried hard to be a good listener, but unless it was to kindred themes, he could not command his attention; and he had a habit of opening his eyes very wide, fixing them upon his companion, whoever it might be, and going off into the land of sleep as completely as if his eyes were shut and his head on the pillow. Indeed, he manifested that it was real open-eyed somnolency, for he would breathe in such deep, regular cadence, that it almost amounted to a snore. This peculiarity was so marked that certain of his young friends talked of him among themselves as "snoring Vesey."

He had made his court to his aunt by giving her Fido; and he tried to propitiate his uncle by drinking with him, and in this latter accomplishment, if in no other, he excelled his brother Frederick. Drink, that excited the mercurial temperament of the one, was a sort of sedative to the absorbent system of the other. Frederick, when he had taken a

few glasses, was the gayest of the gay—for a joke or a song he was then prime. Games of skill at this stage he could play capitally. His uncle used to say it was a real treat to have a game of chess or backgammon, or a rubber at whist with Fred. when he was just started; there was a great triumph in winning, and small disgrace in losing with him for an adversary, while playing with Vesey was always dreary work, for his defeat was sure. Vesey, with his knees under the mahogany, could drink twice as much as his brother had ever done, and only stare the harder and snore the louder. He had, as his uncle said, quite the family gift in carrying his drink.

It will readily be understood that, with so limited a range of acquirement, Mr. Vesey's absence from "Cumb'ry" did not create a great blank; still, the squire, who found it monotonous sitting alone over his glass, now the nights were getting long, was glad to see Vesey come in. It was some one to lecture, or grumble to, or snub; and Miss Keziah had always her little twaddle to tell to a fresh listener, so that the young man found himself welcomed with unusual cordiality. He sat himself down at the round table, his uncle and aunt facing each other, one on each side of the table, with a cribbage-board between them. A glowing fire in the grate sent out its kindly warmth on Vesey as he seated himself opposite, and equally distant from the two players. The game was soon over, and then, while the gentlemen continued regularly plying the bottle, and nodding to one another like automaton Chinese mandarins, Miss Keziah related her story about recent events, and concluded it by drawing out the lines from her pocket and reading them.

"There's a dead dog for you," said the squire, winking knowingly at his nephew; whose only reply was in a tone of sleepy amazement.

"Fido died mad, didn't he?"

"He did," said Miss Keziah solemnly; "and that convinces me dogs—that is, some dogs—have souls, or how could they go mad? Isn't madness mental disease?"

"There, Kizzy, don't bother your brains about that, but tell us what you mean to do with the child, now you've got her."

"Rescued the darling from 'the Raven's cruel nest,'" interposed the lady; adding, in reply to the question, "Do with her? What do people ever do with children when they're beautiful as angels, but make pets of them?"

"Haw! well; but she must have a nurse or a governess; somebody to do the drudgery. There was a rare *posse* of such folks when—when the nursery here was last used."

The squire had been on the point of naming the absent Frederick, but had altered the termination of his remark.

In an absent way, Mr. Vesey said, "Wont that sort of thing be very expensive?"

It was evident his dull brains were working with an idea, and it disturbed him.

"Expense! come and see her, Vesey. Come, you dull, old fellow you; shake yourself awake, and come. Roselle is, in a sense, your gift, you know."

"Mine!" said the puzzled young man, never able plainly to understand his aunt, and now wholly at fault. "Mine!"

"Yes," said Miss Keziah, laughing. "Yes; you gave me Fido; and poor Fido from his grave showed himself worthy of his name, and directed me to a substitute for his affection."

"Not he; that's all moonshine, aunt. I'm not so dull as all that," protested the prosaic Vesey.

"Moonshine! capital; of course it was: a reflected light, pure and tender, that came to me. You have said a good

thing, Vesey—you really have. But come, see this angel, and then talk of expense, if you can."

Vesey rose reluctantly, and followed his mercurial aunt to the room where the child was sleeping, saying peevishly as he went up stairs and across the corridor, "I know about her, and saw her at the Raven the time of the cricketers' dinner."

It was curious to observe the difference between the two faces leaning over the little bed—one so enthusiastic, the other so stolid.

Miss Keziah called her her sweet Roselle, and showered kisses enough upon the child to wake her; indeed, tried to do so; but the little curly head turned over on the pillow and resolutely slept.

"That's enough, aunt; I see her," said Vesey, his mind by this time beginning to cogitate as to the child's antecedents. Without any circumlocution he bolted out, "Who do you think she belongs to?"

"I know nothing, and I care nothing, Vesey. She's a fairy gift—my Fido's legacy—that's enough for me."

"Well, but aunt, now, somebody must a' been in it?"

"O you dear, slow, old fellow! don't ask me; you'll stupify me putting those dull, matter-of-fact sort of questions. You've no ideality—none."

"But it's out of all reason."

"Well, well, ask Dr. Strong. There, that's all I can say of my Roselle—ask Dr. Strong. And, Gribber, lay the darling's playthings upon chairs, ready for her when she wakes. I want her always amused, and then she'll be amusing. Oh! she sings like a bird. Indeed, her name is Birdie; but I didn't quite like that; it was too vague."

"Well, she's roosting pretty snug."

"Ah! true. Really, Vesey, she has improved you already.

Ah! who knows but the old story of Cimon and Iphigenia—to be sure, I don't think Iphigenia was a child; no—but it will do though, in a sense; for Cimon was such a boor, a mere clown, and she transformed him. There, go now; good night. Gribber, my mulled wine; and so saying, Miss Keziah dismissed her staring nephew, who, as he ponderously lounged down stairs, repeated slowly, "A boor—a mere clown—Fido's legacy—Dr. Strong. Well, I shall ask him what he means bringing legacies like that here."

The idea that the little girl might become a legatee, superseding Mr. Vesey's own claims, was slowly evolving in his mind; and Miss Pendrainly had, with wondrous dexterity, contrived to make a host of enemies, with her nephew at their head, for her darling Roselle.

Meanwhile Berry had so far regained her usual composure that no outward traces remained of her recent mental sufferings. She fell into her old routine of abstracted working, silent observation, and apparent indifference. On the early part of the evening whose events we have recorded, she had paid one of her wonted visits to Dr. Franks, and heard one sentence there which startled and troubled her not a little.

When Dr. Franks came in, followed by his new domestic, Bessy Vosper, Berry shrunk, as was her wont, into a nook, and with a searching gaze perused the young girl's face; for she had heard in her retreat that day an angry statement of Bessy having refused a place at the Raven, and going to what Twirk facetiously called "Dr. Franks' tank, famous for gripes and gruel."

The scrutiny seemed to satisfy Berry. While Dorcas was taking the young girl up stairs, and in the half-grumbling way of an old and favoured servant, bemoaning her weakness that any help should be needed, Berry left her station beside the clock-case, and following Dr. Franks into his

new study, was at the side of his chair as he seated himself wearily. He was not startled at seeing her; and something of a momentary community of feeling gave a touch of tenderness to the always considerate manner in which he addressed the cripple.

"My poor Berry," he said, "I fear you are not well?"

"Oh! I'm well enough, sir," she said, putting coldly back Dr. Franks' outstretched hand, and adding abruptly, "You've heard Miss Pendrainly has taken that child off our hands, or out of our claws, we Raven people?"

"Yes, Berry; and though you Raven people, as you are pleased to phrase it, are not fit to train a child, the little thing is no better off where she is."

There was a perceptible shade of annoyance on Berry's face, that came across its habitual gloom like a lurid ray on a dark cloud.

"Why? The lady is rich—not a niggard—can be kind to any pretty living thing. She keeps her cruelty for the ugly and the helpless; and, moreover, she is vain, and through that folly can be propitiated."

"Vanity, caprice, and selfishness are a triad not to be separated in human character. She will make her pet hated by every one, and then she'll tire of her, and cast her off—that is, if the child lives."

"*If* she lives; why that '*if*,' sir?"

"Oh! life is insecure. Young life often very insecure."

"*I* lived," said Berry drearily.

"True; and so may this poor thing; but luxury, Berry, and pampering, kill more frequently than disease; and in that house there are other influences unfavourable to the child. Favourites, whether canine or human, have enemies."

"Dr. Franks, sir; you do not mean that the poor pet-dog was unfairly dealt with?"

"No—o," said Dr. Franks musingly, and relapsed into silence. Berry, crouching on a hassock near his feet, looked intently into the fire, as if trying to read the future there. She remembered, with a sudden pang, that Mrs. Gribber had a nephew, a sort of under shop-boy, at Mulsion's, the druggist. She looked up as if intending to speak; but Dr. Franks had drawn his desk towards him and was writing with absorbed attention. Berry crept round, in her noiseless way, to a side-table where Herbert's lesson-books and simple writing materials were. She took a scrap of paper, and in printed characters wrote a sentence; then enclosed it in an envelope, and with as much abruptness and suddenness as she had entered, took her departure unnoticed by Dr. Franks. She avoided the kitchen by letting herself out of the front door, and with her usual crouching step, yet more quickly than might be supposed, she went to the top of the town, and stationed herself where two roads met. Just then the church clock struck eight; she threw out her arms with a gesture of disappointment, and muttered, "Too late—too late; the carrier's cart has gone;" then, listlessly turning, she bent her steps homeward. Chance, however, seemed to favour her. In the yard, at the Raven, on a little stand under a cloak-rail, the first thing she noticed on entering was the basket of the chemist's boy, with all his town packets delivered, but some others remaining. The quick eye of Berry saw these were directed to Miss Pendrainly, and next to them lay a letter in Twirk's handwriting, on a sheet of paper clumsily folded in the way commonly adopted before envelopes came into general use. In an instant the tiny note of Berry's was slipped within the open end of Twirk's letter; and as she crept away she heard the voices of Jem Gribber and the waiter coming from the tap, where the latter had been treat-

ing his messenger to "a drop of something short as 'ud lighten the road." The boy swung his basket on his arm without looking at its contents, and went off at a good round pace. As he lodged with the under-gardener at Cumb'ry, his last journey with Miss Pendrainly's indispensable medicines was always to the squire's. In about three-quarters of an hour the boy had fulfilled Twirk's directions, by giving his letter into Mrs. Gribber's own hands, and was again treated with a glass of the famous Pendrainly ale; his aunt, meanwhile, giving him, as she put the letter in her pocket, a moral lesson, couched in very old phraseology, to the effect that "A still tongue made a wise head," and so dismissed him.

As we have seen, Mrs. Gribber's time and patience were both heavily taxed that night. Miss Keziah was a long while sipping her mulled wine and making her night toilet. But at length she was safe in bed, and Gribber was free to go to her own room and make herself acquainted with the contents of Twirk's letter. It contained, as she expected, an offer of what he called "his 'and and 'art;" and intimated, in words whose prophetic style particularly interested Gribber, that "p'r'aps he was as well hoff as many as carried theirselves much loftier; and only waited but for a snug concern to be heard on, and the consent of wun as no doubt could bring a trifle to help at a pinch; and with them two blessins as a-sitting down in life, none 'ud be lovinger than Richard Twirk."

Gribber had observed, as she opened the letter, the little closely-folded enclosure within it, and she held it in her hand while she was slowly spelling through Twirk's sentences, for she had not the benefit of modern systems of education. For some minutes afterwards she entirely forgot it, in the interesting emotions and considerations that had been excited

by the offer. Suddenly, as she unclosed her hand, she let it drop, and a momentary thought, that perhaps it was some little present, though it felt very light as she picked it up, made her eagerly undo the folds. Who shall describe the changes in her countenance when she saw in clear, large, printed characters, the two words—

"POISONER, BEWARE!"

Gribber was not a person to tremble or faint. She had all her wits about her; but she certainly turned of a sallower tint, and her breath came in gasps. She sat down and compelled herself to read the paper again. She looked outside, and saw her own name in the same kind of writing. A strange awe crept over her, and she gazed round the room, rose and drew the curtains of the window close, peeped into a cupboard, as if she had the impression of being watched, and locking her door, read the words again; the dog, the poem, the child, her nephew, and Twirk, being all in a confused way in her mind. Far into the night she sat; and it was one result of the warning that she made a fire of waste paper in her grate, and burned a little packet of powder that she took from her box, muttering to herself as she did so—"It was only a dog, a troublesome beast, and I didn't kill *him*. It only made him a bit ill and drowsy, and giv her a fright. The squire ordered him to be shot; and as for they others, their lives was a misery, poor, fat porpusses. To think o' such a fuss and a-going on about a beast like that!" At that instant some noise outside disturbed the mastiff who ranged the stables and offices, and his deep-mouthed bark came booming up to Gribber's window in a way that sounded to her ominous. Hastily clearing the grate of the remains of burnt paper, her teeth chattering in her head, Gribber resolving, at the earliest opportunity, to question her nephew and Twirk, she went shivering to bed.

Before daylight she rose and made her way to the under-gardener's cottage; but all her inquiries failed to elicit any explanation of the mystery. The boy denied that he had ever left his basket; he had come direct from the Raven without stopping anywhere. Gribber, of course, guarded her question, and the lad supposed something was wrong with the medicine.

She returned perplexed, but now entirely free from the superstitious terrors of the past night, and angry with herself for yielding to them. One feeling gained strength with morning light—dislike and anger at the child. If wishes could kill, Gribber would not have been free from the guilt of murder; but she had a wholesome dread mixed with her dislike—a belief that in some way she had been found out; that she was in some unknown person's power; and that the child was secretly watched. Such a frame of mind was not improved during the day by Miss Keziah's mode of proceeding. Two dressmakers came to make up clothes for the little Roselle, and the work of attendance and waiting was fully doubled. The squire became as great an admirer of the child as his sister; and Mr. Vesey, who had a remembrance of such words of praise having been lavished on his brother in years gone by, and always to his own disparagement, had an uneasy feeling that he was to be again superseded, and this time by a "nobody knows who."

In a week Miss Keziah contrived to make her *protégé* absolutely hated. The child, to do her justice, was not half as exacting as she might have been. Her affectionate nature was amenable to a word; but her quick temper, and the involuntary caprices of an active mind, made her imperious. The pretty air of authority that she assumed was so amusing to both the squire and his sister, that they encouraged it, and "Miss Roselle's commands were not to be disputed."

Had the poor child been a descendant of the house, thus trained she would not have been popular; but when every servant knew she was a foundling, and were for exaggerating the mystery, and blending it with sin and shame, it may be readily supposed that the bitterness was as extreme against her as possible. One of the grooms, who was a sweetheart of Patty, the housemaid, undertook to watch Fido's grave pretty closely, under the notion that some more writing would be put there, and thus they would discover some connection of the child's, and be able to damage her with Miss Keziah; but the grave was silent from henceforth. Gribber had taken occasion to go into town, and had met Twirk by appointment in the churchyard. They both scanned the paper before destroying it, but came to no definite conclusion about it, except that for the future, if another dog came into favour, such summary means as Gribber had used with his canine predecessors must be dispensed with. There was something amusing even to Twirk in the way in which the lady's maid said, "This thing is a thousand times worse than a score of Fidos. If I'd a-known, I'd never have made room for this brat. That's what worrits me past bearing, to think as I made a place for the young minx."

"Better leave it altogether arter Christmas," was Twirk's recommendation. Certainly it excited a little curiosity in Gribber how he should have made the money she concluded he must have; for he never ventured to speak so plainly before, though he was decidedly opposed to going into business anywhere but in London. "It's slow work yere," was his remark. His soul evidently was fired with ambition. A country town would be too limited a sphere for his powers. He did not tell his companion the exact amount of his "savings," nor hint that one motive for his determination to go into business in London was the desire to avoid

any awkward questions or comments on his sudden prosperity.

Meanwhile, Miss Patterson, who had visited Birdie at the Raven, to see if she had any knowledge of foreign languages, was engaged to come for two hours daily, to give lessons to Miss Roselle, and the child learned, as she did everything that pleased her, with wonderful avidity. The little song that she had first sung was superseded by others, and her gay carol rang through the house like a ray of quivering light.

Still, like all spoiled children, Roselle was often very unhappy. There were times, too, when she was greatly neglected. A series of parties at many houses of the gentry round were given as the winter set in, and though at first Miss Keziah thought of taking her "sweet Roselle," it was plainly intimated that course would not be agreeable. The servants had spread tales of the child's waywardness and Miss Pendrainly's indulgence, and matrons who had nurseries of their own objected to the introduction of a child of whose antecedents they knew nothing, or rather about whom they knew too little and too much; and in houses where there were no children, they were voted inadmissible; so that, during these preparations for gay doings, and when the visits were paid, Roselle had a bitter experience of neglect. It is always in the power of servants, without active unkindness, to make a child feel deserted and alone; but the excellent health and spirits of the little creature saved her from fretting. She learned to read with wonderful avidity, and being supplied with all sorts of baby books, she would amuse herself the whole day through. Some children are wonderfully sufficient to their own amusement, and no one could be more so than this little girl, who was either singing her

playful songs or poring over her picture books at Cumb'ry, always good and happy when let alone.

Another interest sprung up for Miss Keziah. Vesey, not liking the state of things at home, became more in earnest than he had ever yet been to marry. His uncle wished it; though Vesey did not make much progress in the ladies' good graces—at least those around Boveycum; but there was a pretty girl, just let loose from school, who came to spend Christmas at Glenslea, a large country house about twenty miles from Cumb'ry, owned by Mr. Twistle, the great maltster. It was understood she had money; as to family, there was a slight difficulty. However, as she was an orphan, and so there would be no trouble with vulgar connections, Vesey's uncle and aunt approved.

The young people, on their part, had danced together at the county ball; they had sung duets together, and their voices suited each other; they had rode out together, and Vesey had shown manifest superiority there, for he had greatly re-assured Miss Brand, who was a timid horsewoman, and he had promised to break and train a colt for her especial use. And on this acquaintanceship the gentleman spoke. It was the lady's first offer. There were plenty of mutual young friends to rally them and talk at them. The Twistle girls were content she should have Vesey, whom they laughed at; and so in a very short time, without any hitch or misgiving, the affair was settled. Thousands of similar marriages are made every year. Indeed, there is, no doubt, some truth in the remark that Twirk made to Mrs. Gribber, when she, in confidence, communicated the approaching nuptials, "Weddings is like pie-crusts, the quicker they're mixed up, and turned out o' hand, the better they eat." So a hasty affair it was. Miss Brand was married from Glenslea; and Miss

Keziah, all flutter and furbelow, was so sentimental and juvenile that not the youngest lady present excelled her in graceful little coquetries. Poor Roselle, of course, was left at home for nearly a week. We shall see how the child employed her time meanwhile, and the new acquaintances she made.

CHAPTER XIII.

TOSSED AND DRIFTED.

"'Tis of a little child
Upon a lonesome wild,
Not far from home; but she hath lost her way,
And now moans low, in bitter grief and fear,
And now screams loud."—COLERIDGE.

ON the week of Mr. Vesey Pendrainly's wedding the domestics at Cumb'ry had permission to have a grand gala. The squire and Miss Kizzy intended to remain at Glenslea, for there was plenty of drinking in prospect for the one, and flirtation and finery for the other. Miss Kizzy left Gribber in charge of the child and the house, and took as her substitute Annie Clinch, a young woman, recently from London, whom she had seen at the Boveycum dressmaker's, and taken a sudden fancy to.

Miss Patterson, the daily governess, claimed her holidays; and therefore, when the card-party, supper, and dance came off, that the servants had to celebrate both the new year and the nuptials, the child was left, during the preparations of the day, pretty much to her own devices, in an upper room that was now called the school-room. Patty was certainly placed in charge of her, but she had her own pleasures to seek; and as the window of an adjoining closet commanded

a view of the stables, she employed herself chiefly in looking out, and exchanging a series of signals with Saunders.

The excitement that pervades a house where a festivity is impending always communicates itself to children. They feel—little sensitive creatures that they are—the quicker beating of the general pulse, and their own throbs in unison. Birdie danced and capered about her room as if the amusement of the evening was for her; and when Patty impatiently told her to be quiet, and added that she was to go to bed an hour earlier that night, Birdie, in her waywardness, resolved to prevent that by making a bold effort for freedom. Seeing Patty busy at the window, and a door on to the staircase being unclosed, the child stole out, and had been absent full half-an-hour before the girl looked round for her; and even then, idly concluding she had rambled with her dolls to Miss Keziah's boudoir, Patty took the opportunity of running up stairs and laying out her finery for the evening, trying on her cap before the glass, and hardly noting the flight of time while she was so occupied.

The striking of a distant clock warned her to fetch up the nursery dinner; and away she went down stairs, without looking for her charge.

Meanwhile, Roselle, finding that the two dolls she had lugged down one flight of stairs encumbered her, put them into a sitting posture at the door of Miss Pendrainly's apartments, kissed them both, and, with a pretty mimicry of her patroness's manner, saying, "Be dood; I'll soon come back, darlings," away she went down stairs into the hall, and a south door being open, was soon out on the lawn in the clear sunshine of a fine winter day. The joy of being alone, the sense of freedom, was in her nerves, if not in her thoughts. Gaily she skipped along the carriage sweep, took a turning out of the avenue that by a short cut led to a small gate

which opened into a lane, and was chiefly used by the gardeners. It was unfastened, and forth she went into the outside path. Seeing a robin hopping, first in the lane, then flying into the hedge, from thence away to a tree, and so swaying above her head, carolling out its merry song, the child laughed aloud, and seemed only able to express her glee by swift motion. Away she ran, stooped down to pick up a pebble, and throwing it before her, kept up a chase that sent her uncovered curls flying on the breeze, and made the colour mount in brightest bloom to her cheeks. For an hour she had strayed thus, when suddenly she came to the end of a lane, and, on the margin of a dirty pool, saw a dismal-looking cottage. The door was ajar, and the child, suddenly frightened, peeped timorously in. There was a miserable bed on the brick floor—a sick woman and two pallid children were lying on it; while half-dozing over the morsel of fire was a withered-looking old crone. Roselle was just turning away terrified, when the sick woman suddenly sat up in bed, and, with a scream, said, "What's that?" The old woman turned, and cowered for a moment as she saw the little creature in all the glow of life and light standing on the threshold.

"It's a warning for death."

But the child swiftly dispelled any thought of her being an ethereal visitant by a sudden panic-cry of fear. The strange place and her loneliness seemed at once to have struck her.

The old woman had heard of the child at the Big House, and immediately concluded rightly, that she now saw her, and that she had strayed from her home.

"Oh, missy! you didn't, oughtn't, not to a-cum' to we, 'cause o' the fever," she said. Then rising up, she went to the door and called out in a shrill, cracked voice, that

brought a ragged boy from a sort of shed near. She directed him to take the child, who was now crying bitterly, home. The wind by this time had suddenly changed, and the clouds were lowering; the uncovered head and neck of the child made the old granny look round for something to put upon her, and a tattered shawl was tied about her head and throat. Thus disguised, and with her strange attendant, Roselle retraced her steps. A vague dread of what awaited her, Miss Keziah being absent, made her linger, so that the time of the return was at least twice as long as the flight. It rained for the last half-hour heavily, and a most dilapidated object was our Birdie, her clothes all drenched and dabbled, and the old musty shawl, like a wisp of rotten hay, round her neck. She came up the main avenue to the house with her conductor, and stepped into the portico just as Mrs. Gribber, from the farther end of the hall, saw the boy, and with an angry gesture of her hand was waving him off. She came forward, enraged as she beheld him and his companion, still unmindful of her hand, mounting the steps. "You tramp; how dare you! Go away this moment! or I'll call the men, and they'll give you a taste of the dog-whip." She stopped suddenly in her threats, for the child ran to her, saying half-crying, half-coaxing, "Gibby, its Rose; wont go away again, dear Gibby."

"You! here, Patty; where are you? Why was ever such a fright? You, Miss Roselle, indeed! Well, I never —who are you, boy?"

"I'm Ralph Hedgum's bwoy, please."

"Oh! what—where they've got the fever? Go away this moment. You're father's a drunken vagabond; I heard the squire say so."

"Please," whimpered the boy, still lingering in hope of some reward.

"There, go, I tell you. Why did you bring the little wret— miss, I mean, through the rain? Why didn't you keep her, and come and tell us? Go."

"Please, her's got granny's shawl; mayn't I have it?"

By this time the hall was filled with servants, and the delinquent, Patty, coming forward, had her tears ready. Oh! Mrs. Gribber, I never see such a young lady for deepness.

"Young lady!" sneered the servants.

"I'd young lady her, if I'd my will," muttered the upper housemaid, whose work had been much increased by Birdie.

"I wish I'd the basting of her," said the cook, remembering the extra dinner she had to send up to the nursery daily.

"There, Miss," said Gribber; "can't you take off the shawl yourself; you can do a deal more when you likes than anybody knows on. Patty, for gracious sake don't cry no more; and don't touch that shawl, there's a fever in that drunken fellow's cottage as hev killed one on 'em already, and the rest is down."

"Missus won't hev the carriage druve that way," said a man-servant, coming forward.

The sight of the angry looks gleaming round her terrified the child. She tried to get off the shawl, but her hands were benumbed with cold. Suddenly Mrs. Gribber bethought herself of a plan of getting it off without touching it, that would be both humiliating and alarming to the child. She darted into the dining-room, and returning with a pair of tongs, took firm hold of the end of the shawl, and by dint of the frightened child turning herself round, succeeded in rending it off, and throwing it to the boy, who picked it up and went away crying. Then Birdie was taken up stairs, and ordered by Gribber to be put into a bath, and the clothes she had on to be burned. Knowing Miss Keziah's dread of

infection, she felt sure she could answer to her for that; and in all her proceedings so far, she kept fully before her mind the salutary thought of "What will my mistress say?" but her dislike to the child prompted many severities. The bath was cold, and having dismissed Patty, Gribber kept the child in it until she was like an icicle; then she put her to bed hungry, saying, "Ah! my dear missy, I hope the black man wont come for you." Roselle, in an ecstacy of terror, as the woman left the room, with frantic screams implored not to be left alone. Gribber called out, "Pray, my dear Miss Roselle; pray, be quiet, or —" holding up her hands in alarm, after which she shut the door, and began scratching along the panels. At this sound the child was instantly silent. Paralyzed with fear, she hid her head in the bed-clothes, every pulse beating so madly that, weary and cold as she was, there was no sign of sleep. As the short winter day drew to a close, a strange terror seemed to compel the child to peep out from the coverings and peer into the gathering gloom. A light was put noiselessly on the drawers—a wick floating in oil—and this threw just enough of a ray to deepen the shadows. A cloak that hung at the back of the door was so situated just before the foot of the bed, that it seemed to the trembling child to look like a man. She gazed on it until she fancied she made out its lineaments, and to her excited imagination it appeared to approach the bed. Unable to restrain herself, she screamed aloud; and then Patty, who had slowly opened the door, and caused the movement of the cloak, came to the bedside with the words, "For shame, Miss Roselle; you'll never go to heaven while you go on so. Why don't you go to sleep, like a good girl?"

With piteous accents Birdie begged and implored Patty to stay with her, and the girl for a few minutes lingered; but there was no sleep in the child's dilated, restless eyes,

so, making an excuse that she would return in a minute, Patty went away.

Then began the agony of terror over again; in vain the child shut her eyes, and cowered under the bed-clothes, Her mind was filled with shadowy forms—the black cloak, or the little quivering ray of light, like a fiery finger pointing into a remote corner, or the reflection of the bed-hangings on the ceiling—all seemed to threaten her. Trembling she lay, wanting to scream out, yet afraid to speak; while from the distance came the sound of loud voices and revelry, that jarred on the sensitive nerves, strung to an unnatural tension.

While these events were passing at Cumb'ry, and the high tide of the servants' revel was unchecked by any care for the little creature, whose brain was fast losing consciousness, there was a very different scene presented at the fever-stricken cottage that the child had visited. Just within the threshold, on the very spot where Birdie had stood, was the cripple Berry. She waved her lean hand to forbid all approach of the old woman or boy; and putting down on the floor a basket that had sorely taxed her strength to bring asked, in her curt way, "Better or worse, granny?"

"Lord bless you, Miss," began the old woman—

"Never mind that; answer me—better?"

"I don'no, we been so scared to-day." Then, looking at the basket, she added, "Hansum is as hansum doos. The last as cum were for all the wurl like a picter, but thof Bill tooked her to hum cearful, and I lapped her up in the only rag of a shawl as us a' got, Madam Gribber only jawed Bill, and tore the shawl to bits; it's a sheame."

Berry would not have understood a word of this, but for the name of Gribber. Instantly her interest conquered her fear of infection, and she crept forward a few paces towards the old woman, and made inquiries that led to a full explana-

tion of Birdie's ramble. Her mind revolved the consequences. She did not know of the revelry at Cumb'ry; but she recollected the absence of Miss Pendrainly, and dreaded the effects of the anger the child would have aroused. The old woman brought her maundering account to a close by saying, "Bill hed been blamed for not letting the child stay in our cottage till they sent for her. Why, with our fever, it wur as much as the little cretur's life wur worth."

"What time will Dr. Franks be here?" said Berry.

"He promised to coom again in a few hours. He hadn't been gone an hour before little Miss coom."

Lingering at the door-way, Berry resolved to alter her plan. Usually she did not like Dr. Franks to meet her in her night walks, as he was apt to scold; but now she would await him, taking the precaution of keeping in the air, cold as it was. She had not to wait long before she heard his light, firm footstep approaching. She stood aside behind the door, and watched him as he took up the rushlight and scanned his patients. Administering their medicine himself, and drawing from the pocket of his greatcoat a clean, but old sheet, he handed it to the aged woman, saying, "Keep them as clean as you can. They are all better."

The basket had been lifted to the table, and as his quick eye noted it, he said, "I see who has been here. She did not come in? You must admit no one."

He was at the door as he spoke, and Berry's hand touched his sleeve. He started; and as he led her hastily out, was beginning to chide, when she prevented him by repeating, with unwonted animation, the incident the reader is acquainted with, adding a fervent entreaty that at once, without losing a moment, he would go on to Cumb'ry.

Dr. Franks, as we have seen, had a bad opinion of Gribber. The fever at the cottage, and the absence of the master

of Cumb'ry gave him a sort of right, as a neighbour and medical man, to call and see the child, and warn Gribber. He was astonished at the swiftness with which, in her gliding motion, Berry got over the ground. She had constituted herself his guide, a post she was very fit for, as knowing every turning, avenue, and gateway on the estate. Through a gap in a fence they passed, and went by a sheltered path along the shrubbery up to the side of the house. The sound of loud laughter and the rattle of glasses were heard as they approached. Dr. Franks was seeking for a bell, though Berry seemed anxious to make her entrance, if possible, unannounced, when the door which terminated a passage leading to the offices opened, and Patty and Saunders, talking very incoherently, were on the threshold. "I tell you she's in a fit, and you must go," said Patty.

"Fit, be hanged," hiccupped Saunders, evidently under the influence of the Cumb'ry ale, and unwilling to turn out.

"Who is in a fit?" said the deep, calm voice of Dr. Franks. The man, instead of replying, shambled, muttering, away. Patty at a glance knew the speaker, and being in that state of partial excitement in which there is no clear sequence of ideas, she never asked how Dr. Franks came there, or noticed his companion, but begging him to follow her, led him at once up a back staircase to the nursery. Berry crept after them noiselessly.

On the floor, her little hands clenched, her lips purple, and her whole frame rigid, lay the child in strong convulsions.

In a tone whose sternness awed Patty, Dr. Franks ordered her instantly to bring hot water for a bath, while Berry, sitting on the floor, took the little writhing creature on her lap, and tried to keep her from hurting herself, noticing as

she did so that there were many strange-looking bruises and contusions on the white skin.

In five minutes there were plenty of attendants with flushed faces in the nursery, ready enough to begin a clamour of tongues; but the child's condition and Dr. Franks' manner checked them. One by one they departed, leaving Patty alone to assist Dr. Franks and Berry in putting the child into a hot bath.

Gribber had not made her appearance. A dread that she had been discovered in her secret cruelties; anger that Saunders, "the drunken fool, should have run against Dr. Franks, and brought him, of all men, there;" and some confusion of mind arising from the carouse, which had been at its highest when Patty had, by mere accident, discovered the child—all combined to make her very reluctant to face Dr. Franks. However, when she was called for, she fortified herself with what she called "a good drop of neat brandy, to put heart into her," and mustering up a bravado air, she entered the nursery.

Cowardice and cruelty are near akin, and she quailed as Dr. Franks said decidedly, "Mrs. Gribber, I shall take the responsibility on myself of removing this child to my house. I find her in a state that justifies me in thinking her neglected at all events, if not more actively ill-used. She has, I find, strayed to-day to a cottage where there is typhus, of which Miss Pendrainly will naturally have a dread; therefore I shall take her away."

"Yes'ur; yes'ur," said Gribber, awkwardly calling up her little cough; "the fever'll frighten missus out of her wits; but I can't order out no carriage, sur; 'tain't allowed, and none o' the men are quite—that is ——"

"I understand—there is no need. My young friend, Miss Berry, has been visiting a sick person with me; she will go

to Hoe farm, and get them to put a horse to. I take the child, or I go before a magistrate, Mrs. Gribber, to-morrow morning."

This was conclusive. Pale as death, Gribber slunk down stairs; Berry followed, and a stable-boy, who, with the curiosity of his age, had managed, in the confusion, to learn all that was going on, ran forward to Hoe farm, where Dr. Franks' name was a sufficient warrant; and in less time than the good doctor had expected, he was driving home; his little patient, wrapped in blankets, being held in Berry's sheltering arms.

The doctor's house would have looked a dreary place next morning, had the child been able to notice it, standing up as it did before the wintry sky in all its windowless desolation. But Birdie, neither that night nor in the morning, took notice of anything. Dorcas and Bessy tended her with compassion on their faces; and little Herbert gazed inquiringly and affectionately at her. They had all heard of the little girl left at the Raven, and adopted by the lady of Cumb'ry, and they knew this must be she; but why did she come to them to die?

No; Birdie did not die. She lay long in the same sort of stupor; at length, gradually as the days began to warm and lengthen, she began to revive, as if the thrill in nature's veins that precedes the spring-time vibrated in her. But it was evident her nervous system had received a shock that she might feel all her life. Her naturally fine constitution had been severely tried, and had gained a hard triumph. No inquiries or cross-questioning had elicited all the facts. Gribber kept her own counsel; and Patty, if she suspected the child had been frightened, said nothing. Indeed, the only new fact elicited was, that the servants, none of them, exactly knew what had taken place that night. Stories of Cumb'ry being

haunted got abroad, much to the squire's annoyance, who was heartily sick of the child and all connected with her; and was so far infected with the superstition of those he would call the vulgar—not reckoning his own affinity to them—that he considered the child brought ill-luck. It was suggested to him that young Mrs. Vesey would feel wounded at any such inmate. By some side-wind he came also to know that there was a rumour about the little girl's parentage that reflected on him, and he was all the more angry at this, that it really did touch upon a truth which he was very unwilling should be brought to light. Miss Keziah was not sorry to take refuge in her fears—a child, perhaps subject to fits!—and with a disposition to wander and get into low company. In short, it was a worn-out caprice, and therefore hateful. She was content to let Dr. Franks' summary proceedings pass; nay, to admit it was best Birdie should be out of the house.

Gribber, who fancied Dr. Franks had infected Dr. Strong with his suspicions of herself, and who saw there was no speedy prospect of Miss Keziah dying or getting married, resolved on taking Twirk's offer; and timing her intimation just at the period when the new attendant, Annie Clinch, was in high favour, she, with many tears, told Miss Pendrainly she must leave.

It flattered the spinster to think that her servants loved her so well as to be jealous of each other; so she tried for awhile to laugh off the intimation. Then, having a not uncommon dislike of her women-servants marrying, she chose to consider that Gribber had gone foolish; that the wedding in the Pendrainly family had set her mind upon the folly she meditated. But the smiling aptitude of her new maid reconciled her; and, after all, it was best Gribber should go; she was getting above her place, and old servants were some-

thing like dry-rot—they undermined the place that harboured them. So, with tolerable show of cordiality, Gribber was dismissed, taking with her plenty of wedding presents and a good accumulation of spoil.

So it happened that, just as one day in spring often seems at once to usher in the summer; or one long, dark autumnal day of wind and rain brings down the leaves, and unmistakably introduces winter, that night of revelry at Bovey-cum-bury altered the conditions of all concerned in our story. Nothing absolutely returned to its former state, or remained unchanged, except, perhaps, Dr. Franks' windows. They were boarded up: so much and no more would he have done to them.

Captain Flammerton was more disturbed than Mrs. Stillwell when Twirk announced his intention of leaving, and assigned as a reason that he was going to better himself. It might be that the captain felt what a mere hanger-on he had become, and with his education, former station, and acknowledged convivial talents, he was in reality houseless and dependent, while Twirk had managed somehow to steal a march on fortune. The captain noticed, too, that when the business of the house flagged, and the profits arising from the club-room, the concerts, and other sources of revenue, were below the average, Mrs. Stillwell looked black at him, and made him feel his dependence. At such times his resource was to drink as deep in reality as he sometimes for a lure pretended to do; and this she resented with that settled kind of heavy discontent which makes the anger of slow natures so much the most lasting and severe. Besides, Twirk was a positive loss to the captain. They had played into each others' hands. The one had studied all the little finical self-indulgences of a *gourmand*, as well as drinker; and the other had, by his praises and patronage, secured many favours

to the man from his mistress, and many extra perquisites from the customers. Now this league was to be broken. Twirk heard of "a concern" in a crowded, low neighbourhood in London, and went up at once to secure it.

Gribber would have liked to have been married at Boveycum; but as she intended to shine forth in great splendour, the waiter had his private reasons for not wanting much talk about his circumstances, seeing that his old mother had died in the Boveycum workhouse only two years previously. So Whitechapel church was the scene of the nuptials, and the Fox and Grapes, Trap-bat Buildings, the bridal bower of the interesting couple. They began their married life without any foolish nonsense of mutual confidence and such sentimental silliness. Each had a private fund they were intent on increasing, and each had a distrust of the personal habits of the other in relation to strong drink. Mrs. Twirk kept her private bottle as well as her private purse, and was nearly as successful in little-drop drinking as her husband. Of course the fine, hard, flinty nature of the matron did not multiply itself; as well expect a pebble to bud and blossom. Such a thought seemed never to have been entertained of or by them. It would somehow have been unnatural and incongruous if childish life had come into that dwelling. The talent for management that Mrs. Twirk had developed itself in getting the utmost possible quantity of work out of her household drudges, for the least amount of wages. When they wanted to leave her, or she wanted to get rid of them, setting temptations in their way, and revenging herself on a pretty girl or a pert boy by getting up charges of felony against them. In this she was so acute that even Twirk stood aghast, and deferred to her superior skill. While the neighbourhood supplied not only good custom to the Fox and Grapes—its very bones being picked clean, we may

say, by the Fox, and its blood manuring the Grapes, until both throve wondrously—the cruel veins that had thrilled with savage pleasure at Birdie's piteous cries, had that thrill often repeated here; for in a back street, there was not a night that some woman did not wail and scream, battered by the blows of a drunken husband; or some child, in frantic terror, mad with pain and hunger, writhe under the stripes of some creature that it seems profanation of the word to call parent. A good, strong compost of blood and tears cemented the walls of this house, and the couple throve.

There were changes, too, that Christmas, among other children of our narrative, as well as Birdie. Master Stillwell being invited to a juvenile party given by Dr. Strong, and seeing the prizes brought home by the doctor's son, his youngest child, signified to his mother his intention of going to school; to which she gladly assented, being at her wit's end with him; taking care, however, that her darling should be a parlour boarder, and that his preceptors should not want the propitiation of a hamper of wine, or a case of liqueurs, on consideration of school life being made easy to him.

Herbert Franks began in good earnest to work at his books, and, as Birdie slowly got better, to take brotherly care of her; and a new curate, Mr. Wright, whose father had once known Dr. Franks, came to the house in his brief leisure, and amused himself with the children, and taught them many things in a desultory way. Bessy seemed to profit both by the lessons given in the study, and her own peculiar lessons bestowed on her by Dorcas in the kitchen. She grew a neat-handed, blooming maiden, with such a wholesome sense of what she had escaped, in not having gone to live at the Raven, that, whenever she walked in the town, she made the circuit of three parts of the Bull-

ring, rather than come into the shadow of its tree or its sign.

Berry continued to make her wild, plaintive music at strange hours in her bedroom, and to seclude herself by day in her desk, always busy with pen or needle. She still walked forth at nights, and came and went unquestioned into the doctor's house, her skill in fashioning garments being called into request now for two children. Bessy, with the ready aptitude of youth, fell into the humour of not making any comment on Berry's doings. Indeed, the girl had a shrewd suspicion that the money that sent in a supply of winter coals to her widowed mother, and paid school fees, came from the claw-like hands that seemed never at rest; and that took care to leave plenty of needlework cut out and fixed, to admonish Bessy against idleness.

So Dr. Franks had a family that enlarged, and a purse that diminished. It took all his skill to solve the problem of adjusting the condition of things around him. But if it was a hard, it yet seemed a healthy exercise. In that tough wrestle his soul grew stronger and his heart stouter. He looked not only at his boy, seeing the shadow of an angel's wing over his young face, and letting that shadow waft his thoughts heavenward, with an impatient yearning to join the spirit that had been the light of his life; but he looked also at the poor old pilgrim, Dorcas, who had grown grey in following his footsteps, and had nothing else on earth to follow but him and his; and the little enfeebled child, and the fatherless young girl, who had been drifted towards him by the conflicting currents on the ocean of life, and who must have perished had he not put out his hand and drawn them into haven—at least so he thought; and this contemplation of dependent age, childhood, and youth, called up both his activity and his cheerfulness.

"Happy he whose inward ear
Angel comfortings can hear
O'er the rabble's laughter;
And, while Hatred's faggots burn,
Glimpses through the smoke discern
Of the good hereafter."

He worked no less among his poor patients, but far more at his desk than ever; and when Miss Keziah offered to pay for the child's board, he declined it, saying, "He could not admit any interference, and therefore needed no assistance." The new curate, too, formed an ally. He held to some of those tenets that had made Dr. Franks unpopular,—held to them with such a vigorous vitality that no one cared to try to wrench him from them. Mr. Aspen, an amiable man in the main, was somewhat strengthened by his strength; or, at least, made a compromise that saved his own feelings. The rough work of all kinds he left unreservedly to his curate, and was satisfied to hear such tidings of his activity as comforted the conscientious part of his nature. We must take people as we have them, my good reader! There are men and women mere down pillows. You cannot expect *them* to rouse the world.

Under the auspices of the curate and Dr. Franks the first temperance meeting was held at Boveycum. The rector had not been well during the winter of our story, and he was escaping the east winds of spring by sheltering himself in the sunny nooks of Torquay; so he took no responsibility in the matter of trying to upset the drinking cans and glasses of his parishioners. Young Summerfield, the rustic ally who was converted by Dr. Franks' broken windows, beat up for recruits, and managed, by dint of inviting and arguing in all directions, to get an audience; while some went for

curiosity, and some for contention; yet it was satisfactory they went. Dr. Franks gained a hearing. Without any violation of confidence, he gave them a brief, simple history of some of his poor patients—their ailments, sorrows, and sufferings; poverty with more than hunger's sharpness; maternity with more than nature's pangs; childhood with more than infant helplessness, and none of childhood's joys; life deprived of everything but its power to suffer; and one vice, at once subtle and gross, common and costly, the main-spring of all this guilt and misery.

A society was formed at once: its numbers were small, but they were not contemptible; for Dr. Strong thought it worth his while to laugh, and Squire Pendrainly to swear at them; but both the jeer and the curse passed harmlessly by, or returned like chickens home to roost.

So, tended with skill, and trained with care, in a home that we cannot call poor, for it was rich in love, beautiful with order, fragrant with cleanliness, lived the child called Rose Bird,—a home whose outer side looked indeed but blankly on the world, but whose inner rooms and garden retreat, whether physical or mental, lay open and clear before Him whose smile is life, and health, and peace. Thus for awhile let us leave them.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

FOURTEEN YEARS AFTER.

"Meet is it changes should control
Our being, lest we rust in ease:
We all are changed by still degrees,
All but the basis of the soul."—TENNYSON.

"Must marriage, that immaculate robe of honour,
Be made the garment of leprosy and foulness?"—MIDDLETON.

FOURTEEN years, the term at which we resume our story, must inevitably produce great changes in human life. Children are grown up, and mature people grown old in that term. The tyro in folly and vice has become an adept, or a wreck. The earnest votary of truth and duty has gained vigour in his inward and outward conflicts, and become strong in the Lord, nothing doubting. All, in fourteen years, would bear strong marks of change; yet while man is thus mutable, some objects that meet his eyes seem to deride him by their stability. The oak tree flutters its leafy banners in disdain of such a span, and is emulated by many of its woodland compeers. How often, amid the sylvan veterans, the human observers exclaim—

"Behold—
And marvel at the course of time;
Though you and I have both grown old,
This tree is only in its prime."

In towns where the channels of human thought and industry wear the streets and houses until they reflect the toil-worn look of man, and a sort of individuality pervades the dwellings, fourteen years is a period necessitating great changes. Boveycum had altered greatly in its external aspects since we last looked upon it,—quite as much as those of its inhabitants with whom we have formed an acquaintance. This alteration was mostly owing to the railway having stretched out its iron arms, and taken a grasp of the town. The Bull-ring was no more. A station reared its ample frontage close up to the old elm, and within the shadow of the Raven, as it still swung creaking on its crane, an almost obliterated effigy, more blot than bird. There was a slatternly, tipsy look about the house, that its more decorous days of respectable moderation would not have tolerated: something of the effects it had wrought in other dwellings seemed to have recoiled on itself. The church was just the same in its rich, time-stained stateliness; the green mounds heaped around it were something better kept than of yore; for a cemetery being made, "the rude forefathers" of the town rested undisturbed by newer occupants.

The front of Dr. Franks' house no longer bore such a testimony against his neighbours. There were, it is true, no windows; but many climbing plants hung their garlands over the boarded-up spaces, and a glossy drapery of vigorous ivy in particular was bright and green all the year round: an emblem that the rents and damage so wantonly inflicted of yore, and which flawed and shattered, it may be, something far more valuable than glass, were all now not only covered up, but a rich mantle of ever-fresh and growing verdure hid the scars, and also gave something in their stead that gladdened the eyes of all beholders; so repaying evil with good. How kindly nature ever tries to cover up defects,

and to beautify even deformity! In like manner grace mantles over with love and pity the scars of wrong and sorrow, and makes immortal bloom spring out of the torn chasms of the bleeding and contrite heart.

It was an early morning in October, and a young girl, followed by a boy with a spade and a large basket, from which the boughs of a plant are protruding, was making her way with rapid pace from Dr. Franks' house to the churchyard. She bent her steps towards a grave neatly kept, and bound with osiers, but without any headstone. A bramble, in great luxuriance, grew near the head of the grave, and partly overshadowed it.

"I want you, John Vosper, to dig up this bramble; *I* can plant the laurel."

"Very well, Miss Rose, as you like," said the youth, with a half-smile that implied, "It's only a whim of hers; but I'm pleased to obey her whims."

Our readers recognize the wilful little Birdie, now called Miss Rose Bird, and grown up to the dignity of seventeen or eighteen years; she, of course, claimed the greater age. A garden hat shades her face, but does not conceal the rich curls, very little darker than they were in her childhood, that cluster round her head. The bright golden tint has been subdued to a brown, like the colour of a pheasant's breast; and as she works away with a garden trowel, kneeling meanwhile beside the grave, the pure colour that mounts into her cheeks, and glows yet redder on her lips, tells of health as well as beauty. A plain cotton morning-gown, with its little frill round her slender white throat, and its band slightly confining the folds to her finely-curved easy waist, marked the pliant grace of her tall, slight form, delicate, yet firm; as the little, well-arched foot also testified, which, as she knelt, extended beyond the flowing skirt; as well as the tiny, yet

active hands, a little red with use, which just now she was so busily employing. In a few minutes a spotted laurel was at the head of the grave, while young Vosper, a pace or two off, was tugging away at the bramble.

At the end of this grave there was quite a crowd of head-stones, and Rose—as the boy and ourselves will now call her—did not observe, as she worked, that over one which was sunk to within about two feet of the ground there was a face peering. She might well not notice it, for the colour of both hair and skin was like the grey stone, and the pale, ashy-tinted umber lichen that had gathered over it.

"So, the bramble is to go, and a spotted laurel is to be there," said a voice whose tones Rose knew well; but she started and trembled sufficiently to show that she was of a very nervous temperament, and then, checking her momentary tremor, said—

"Dear Berry, who would have thought of your being out this morning? Yes," she continued, alluding to the remark that had been made, "at least, if I can put no name over the grave, I may keep it free from weeds; and let this," pointing to the shrub, "be a memorial."

"Ah! a good symbol, a spotted laurel; and the bramble was a symbol too, self-planted."

"It may be so, Berry; but I do not choose it to stay there. You come to see and tend *your* grave, why may not *I* also? particularly as I'm going away soon; and if it had not been for you I should not have known my uncle's grave."

"Oh! I've no objection; but it's more fitting for me than you to loiter among the tombs. My name is here," pointing, as she spoke, to a line on a stone, "and my place ready."

"Come, dear Berry, that gloomy talk is wrong."

"It is not gloomy now, child, for I am ready too. There's nothing now jarring, Rose."

"Ready for loving, working, waiting—to be sure, dear Berry, you are. I wish I were as ready."

As she spoke, the young girl had risen from her work, and ran to the side of the cripple, whom she leaned over, and clasped in an affectionate embrace. Berry calmly untwined the arms that were folded round her, and, lifting her hand with a listening gesture, said—

"Hush! there's wheels. Now, Rose, if you come with me round to the north porch you will see a strange sight. John Vosper, you have done, now go."

The lad, who evidently did not care to stay, now Berry was there, ran off by a different route, and did not notice that as he left the churchyard a carriage drew up at a side entrance, and a very sickly or very old man was helped out by a servant. A lady, thickly veiled, and richly, but not gaily dressed, followed, attended also by a woman who looked like a servant.

"I saw the clerk and Mr. Wright go into the church just as I came here," said Rose, following in some surprise the steps of Berry, who took her away to the porch she had indicated, the outer door of which was open; but the inner door, with glass panels, which commanded a near view of the altar, was closed. Here, to the great surprise of the young girl, she saw Squire Pendrainly standing at the altar, looking not only very feeble and shaky, but with a peculiarly sleepy expression; and beside him, her veil thrown up from her face, and her eyes fixed on the squire with a strange mixture of coaxing and triumph in their gaze, was the woman, now middle-aged, who had succeeded Gribber as an attendant on Miss Keziah.

"Can it be a marriage?" whispered Rose, in great astonishment. Berry, whose eyes just reached the bottom of the glass panels, did not speak: she made a gesture of

silence, and they both witnessed the ceremonial. Rose observed a troubled expression on the countenance of the good curate, and a hardly-suppressed smile of derision on the face of the clerk. The men-servants had the well-trained look of blankness and no-meaning that is considered suitable to accomplished domestics. The service concluded, the bride turned to her husband, and giving him a patronizing kiss, linked his arm in hers, and sailed off into the vestry with a consequential, defiant air, that said even more plainly than words — "There, it's over—undo it who can."

"What a marriage!" again whispered Rose.

"Marriage! do not profane the word, child. Marriage! call it fraud and folly, drink and dotage." She hissed these words through her shut teeth, in a caustic tone that justified her name of Rasp, and turned to go, when a sound of other wheels struck on their ears; and, pausing a moment, there were hasty steps and loud voices in the churchyard. On the path, leading directly to the porch they were standing in, they saw Miss Keziah approaching, dragging, rather than leaning on the arm of Dr. Strong. The morning was not propitious to Miss Keziah's looks, nor had time dealt gently by her. Her skin hung in yellow wrinkles, and her lips were blue with either the slight cold or agitation. Only the nose showed the warmth of her temper; *that* flamed like a capsicum pod in the centre of her face, and prevented, by its peculiarity, any eye from noticing other incongruities. Even the rich auburn ringlets, now put on all awry with hurry, seemed tame beside the crimson blotch. Berry instinctively shrunk into a recess that flanked an old tablet in the porch, as, like a dash of hail, the rustling silks and rattling voice of the lady of Cumb'ry came within it. Rose advanced and curtsied.

"Let me in this minute; let me in, I say. Child—you Roselle, why do you stand staring there, impeding me."

"This door is fast, Miss Pendrainly. The door at the other side is open," explained Rose; while Miss Keziah shook and beat on the door, and then raising her trembling little hands, seemed ready to try their strength on the glass; but Dr. Strong took hold of them, and half-forcing her away, said, "You must be calmer. Remember it is undignified to be so loud."

"What! and my brother entrapped before my face by that artful, designing wretch. Ha! she mixed his punch for him to pretty purpose; but I'll expose her. The marriage—if they are married—sha'n't stand. He's mad. I can prove it. Roselle," she screamed, "come here; *you* ought not to stand still like a post. I've taken an interest in you. I would have brought you up, only for Gribber and Dr. Franks. Roselle, come with me."

Raving in this way, and followed by Rose, who pitied the poor, provoked woman, they made the circuit of the building, and came to the open door.

"Remember it is a church," said Dr. Strong, alarmed lest the wild passions of the lady should bring a charge of brawling on all her party.

"Do not go in, Miss Pendrainly; they are married," said Rose.

But there was no stopping her. She swept like a whirlwind through the church, and entered the vestry just as Mr. Wright was taking his leave with a cold bow, evidently not relishing his morning's task; and the clerk was bringing out of the rector's cupboard a decanter of wine and glasses.

"Soh! you are here," said the angry lady, panting for breath.

"Yes, Miss Kizzy," replied the bride, advancing before

her husband, and confronting her with the most cool assurance. "Yes, we are here; we couldn't all have met in a better place."

"Monster of duplicity!"

"Oh, tut, tut, sister Kizzy, don't be angry. Here"—turning, as she spoke, to the table, and filling, not a wine glass, but a tumbler, she presented it to the squire—"Drink, my dear, to Kizzy's good health and temper."

The squire had sunk down in a chair; and he held out a tremulous hand for the wine, and drank it eagerly, while Miss Pendrainly was vainly trying to recover the power of speech.

"Sit down. Do, sister; compose yourself, and take a glass of wine," said the bride in tones of patronage.

"I can't and wont—wont bear it. It sha'n't stand—no, not if there's laws or lunatics; yes, lunatics and asylums. Look, take notice, all of you—all, I say—he's not sober, never is. Wretch! to marry an old idiot. Marry, indeed!—it's no marriage."

"Hush, madam," said Mr. Wright, recalled by her incoherent, screaming words; "hush! Dr. Strong, allow me to help you in assisting Miss Pendrainly away. This is all very unseemly, and cannot be allowed in this place."

"Unseemly! yes; you ought to lose your gown," she said, as, with firm hands, the curate and doctor took her between them out of the vestry. Revived by the air in the churchyard—as flames burst forth fanned by a fresh wind—she stamped, and raved, and cried, uttering wild denunciations of every one present, between her sobs. It was in vain that Dr. Strong represented that the curate had no power to refuse to marry the parties; or tried to joke, saying, "No work a clergyman does is so faulty;" and then, with a curious emphasis, reminded her, "The squire is as sober

this morning as he ever is." His words were like pebbles that the angry wave dashes and scatters on the beach. Miss Keziah was fain to sit down on a grave at last, and lean her head on Roselle's shoulder.

While this group were doing their best to tranquillize the squire's sister, that worthy, supported by his wife, and preceded by the clerk—who bowed along the path most obsequiously, a good fee from the bride having greatly altered his view of the case—passed close, the silk of the new Mrs. Pendrainly's dress touching the recumbent Miss Keziah. With an elaborate smile to her husband, she said, loud enough to be heard, "We meant, my dear, to have quite a private and quiet wedding; but, as our sister has come, it will be as well to countermand about the bells, and order them to be rung."

"Bells! bells!" said the old man dreamily. "Oh! to be sure; always ring a merry peal for the Pendrainly weddings."

"There, Mr. Twang," said the bride, carefully repeating the words, "Mr. Pendrainly will not depart from the custom of his family, so tell the ringers."

With these words they regained their carriage. A group of boys and idlers had by this time gathered about the church, and before Miss Keziah and her escort were sufficiently composed to depart, they had the satisfaction of hearing the bells peal forth upon the morning air a joyous chime. In an ecstacy of passion poor Miss Keziah shook her clenched hands at the old steeple, and it was with difficulty that she was persuaded to let the carriage door be shut, to hide her impotent rage from the mob.

She retained enough recollection to insist on being driven to Dr. Strong's. To reach his house they had to pass the Raven, and the news of the strange nuptials had already

reached there, and deeply interested one, at all events, of its present inmates. A florid man of nearly forty, enormously stout, and in a slovenly morning-gown, came, rubbing his eyes, to the entrance, and looked with a heavy stare of bewilderment out into the street. This was Mr. Vesey Pendrainly. By his side was Jasper Stillwell, an unwholesome-looking young man of about twenty-two, with a cigar in his mouth, whose naturally fair skin was of a greasy-yellow hue, as if his veins were filled with tobacco juice. At a gesture from Mr. Vesey Pendrainly's hand, the carriage was stopped, and leaning heavily in at the window, he said—looking first at his aunt, and then casting his sleepy eyes on Dr. Strong, "What's up, now? Wherever are you bound so early, eh? What's the bells making that confounded clang for, eh?"

"There's a marriage," said Dr. Strong.

"There's ruin; and you're as great a drunkard and dotard as your uncle, you are, or you might have prevented it!"

"Whew! zounds! marriage!" rubbing his eyes again.

"Yes; that wretch, my maid, and—that I should live to say it—my idiot of a brother."

"Humph!" stretching himself; "I should have thought she'd better taste. Married! the old fool! he was never sober."

"No, nor you; you're going to ruin."

"There, aunt—be quiet; my head's ready to split—*con*found those bells! Drive on."

The last words to the coachman were obeyed, while, with a stolid, yet crestfallen look, evidently incapable of understanding more than that a great disaster had happened, Mr. Vesey lounged into the house, saying, "Still, my boy, I ought to have taken a leaf out of your book. You've boxed up your old girl snug and safe in Hillsby Asylum. By

George! I don't believe she is half so mad as our old governor. Not that he ever tried to take his own life. Not he; *he* wasn't tired of the world, though he tired out everybody in it that belonged to him. Yes; he's done that pretty smartly. Married! Order me a nip of brandy, to take the taste of that word out of my mouth. Married! the old lunatic."

The tidings of the marriage seemed to be nearly as annoying to Jasper Stillwell, and even to his flaunting barmaid, as to the bewildered and bemuzzed Vesey. As the brandy was being served, both of them had lowering brows and a suspicious expression, that found vent in Jasper's words.

"I say, King Vesey," said Stillwell, "if there should be a son and heir, you'd be a deposed monarch, eh?"

"Son and heir! Still, you're as mad as your mother."

"Never mind my mother, Mr. Vesey," said Jasper, sulkily; "she'd never a-played *me* such a trick; and if I'd had an old 'un like the squire to have looked after, he wouldn't neither. I'd let 'em call me mad—ay, and I'd a-called myself mad, to the end o' my days, if I'd a-let him slip through my fingers so—blest if I wouldn't."

This sentiment was evidently responded to by the female listener, who expended her energy in thumping about the pewter measures, and rattling the glasses, while she scolded the servants in her shrillest tones.

There were doubtless good reasons for uneasiness. Mr. Vesey Pendrainly's position could not fail to be seriously affected by the marriage, let it turn out as it might; and he was so deeply in debt that it was only the probability of the old squire's speedy death that had quieted his creditors, of whom the landlord of the Raven was the principal.

Mr. Vesey had been a widower for two years; his wife, after mourning the death of several infants, had followed

them. Poor lady! a joyless life and dreary death was hers.

It was dismally curious to note the speculations that had often been whispered by the dutiful nephew and his boon companions as to "how long the old buck could hold out;" and while they drank deeply themselves, they were ever alleging the impossibility of his "standing it much longer." Poor, decrepid, befooled old squire! For all that life was worth to himself, or the world, he might as well be dead.

Meanwhile Rose, recovered from the agitation into which she had been thrown by the scene of rage that she had witnessed, was quietly presiding at Dr. Franks' breakfast table, and recounting the incidents at the church.

Dr. Franks was altered for the better since we last saw him. His face was fuller; his form more robust. He had become bald, but that had rather improved his countenance. He listened to Rose's description with a look of grave benevolence more than surprise, saying, as she concluded—

"Ah! my dear, it has all been wrong, and that for a very long time, at Cumb'ry. There was such an inextricable mixing up of all sorts of influences adverse to good there, that no result, however humiliating, would surprise me. The squire, his sister, and nephew, have used their influence for evil, and it has returned in a large measure to their own bosoms. It has been a case of sowing and reaping."

"And they so wealthy. Oh, what good they might have done!"

"Yes, they might; but wealth, like fire, is only valuable as long as it is regulated wisely. Even in the matter of adding to their riches, how short-sighted they have been! The railway company wanted the site of the Raven for the station. Miss Keziah was persuaded to oppose the line; and when that was overruled, to ask such an exorbitant sum for her

house that the company managed without it. Then there's Vesey, instead of improving the estate, as he might have done, he must embark in buildings, which, had they been near the junction, would have paid him; but he chose as a site the only really unhealthy bit of swampy ground in the neighbourhood, so that speculation has been a heavy loss. His personal habits, too: I have heard the nephew say that his uncle ought never to fine a poor tipsy brawler that was brought before him without, for consistency sake, paying down a fine himself; and the squire, in his turn, would give a similar description of his nephew. It is well, my dear, that many in this town know the danger of such habits, and avoid them."

"Thanks to you and Mr. Wright, father;" but do you think that it was the agitation about the railway coming, and the impending injury to her business, that made poor Mrs. Stillwell lose her reason?"

"No, I do not. You're growing up fast, Rose," he added after a pause.

"Dear sir, I'm grown up, I think."

"Well, well, child, you are old enough to know that the alleged and more obvious is not always the real reason of an effect. 'Tis a sad thing to say, Rose, but if her son had treated her better, she might have retained as much reason as she ever had, poor woman."

"Did not Berry's terror and dislike of the wretched young man exaggerate her testimony? Why, I inferred from what she said, sir, that he actually struck her—his mother! and turned her out of doors, though Berry would not dwell on it."

"All true, sadly true, Rose; it happened a year ago, when he came of age. It was while you were ill, and had gone for change to Mrs. Summerfield's."

"Dear Summerfield cottage!" said Rose, changing the

subject at once to one that evidently pleased her. "Ah! it was a happy day for Bessy Vosper when she came to you, sir, and for her whole family. I've heard her say that her mother had two children nearly dead with fever, and John, a miserable infant, carried about on a pillow. I cannot think, as I look at Mrs. Vosper's sturdy family now, and John, our stout gardener, with a face as full-blown as a peony, being in the state she described."

"Ah! widow Vosper had trouble enough then to have crushed her. I half-fancy, Rose, it would have crushed a man, or driven him to rush distractedly away from it."

"And yet women are reckoned the weaker, sir."

"Not in their affections, whatever their judgment may be, Rose; and it is one of the pleasant things to reflect on, that the children of the poor widow have grown up to comfort her, for all that her husband's intemperance left her to contend with."

"Was he so bad a husband? Bessy remembers him with great tenderness."

"Not bad in the sense of deliberate design; certainly not. He was one of a large class of kind-hearted men, without principle, who mean well, and who, in falling into bad habits and love of company, never seem aware of the tendency of their career. Vosper, with a smile on his face, and words of love on his lips, ruined his health and his circumstances, and brought about his untimely death as decidedly as any suicide does, leaving his widow in the destitution you have heard described; and yet it is true, as the family say, 'He was the tenderest husband and father.'"

"How happy for Bessy—Mrs. Summerfield I ought to call her—that her husband has learned a different plan of life! How prosperous and happy they are! He has been an abstainer now fourteen years, has he not?"

"Yes; the winter that brought you, my Rose, to bloom in my dull dwelling, and be as a daughter to me and a sister to Herbert, saw the decision of Summerfield. He was a rough fellow then, though always with a kind, honest heart; but when he became decided in his principles, and gave up the great temptation of drink entirely, it was wonderful what other changes followed. He was no longer content with being nominally a Christian. Nominal Christianity, like nominal sobriety, he saw was a very worthless, hollow thing. He would be thorough. An earnest manliness, above all mere pretence and surfaceism, is his characteristic. And so, step by step, he made progress; improved his mind in his leisure time, until there are few men, not of liberal education or professional pursuits, more intelligent than Summerfield."

"By your help, sir."

"I wish," continued Dr. Franks, not heeding the interruption, "that Herbert had more of that determined definiteness of purpose which is Summerfield's characteristic."

"However excellent Summerfield may be, Herbert, father has surely no need to take a lesson from him," said Rose, in a tone of pique.

"He has, child, every reason. He is at once too impetuous and too yielding; a little inclined also, I think, from pride and self-assertion, to shake himself free from what he would call educational bias."

"Oh! dear sir, all that sounds harsh from your lips. Herbert, as his father's son, has the right surely to think for himself. His individuality" ——

"Ah! there it is, my dear; that's the word with you young folks—individuality, idiosyncrasy, and what not, all comes to this: what you have never suffered from, you do not dread. The wisdom taught you in your home-habits and rearing may be all very well; but wisdom bought by

experience, even in dangerous ways, is thought better. That's how I interpret some of the waywardness of even the clever and well-disposed young people of this age."

This conversation, which had proceeded while they were taking their breakfast, was interrupted by letters being brought in, and there was a heightened colour on Rose's cheek as she saw that one was from Herbert: it was to his father.

Dr. Franks read it with an anxious look stealing over his face, and then handed it to Rose, saying—

"I'm afraid Owen Strong's words, about his looking so ill, are true. He does not complain, but he is evidently out of sorts. What say you, Rose?" he added, after a pause; "can we hasten our preparations; and, instead of going to London in a fortnight, go at the end of this week?"

"Certainly, sir. Berry is uncomfortable, I know, in those noisy lodgings near the station. She and her maid will be glad to come and stay in this house, for Dorcas is too deaf and feeble to be left, and she does not wish to go to Mrs. Summerfield's; she seems to cling to the place like a limpet to a rock. But whether the house is left full or empty it will be safe enough; no one will harm it."

"No, no, Rose, the days of window-breaking are over, thanks to the large battalion of the cold water army now in Boveycum."

"Then I'll begin at once with our preparations."

"And I will write to-day to secure our lodgings."

CHAPTER II.

PERPLEXITIES.

"She grew fairer than her peers;
Still her gentle forehead wears
Holy lights of infant years."—ALEXANDER SMITH.

As Rose had grown up, her graceful manners, talents, and many acquirements, had won her some notice, though the well-known ambiguity of her position tended to isolate her from young people of similar education and attainments. Dr. Franks had never parted with her from the idea of giving her school advantages. He, indeed, could not afford to maintain her at a superior school, and anything less than first-rate teaching and influence he rejected. Indeed, the child had brought a blessing with her, and became not so much a part of home as the central point towards which the affections of the whole circle converged. She had been well taught, though perhaps not in a fashionable way. It had not been the aim to crowd mere showy results into a short period of time, but to teach her principles.

Dr. Franks had superintended her more serious studies; Rose had pored over Herbert's school-books, and knew more of them than most young ladies would have cared to acquire; she had diligently helped Dorcas with household work, and was a neat-handed housewife, not ashamed of being useful and economical; and, for her musical training, Berry's skill had been exerted for her with less fitfulness than for any one. And it was Rose's triumph that she had crept into the lonely heart of the poor cripple and brought a healthy glow there.

As time had developed the loveliness of Dr. Franks' *protégé*, Miss Pendrainly sought to renew her claim, and made

many calls that were courteously received, while all interchange of visits was declined. Sometimes, with characteristic caprice, Miss Pendrainly would praise the talents of Rose, and take a strange credit to herself for having first discovered and fostered (?) them; at others, annoyed by the barrier of reserve around the young girl, she would wonder "what Dr. Franks meant by teaching her languages, and music, and unfitting her for the station that—as a nameless, friendless creature, the child, probably, of infamy—she ought to fill."

This censure was reiterated by many who sometimes, for a little while, sought Rose from curiosity, and then, with a censure of her protector on their lips, treated her with studied coldness.

Dr. Strong's family were of this class of neighbours. When the young ladies left school, and came to superintend their father's house, they made many overtures to Dr. Franks that Rose, then a child of ten years old, might visit them; and when this was declined, they kept up a kind of surveillance of her, aided by their brother, Owen, who suddenly, in his fifteenth year, became intimate with Herbert, two years Owen's junior—an intimacy that had been afterwards continued at the London University, where they were both students.

Owen was intended for the bar, and was pursuing his studies in London; while Herbert, who had just passed his examination with success in the theory and practice of medicine, was, for the time being, continuing his studies, and held the office of junior house-surgeon at ——— Hospital. Mabel Strong, the elder and more amiable of the doctor's daughters, had married a clergyman, with a living in a crowded London district. She inherited a small fortune from her mother, and had, as Dr. Strong said, "with genuine

female wrongheadedness, chosen a lot for which she was unfitted." Jessie was considered a beauty, and she still remained mistress of her father's house, though a variety of offers had been made for her to leave it. Indeed, the number of these opportunities, which she had from her eighteenth year until now that she was certainly twenty-five, might be the reason that she had never made up her mind. She gave encouragement by her smiles and yielding manners to many admirers; listened, evidently pleased, to all the admiration that was proffered to her; thought herself very irresistible, and in her secret heart—if we may use that term—was amused, flattered, but never deeply moved by any exhibition of attention or devotion. She took it all as a right due to her beauty, and laughed if there was any return expected. Of late, however, the Pendrainly estate had interested her, and Mr. Vesey, as an adjunct thereunto, had won her smiles. This young lady had watched the growth of Rose with affected indifference and real dislike. The story of how the child was left destitute at the inn, by the death of a profligate, vagabond foreigner, never was allowed to be forgotten by Miss Jessie. She affected to believe that Rose might be much older than the age assigned her; always heard her beauty praised with a look of amazement at the strange delusion, and yet contrived so well to keep in check any open manifestation of her real feelings, that Rose thought her a friend, and was always ready to assist her in all her feminine occupations of endless embroidery and knick-knacks, and to give her the benefit of that superior taste in music and singing which Rose had both inherited from nature and cultivated with care.

Of course, Owen Strong, as the friend of Herbert and the brother of Jessie, was on terms of intimacy with Rose. He was a fine young man, fully conscious of his advantages of person, education, and social position; he had been some-

what spoiled, both at school and at home. As an only son and brother, his father and sisters had paid him great attention; and, if he thought of himself more highly than he should, he only followed the example set him by his nearest connections from his childhood up. School and college did much—often in a painful way—to remedy this home training; and one thing that had really linked Herbert and Owen together in the bonds of a tolerably warm friendship, was that Herbert, with the refinement and tact of a tenderly-nurtured, home-bred youth, had felt for the many mortifications that Owen had to endure; pitied his foibles; and had kindly admonished him, without wounding him, of his offensive style of dictating and patronizing. Still the fault was too deep-seated to be fully eradicated by any external influences. Owen modified the outward by concealing—not forsaking—the inward evil; a plan common enough. It is so much easier to cut off the outward shoots than to root out the weeds that grow in the rank soil of the human heart.

The difference of nearly six years in their ages had enabled Owen, without any offence, to patronize little Rose all her childhood. When in the Christmas or midsummer holidays they had met, she was a pretty little sprite, flitting about the room or the garden, amusing by her spirit and fun as much as by her talents or beauty. As time went on, the young men both left home, four years before the period we are describing, for residence in London. Owen lived in his sister's house, and Herbert in a family known to Mabel—now Mrs. Apsley. An interval of two years passed before either Herbert or Owen came to Boveycum; and then Rose was so grown and altered in manner from the mere playful child, that the old, merry intimacy was over. Even Herbert was involuntarily subdued into most unwonted reserve with his sister Rose; and Jessie Strong watched with

considerable vigilance—women are sharp-sighted in such matters—the manners of her brother when he was in the society of Dr. Franks' *protégé*. Even his looks on casual meetings in the street were mentally commented on; and from pure sisterly regard she did not fail to expatiate to him, in terms of ostentatious pity, on the "sad history, the unfortunate, disreputable antecedents of that poor Rose, who, of course, could never marry—at least never marry decently. No man of position or refinement would think of marrying her; and her education, unfortunately perhaps, had unfitted her for a working man's wife. Indeed, it was a pity to observe that she was rather too much at ease in the position to which the whims of her protector had raised her; for poor as Dr. Franks was, he was still a gentleman—the same profession, Owen, you know, as papa—only in a different grade, certainly. And this young person so absurdly—as I heard Miss Pendrainly very properly remark—so absurdly over-educated, seems to fall into rank as it were with us, just as if it was her right; which, poor thing, is a great mistake. Dr. Franks keeps her close, does not let her visit; and there he is right, for some people think her well-looking. I don't see it myself; but it might be a snare to her, so ambiguously as she is placed; for a gentleman, you know, could not venture to make her his wife."

To which verdict, and its accompanying suggestions, Owen would reply in one contemptuous word—

"Stuff;" and, much to his sister's vexation, would make no change in his deportment, unless it was to show added interest in Rose.

Herbert had not come down this present autumn, as had been his wont. He was working very hard, and could not spare the time, or be spared from his engagements. Owen, who was a much more leisurely student, and whose profes-

sion was not quite so exacting, at least as he pursued it, had come to rusticate, and made rather frequent opportunities of calling at Dr. Franks'—not always when it was likely that he would find the good doctor at home. But if he had any intention of obtaining a chat with Rose, he was disappointed. Ever since Mrs. Stillwell had lost her reason, on a quarrel with her son about his assuming the masterhood at the Raven, and been consigned to a private asylum, Berry had lived in lodgings, and came for many hours of every day to Dr. Franks' house—a custom that she continued even more rigidly now that she knew Owen Strong was at home. So the young man was fain to retreat from the little parlour, scared by Berry's scowl, which looked all the more weird and strange by contrast with Rose's gentle smile. He complained to his sister Jessie that "Dr. Franks' house was haunted by that frightful, malignant-looking creature that Stillwell had wisely rid himself of." And Miss Jessie replied demurely, as it suited her to take the part of Berry—

"She has as much right in Dr. Franks' house as Rose; and perhaps, Owen, it would be as well for the young girl, whose head will be turned with praise, if she was like Miss Rasp or Berry, whichever it is."

"Like her! what trash you do talk, sister mine!"

"Yes, Owen, trash as it is, Berry is safe from any temptation; and we do know who and what *she* is; and I hear that old Miss Asbury, of Claydip, left her little property to her. So she had no need to live at the Raven—only stayed on Mrs. Stillwell's account; and, more than that, she might have set up a claim to a share in that business; but she left it to young Stillwell—and they say he is rich. So, I am sure, she is Rose's equal."

This skirmishing at home, and the check of Berry's presence at Dr. Franks', was just the stimulus needed to make

the young man more eager than he would otherwise have been to see and speak with Rose. In truth, there were many Boveycum belles who responded to his smiles. Some —it is grievous to write it—that hardly waited to be sought, but, like over-ripe plums, seemed ready to drop into his path. But he did not care for that which would so manifestly require no effort to become possessed of. The shyness of Rose, her freedom from all coquetry, her reserve, were an added charm, like the moss upon a rosebud; and, though no young man could more estimate the advantages of family and station than Owen, he was irresistibly attracted towards Dr. Franks' adopted daughter; and, when what was known of her origin was dinned into his ears by his sister, he dismissed it as a painful, annoying remembrance, to be shut out of his mind. Indeed, like multitudes of young men—and women too—he did not pause to analyze his feelings. He saw no danger and had no fears. He was now down at Boveycum for a holiday; and if he could make the prettiest girl in the place blush when she heard his footstep, and manifest a little gentle tremor when he spoke to her, it was pleasant pastime. Only in this case there was not quite the readiness to blush and tremble that he wished to see. Rose was timid and retiring, but perfectly self-possessed. Her manner often provoked him; it was so exactly the same as to any other gentleman, or, if a little more familiar, it was simply because he was Herbert's friend.

After the breakfast conversation that we have recorded, the day was very busy. Rose put all in train for the journey, and Berry moved about helping the preparations. In the afternoon Rose went to Summerfield cottage, about two miles distant, the abode of the prosperous total abstainer, who had risen from being a small market-gardener to be one of the most successful horticulturists in the county; and his

house and gardens were so beautiful that the home of Bessy and her widowed mother was pleasant to all beholders, and no small recommendation of the principles of religion and sobriety that were the solid basis of its prosperity.

Rose had to tell of their sudden departure, and to make arrangements with Mrs. Summerfield, who had promised to exercise care and supervision over Dorcas and the house during their absence. Her errand was soon done. She was followed to the gate by Bessy's two rosy children and their comfortable-looking grandmother, who sent all sorts of kind messages to "Master Herbert," as she called him. "Ah! if he only makes as good a man as his father—and I don't doubt he will, Goodness forbid that I should—he'll be a blessing to the world," was the widow's parting remark as Rose took her way with rapid step down the lane that led to Boveycum.

The shortening autumn day was drawing to a close, and Rose, wishing to get home with all speed, took a cut through a plantation, called the Rookery, that led to the back of Dr. Franks' house. She had not gone many paces, when, coming immediately towards her, was Mr. Owen Strong. It was not an agreeable encounter to her, though to avoid him was impossible. Boveycum had the usual amount of gossiping tongues, and the Rookery was so secluded a spot, a young lady being seen there with a gentleman was equivalent to an acknowledged courtship. To say that the thought of idle tongues did not enter into Rose's mind would be untrue, though that there should be the least ground for such inferences as the Boveycum gossips were in the habit of forming, was not in her thoughts. Owen sprang forward when he saw her, and, after the usual greetings, expressed his surprise at her being alone "so late," and, turning back, manifested his intention of accompanying her home. He had heard that day from Dr. Franks of the intended visit to

town, and their probable wintering there; and he immediately began the conversation by saying how happy his sister, Mrs. Apsley, would be to see Rose, and renew the intimacy with her which had now been suspended for four years. "She will hardly know you," said he.

"I shall not have much time for visiting," replied Rose. "All my leisure will be taken up with some studies I mean to continue; and, you know, I am to be housekeeper and manager for my father and Herbert."

"Oh! Herbert will not make many demands on your time—he is always occupied. He hardly found time to visit at my sister's as often as I know his inclination prompted. Did he never tell you about an attraction that drew him there?"

"He always said that it was pleasant to meet an old Boveycum friend like Mrs. Apsley; and then you were there: we quite understood that his brief leisure was spent in your circle."

"Ha! ha!—sly fellow! So he did not tell you of a certain Grace Apsley, an orphan cousin of Mr. Apsley's, who, I think, had far more to do with Herbert's visits, or his pleasure in them, than either my good sister or myself, though I don't deny we are old cronies, always wrangling, but none the worse friends."

Rose had turned her head away, so that if there was a heightened flush on her cheek at the words so carelessly uttered by her companion, he did not see it; and she replied, with an added coldness in her voice—"Yes; I think I remember his naming Miss Apsley."

"I shall expect one kindness of Dr. Franks," said Owen, changing the conversation. "He must let me be as free of his abode as Herbert has been of my sister's."

"Dr. Franks is not a person to forget a kindness."

"Ah! but I shall claim payment in kind."

"The cases are hardly parallel. My father has no one to preside over his house."

"Why, he has you."

"Oh! no efficient person. I am not like a married lady—not like Mrs. Apsley."

"All in good time; if I say you are all you ought to be, and more than for the peace of some I could name, than ——"

"Oh! pray, no banter, Mr. Owen, I do not understand it."

"How grave you are to-day, my gentle monitress. May I not use the privilege of an old friend with one who was a playmate not so long ago? May I not speak frankly where I"—he hesitated—"I feel deeply?"

"Mr. Owen, release my hand. I will hear not a word more of this nonsense. I am no longer a playmate. You seem to forget that I have ceased to be a child, that you amused yourself by teazing and mystifying. Do not delay me, I beg."

At that moment a dog came bounding towards Owen; and a few paces distant, walking with another lady, was—Miss Jessie Strong.

"Why, I declare, Owen, I thought you were at Cumb'ry by this time," she said. "Papa will be much annoyed if he does not meet you there. He wants, you know, to try and make up matters with the squire and his sister. Oh! Rose," she added, coldly, "I did not see that it was you, child. How long have you taken to walking in the Rookery by twilight?"

There was a something in the tone of the speech that prevented Rose replying. A little of her old spirit was in her; and as she felt her colour heighten at the manner, more than the words of Miss Strong, she repressed her reply; for she had learnt that, if she could not give the "soft answer that

turneth away wrath," the next best achievement was to be silent.

She bowed her head gravely to the lady, and waving her now disengaged hand to Owen, with an air of dismissal, was, with added speed, pursuing her way; but Owen, saying hurriedly and testily, "I met Miss Rose Bird just a few minutes ago, and shall not leave her to reach home unattended in this lonely spot. I doubt whether the squire will see my father." Before Miss Strong could reply he had regained the side of Rose, and was walking with her, much to her perplexity, towards her home.

How much depends on trifles in all the affairs of life! The evident construction put by Jessie Strong on seeing her brother and Rose together had its weight with each of the young people. He was indignant at the open attempt at interference—Rose at the cool air of contempt; and though she cared nothing in any special sense for Owen, yet no young girl was ever on the point of hearing a declaration of love made to her for the first time with indifference, even if she fully resolved to reject it. Indeed, Herbert's letters, which were often warm in their praises of Owen, and also the admiration expressed for the young man in Boveycum, were not without a certain influence; so that Rose reached her home in a much greater agitation of feeling than she could justify to herself. She had called to her aid a silent manner that repressed any further reference to the topic which had been interrupted, and Owen, mortified and annoyed, concluded that she was offended; and their parting, too, at Dr. Franks' door—Berry coming out into the garden as she saw them approach—was constrained on both sides. A much less acute observer than Berry would have noted the confusion of Rose. But the return of Dr. Franks prevented any explanation.

At night Berry lingered in the house on many pretexts,

superintending the arrangement of the bedroom she meant to occupy when Rose and Dr. Franks had gone. And when at length she could remain no longer—Rose being about to retire for the night—Berry crept into the room, and plucking the young girl's gown, said, looking up at her with an apprehensive, as well as melancholy glance, "Rose, are you going to be foolish? What can Owen Strong ever be to you that you should blush at either his coming or going, or allow him to see you home?"

"I could not avoid him or reject his attendance without seeming to act rudely," said Rose, hurriedly. "Why do you doubt me, Berry?"

"Because winning a woman's heart for amusement, and throwing it away when won, is as common as a child's crying for a toy and breaking it, and of about the same consequence in many men's estimation. It is play, Rose, to them, but not to us."

The last word had hardly escaped her lips when its incongruity struck Berry. "Us!" she repeated bitterly; "what claim have I to community in feminine feelings, any more than in beauty, with you and such as you?"

"Dear Berry, do not speak so. Your lightest word I would treasure; for, indeed, we have more in common than others. Are we not both, in a sense, sufferers, helpless sufferers from the effects of the same vice. If you are set apart by your personal afflictions—which make you so dear to me—I am but a stray waif after all; nameless, as Jessie Strong's looks to-day told me she remembered. I never saw that look so manifest on her face before. Why should they suppose, because they know nothing of me, that my parentage must be base and evil? Why may it not be good, Berry? Oh, that I knew!"

"Evil is the readiest conjecture—more native to human

thought, Rose, than good. Why, Milton found it so, great and good as he was. When he describes fallen spirits he is marvellous in power and grandeur. When supreme good is to be portrayed, we feel he sinks overpowered by his theme. But, Rose, what I would say is, as you feel you are, even with all Dr. Franks' care, to some extent alone and nameless—with womanhood has come the bitterness of that knowledge—all the greater need of being watchful over your heart. 'To thine own self be true.' You know the words, child; and God bless you!"

She lifted up her wan face, and Rose stooped down and kissed her affectionately, her sunny curls falling on the pale hair of the cripple. The contrast was so marvellous; it was as if hope and despair had embraced.

That night Rose could not sleep. More than ever before, she thought of the sad incident that had cast her desolate on the charity of her present kind protector. Dimly she recollected part of the horrors she had endured at Cumb'ry; but no effort of memory enabled her to recall the features of the man she had often heard described who brought her to Boveycum. Her heart yearned to him in his grave with an intensity of feeling that none but those who have known no kindred could understand. She felt glad that she had weeded and kept his grave sacred; "For," she murmured, "it holds all that I can call mine in this populous world; and it is dear to me. It did not occur to me, as poor Berry's poetic imagination suggested, that there was anything emblematical in 'a spotted laurel.' Ah! who is without spots?"

CHAPTER III.

STEPPING FORTH.

"These struggling tides of life that seem
In wayward, aimless, course to tend,
Are eddies of the mighty stream
That rolls to the appointed end."—BRYANT.

ON the Monday morning after the events described, Dr. Franks and Rose took their departure for London. They were attended to the railway station by a sturdy, comely-looking man, whose name of Summerfield exactly suited his broad, smiling, wholesome face. He made himself very busy with the luggage, and secured very comfortable seats in a nearly empty carriage for our two travellers, who, it was evident, rarely left their homes; for there were so many poor folks hovering near the platform to see "the doctor off—God bless him!" and making quite an event of it. Just as the bell had rung, and adieus for the last time were exchanged, and messages to Master Herbert sent from Summerfield, and charges given in return about Berry and Dorcas and the house, followed by the common injunction, "Write soon," the guard had slammed to the carriage door, when a young man rushed on the platform, flung his carpet bag through the window, mounted the step of the closed door, and hung on—the train beginning to start. In a moment the door was opened; not without the hasty comment—"Sir, it won't do; you're always late," from the guard; and in jumped Jasper Stillwell, chuckling as he sat panting down exactly opposite Rose. "By jingo! I nearly lost it."

It seemed to Dr. Franks and Rose as if they were deprived, by the presence of the new-comer, of all the ad-

vantages of their punctuality. They would both gladly, at any inconvenience, have avoided being boxed up with young Stillwell, who, of all the residents in Boveycum, was the most offensive to both of them. To do him justice, Stillwell had not planned the meeting. He was always late; though, with a prescience that he was not agreeable, he liked annoying them. He was a few moments in the carriage before he looked round and saw Dr. Franks, or particularly noticed Rose, both of whom began reading very diligently, to prevent any attempt at conversation. But Stillwell was not to be silenced. With an air of great civility he said to Dr. Franks—"Sad news this, sir; very sad for the family."

The doctor, without speaking, merely looked up with a cold note of inquiry—"Eh?"

"This marriage, sir, of Squire Pen——"

"Oh! that is the squire's affair. I do not know that any one has anything to do with it," rejoined the doctor.

"It's very hard on the fam'ly, Dr. Franks. Miss Keziah is in the train, and Mr. Vesey; they're going to London to consult what can be done."

"Indeed!" said Dr. Franks, turning his paper and reading on.

"Yes; very hard. An old, mad fellow—I've no patience with him. It's a charming marriage, Miss Rose," he added, addressing her—"Don't you think so?"

"I don't think about it."

"No! Why, I thought you'd feel an interest in the Cumb'ry folks. It was quite the toss up of a halfpenny, and you'd a' been brought up there."

The last words were spoken in low tone that was intended for Rose's ears only. She turned her head full towards Jasper, and said, "How is your mother? when did you see her last?"

This question had the effect she wished—it silenced him. He seemed to collapse; muttered confusedly, "Better, better—that is, much the same;" and neither Rose nor Dr. Franks were troubled with any further remarks. At the next station a young man entered, wearing a cut-away coat, and his hat very much on one side. Stillwell and this last arrival knew each other, and they talked on congenial themes, such as wagers, races, drinking feats, pedestrianism, and other sporting matters, during the whole of the journey to London.

However, Dr. Franks and Rose read sedulously; and, by mutual understanding, as much as individual dislike, took not the slightest notice of their boasting townsman.

Stillwell, by dint of nudging his neighbour, whispering, and looking in the direction of Rose, contrived to make her the subject of remark, though her drawn-down veil, averted looks, and occupancy with her book, prevented her being fully conscious of the rudeness of their notice.

At the terminus of the Great Western Railway, Rose saw the Cumb'ry party enter a cab, and was not sorry that they did not recognize Dr. Franks and herself; and she was glad to find that in the bustle of arrival and claiming luggage, Stillwell had vanished. Lodgings had been secured for them in a street of that new and populous district which, emulating a more aristocratic suburb, has assumed the comprehensive name of Westbournia. Just as they were alighting at 2 Felix Terrace, West, Rose saw a cab depositing its burden at a house called Felix Lodge, at an angle of the same terrace. But if she had any disposition to notice or think much of the near neighbourhood of the Cumb'ry people, she was prevented by disappointment at not finding Herbert there to meet them. His absence was, however, satisfactorily explained by Mrs. Woodly, the landlady,

giving them a message that, "through the absence from town of a medical friend, Mr. Herbert Franks was unusually busy in his professional pursuits, but he would be there early in the evening."

Rose walked through the little drawing-rooms on the first floor, connected or separated, as the case might be, by folding doors. She observed a door on the landing that she thought opened into another room, but as she laid her hand on it, was told it led to the next house. The houses had once been connected, but were now in separate occupancy. She then mounted to the three bedrooms above, that comprised their apartments; they looked small to eyes accustomed to the space of an old-fashioned country dwelling; but they were clean and neat, and had been well recommended by sundry Boveycum folks who had resided in Mrs. Woodly's lodgings.

Rose had scarcely laid aside her bonnet and mantle when she began to make arrangements—at least in thought—for Dr. Franks' comfort. She looked at the sleeping-rooms, and decided he should have the largest. Her faculty of arrangement, which, by a few neat touches, wonderfully altered for the best the disposition of the furniture, so as to secure the greatest amount of space and light, was all so smilingly effected that no offence was given to the landlady and her servant. Rose regarded the latter with wonder. The London maid-of-all-work, in a genteel lodging-house, was a new genus to her; and the way in which the poor wiry thing, with her muddy complexion, smart cap, and quick movements, contrived to run up and down stairs, prepare tea, and answer the street door, all seemingly at one time, puzzled Rose, accustomed as she had hitherto been, to the quiet, not to say slow, orderliness of country life. She made a resolution to be very chary of ringing the bell for this poor drudge, and to

wait as much as possible upon herself and on him whom she called father, and served with a daughter's love. I'm afraid my young lady readers will come to the conclusion that Rose had not a genteel sense of the way to maintain her dignity and position. Giving all the trouble they can to servants, and boasting of their own helplessness, being the approved mode of impressing others with a due sense of their importance, and therefore the fashion. But it is as well to confess our poor Rose was not a fashionable young lady.

One of the first arrangements was to make the back room into a study for Dr. Franks. His life at his desk had been too many years uninterrupted for Rose to think of anything before the quietude so needful to his comfort was secured.

Then they sat down to their tea, Rose observing with pleasure that a piano formed part of the furniture of the room.

As the gas lamps were lighted in the street, Rose raised the blind and peered out with a gaze half-curious, half-awe-struck, believing it was London she looked at—about as rational a conclusion as if she looked at a leaf and believed it was a tree. This was the momentary exaltation of her mind in coming from the country to London; and as she did not mean to write a book of her impressions, or rather her bewilderments—after the plan of numbers who rush through cities and countries "seeing" and "doing" them, with equal indistinctness and celerity—we may pardon her.

But a step on the stairs, a rapid entrance into the room, a warm embrace given and received all round, and there is the fireside group complete. Herbert sits down opposite his father, the table between them on the one hand, and the fire-place on the other; and on a hassock at their feet—she retained many of her childish ways, and a love of a low seat was one—was perched Rose, so flushed with the novelty and pleasure of the present, that her face was radiant. Indeed,

those deep eyes, with their lambent ray, would have been too bright but for the white lids and long lashes that drooped over them; and it was well that the redundant hair, falling about a little carelessly, softened the glow of her cheeks. Herbert was very like his father, but taller, darker, and paler. It was a thoughtful face, that could be stern. It had not the calm benevolence that made Dr. Franks' countenance so impressive; nor the unmistakable traces of sorrow, patiently borne, that gave at times a woman's gentleness to the father's manner. Herbert was a little abrupt; but that abruptness and sternness was often atoned for by a smile so open and beaming, so rare and sweet, lighting up and altering the whole face, as a sunbeam striking down a rugged glen calls out beauties before unnoted. He was thin to attenuation, and his father interrupted some remark in the swift interchange of pleasant, homely prattle, by taking up one of his son's hands, holding it in his with a sigh, and saying, "This will not do, my boy; we must alter this."

"Oh! I am well, very well; none the worse, sir, for being thin."

"I'm inclined to think, from remembrance of my own youth, and observation of others, that the laws of health are most neglected by those whose profession it is to study them," said Dr. Franks.

"Not most, my dear father, but much. Knowing and doing are as different as seeming and being."

"But medical men," said Rose timidly, "are guides of others; they should surely be consistent."

"That, my dear," said Dr. Franks, "is the greatest difficulty of the teacher, whether it be of morals or physics—the embodying of his own ideas, reaching his own standard. In proportion to that being a high one, will be his need of effort and watchfulness; and his falling below it will expose

him, not merely to the misery of failure, but to the temptation to the worst of all evils, hypocrisy."

"Better make no such high profession," said Herbert.

"Not so," replied his father; "it is a coward's part to live below his convictions. This is pandering to what is worst in ourselves and others."

"Would it not have been better, father," said Herbert, knitting his brows, "if those medical men who, some years ago, signed a certificate recommending the safety and propriety of discontinuing the use of intoxicating drinks—would it not have been better never to have signed it, than that almost every one of them should live in violation of their own written statement; and, when appealed to on the subject of the inconsistency, resort to petty quibbles, as one did the other day, saying, 'When I signed that declaration, all I meant was that water-drinking, as a rule, was safer than wine-drinking.' I remember, sir, how pleased you were with that certificate."

"I am still glad, in the midst of my annoyance at the inconsistency of the men; I am glad of those names. I rejoice that temperance friends have the autographs in safe keeping; their not practising what they recommend no more nullifies the recommendation, than clergymen writing infidel doctrines nullifies Christianity. A great and good man, at the head of his profession, drew up that certificate, believed and practised its recommendations. Others, men of distinguished talents, signed it. Had they been firm to carry out the convictions it embodied, the medical profession might have had the merit of breaking down the stronghold of the vice that most of all baffles the efforts of benevolence, and impedes human progress. There are, however, Herbert, many faithful among the faithless—names second to none; and as intemperance is both a physical and a moral evil, in

combating it the physician has quite as much influence as the clergyman, and it is as needful he should be on the right side, which in this case is the safe side."

"Ye—s," said Herbert slowly; "ye—s; but, sir, what you said about its being 'safe' is my objection. The better part of valour may be discretion; but I have no idea of a man overcoming moral evils by entirely putting himself out of the way of being tempted. Moral strife—the struggle with evils within and around—invigorates the soul. Getting wholly out of the way of these evils is the ascetic principle. A man should be able to say to all his pleasures, 'Thus far thou shalt come, and no farther.' It is the highest platform when a man stands erect, and so far treads down Satan under his feet as to say—This drink, this conviviality, is my slave, to yield me what I choose in obedience to the dictates of my reason."

Herbert's face flushed as he spoke; he reared his head, expanded his chest, and his whole attitude seemed full of assurance of a noble victory in that moral strife.

Dr. Franks lowered his spectacles, which had been quietly reposing on his forehead, and looked through them with a quaint, half-mournful expression at his son. Rose laid down her knitting in her lap, and glanced from one to the other doubtfully.

"I think, Herbert," said Dr. Franks slowly, "you will find there will be plenty of occasions for that moral strife you so much admire inevitably rising up in your inner and outer life. You need not tamper with, or invite more, by yielding to any of the pernicious customs of society; and as to that grand high platform you talk of as the highest, it seems to me out of sight. If you, by reason of strength, which I doubt, could stand on such a moral pinnacle, like St. Simeon on the column, you must occupy the place alone. Down amid the erring and

the suffering, helping others out of the horrible pit and the miry clay—that is the noblest place."

"Why, sir, I know a very clever man, a minister of Leicester, who says, as I think truly—'Why, I may as well say, I will never speak because some people swear, as that I will never drink because some people become drunkards.'"

"O Herbert! but speech is a necessity," said Rose. "It is God's distinctive gift to man; he must exercise it; there's no parallel between that natural gift and the artificial drinks that cause so much evil. We as a family know they are not needed either for health or sociability."

"Rose, you are eloquent on the gift of speech; 'tis your sex's privilege."

There was no one to echo Herbert's laugh, for a little, a very little damp had fallen on the feelings of the party. It was a disappointment to Dr. Franks that the habit in which his son had been reared had not deepened into a principle; and though it was pleasant to him to hear Herbert say, as if anxious to correct any painful impression his words had made—

"Oh! I'm a water-drinker, as I ever was. I merely stated some objections that arise in my mind, and make me doubt the basis of the temperance argument."

The conversation was interrupted by shrill cries and shrieks in the street, and the noise of many voices, as if a crowd were passing. Herbert threw up the window and looked out. There was a shutter or plank upon some men's shoulders, and stretched on it lay the body of a woman bruised and bleeding. A man in the custody of the police followed. He was intoxicated, struggling with the police, raving and foaming. Three children followed, whose cries of mingled grief and fright rang wildly through the

night-air above the hum of the mob and the foul oaths of the man in custody. The whole party had issued out of a little back street that opened into Felix Terrace. It was a common street-tragedy; and Rose's face, from which every particle of colour had fled—though she had only heard the children's cries—caused Herbert to close the window hastily, unwilling that she should see the spectacle of misery. The maid-servant came into the room with the supper-tray, and on Rose uttering an exclamation of fear, the girl said very coolly—"Oh! it's that Felix Tavern, Miss; there's never no peace with the rows they has there—leastways at their side door in Felix Passage."

"Why, it's horrible!" said Rose.

"Oh! that ain't nothink, Miss; and please, am I to fetch any beer? The Felix draws the Golden Brewery ale, and missis's West Country lodgers allys likes that, Miss; leastways if they don't take London porter; and if they do, the Felix draws Barclay and Perkins."

"No," faltered Rose, looking towards the window where Dr. Franks and Herbert stood—the girl with her glib swiftness still running on.

"They keeps Alton ale and Burton at the Felix, and the best o' wines and spirruts."

"No; we take none."

"None!" said the girl with an accent of surprise which she checked. Dr. Franks returning to the table, and hearing the name, repeated the incongruous word, "Felix;" adding, as he looked at the girl, "And your neighbourhood is much the happier for this same house, the Felix."

The girl dropped a curtsy, looking up with the acute London look, as if she detected the covert sarcasm of the question, and said, "The Felix does a first-rate trade, sir; and the landlord and landlady is most respectable." She held a

waiter before her and stood expecting orders; and when dismissed, it was evidently wondering that she had no errand to the Felix.

The little remark that the uproar had excited struck Rose as being quite as mournful as the incident. That people could get hardened or indifferent to such sights and sounds was to her a most painful fact.

The cries of the children rang in her ears; and when, the supper being over, according to his wont, Dr. Franks opened THE BOOK, and consecrated his new abode by setting up the family altar there, it was difficult for one of those who knelt to obtain composure or unite in offering anything but a helpless weeping before God—

> "Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
> The falling of a tear."

So Rose was refreshed and strengthened. An earnest desire sprang in her soul to live usefully, to be permitted to do some active, practical good. Never was that desire imparted in vain. It is one of those good gifts which, if it do not ripen into great outward action, by merely growing in the heart, diffuses health and vigour to the whole moral nature.

O women! living at ease; sitting at your looking-glasses contemplating the beauty which you are vain of, rather than grateful for; whose most diligent study is what contour and form of garb and garniture best suit your complexion and shape; whose most recondite problem is, how to murder time gracefully and pleasantly,—how little you know of the great purpose of existence—of the virtue that should ennoble this life, or the faith that, reaching onwards, casts anchor within the veil, and realizes amid, it may be, toil, and tears, and pain, the blessedness of the life to come.

By breakfast-time the following morning Rose seemed so

clearly to have settled the plan of life for the present, that Boveycum appeared to her now a great way off in point of time as well as distance. Dr. Franks intended reading closely at the British Museum for a few weeks, and superintending the publication of a new work he had been years preparing.

Rose did not know enough of human nature, and was too tractable and affectionate, to be able to account for that very common form of self-assertion in which the young mind inclines to get out of the groove made by education and early association, and claims a path for itself. Jealous of their individuality, this is the common temptation of intelligent young people. It is the time in their mental history when they most need the prayers and tax the forbearance of their friends. How often the latter, in grief at the partial disappointment, or in annoyance at the waywardness which seems to them so short-sighted, utter bitter words about rashness and rebellion: wonder that the promise given, "Train up a child in the way he should go," is not immediately realized; forgetting that the *immediate* realization is never promised, though often mercifully given. When *he is old* he shall not depart from it. It is never said, or to be inferred, that he shall not wander. Each succeeding generation works out its own problems for itself; and, perhaps, amid all errors and failures, this is best. How firm is the belief—indeed the only conviction worth the name of belief—that arises as among the Samaritans of old—"Now we believe, not because of thy saying, but we have heard him ourselves, and know."

Herbert was by no means the first among those reared in the careful practice of a definite principle, who sought to find means to make that principle as efficacious for good, and yet less stringent. To do him justice, no personal leaning to pernicious habits, no dread of the raillery of companions, no fear of the charge of eccentricity, influenced him. He

knew and reverenced many wise and good men who did not see the evils either of drink or drinking customs, as his father did; and he wished to make it clear to himself that it was as right for them to retain their views, as it was for those whose convictions were different to adhere to theirs; forgetting that Supreme Wisdom has given an infallible practical test as to practical evil—"The tree is known by its fruits."

Of the fruits of that upas tree of intemperance Mrs. Woodly told, in the sequel of the street scene of the past evening. Rose heard that the man and woman were noted drunken brawlers, who disturbed the neighbourhood; that murder was so often shrieked in their dwelling no one noticed it; and at length it had been screamed for the last time. The woman was indeed killed—if not murdered. She had gone, as was her custom, to fetch her husband from the tap-room of the Felix—had been denied admission—raised a clamour at the door. The husband, primed for any deed of cruelty, was let out to wreak his vengeance on her. She had flung a stone at him, and he had dashed her on the pavement, and trampled on her.

"Why did not the people of the house interfere?"

"Oh! Miss; that was for the police to do. They are very respectable people indeed at the Felix—quite rich I'm told. They acted very right and proper. They did not let the woman in, and they turned the man out, you see; and it wasn't for a respectable house to interfere with such riff-raff."

"Well; but the man was made mad and brutal by the drink they sold him," persisted Rose. "They should have kept him in, and prevented his doing mischief."

"No, Miss; that's the work of the police—that's what we pay rates for; and very heavy indeed they are. Mr. Twirk, the landlord of the Felix, would have enough to do if he

gave the people that use his house leave to stay till they were sober again; indeed, that wouldn't be allowed. There's a time for clearing the house, Miss. I'd an uncle in the public line, and he never turned a customer out, or behaved severe to him as long as he was quiet; but when any one was noisy or quarrelsome, he'd have 'em out in a trice. He used to say, 'Fight it out outside to your heart's content, and make as much noise as you like anywhere but in my house.'"

Rose cut athwart these remarks, saying, "And the man will be tried; and the children—what will become of them?"

"Yes, Miss; there'll be an inquest on the woman; the man will be tried at the assizes, and the children—the youngest of 'em—will go to the workhouse; but I'll be bound the two biggest will take to the streets; they've the regular jail-bird jib—a hang-dog look; I saw it in their faces when they went to the Felix this morning, and the eldest turned quite saucy when he was warned off. Mrs. Twirk is a little hard-like in her way of speaking; it's a pity, so genteel as she might be with her property; but she ordered one of the barmen to horsewhip the boy away."

"What!" said Rose, starting from her chair; "the child whose mother lies dead, and his father in prison?"

"Why, you see, my dear young lady, you don't understand these things and these people. The boy was saucy, and as I tell you, is quite a young ruffian, quite—a bad set, all of them. As to the woman, Mrs. Twirk told a lady that told me, she was an aggravating creature, that a man couldn't keep his hands off, not when his blood was up and he'd had a drop."

Rose sighed and said no more. It was evident that Mrs. Woodly saw the incident in a different light. The household matters were discussed, and the landlady, with her commonplace estimate of things as they are, departed, leaving Rose to

the companionship of her own thoughts. It was curious how her mind dwelt on this incident—the misery of the life that had been crushed out on the curb-stones like a noisome reptile's—the misery of the life that remained, both to the brutal husband and the wretched children! Then she puzzled her head with strange questions—Who might have to pay the cost of all the law business and prison work that would follow? Who would have to keep the children? Did it come out of those same rates that Mrs. Woodly said were so heavy? Was it not hard that industrious, sober people should be thus taxed for evils that came from drinking? If this Felix man, whose name she thought she had heard somewhere before, had made such a fortune by selling strong drink, why should he not be made to support the children that were bereaved owing to the drink taken in his house? My readers will see Rose was no philosopher in the legislative sense of that term. The poor shallow thing would not be able to understand—no, not if the most learned and accomplished of Chancellors of the Exchequer condescended to explain it to her—that it was right to license drink, to derive a revenue from drunkenness, and then to punish the drunkard, and to throw the expense of that punishment on society. Rose had heard from friends who had visited the Continent how certain foreign potentates derive a revenue from gambling, support the splendour of regal state from the spoils of guilt, and traffic in the iniquity of their subjects. She was sufficiently national to be proud of her own country's freedom from any such mode of deriving an income. Yet somehow, as she thought it all out, sitting there over her work, and remembered the arguments she had read in many books on the subject in Dr. Franks' library, her patriotism was wounded. She couldn't see, being a woman and with only a limited mental vision, poor thing! the mighty difference, whether it was drinking

or gambling. If the government tempted its subjects to the vice, and made a profit out of their yielding to it, it seemed to her equally wrong. And she was perplexed—this perverse young thinker!—when the remark arose, "Brewers and distillers are among the most influential people, good Christians and eminent philanthropists." Why, was there not the foundation-stone of a district church to be laid in a few days, as she could see by a bill that blazed in yellow and gigantic letters on the opposite wall, by a famous distiller? It was confusing, this mixture of the spiritual and the spirituous, certainly.

Her reverie was interrupted by the arrival of two ladies to call on her—Mrs. and Miss Grace Apsley—the before-named married daughter of Dr. Strong and her cousin.

The recent mention of the latter's name in the agitating interview Rose had had with Owen Strong made her colour and tremble a little as she received her visitors—a confusion which Mrs. Apsley, who had that morning heard all particulars, very much exaggerated, in a letter from her sister Jessie—set down to Rose's dread of meeting a sister of Owen's. She was not an ill-natured woman, and she very much liked Herbert Franks; but she did not, of course, wish her only brother—the pride and hope of the family—to entangle himself in a love affair with a girl in Rose's circumstances. It did not glance across her mind that her brother was to blame. He was to be pitied and protected, put on his guard against one who was evidently—yes, though Jessie affected not to see it—a very beautiful, attractive creature. Mrs. Apsley was neither worse nor better than nine-tenths of average ladies in judging of the conduct of their male relatives where women were concerned. No thought of injury to Rose, of the respect, deference, and reserve due to her peculiar position, entered her mind; and, therefore, involuntarily, there

was a hardness in her manner as she asked after Dr. Franks, and whether Herbert was immediately to be domesticated with them. Then, diverging into Boveycum news, spoke, of course, of the marriage of the old squire, and the artifices of designing women—to all which Rose replied in monosyllables. Miss Apsley, after the first formal bow and a few remarks, was entirely silent. She was an elegant, proud-looking young woman, about three years older than Rose. As they were leaving, they both glanced across the road to the monster bill, and instantly remembered that part of their visit was to ask Dr. Franks and Herbert to go with Mr. Apsley and their party to witness the laying of the foundation-stone. Rose could not, without positive rudeness, be omitted in the invitation, and the younger lady, with a gracious bend of her tall form, and a patronizing smile that curved her lips, but did not mount to her eyes, muttered the usual formula—"Give us the pleasure of your company," &c. To all which Rose replied by leaving the matter to the decision of Dr. Franks. Then Mrs. Apsley launched out in praise of the munificence of the gentleman who was to lay the foundation-stone.

"Certainly he and his family are very rich. You've heard of the Simmers, the great distillers. Lady Emily Simmers is to be present, and she will lay a purse on the foundation-stone, and Lady Burnish will lay another. I daresay Lady Emily Simmers will write a poem about it. It's really delightful to see persons of their wealth spending it to promote the best interests of the people. Such destitution, too, as there is in that district. But, there, I'm talking wide of the mark. You young ladies know nothing about these matters. Write soon. Good morning."

When Dr. Franks returned, Herbert came with him, and Rose delivered the invitation.

"Oh! the Simmers intend building this church," said Dr. Franks musingly.

"That is a good work surely, father," said Herbert.

"Yes. It reminds me of the building of many churches in the olden time—a compounding for sins."

"The building was none the worse, and society was all the better, sir, when some red-handed baron or criminal took sanctuary from the avenger of blood, and put up a penitential prayer in stone, as witness of his remorse."

"And, if he were a true penitent, left off his sins against his brother and society, eh?" interposed Dr. Franks.

"Ah! I see, sir, where your argument drifts."

"Yes, Herbert, there will be spiritual destitution as long as neighbourhoods are so well supplied with 'the best gin' or strong beer of such capitalists as Simmers and his coadjutors; and build as many churches as they may, the working-people will neither have the decent clothes nor the virtuous inclination to go into them. A new wing to a brewery, and twenty-eight fresh licenses in one year to the public-houses of one firm alone, absorbs not only the means, but perverts the morals of more hundreds than it would take to fill many churches. No, Rose, I shall not go; and any trifle I may have to give shall go to the earnest men and women who carry the Gospel to the poor, and who are labouring to open rooms and places of sober resort for working men, and to shut up the public-houses. I have read Defoe's biting satire—

'Wherever God erects a house of prayer,
The devil always builds a chapel there;
And, 'twill be found upon examination,
The latter has the larger congregation.'

But it seems to me a refinement on the impiety of Satan,

when a man erects scores of shrines to Bacchus, and then presumes he can cover the evil by building a church to God."

Rose was not sorry that the plan was given up, though Herbert said to his father, "Mrs. and Miss Apsley would be companions for Rose, sir, while you are reading at the Museum, as you propose to do."

"I need no company," said Rose cheerfully. "On the busiest days we shall still be all together at breakfast, and again in the evening, and I have plenty of occupations." There was a pause, which was broken by Rose saying suddenly—"Father, did we know any one at Bovey named Twirk?"

"No—o; and yet, let me think. Twirk! yes. Now I remember, there was a man of that name, years ago, head waiter at the Raven. He was there, Rose, when ——"

"When I was left," said Rose, observing that Dr. Franks hesitated.

"Yes. He married a waiting-woman in the service of Miss Pendrainly. Why, my dear, do you ask?"

"Because, sir, Twirk is the name of the landlord of this tavern or hotel near here—the Felix."

"Indeed! then he must have prospered, if it is the same. I heard something of Twirk taking a house in a low neighbourhood of east London; but he may have changed his abode, and set up in fine style in this suburb."

"Mrs. Woodly says, sir, that he is rich. I have been talking to her about that sad affair last night. The woman is dead."

"Yes," replied Herbert, "she died an hour after her admission to the hospital. But come, Rose, give us some music. I have not heard you sing now for a long time. Let us have one of poor Berry's weird songs."

"Willingly," was the reply, as Rose went to the piano;

"but they lose half their merit when she does not play the accompaniment—poor Berry!" It was with a sigh that she seated herself at the instrument; and after a little fanciful prelude, with a faint, far-off echo, began to sing, to a wild and plaintive air, the following words:—

"Hope is like a mountain echo
Floating on afar—afar;
While you follow, still it flies,
Wild and hollow calling dies—
Dies in empty air.

"Hope is like a shooting star
Darting off afar—afar;
A dancing sprite, athwart the skies;
A glancing light that trembling flies
While you say—'Tis there.'

"Never heed the mountain echo,
Nor the gleaming star—afar;
A warning hear—your safety lies
In lowly fear, that ever cries
One word—beware, beware."

"That song does not suit *you*, Rose," said Herbert, with a smile. "It is all very well for Berry, perhaps. By-the-by, I often hear some good singing at Mrs. Apsley's. Her cousin Grace sings divinely."

"Really! you speak enthusiastically."

"Yes; divinely. She reminds me of that most perfect description of a lady singing, by Mrs. Barrett Browning—

'Oh! to see or hear her singing! scarce I know which is divinest;
For her looks sing too; she modulates her gestures on the tune.

Her mouth stirs with the song, like song; and when the notes are finest,
'Tis the eyes that shoot out vocal light, and seem to swell them on.'"

Rose reddened a very little as she said, "It must be a wonderful singer to equal that description;" and Dr. Franks paused in his pacing up and down the room, and gave an amused laugh, adding carelessly, "That is the young lady whom Jessie speaks of as her brother's intended bride."

Herbert made no reply to this remark; but said, still speaking of the singer, "She has had the benefit of very admirable teaching."

"I thought I heard that Miss Apsley had been brought up in the Isle of Wight, and only last winter came to London," said Dr. Franks.

"It was in the island she was taught; and recently I have known her teacher, one of the most interesting persons—with the exception of being very reserved, annoyingly so—that I have ever met with."

"Indeed! How came you, Herbert, to make the acquaintance? What has brought this teacher to London?"

"That which brings scores, hundreds—affliction; for even when the hope of health and of cure are gone, many still come for alleviation."

Dr. Franks seated himself at the table as Rose trimmed the evening fire, and Herbert left, for he was not to take up his residence with them until the following week.

The short conversation had given Rose much to think about. Herbert evidently admired Miss Apsley. With a pang that was equally strange and painful Rose recalled his looks and words, and a sense of misery, new to her, crept like a chill to her heart, and tinged her thoughts with gloom.

Then a glow of indignation rushed like a flame over her as she thought of Owen Strong. Could it be that he had dared to approach her with such words and looks while he was engaged to another? This change of thought was serviceable to her. She roused, and settled it in her mind that the pain she had felt, at first, was sisterly regret at finding Herbert so changed. Yes, he was certainly changed; the old affectionate Herbert, the part playfellow, part instructor of her childhood was gone. It was natural she should feel some regret at that. Then not only Miss Apsley, but this teacher, mingled in her troubled thoughts. Poor gentleman! how terrible must the affliction be, that Herbert spoke of as incurable! and to a professional man who might be poor. Rose knew enough of that phase of life to have her sympathies awakened.

The thoughts suggested that night continued to operate through the next few days. Left much alone, she had time to ponder over them; and her letters to Berry, which were very regular, were so far descriptive that they tended to fix on the writer's mind some incidents that otherwise might be forgotten.

While life went on so quietly in the temporary home they had selected, and Dr. Franks was busy with his literary pursuits, Herbert with his studies, and Rose with the feminine occupations that an industrious young woman contrives, not only for her own solace, but mostly for the comfort of others, scenes of a very different kind were passing near them, in which, as it ultimately proved, they were by no means uninterested.

CHAPTER IV.

OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

"With wine inflated, man is all upblown,
And feels a power which he believes his own;
With fancy soaring to the skies, he thinks
His all the virtues, all the while he drinks.
But when the gas from the balloon has gone,
When sober thoughts and serious cares come on;
Where, then, the worth that in himself he found?
Vanished! and he sunk grov'ling on the ground."—CRABBE.

IT was quite true, as Jasper Stillwell had said, that Mr. Vesey Pendrainly was in London, not solely on account of his uncle's marriage. His journey was to arrange the complication of his own affairs, which long habits of intemperance and carelessness, and heavy losses during the whole of the past racing season, had rendered desperate. Mr. Vesey had settled his aunt in lodgings, but it was by no means his intention to remain with her. He had secured the attendance of a woman known to him—no other than the former Miss Grig, who had been for a time in the employ of the Twirks, had married, and was now a widow, Mrs. Carver, and had taken up the business of a lady's nurse. Vesey swore bitterly at himself for not inducing this woman to come a year ago to Cumb'ry, and getting rid of Annie Clinch, whom he had himself both flirted with and distrusted. But with his wife's death had vanished every particle of ordinary prudence, and Vesey had blundered on a drunken dupe.

As soon as he could shake himself clear of his aunt Keziah, who, wayward and helpless as a spoiled child, alternately clung to him and upbraided him, he fulfilled the promise he had made to Stillwell, who had long been his *fac totum*,

to take up his abode at the Felix. He had often been a guest there, and now, crestfallen, anxious, and, of course, very thirsty, he came to his old quarters.

In a small sitting-room on the second floor of the house he sat at a table covered with papers; and it would have been ludicrous, only that his wretchedness was so apparent, to notice the puzzled way in which he laid his hands among the heap, then referred to a private book, then took a long drink at a glass of spirits and water at his side, rubbed his head and eyes, leaned back on his chair,—then began again with the papers, all the while snorting out monosyllables of vexation not unmixed with oaths. It was clear, as he said, there was "a confounded muddle"—"a hitch somewhere." "It would be a puzzler to old Harry to pick out the rights of it." Yes, to find or make all right there would indeed defy even superhuman intelligence. So this poor Vesey sipped and swore, beat the fire, and heated himself in vain.

What perplexed him most was, that he had no remembrance of signing many of the engagements, bills, and bets of which here was a record. He had generally been content to put himself, in most sporting matters, in the hands of Jasper Stillwell, who had the reputation of being "keen"—"a knowing dog." He had quarrelled with Stillwell the night before on that very topic—his want of memory of certain transactions; and was pretty plainly told, that "as to memory, no one expected him to have that, for he was never sober"—a statement that stung him, and that he deeply resented both when it was uttered and now after a night's rest, as in his confused way he argued—"I remember that speech of his, the upstart! Who's he, I wonder?" To which query, with a twinge, there was an inward reply, "He's your creditor, and if he turns rusty, on the heels of all the other losses, why, then, there's no seeing the end of

it—no way out—shut up." The blank look that accompanied this conclusion was almost idiotic in its vagueness. He leaned back in his chair, let his hands drop down at his sides, pushed the table away with his feet, and stared at the opposite wall helplessly.

Approaching steps were heard, and Stillwell, accompanied by Twirk, entered the room rudely, without the ceremony of knocking. The former ran up familiarly to Vesey, saying, "Come, it don't do for you and I to be out o' sorts." He took one of the languid, purposeless hands and shook it cordially; Twirk, in the very finest of broad cloth, with a heavy gold Albert and eye-glass, two rings on his red hands, and a certain glossy look from his now bald head to his boots, stood bowing and saying—

"Gents I've known for a matter of twenty year, afore one on 'em knowed hisself, it's hard as words should part 'em, and they sich friends, and in my house too, which I'm proud to call mine. Ah! that's right, shake hands, shake hands. It'll all be put straight no doubt, no doubt." A servant entered with a tray of bottles and glasses, and Vesey's fevered eyes and parched lips quivered at the sight. He was fast drifting into the condition that made any attempt at sobriety a torture to him. What of vitality was left in his turgid veins seemed to require a fiery vapour to run along and stimulate it; otherwise the sluggish blood was heavy and stagnant. He had been once visited, comparatively young as he was, by an attack of paralysis, and there was a twitching of his mouth, and one side of the face, when anything worried him, and an indistinctness of speech, that showed the enemy lurked ready to spring and pull him down.

Stillwell approached the table, and began to pile up the papers as Twirk poured out the drink, and made himself quite at ease. If Vesey Pendrainly had ever felt the en-

croachments of familiarity in his present companions, that time was long past. All trace of gentle birth and breeding must pass away with such habits, and a man sinks necessarily to the level of his associates. As the glass circulated, cheerfulness revived. After all, this marriage was not an irreparable evil. Vesey would still be heir—that was certain, and the estate would be encumbered only to the extent of a jointure to the widow. If there was any tampering with the will, it would be time enough to prepare evidence of insanity.

"Plenty of that could be got, if needed," said Stillwell; adding, "I've witnesses that an oath wouldn't choke. I've had my eye on the old fellow; and Dr. Strong 'ud help us there—that's if he thinks, as he should do, of Miss Jessie's interests, and the welfare of his future son-in-law."

"I can't make Strong out. He's close, he is. He's always had the length of my aunt Kizzy's foot. He'd strain a point for a friend in a plain, strait-forrard way; but as to the witnesses you talk of, Jasper—you artful shaver, you—he'd have nothing to do with 'em, not he."

Having thus spoken, Vesey relapsed into silence, and set his knees under the table as if for hard drinking, while his papers were removed by the officious Stillwell, who, asking where they were to be put, received from the poor sot the answer—

"Make a bonfire of 'em; I'm hanged if I look at 'em again!"

Twirk, who merely appeared to be the looker-on of the party, as soon as he saw that the two worthies were intending to make a drinking bout, was preparing to leave them, when, as he stood at the window, Dr. Franks and Rose passed on the opposite side of the way. Twirk reached out his arm, laid hold of Stillwell, and, drawing him to the window, said in a suppressed tone, "Look there."

"Yes, man; that's Franks," said Stillwell. "The old icicle; he's froze half Boveycum with his water-drinking. It's not like the same place it once was."

"Well, but who's she?"

"Who? why, that little imp there was such a row about just before you left."

"Why, she's grown a beauty—an out-an'-outer. Why, with that face that gal ought to make her forchun."

Twirk leered and rubbed his hands as he spoke, with a look so animal amid its cunning, that Stillwell noticed it; and turning away impatiently, said, "Oh! young madam knows she's a beauty; she's as proud as a princess. My lady forgets that she's nothing but a kind of castaway. I'd a mind to her two years ago, and took a bit of notice of her; but the airs of the damsel were quite in the tip-top line, I promise you. But I know what I know. There's Owen Strong has come round her, through knowing that lofty gentleman, young Franks; and he'll pay my debts in that quarter."

"Why, he's sweet on Miss Apsley—a ten thousand-pounder. The Apsley's are customers of mine."

"Well, and if he is, what o' that; he's no need to stand on his p's and q's with a girl that belongs to nobody."

Twirk's answer was interrupted by the sudden opening of the door. A bony, hard-featured woman, very gaily dressed, bounded in, trembling with passion, and said, "Mr. Twirk, how long am I to be slaving down stairs? I'm surprised at you."

"Are you indeed, my dear? I thought you'd got over that," said Twirk coolly.

Pale—heated to a white heat—she rejoined, "Here I am, and here I stay, till you go to your business—lounging up here this time o' day. Excuse me, Mr. Pendrainly; it's all

very well for gentlemen like you, and for you, Mr. Stillwell, with no wife—you may do as you like; but Twirk, it's infamous—it is!"

Thus beset, the landlord trying to laugh it off, had to retire; and his better-half, duly remembering that there was a long bill on their books unpaid by Mr. Vesey, and scenting ruin as a crow scents carrion, did not feel restrained by any respectful considerations from invading her guest's apartment, and giving vent to her temper. Indeed, she rather liked to show off before young Stillwell, to prove, as she said, that "all women were not to be put upon, and worretted, and driven mad, as his fool of a mother was."

She knew also, from her acquaintance, Mrs. Carver, where Miss Keziah was lodging, and gratified an ancient spite by parading her prosperity before the Cumb'ry folks. But though she stayed in possession of the field, and was particularly anxious to talk to him of the squire, and to give her opinion on the present aspect of affairs, Vesey was too drowsy to feel any interest, except in having his glass refilled, so Mrs. Twirk, like a great many better people, found herself foiled by her own weapons.

"Who are the people at 2 Felix Terrace West?" said Stillwell, as she was about retreating.

"Oh! just round the corner here, you mean? I don't know many of the people; but, let's see, 2 is kep by a widder, Mrs. Woodly, that lets furnished lodgings. I don't know the person myself, but I've heard Carver speak of her; she's a Boveycum woman, and none the better for that, only she certently sends us customers, and we return the civility. I don't know who she's got now, I think their name ain't in our books."

"No, and never will be; it is Dr. Franks that lives there."

Mrs. Twirk changed colour. She well remembered the

searching severity of Dr. Franks' manner to her at the time of her leaving Cumb'ry, and a whole host of spiteful feelings were instantly aroused as she said—

"What! isn't he dead yet?"

"Nor like to die; and your little pet, she whom Miss Pendrainly made so much of, and you all spoilt so; why, she's with him, grown up now such a beauty that Twirk here has been looking out of the window, and running on finely about her."

"Pshaw! it's all a flam. Beauty, indeed!" and Mrs. Twirk slammed the door after her, and descended to her own particular region in a mood, even for her, specially irrascible.

As she plumped down on her easy chair, and tossed an offending basket from the table across the room towards a maid-servant, with the words, "What does that do there?" she saw through a side-window an old man on crutches in the passage, who seemed to be pleading very earnestly with Mr. Twirk. The sight appeared to have an influence like an electric shock; she stood a moment ejaculating, "Well, I never! The impudence of some people is past everything. That old rip to dare to come yere agen."

She threw up the window, and putting her head out, raved to her husband, "Twirk! what do you mean, speaking to that old vagabond? Send him away instantly. What do you mean, I say?"

Twirk vanished quickly into one of the side-rooms out of his wife's sight, and the old man, bareheaded, and bowing between his crutches very obsequiously, came forward, saying, "Mrs. Twirk, ma'am, my good lady, do permit me to speak to you for a few minutes—mind-shoo—only a few minutes;" and then, as if to prevent a refusal, he hurried on, "They've discharged me incurable, and I'm in distress—God help me,

in great distress!" His voice grew too husky to say more, and he bent his head, and began rubbing his eyes on the top of his crutch. Anything more forlorn than the poor creature looked it would be difficult to imagine.

"Well; and you've never been anything else than in distress—that's no news. And as to incurable, I could ha' told you that years ago. If I'd a-had my way I'd never have had you hanging on and guzzling here. You 'tice customers, indeed! Look at you! you'd more like frighten 'em. I told you when I gave you the letter for the hospital that was all we could do for you; and a pretty deal more than you deserved."

"I wish I'd died," said the man.

"Die! not you, indeed. If you'd a proper spirit, you'd a-walked into the canal and tried the water-cure; but you're a sneaking cretur, always was; but the long and short of it is, you don't come here; so take yourself off, or I'll call the police. You've tried a couple of hospitals, and you're above going to the workhus; p'r'aps a prison would suit you?"

"Mrs. Twirk, if I'd a settlement I'd go into the workhouse," said the man meekly.

"Ha! you called yourself a gentleman. Captain, indeed! and no settlement—not respectable enough for the workhus. Ha, ha! a fine gentleman! Come; do you hear? move off. Tom! Ned! you hulking fellows, where are you? Do something for your wages. Help that old rascal to quicken his paces; and if ever you see him again, unkennel Mr. Stillwell's bull-dog from the stables." She shut the window down with a slam; and the old man, as he hobbled off, turned his head, and gave one look along the passage so wo-begone that if he had dropt on the pavement dead, it might have only been considered the natural sequel of that look. Even

the two rough men who, with shirt sleeves tucked up, came from the yard to do their mistress's bidding, stopped appalled by the expression of the pallid face, and watched him a moment as if they expected him to fall. Then looking to each other, and pretending to go towards him with hostile intent, they spoke under their voice.

"There, old fellow—Flammerton—what's your name? It ain't no go; you might as well expect to turn flint stones into down pillows as to turn her."

The cripple hobbled away a few paces and turned the corner, where a boy—a crossing sweeper—was sitting down on a block of stone that projected from the wall. He rose as the old man came near, and pointing down, offered him his seat. Whether the contrast of the action with the treatment he had just received, or the weakness of the cripple, or both combined—overcame him—he sat down on the seat the boy resigned to him and burst into tears.

With a scared look and a little twitching about the corners of the mouth, the young street urchin regarded the broken-down old man; and just at that instant Dr. Franks and Rose turned the corner, driven back from their walk by a shower of rain. She saw the boy and the trembling old man shaken like a reed in the wind by the violence of his grief.

"What is it?" said Dr. Franks, addressing them both; adding to the boy, "Does he belong to you?"

"No; I sees him coming, looking precious bad, and I giv him a seat; that's all."

"Belong to him! no; I belong to no one," said Flammerton, for it was indeed he—grown grey and battered—worn out in the service of his master; and these were his gains at last. He made an effort and controlled his tears, looking up with glassy eyes as he added, "Poor boy! he belongs to this rank—I have come down to it." Then his voice changed,

and he hesitated, for he recognized Dr. Franks. Pulling his broken hat down low over his face, he picked up the crutches that had fallen from his hands, and struggled to his feet. Rose held one of his crutches a moment, and as she gave it to him her eyes, full of pity, met his. Her little purse was opened, and in a moment she slipped a shilling out of her slender stock into his hand; but he let it fall, and sinking down again on the stone, said, "It's too much; I can't bear it. Dr. Franks, don't you know me?"

As their lodging was only a few doors off, with the assistance of the boy, Dr. Franks helped the poor creature into the passage of No. 2, and causing him to be seated, Rose hastened to procure him some food. He ate ravenously, with animal ferocity, a few mouthfuls, and then faintly declined the rest.

"Who is he?" whispered Rose to Dr. Franks: for she had no remembrance of him.

"A man I once knew, but have lost sight of for at least ten years," was the reply.

It was neither possible for the poor exhausted creature to answer questions, nor Dr. Franks' purpose to put them then; enough transpired to let them know that he was destitute, had left an hospital incurable two days before, and had spent his last shilling. At this juncture Herbert came in, and, knowing the lower part of the adjacent neighbourhood well, he went out and procured a lodging in the house of some decent poor people, and returning, took Flammerton under his charge, soon saw him laid in a bed, and left money to have some comforts provided for him.

As they sat at dinner that day, the incident naturally furnished a subject for conversation. It needed not that the poor object should tell his story; Dr. Franks could trace it. Born to good prospects, a spendthrift, who had been dis-

carded by his friends—a boon companion—afterwards a hanger-on in the temple of Bacchus—then a decoy—then a drudge—then an encumbrance ; at last sick, poor, useless—a wreck in every sense—cut adrift to sink or swim as the circling eddies of the tide of time bore him away."

What to do with or for him seemed very difficult. Incurable cases cannot be retained in hospitals to the injury of those who may be restored. Neither can casual poor have more than temporary relief in parishes often overcrowded with their own paupers. This stray waif, who had lived so purposely, where was he to be sheltered till he died? How often is that question asked, not as now, by benevolence seeking to aid the sufferer, but by desperation, famine, and remorse, who wait for death in vain, and often goaded by despair, rush on to meet him.

The next morning's post brought a letter from Berry to Rose, in which, contrary to her wont, she spoke with interest of the Pendrainly family. In one of her wanderings she had penetrated into the grounds and met the squire, who looked frightened when he saw her, and said, in an incoherent way—"Where is Keziah? where's FRED.?" But the sound of footsteps had been heard approaching; the gardener came up towards him, and Berry, pitying the old man's evident alarm, had left him before any one had noticed his speaking to her. The part of this incident that perplexed Berry was the mention of a name that had never been known to pass the squire's lips for years—one who had long been dead. She concluded her notice of the subject by saying, "I always understood that Mr. Frederick Pendrainly died in America; but on questioning how I came by that belief, I cannot get an answer that satisfies myself. In my old desk, which I so often converted into a watch-tower, I heard and saw many things that have a sort of fragmentary place in my memory. I am

impressed with the belief that this wretched, doting creature is afraid of his new wife, and of the gardener and servants generally. I think his sister should not have deserted him, though she is nearly as foolish. I would write to Dr. Franks about this matter, but he would only scold me for prying into people's affairs. Years ago I once made so miserable a hand at a stratagem that I have never tried since. And, after all, what are these Pendrainlys to me, or any one? Not a creature would be the worse if the whole generation were swept from the face of the earth. Rose, be careful to make your poverty more valuable to yourself and others than they have made their riches.—Your friend, RASP——."

It made a melancholy picture to Rose's mind, this old man creeping like a timid child about his house and grounds, missing the old familiar faces of his kindred; and she spoke to Dr. Franks about the scene Berry had described.

"Like all imaginative people," said Dr. Franks, "Berry may have noted much more than really appeared in the squire's manner. Certainly, he has tampered too many years with his brain to have it either strong or clear now, if it ever was, and the shadows deepen as the night of old age draws on, unless, my child, the Star of Bethlehem arises to chase away the gloom. It's all groping in the dark without that light."

"But this Frederick whom he asked for, sir, is it not strange he should think him still alive?"

"No; it is not an uncommon thing for old people to dwell upon the past very intently; and when any confusion of the mental faculties occurs, to recall vividly those they knew in former years."

"He died in America?"

"So I have heard. I knew little of him, except by report. He had more talent than the rest of them, but all the family failings. He was, I have heard, capriciously treated." There

was a pause, and then Dr. Franks, laughing quietly, said, "Berry is constructing a romance now, out of this speech of the squire's, rely on it."

While they were thus talking, Mrs. and Miss Apsley were announced. Their manner was particularly gracious; they came to request the favour of Rose going now and then to spend a little time with Miss Pendrainly. "The family have already suffered so much from having servants in the ascendant," said Mrs. Apsley, "that it is incumbent on the friends to guard against any further mistake of that kind;" adding, "We would gladly receive Miss Pendrainly into our house, but she declines that, and really Grace and I have so much to do that we cannot give the time that would be requisite. As an old neighbour and—and friend, Dr. Franks, I think you would allow your—your ward."

It did occur to both Rose and her guardian that nothing in the past exactly warranted their being called on for any such attention; but they were not in the habit, when a service was asked, to weigh the claims the asker had on their gratitude, and the letter they had just been canvassing had turned their minds in the direction most suitable for complying with the request.

"If we can do Miss Pendrainly any service—that is, if she is ill and lonely, as you say, I can answer for Rose as for myself: we are willing to give her all the time we can spare. But where is her nephew, Mr. Vesey?"

"Oh! gentlemen have so many ways of employing themselves; and I hear he is visiting somewhere in Leicestershire, hunting. I suppose you know Mr. Vesey. A sick-room and a nervous woman would soon weary him, though he's a kind creature—very. But will this marriage seriously affect his interests?" she added, looking keenly at Dr. Franks, who answered somewhat impatiently—

"I know nothing about it."

It was evident that Mrs. Apsley was canvassing the probabilities that Jessie's projected marriage with Vesey might not have that one grand requisite which, in the opinion of the world, covers a multitude of disparities.

On their departure Dr. Franks made a visit to Miss Pendrainly, and found her low and restless. It seemed to him that all her habits were unfavourable to health; but the want of society was, to one so vacant and unoccupied, a great loss; and therefore, though not without reluctance, he consented that Rose should call and spend one hour every morning, and occasionally another in the evening with her.

While this arrangement was being made at Felix Lodge, Vesey was still in ambush, hardly three hundred yards away; though a street intersected the distance, and seemed to remove the houses farther than the actual space.

Letters had come to Mr. Twirk; he was not clear of the complications into which the speculations and failures of Stillwell had led him, and a demand was made calling in a large sum unexpectedly. The entire want of confidence between Twirk and his wife, and the dread which she certainly inspired, made him willing to resort to any means to get out of his dilemma; and having Vesey Pendrainly in the house, unknown to any one of the Cumb'ry family, was a tempting opportunity. He had watched the progress of intemperance too long to be mistaken in its manifestations. He knew that there was a stage in which the votary of Bacchus could be made to do any foolish thing—particularly in business transactions—and the game of Stillwell and himself was to keep their dupe well plied with drink, and under its influence get him to draw cheques and sign bills, of which they would take advantage. In Twirk's calculating creed murder and forgery, in the ordinary way in which those

crimes were perpetrated, were a useless risk—a wanton waste of skill. "You may always make a man ruin and kill himself, if necessary," he said to Stillwell; and added, "A bird in the hand, my boy. We've got this here fellow, now; he'll not be worth a rap more, depend on it, when his uncle dies, than he is at present; and so 'we must make hay while the sun shines,' for it's my belief it'll set soon with both on 'em. They're on their last legs, or my name's not Twirk."

Vesey had brought a box of papers to town at the request of Stillwell, who promised to help him with arrangements, and to introduce an accountant to him; for, with the mingled fear and rashness of a dupe, Vesey disliked the family lawyer knowing anything of his affairs; so he was just in the condition to help his present companions to ruin him. And with them it was also a desperate game; for, in their own phrase, there had lately been "a run of luck against them."

CHAPTER V.

PERPLEXITIES AND PRETENCES.

"Across his midnight sea of mind
A thought comes streaming, like a blazing ship
Upon a mighty wind."—ALEX. SMITH.

THERE is no cure for affectation so efficacious as rough contact with the hard realities of life. Miss Keziah was so broken down with recent family events that her manner was more subdued and rational than Dr. Franks expected to find it. She had wept some real tears, and they had washed off the rouge of mock distresses. Of course her language was what the exaggerations and sentimentalities of a lifetime had made it. She did not say exactly that she was enchanted

and delighted to see Dr. Franks; but she kept repeating, as she lay on her sofa, really weak and ill, "Oh! how kind of you to come! how sweet of my poor dear Roselle—the darling!" until the doctor, in his unpopular way, said, "You must not thank either of us. We wish you had friends with you who knew your ways better than we do; but if we can render you any service while you are alone, well and good." Then followed the history of her ailments, and Dr. Franks found that rest and diet, and diverting her mind from recent annoyances, would soon restore her; but she was one of those perplexing patients who think their maladies slighted if such plain means are adopted. It is the difficulty of the medical man that his patients, like Naaman of old, would willingly "do some great thing." How often are stimulants recommended in trifling ailments because the patient has not the sense, nor the doctor the honesty, to trust nature. Something great must be done, or attempted. Patient waiting, sleep, quiet, air, cheerfulness, and light, plain food, are not in the pharmacopœia. However, Dr. Franks so far yielded to Miss Keziah's weakness as to write out very carefully for her a routine of diet, and inspired confidence by laying great stress on his simple plan; so that, when Rose came in for her first visit on the evening of the same day, the invalid was very gracious, and said, after the first mutual greetings, as if apologetically, "I never knew that I should find dear Dr. Franks such a treasure. But you know, my dear, he always would hide his talents, and huddle away among the common people. I've heard of his scientific writings. Your geniuses are always eccentric. I know that by instances in my own family."

Rose felt afraid to inquire, for she had a fancy that Miss Pendrainly would name some person who, as far as she knew anything of them, had no claims to talent, still less genius.

But Miss Keziah kept sighing for some time, and repeated, as if to herself, "Yes; he was eccentric, but a clever creature. If I'd known what I do now, and how wretchedly Vesey would have disappointed us, I'd have acted differently—Heigh ho!"

"Do you wish your pillow altered?" said Rose.

"No, no; and yet, my sweet Roselle, there's some thorns in it—you understand me, or you will do, my dear, when you come to my time of life, and look back and see that everything with you has gone wrong."

"God forbid!" ejaculated Rose earnestly.

"What!" said Miss Keziah, startled.

"Why, dear madam, that my life should present me, on the retrospect, such a summary."

"If it should not, you will be fortunate, that's all; but young people can't be made to think so."

"Shall I read to you?" said Rose, taking up a book from the table. It was a collection of poems by different modern poets, and she opened on Southey's little poem, "The Old Man's Comforts, and how he gained them," and her fresh voice, with its musical, liquid cadence, gave an added charm to the poet's words.

"Oh! read it again," said the invalid; but whether it was Father William's wisdom, or Rose's gentle tones that impressed her, was uncertain. She signed for the reading to go on, and fell asleep to the flute-like melody of Tennyson, Rose at length creeping away, and leaving her to the charge of her attendant, Carver, who gave no sign of remembering Rose, and had not made herself known to Dr. Franks. Perhaps, being poor and a widow, she shrunk from those who had known her in her old pert days.

The servant of the house was to see Rose home, but on the step of the door she encountered Owen Strong. They met

full. He explained that he had arrived that day in town, and being on his way to his sister's, wished to inquire for Miss Pendrainly, tidings of whose illness had reached Boveycum. Leaving a message with the servant, he escorted Rose to her door, but to her relief did not express any wish to see Dr. Franks that night. He was turning away when Herbert appeared so suddenly at his elbow as to cause them both to start.

"Why, where have you sprung from? Have you the power to make yourself invisible until the moment you touch one?" said Owen, laughing, as he gave Herbert his hand, which was warmly shaken. The young men for a moment entered the hall, Herbert explaining that he had been asked by a medical friend, who had gone out of town, to look in and see one or two patients of his during his absence, one of whom lived next door, "and," added Herbert, "he is not wholly unknown to you—Mr. Wilson."

"I do not know the name," said Owen.

"Then Miss Apsley does; that is, she knew Mrs. Wilson in the Isle of Wight."

"Oh! Mrs. Wilson, the lady who sung so delightfully?" Yes; I have met her there, but never her husband. Oh! they live here, do they?"

"In lodgings, like ourselves, and see no one," said Herbert; adding, "You will walk up and see my father?"

"Not to-night; I'll call in a day, or two. Come with me, Herbert: it's early; come."

The young men seemed glad to have met, and unwilling to part; so Owen, bidding Rose good night, and Herbert saying he should be back soon, they departed.

This rencontre disturbed Rose. She mounted to her room with a flushed face and a sense of annoyance. Owen's manner, she thought, altered towards her the moment he saw

Herbert. It was full of delight at the first instant, and then constrained; but the whole meeting was so momentary that she might be mistaken. Then Miss Apsley's name coming up so unexpectedly, and Herbert to go away with Owen. The sting—for trifling as the matter was, it inflicted a sting—was in Herbert's going. Rose knew he had much to do. His pen had been driving across the paper at a rare rate the past evening; he had not one word to spare her, and now——!

Very tediously the rest of the night wore away. Dr. Franks was reading; and Rose, too, took up a favourite book; but she looked on the page without seeing the words, and the time seemed to her very long before Herbert returned. When at length he came, she felt unable to ask him of his walk, and yet longed to know whether he had called on Mrs. Apsley. She wished Dr. Franks would ask him; but he was absorbed, and the tone in which Herbert said, "It is time you were in bed, Rose," irritated her. He seemed, she thought, inclined to treat her like a child; and any one who knows much of the feelings of that sensitive time when girlhood is on the threshold of maturity, is aware that no greater offence can be committed by a companion of the opposite sex than behaving "as if I were still a child—a child, indeed! He is only four years older, and that's nothing in a man. A man of twenty-two, I've heard it said, is not really older than a woman of eighteen. Herbert is certainly a little assuming and—and disagreeable!"

The tears started in her eyes as she came, in her cogitations, to this conclusion. She did not reflect that the circumstance of their being brought up together gave Herbert the familiarity of a brother, and enabled him to retain that four years' authority of seniority, which in their mutual childhood had made a great difference, if it did so no

longer. In her present mood every word of tender care seemed to her patronage and direction; and any little carelessness of familiarity appeared to be indifference. The thought that, notwithstanding what she had heard about Owen from his sister, Herbert was really in love with Miss Apsley, was a source of torment, none the less painful that Rose was angry with herself for wincing at it.

Coldly, for her, she left father and son with their books, and retired to the unprofitable and unhealthy task of musing over feelings and fancies until they assumed a disproportionate importance.

O young reader! seen through the mist of your emotions, how large and vague looms the outline of your vexations! Half the troubles of life, the worse half, we invent for ourselves. If we took them, small and great, to the light of truth, and tested them by God's Word, how would they dwindle and fade away!

For several mornings Rose was at her post in Miss Pendrainly's room, and was witness to a very painful scene when some business letters came. There were sums demanded that she had thought paid—had, indeed, trusted to her nephew—and now concluded that it was an oversight of his, though it would involve a serious loss; and then Miss Keziah launched out into a censure of his habits. "Rose, he drinks! that's the long and the short of it. It's very vulgar and humbling to speak of, very! And, my dear, there's a gentlemanly way and an ungentlemanly way of drinking!"

"Is there?" said Rose.

"Why, what a question! Of course; young as you are, you should know that; but I forgot, Dr. Franks is a teetotaler—a very ugly name, my dear. I must say, if I practised the principle, I couldn't be called by that name. I call it gentlemanly drinking when there's no appearance

beyond a little exhilaration—just a sparkle in the eye—and a more fluent flow of speech; that, you know, is delightful. But it's ungentlemanly to go beyond that, and unnecessary, too, for I've known gentlemen take their two bottles or more of their favourite wine, or their mixed spirits. Bless you! my dear, it's wonderful what practice does in perfecting the art. Yes; its quite an art, like any other branch of manners; and it's no offence, then, you see, to morals. But drinking so as to confuse himself is ungentlemanly and immoral."

"But, madam, that makes a gentleman's morals depend on the strength of his stomach."

"Dear me, what a strange girl you are! I never said any such thing. Morals are—are—doing what's right; and if he drinks in an ungentlemanly way, he does wrong. Vesey does wrong—he doesn't know what he does; and there's my brother—infatuated—fell a victim to that woman—that wretch, all through ——. Yes; upon my word, I must say it—it's very amazing, but I don't see how to avoid the conclusion—all through drink."

"Did they not once, Miss Pendrainly, drink in what you term a gentlemanly way?"

"Why, Roselle, my dear, what a question! Of course they did, for years. My kinsmen *are* gentlemen; they drank all that was right and proper."

"Then they failed in the acquirement of the art you spoke of?"

"Well, I suppose they did."

"Took more?"

"Oh, they might have become weaker; or, as you say, took more. People do not weigh and measure what they take; but I think, somehow, they should manage it. Management is a great thing; is it not?"

"I would manage without it."

At this instant Miss Keziah's chocolate was brought in; and as she sipped it, she said, "I declare this does me more good than wine. I shall come round to Dr. Franks, I fancy; but I wont be called a teetotaler; and yet I wish Vesey was one, and my poor dupe of a brother. Dear me! what property we've lost; but then there's the brewery shares, to be sure, that's a certainty; they've increased in value of late years."

As Miss Keziah maundered on in the fog of her prejudices, Rose's mind, which was naturally logical, and had been improved by her solid education, saw the need of pulling up the evil by the roots. Pruning was useless. The problem Miss Keziah wanted her kinsmen to solve was one that has employed society for ages—How to tamper with evil and escape its consequences?

But personal matters were soon to engross all Rose's attention. Owen Strong had called on Miss Keziah at the time Rose was there, and she left instantly, to his evident annoyance. He came again one evening just as she had arrived, and she would have withdrawn, but feared to attract attention, judging it better not to allow anything to appear in her manner different to what she would have manifested if an ordinary stranger were there. He left just before she did, to her great relief, but on reaching her home she found him with Dr. Franks, and he remained some time, and contrived that the conversation should be addressed to her. He was a young man of talent, and Rose, as she conversed with him, did not wonder that Herbert was so partial to him, and so often quoted him. It did occur to her, though she chided down the thought, that Owen had by no means Herbert's frankness. In all her intercourse with the latter she could call to mind no crooked ways, no

skill in manœuvring; an honest, often even an abrupt truthfulness, was his characteristic. This made him jealous over himself in siding with his father's views. He could not say he was convinced, or profess belief, if he had the shadow of a doubt on his mind. Owen was more supple, if not less sincere.

As she bade him good night, a slight pressure of her hand called the colour to her cheek, and made her eyes fall below his. On reflection afterwards, she thought that she had understood Owen to say he had seen Herbert the day before. Could it have been at his sister's? The very fact that she was interested to know this kept her from plainly asking Herbert as he came in weary and thoughtful.

He began speaking to his father about their poor pensioner in the lodgings, Flammerton, who, it was now arranged, should be speedily moved to Boveycum. Herbert then sat down to his desk, asking Rose, as he did so, the question—

"Have you written to Berry, lately?" to which Rose replied, "She intended writing the next day, and would give any message of Herbert's."

"Thank you, Rose; I'll write myself. I want to ask her a question."

"Can I answer it?" said Rose simply.

"*You!* oh, no. It's about—about something before you were *compos mentis*, little Rose."

"Really! most potent, grave, and reverend senior, when ever was that?"

"It may be very recently. What if I said, now?" replied Herbert, in a tone of raillery, a smile filling his dark eyes with light. "Young girls," he continued, "are not often *compos mentis;* a touch of insanity pertains to them."

Rose started up with much of the old petulant manner of her childhood; and going to the piano sat down to play,

while Herbert, unconscious of any offence, added to it, by saying, "That's right, child. I fear you neglect your practice." And then he turned to his desk and wrote his letter, and from that he went to his evening studies, looking up when Rose finished a piece, to say, "Play on, do; it's no interruption."

"He treats me like a child; he only cares for me from association—not for myself. Why should he?" Poor Rose!

Next evening she played and sang to Miss Keziah; and as she was singing in came Owen Strong. Her back being to the door, she did not see him until turning round her head, when her song was finished, she encountered his eyes fixed upon her with a beaming, ardent look, that revealed an amount of admiration dangerous to speak of. He was flushed, and looked very handsome. Herbert never praises me, was the mental comment she made as she received Owen's thanks, and yielded to his entreaties for another song.

"That pretty drinking song," said Miss Pendrainly.

"Drinking song!" said Owen, surprised; and, with a gay laugh, she ran her fingers along the instrument and began to sing—

"I drink with a goodly company,—
With the sun that dips his beams,
And quaffs in loving revelry
The pure and sparkling streams;
The laughing streams
That catch his beams,
To flash them back in light;
The glitt'ring streams
Whose ripple gleams
Like liquid diamonds bright.

"I drink with a blooming company,—
With flowers of every hue,
Whose fragrant lips take daily sips
Of sweet and od'rous dew;
Of morning dew
So fresh and new,
That tenderly distils
The balmy dew,
So pure and true,
That every petal fills.

"I drink with a merry company,—
With every bird that sings,
Carolling free a strain of glee,
As he waves his airy wings—
Wild soaring wings—
And upward springs,
Filling the air with song;
The woodland rings,
And echo flings
The warbling notes along.

"I drink with a noble company,—
With all the stately trees
That spread their leafy shade abroad,
And flutter in the breeze;
The playful breeze
That loves to please
My comrades, great and small;
I'll drink at ease
Pure draughts with these—
They're water-drinkers all."

When she finished there was a look on Owen's face she

referred to his probable disapproval of the sentiment she had been singing. She did not know that the young man, who had only just risen from the dinner table, was conscious that he had rather exceeded the limits that he generally set himself, and that his veins throbbed with a glow that was as pleasant as it was dangerous. He spoke little, not daring to trust his voice, lest it should betray him; and a sudden plan darting into his head, he left, pleading an engagement.

Shortly after, it was time for Rose to go; and it had now become a custom for her to run across the road alone. To-night, when the door closed behind her, she felt her hand grasped, and looking up, by the light of the lamp recognized Owen, who said hurriedly, "One minute; only one, I pray. I must speak to you."

Rose struggled a moment as he drew her round the angle of the house away from her own home; but controlling herself, she said, "You can have nothing to say, sir, but what can as well be said in my home, before my fa—, Dr. Franks, I mean."

"I cannot speak before Dr. Franks."

"And I cannot listen without his knowledge."

"How cold you are, Rose; cold and cruel. Is it nothing that I love you? There it's out," he added, impetuously. "I love you—madly it may be—but I love ——"

"I cannot stay a moment; let me go."

"Rose, dear Rose, there's a reason why this must just now be a secret between us."

"Between *us?*"

"Yes; you do not mean, you cannot be so cruel as to forbid me?"

"Let me go, I cannot stay another instant. See, we are observed."

A passing stranger had turned his head, and was looking

back at them. Owen's strange, wild, impetuous manner overpowered opposition. He poured out a string of passionate protestations and entreaties; but she turned resolutely away, though he still held her hand, and insisted so determinedly on going instantly home, that he had no help for it but to take her there, reiterating, as he crossed the road, all sorts of exclamations and enthusiastic pleadings. During the few moments that she stood on the step of the door, he wrung her hands in his, and implored her to listen to him, and to keep the secret that he had betrayed so abruptly, Rose trembling, meanwhile, too much to return an answer.

With the opening of the door he turned swiftly away; and when Rose reached her room, and sat down, it was difficult to still the beating of her heart. Amid all the tumult of the past few minutes, there was, as she recalled his words, a something that jarred upon her. She could not doubt the love so passionately declared; but why the necessity of secrecy? Then arose the vision of Dr. Strong, of Jessie—even of Mrs. Apsley; and with a flushed cheek the young girl understood that she might not be approved of by them, and that was to Owen a motive for secrecy. It did not occur to her pure mind for a moment that Owen would dare to insult her with the declaration of a dishonourable love. That he was meditating an imprudent marriage was the worst she could charge him with; and whether she wisely answered "*No*," or weakly said "*Yes*" to that, she would not, in either case, be likely to judge him very sternly for entertaining such a hope. That there could be a social code in which her peculiar circumstances would be regarded as putting her beyond the range of honourable proposals, and marking her out for insulting overtures, never entered her thoughts. A violent headache supplied her with a reason for going to bed early, and avoiding both Herbert

and Dr. Franks. Before she rose on the following morning, the servant of the house brought her a letter. It bore no post-mark; indeed, was delivered more than an hour before post-time. There was something in the girl's manner that indicated secrecy, and that consequently annoyed Rose in her perplexity. She missed poor Berry. A young girl's confidences can scarcely be given to any one, however honoured, of the opposite sex. As she looked trembling at the letter—the first that she had ever received which she would have minded showing to the whole world, if necessary—the thought crossed her mind that she should take it, unopened, and place it in Dr. Franks' hands. Then the remembrance that Owen had said he "betrayed" his feelings; that it was a breach of an involuntary confidence; that perhaps the note was to apologize, and recall the momentary declaration; in which case, no one need ever know how she had been troubled. This last thought decided her. She broke the seal of the envelope—not without a wondering comment on the tremulous-looking, illegible writing, so different to Owen's hand in general, and read—

"My dearest, I was prevented coming last night as I had purposed, by unavoidable business. I the more regret these disappointments as the time is so short now before I leave. I wish this cruel separation was not insisted on by my father. What do I care for the Continent, or for spending a year—an interminable year—there, without my own dear girl. I certainly think it is very, very hard that our marriage is postponed a whole year. Miss Kizzy is better. I looked in last night on my way home. Dr. Franks sends the girl there whom you call 'the stray Rose.' Seeing her there I decamped at once. How could you and Mabel be so foolish as to believe a word of Jessie's ridiculous hints in her absurd letter, as if a little chit of a foundling could make me for a moment, even in the

most casual thought, unmindful of my own sweet Grace—gracious and graceful as her name.—Ever devotedly,

"OWEN."

In bewilderment, like one in a perplexed dream, Rose read this letter, wondering much what it could all mean, until she came to the name *Grace;* then all was instantly plain. For a moment there was a quickened pulse; a hot tide rushed tumultuously through her veins. Then she became calm; laid the letter out of her hands, slightly rubbing her fingers over each other as if they felt soiled, and quickly continued her morning toilet,—a little more light in her eyes and colour on her cheeks than usual, that was all.

When she was dressed, following the daily custom of her life, Rose opened her Bible for a few words of counsel. She tilted the letter off the chair on to the floor, as if she disliked touching it, and began to read, "Fret not thyself because of evil-doers"—"because of the man that bringeth wicked devices to pass," &c. A few minutes saw her devotions concluded. Then, opening her blotting-case, she found an envelope, and directed it to Owen Strong; put the precious document in it, and went down to make breakfast, getting rid of the letter by instantly sending the girl to the post with it, saying, "If you bring me any more letters from the—the person who gave you this, I shall inform Dr. Franks."

"Law, Miss! the page brought it from him. Such a sweet gentleman as Mr. Owen Strong is!"

"Hush! not a word. How dare you name him to me?"

The girl shrank before the flashing eyes and slender, vibrant form, tremulous with indignation; and silently taking the letter, did Rose's bidding, muttering to herself, as she ran to the neighbouring post-office, "Who'd a-thought that mim young cretur, all of a blush and a smile like, could flame out in that way?"

There was flaming out in other quarters that morning.

CHAPTER VI.

CONVICTED.

"Oh! colder than the wind that freezes
Founts that but now in sunshine played,
Is the congealing pang that seizes
The trusting bosom when betrayed."—MOORE.

THE reader will have concluded that Rose obtained this letter by Owen having made the mistake of putting two, that he had written consecutively, in the wrong envelopes, and thus betraying himself. As we have seen, he had indulged at the dinner-table, came, heated with wine, to Miss Pendrainly's, and made his rash and passionate declarations to Rose. Returning to his lodgings half-frenzied with excited passions, he found a note on his table that had lain since morning, from Grace, reminding him of his promise to spend that evening at St. Blazy parsonage. One of the many diverse properties of strong drink, according to its allies, is that of being a sedative. Owen believed brandy to be, in certain conditions of the drinker, tranquillizing; so he poured out some, and drank it undiluted. Then he sat down, and, with muddled brain and beating pulse, wrote letters. He was not by any means a drunkard—despised the character—had the fullest belief that he should never become one; yet, whenever he wanted to perform any deed that would not bear the light of reason and truth—whenever he was inclined to lay the rein on the neck of his passions, and let them carry him away, he then would drink largely. Yet no one talked more eloquently than he in his colloquies with Herbert about self-government, and the dignity of battling with temptation—encountering it and conquering. That was so

much grander than flying from it. Herbert and he, though very unlike in character, had strengthened one another in the belief that "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," is a prayer for women and children to use. Man could stand erect, clothed in the panoply of his indomitable will. And so in truth he may, if his will is in accordance with that will which has said, "Touch not the unclean thing;" "Avoid the very appearance of evil;" "Turn from it, and flee away." The difference between the young men was, however, very great. One was really seeking, by investigation, to confirm truth; the other, to strengthen falsehood.

Owen finished his crafty notes, and, too feverish to sleep, paced his room, and looked through the haze of his evil intentions at the future. He was glad that his father, disapproving of some circumstances that had come to his knowledge in his son's conduct, had decided on his residing abroad for a year. Miss Apsley, meanwhile, was safely held in the family grasp, not only by her engagement with Owen, but by her residence with, and relationship to, his sister. His approaching departure favoured the strong desire he had formed of entangling Rose in a clandestine correspondence, and entrapping her, by promise of marriage, if it must be, into an elopement with him, trusting to the well-known dangers of London, and Rose's youth and beauty, to turn suspicion of her seduction into other channels. He thought, as every one who meditates crime does, more of the pleasure of the sin than the danger of detection. A few lies more or less would throw the friends of Rose off the scent. Not, indeed, that *he* called them lies; with him it was "diplomacy," "finesse," "all fair in love and war." As for the future of Rose, was she not a stray waif on the tide already? She forfeited no position, belonged

to no one. He would take care she should not want. He loved her madly; but as to marriage, he could not so sacrifice himself. Miss Apsley had fortune and connections—was an elegant woman—would look well at the head of his table—bear his name gracefully, and keep up his respectability; he would baffle suspicion in that quarter. Such were a few of the wild thoughts that seethed together and floated like a foul scum on the *cloacæ* of the libertine's mind, as he continued to walk up and down, pausing at intervals to drink. At length he threw himself in his clothes on a couch, but could not sleep. The household began to stir, and he resolved to lose no time in putting his schemes into operation. He called the "boy in buttons," who did his errands, and despatched him with the two notes, giving him a bribe to bestow on the servant at Felix Place, who was to give the note into the hands of Rose; then, feeling a sense of exhaustion, as the toiling, honest world woke up to its daily duties, he undressed and went to bed, to sleep off dreamily the effects of his unwholesome vigil.

We have seen how Rose received her note. Let us look at Miss Apsley as she comes down to the breakfast table in her elegant morning costume. A little cloud shadowed her brow. Owen was negligent. His not coming on the previous night annoyed her far more than the purposed continental journey did; for Mrs. Apsley and herself had privately arranged, as soon as Owen was gone, to give Mr. Apsley no rest until he took them. They meant to persuade the good gentleman that he was ill, and present the tour to him in the light of a duty—a plan they felt sure would be successful. But Owen's manner of late, and his want of punctuality, were offences that wounded Miss Apsley's pride. She was propitiated, as she took her seat, by seeing a letter lie beside her plate in the well-known handwriting, rather

blurred; "but he wrote now so much, was studying so hard, poor fellow!" Apologizing to Mr. and Mrs. Apsley, both, however, occupied with newspapers, she broke the seal and read—

"Forgive, O best and sweetest! the abruptness—the impetuosity of the declaration I have just made you. Let love, which has been the cause, be the excuse of my offence. I know that the secrecy I must adopt—oh! hateful necessity—in obedience to the worldliness and cruel prejudices of my family, must be as painful to you as it is agonizing to me. To proclaim my love before the whole world would gratify my pride; for, is not the object of my affection the loveliest of her sex, adorned with every grace to charm, every virtue to inspire esteem? But this honour—this delight—*must* be delayed. I ask you alone—I can admit the right of no second in this matter,—I ask you not to drive me to distraction—to utter ruin—by your coldness. See me this night! Hear me just this once! By all that is dear and sacred I implore it! I will wait where I met you. I cannot write my explanation—my entreaties—they are so cold on paper. A hope that must be breathed into your ear alone inspires me. If you consent to my plan, all will be well. I will be every relation in one to my sweetest girl. In fairer climes than this poor island, we will await the breaking down of cold, hard prejudices. Do consent to one interview, in pity to the ardent, devoted love of yours entirely,

"OWEN."

With suspended breath and staring, wonder-stricken eyes, Miss Apsley read every word of this epistle. Branded on her brain as with fire were the contents. Eagerly she looked for a name, an added pang darting through her as she found none. She started as if from a blow at Mrs. Apsley's calm voice, saying mechanically, "Is your coffee agreeable?" and

then, having looked up at her, adding in an entirely altered tone, "Why, my dear Grace, whatever is the matter?"

"Nothing—nothing," said Miss Apsley, forcing a laugh that was more piteous to hear than a scream. "Only *that*," throwing the letter on the table, and rising hurriedly, she rushed out of the room.

In the solitude of her chamber, whither she retreated, and locked the door, she flung herself on the ground, wildly smiting her bosom as she gasped out, "And for this man—this wretched, empty sham—unworthy the name of man, I have smiled, and coquetted, and played all kinds of unworthy follies; have lured that good, true Herbert to propose to me; played him off against this wretch, to make my miserable game secure; refused with cold scorn his honourable offer. I am justly—justly punished. There, fool! don't cry."

These last words were said in bitter self-chiding, as if she hated herself for the scalding tears that would force their way. And well for her, in that rage of mortification, unsustained either by a sense of right or a thought of a strength greater and better than her own, that she could weep. Tears relieved the burning brain and overcharged heart.

Mrs. Apsley came to the door entreating admission, but was refused.

"Leave me one hour to myself, and then I will see you."

At the expiration of the time, Grace went from her room cool and collected, a wiser woman than she had ever yet been. Mrs. Apsley, hurt and indignant, was yet willing to screen an idolized brother under the plea of "a young man's follies. He had seemed changed of late; he had certainly indulged more, perhaps (see how blurred and uneven the writing was) not been himself when he wrote it."

"Your excuses are needless," said Miss Apsley; "give me the letter."

This was said so firmly that it could not be refused. "It will ruin him with his father," pleaded the sister.

"Oh! I purpose sending it to Owen. So precious a document should be returned to its owner. In the afternoon, I shall have a larger packet to send, but this shall go at once, or *I* can go—the same house cannot hold me and it."

The letter was placed in an envelope, and, to insure its safe and speedy delivery, was carried by Miss Apsley's maid.

Owen was still tossing in his feverish sleep when this letter was delivered, and also when the postman left that which Rose had sent. Both were carried up to his sitting-room and laid on his table while he still slept on.

Meanwhile Herbert had asked Rose to accompany him to see poor old Flammerton. He seemed to have a motive in taking her to the poor, but clean lodging they had provided for the broken-down old creature.

Flammerton was dressed in a comfortable greatcoat that Rose knew at once as Dr. Franks'. He held out one of his swollen hands to her, and bent forward his shaking head, saying, "It's very kind, very kind indeed, of you to come. I don't deserve it; I've injured you, I'm afraid; at least—mind-shoo—I've not exposed those who have. Forgive me; I'm a wretched old man; I can't tell you what I've suffered—forgive me."

Rose was quite overcome by this appeal. It was so terrible to her dutiful nature to see the hoary head bent down, to hear the feeble voice panting out its entreaty for forgiveness, that she implored him to be composed, and assured him she had nothing to forgive.

"Yes, you have."

"If so, then I'm sure I forgive freely, as I hope to be forgiven. Herbert," she whispered, "have you spoken to

him of a forgiveness we all need. He is so old, I do not quite like; it might seem presumption in me." He caught or divined the purport of the whisper, and shook his head despondently, muttering as he looked at her—

"To wrong such a creature for wretches like them!"

Rose sighed. She thought he wandered; but the old man continued to repeat, "I'll tell Rasp as soon as ever I get down to Boveycum."

"Think of better things," said Rose.

"Well, when I see your face I do."

Herbert was thoughtful as he took Rose from this scene of weakness to Miss Pendrainly's. Once he asked—the manner and the words both startling her—"Rose, did ever Berry talk to you about the events at the Raven when you were brought there?"

"Never; she seemed to have nothing to tell but what was sad. By dint of importunities I won her to describe my uncle—if indeed he was my uncle; he might have been my father. She showed me his grave. Berry had it kept up and tended before, but I took charge of it from the time she showed it to me. Why, Herbert, do you ask? Is there, oh! is there——"

Her bosom heaved as she spoke; the yearnings of her heart, so often checked in her solitary musings on this subject, were wrought up to pain, as her eyes, more than her lips, compelled the question. Quickly Herbert replied, "My dear Rose, I asked merely because it has occurred to me that your uncle was robbed, and I thought it might be well to institute inquiries."

"Robbed!" said Rose, in a tone of disappointment. "Oh! is that all? Could not inquiries be made after—after——"

Herbert looked affectionately in her face, now working with emotion, and said, "Are we not kindred enough, dear,

my father and myself? Do you pine for those unknown and lost?"

"I belong to no one by blood and right. If you and your father, Herbert, adopt me as child and sister, others remember that I am neither—that I am nameless, and mark me out for insult and degradation."

The words rent their way from her heaving chest before almost she knew that she had uttered them.

"Insult! degradation!" exclaimed Herbert. "What do you mean? Who has dared to make you feel thus? Rose, what can you mean? You are our pride and joy; there's a kindred of the soul—the best kinship of all. No daughter could be dearer to my father than you are."

If Herbert was deficient in those minute attentions which some men so easily practice towards women, he had great latent tenderness, that, when he was roused, spoke in every feature of his face, thrilled in his deep voice, and made itself felt by its unaffected earnestness. Rose knew how true that heart was which throbbed in his words; yes, though it felt for her no more than a brother's love. A brother's love! After the insult she had endured, was a brother's honest, unselfish love to be depreciated? The tears rushed from her eyes like rain. She drew down her veil to hide them, and walked on at his side merely saying—

"I am low-spirited—forgive me;" and he, on his part, angry with himself that he had alluded to the sad story of her childhood.

They were soon at Miss Pendrainly's door. Herbert, with the gentlest, soothing manner, parted from her, and went to visit his patients. His walk from the last of these towards the hospital took him past Owen's door. He had not seen him for a few days; indeed, he had misgivings that Owen was not quite true to their elevated creed of defying temptation

and mastering appetite in the midst of trial. The servant-boy, who knew Herbert well, and had no orders not to admit him, said, grinning, that his master was not yet up; and Herbert, using the freedom of a familiar friend, went up stairs and knocked pretty loudly at the door of Owen's sleeping-room, exclaiming, "What! sluggard, still dreaming?" A reply came in a yawning tone, "Go wait for me, my dear fellow, I'm confoundedly out of sorts; I'll join you in a trice." Into the sitting-room went Herbert, the smell of spirits and cigars filling the place with fetid odours, and affording a powerful comment on the theories that had so often been broached by the young men. Herbert looked round the room; it was all in disorder. In spite of himself, he could not but think of a tavern and all its accessories. A liqueur-stand and glasses still remained on the centre table, among writing materials scattered loosely about, and dusted over by the ashes of cigars. Herbert gazed out of the window, to divert his mind, and to escape from the conviction that was irresistibly coming over it. "This is neither the path of wisdom or safety for Owen. My father is right; best have nothing at all to do with this tempter in any shape or form." By accident his eyes fell, as if drawn by a talisman, to the liqueur-stand, and there, leaning against the edge, were the two letters. He knew the handwriting of both. One was Miss Apsley's; but—could he believe his eyes—was it possible—the other was Rose's? For a moment the impulse was so strong, the sense of a right over Rose so supreme, that he almost forgot the letter was Owen's. He drew back his hand just as it was nearly touching it; but, instead of leaning against the window listlessly, he stood stiffly up in a waiting attitude, ready to confront Owen as he entered.

As quickly as great languor would permit, that young man shuffled on his clothes and came into the room with a sauntering gait, yawning as he held out his shaking hand. On every feature of his face could be read the tale of the past night's drinking. Herbert saw it at a glance. Owen, dull as he was, seemed struck by the immovable attitude and silence of Herbert, and said—

"What's the matter, my boy?"

Herbert pointed to the letter, and replied coldly—"How long have you corresponded with that lady?"

Owen coloured, hesitated, trembled. His nerves played him false. He looked the picture of a pitiful shuffler.

"How long!" he said. "Upon my word, really. Why, Herbert, what right have you to ask me, eh?"

"I have a right. You must answer me or my father, whichever you prefer. What am I to understand by that letter? and next to it, that of Miss Apsley, your affianced wife?" At that moment Rose's words, "insult and degradation," came to his mind. He looked sternly at Owen, and, in a perfectly calm manner and concentrated voice, said—"It is impossible that I can have been so utterly deceived in you that you could be capable of playing false to Miss Apsley, or insulting my father's adopted daughter, than whom no lady in the land is worthier of all honour and courtesy. Speak, man! As I look round this room I see more than I ever expected of your habits. Is your soul sunk to the same level?"

There was a time, perhaps not twenty-four hours previously, when Owen would have fired up, and obeyed the instinct that prompted him to seize Herbert by the collar, and toss him down the stairs, or roll down with him in a deadly wrestle. But now he cowered—conscience betrayed him. He tried to talk loud and bluster; his mouth was dry, and his tongue clave to it.

"I demand that letter, or to know its contents before I leave this room."

"My letter, indeed! Rose ——"

"Do not utter her name. Open the letter, sir, or go with me to my father. Honourable matters of this kind are soon explained. Speak, I say, and clear up the mystery. Assure me there is no double-dealing; that I am not speaking to a coward, who would presume on what he thought the friendlessness of this lady, and a liar, who would double his guilt by a denial."

As he spoke, his form dilating and his eyes flashing, Owen fumbled with the envelope in a bewildered way, and, breaking it open, saw, at a glance, his own handwriting. It was a relief to escape from meeting the fiery gaze of Herbert, which seemed to scorch him, by looking at the note. But, abject as he had already appeared, even Herbert was startled by the transfixed look, the livid tint, that in an instant came over him. He saw, also, that the enclosure was Owen's letter returned, and his heart, in the midst of his anger, beat with a glow of triumph: he could not understand, for a moment, why. With a grasp like a wild beast, Owen clutched Miss Apsley's letter, tore it open, gave a glance, and dropped down in a sitting posture on the floor, as if he was shot, holding both letters in his shaking grasp. For an instant Herbert thought he was in a fit, stooped forward a moment, and saw the letters were in Owen's handwriting, and instantly divined the cause of the prostration that he beheld.

"I'm a fool—a confounded, wretched fool!" Owen hissed out through his shut teeth, evidently almost unconscious of Herbert's presence.

The latter looked at him attentively once more, and then strode out of the room. Never would he forget that spectacle of humiliation. Every lineament and gesture—from the

scowling brow, furtive eyes, and twitching mouth, to the collapsed, shrunk, shaking form, grovelling on the ground—was photographed upon the tablet of Herbert's brain, never to be forgotten. As he retreated down the stairs he heard a cry of rage, not unmingled with oaths and curses.

Herbert thought it right, as he left the house, to desire that "some one should go up to Mr. Owen;" a very needful precaution, for the fury of self-sought exposure and mortified pride has driven men to madness. And a frenzy fit the poor boy thought his master had, when, in return for his inquiries, he was flung out of the room. The women of the house, with the landlady at their head, had to come armed with water-bottles, whose contents they dashed over Owen, as though he had been as much outwardly, as he was inwardly on fire. Their energetic proceedings—and more than all, the outcry they made, by annoying, restored him to some degree of composure, as a counter-irritant allays inflammation. He succeeded in getting them out of his room, and threw himself upon the sofa. In an hour's time his plans were arranged. He drank some soda-water, called up his landlady, to whom he had long been known, told her he was going away for a few weeks; desired she would pack his clothes and send them to Mrs. Apsley's to be forwarded to him. And then, examining the contents of his purse, and wrapping himself up in his warmest garments —"He was quite come to," his landlady said, "for he took good care of himself"—he looked round his room with a farewell glance, as if in that gaze he took leave of all—father, sisters, friends. He was detained a few minutes as he was going out. A packet came; they were his letters to Miss Apsley. Not a line from her. He felt no explanation would serve him; all was over. He tossed the letters on the fire, and beat the blaze down with the poker, muttering

savage execrations. He put the key of a desk containing Miss Apsley's letters in an envelope, and directed it as well as he could to his sister, and then fled down stairs and out of the house as if pursued by fiends—as indeed he was; and they were not to be evaded or conquered by any such means as he was employing; fly as fast as he might, they too would fly with him. In an hour he was off express for Harwich, and from thence, by steamer, to Antwerp. The next day saw him pale and feeble, looking years older, as if he had been shaken by a long illness. To allay the stings of his remorse, or the bitterness of being discovered, he drank deeply of the Dutchman's schnaps. The moral strife which he had thought so dignified, such an evidence of freedom and self-command, was over. Strong drink had won the victory.

Here we take leave of him. From henceforth he wandered about the Continent, as so many of our countrymen do, purposeless, until, from sheer want of occupation and *ennui*, they drift to the gaming-tables, and obtain a little fevered excitement among the sharpers and dupes who aid the revenue there, as here, by their vices—beings who show how man, "created in the image of his Maker," may erase that impress, and brand the likeness of a demon in its stead.

CHAPTER VII.

ROSE BLOOM.

"Without the help of art,
Like flow'rs which grace the wild,
Her sweets she did impart
Whene'er she spoke and smiled;
Her looks they were so mild,
Free from affected pride,
She me to love beguiled,
I wished her for my bride."—ALLAN RAMSAY.

HERBERT had learned much more than the painful fact of Owen's unworthiness in the recent interview. The keen pang which the momentary thought of Rose holding a correspondence with another had given him; the rage that swept through him at the idea of any treachery being meditated against her, that should derogate from her maiden purity, and involve the fact of insult; the glow of pleasure when he saw that she had herself repelled the indignity, and quickly manifested her just sense of the whole transaction, came in such a rush of mingled emotions, that Herbert paused and asked himself—"Is this a brother's love only that I feel for our dear Rose?" Would it have been endurable that Owen should have broken with Miss Apsley and honourably proposed to Rose? No, no. There was torture in the thought. He had deceived himself as to his own feelings. This child that had grown up as a daughter in his father's house, and been beloved by them all, he had never thought of as likely to form other ties. Once—yes Herbert with self-reproach recalled it—once, flattered by a fair and graceful woman's apparent preference, Herbert, with all the impetuosity of youth, had made proposals; had fancied himself deeply in love; had

ultimately resigned his claim as interfering with the rights of his friend, and worried himself into illness in the conflict he had passed through. And now he discovered—oh! perplexed mechanism of the human heart, deceitful above all things to itself—discovered that, all unconsciously, in the depths of feelings undisturbed until this day, lay the image of Rose. And now, how was he to act? With the noble humility of love he felt himself unworthy of her. She was no mere pink and white doll, with a set smile and an equally set phrase. Rose had mind and will, heart and soul. She would do what she thought right at any cost. Would she ever think of him? She had loved him as a sister. Oh! the anxious misery of the thought that, perhaps, the sisterly could not change to a nearer, dearer love; that it had put him at a disadvantage, particularly when he should tell her, as he meant to do, that in a moment of enthusiasm he had proposed to Miss Apsley. In such ingenious self-tormenting he employed his thoughts as he walked home, and found Rose returned from Miss Pendrainly's, and now sitting at his father's desk copying out some extracts that Dr. Franks was dictating as he walked up and down the room. With Herbert's new insight into his own heart, and Rose's recent trials, he was nervous on her account. Her cheek, he thought, looked pale, and he said to his father anxiously, "Pray, allow me to assist you; we tax Rose too much. We forget how great a change to her is this London lodging, compared with the garden at Boveycum and the country walks."

"Herbert, dear! you surely forget that the change is as great to your father," interposed Rose; "and I am young and strong—very strong." She felt a little quiver of her lip as she said so; and Dr. Franks, laying down the book he was reading from, went up to her; and taking her hand

in his, gazed earnestly in her face, and said, "My child, I fear, in my selfishness, I *am* too exacting. Herbert is right. I did not think of it."

Then arose one of those sweet contests, so pleasant in a loving household, where each would take something of the burden of life from the others; and as Rose looked up into Dr. Franks' face, and then more timidly to Herbert, a delicious consciousness filled her soul that there was a deeper glow in *his* eyes whom she called brother; that his voice trembled as he spoke, as it never had done before; that a bond, equally new and delightful, was to be added to the ties that had so many years linked them in family love. What a rosy blush mantled over brow and neck at the conviction!

"Not that Rose looks ill, by any means," said good Dr. Franks, "though I wish, my dear," he added, "you were less nervous; that blush of yours is too vivid."

Rose was not sorry to escape to her room, as Herbert insisted on being for the nonce his father's amanuensis.

After their family dinner, Dr. Franks announced his intention of going to see Miss Pendrainly. He would sit with her awhile, if necessary; but Rose must not go quite so often; it did not agree with her—she was more tremulous than he liked to see her. "And," he added, "Herbert, did you not wish me to see your patient, Mr. Wilson, with you? Will you go with me now, or shall I meet you to-night there?"

"Neither, I think, to-day, my dear father. He is going on well; and just now his wife is absent for a day or two. He has a good nurse; but while she is away he will see no one but me. His is a very peculiar case. He has long fits of unconquerable repugnance to seeing a stranger. I am the only person that Dr. M'Blanque has ever been able to introduce to him."

I'm afraid Rose was not quite so concerned as she should have been at the gloomy reserve of the stranger, whom Herbert had often named to her as a remarkable man. Neither, it must be owned, was there just then exactly that self-command on which Herbert so prided himself, or that serene calm in Rose's manners which she generally displayed. Somehow, when simple-hearted Dr. Franks left the room, strange perturbations beset both the young people. Herbert dallied with his pen; and at length throwing it down, left the desk, rose and went across the room to Rose's chair, bent over her, and taking her hands, said half-reproachfully—"How could you say this morning that you belonged to no one? Do you not, will you not—not—O Rose! may I venture to ask it?—be mine in name, as you have long been in love?"

"Herbert! I—I—"

"Hush! do not tremble so. Look up! let me read my answer in those dear eyes. Never—never shall they shed a tear that I can prevent!"

Ah! boasting Herbert, they were running over with bright tears now, and he has caused them. Fine protestations truly!

"But listen—listen, Rose. I must tell all; I have been a wanderer, though I knew it not. I'm unworthy; my thoughts, my vanity—nay, I then fancied my heart—led me to another. You start—you are angry. I deserve it. I did, Rose, offer my homage to Miss Apsley. She refused me for —— "

"Don't, Herbert, don't name him in this hour; we will keep our minds unsoiled."

"True, dear Rose; can you forgive me, and take me with all my faults?"

There was a pause, and then a whisper—

"Some faults die in the confession of them, Herbert. I

have too many of my own to be extreme to yours, if, indeed it was a fault."

But why attempt to describe in feeble words love's young dream, in which look, and voice, and tears, and smiles, and blushes, and incoherences, make up the eloquence? Herbert and Rose had dwelt together from childhood, but they never knew each other fully until now. If Rose could say with all truth that she had never cared or wished for any one but Herbert as a lover, she had enough of the clear perception of right, to value as the truest test of his love the confession he had made. They had found much to say, when Rose all at once inquired, "And father! Herbert, what will he think of this?"

"Did he ever think his daughter wrong? I shall be twice his son now. Dear, good father, how right he is! how just in his conclusions!"

If anything could add to Rose's happiness, these words did; for they conveyed to her mind a conviction that Herbert meant to tread in his father's steps; that his perverse theories had been tested and found wanting; that going into temptation, under the notion of withstanding it, was of all presumptuous follies the most dangerous.

"You do not, then, Herbert, continue to think that your father's principles are a superfluous restraint, or a pharisaic assumption?"

"The last I never thought them. I knew his motives were above all suspicion. He had been true to his principles to his own injury. My sin has been pride. The pharisaism is on my side, in supposing that where many better and wiser men have fallen I could stand—thinking more of preserving my own personal liberty than helping others. Even if it were, which I doubt, the highest attainment to be able to say to this insidious temptation of strong drink

'Hitherto shalt thou come and no farther,' I feel I could not rescue the fallen or save the falling—the one would see my inconsistency, the other plead my example."

"Herbert!" whispered Rose, "that is surely argument enough. Is not the highest form of godliness that which enables us to do most good to others?"

At that moment the thought of all she owed Dr. Franks—of how terrible her lot might have been but for his generous care—filled her heart with a joy wrought up to pain. She sat by Herbert's side, unconscious of the flight of time, or of anything but that all clouds had been rolled away, and that a serene sky, bright with hues of rosy light, was over their head, tinting the distant future with its glow.

Much sooner than they expected, Dr. Franks returned. Herbert, who was in a mood to be kindly towards every one, said, "Poor Miss Kizzy! what a short visit, dear father, you have paid her!"

"Two hours," replied Dr. Franks, pulling out his watch to verify his accuracy; then glancing at the table, "and my excerpts, Herbert?"

"Dear sir—dear father, I have not written—I have not been able to write. Come, Rose, look up, my own sweet girl, and help me to tell the joy I feel—to ask of my father, of our father, what I know will be freely given—his blessing."

"Eh, eh! children, what's this? what do you mean—blessing? Why, Rose has been always a blessing."

"And now and evermore a greater blessing."

"Herbert, my son," said Dr. Franks in a husky voice, "is this well to agitate the child with these thoughts; have you considered what you ask—a treasure?"

"A nameless girl, dependent on you, dear father, for everything that makes life honourable or happy," interposed Rose.

"Hush, my Rose! this troubles me. Your grateful disposition exaggerates the case. Beware, dear child, of mistaking gratitude for another and more importunate emotion. I'm not so old, Rose, that I forget my youth, nor the rapture with which I took to my poor home the joy of my life. O Rose! if you would not prefer Herbert beyond all others that this world contains, irrespective of any mere collateral considerations, do not think of binding yourself by any promise, or entering into any engagement. Indeed, at your age, you should do neither."

"Father! father!" The same word was spoken by each in a deprecating tone, as if he pleaded against them both. Perhaps nothing could have more completely shown how they were agreed, than the tone in which they both spoke that one word.

Not with unmoistened eyes did Dr. Franks—for it was all the reply he could make—say hoarsely, "God bless you both! If this indeed have His blessing, I think I shall be too happy."

There was an eloquent pause, in which their hearts held full communion. Dr. Franks had sunk in his arm chair; his son stood by his side, leaning on his shoulder, and Rose occupied a hassock before the fire, half-kneeling, half-sitting at her father's feet. The room door was at the rear of the group, and, possibly, when Dr. Franks came in, and was so immediately met by his children in all the enthusiasm of their new-born happiness, he had left it open. Certain it was that, while the three were trying to gain composure in silence, a little rustle was heard, a slight footfall crept near, and, before a head was turned or a word uttered, a well-known voice said—

"I suppose I interrupt you?" and Berry stood on the hearth-rug in the midst of them! She looked a moment

from one to the other, and seemed to understand matters instantly, before surprise permitted any but hasty ejaculations.

"Yes, I'm here. Business has brought me. What, Rose! little simpleton! giving yourself away before you know what man's daughter you are disposing of?"

"I belong to my father here; as to finding out any other, if I—if Herbert ——"

There was a sigh, in spite of her full-hearted bliss; for if ever there is a moment when a woman would wish to possess every good—not for her own poor sake, but for her lover's—it is when she feels that she has promised to be his, and would endow him with the richest dower. But Berry's sudden coming turned the tide of thought into other channels. The little creature stood there so pallid on the hearth, with her questioning eyes, that Herbert, as if he felt a sudden chill, began to break up the fire; and Rose, rising from her place at Dr. Franks' feet, put her arms round her as she spoke, stopped her remonstrances with a kiss, saying, "Come, before you tell us anything of the cause of this sudden visit, or scold us, all and sundry, let me take you to my room and help you off with your wraps."

"Berry," said Dr. Franks, shaking her hand warmly, "I'm right glad to see you; but I doubt whether the wisdom of your coming equals the pleasure."

"Let the pleasure prove the wisdom," said Herbert gaily.

"It is a young man's maxim," said Berry.

"Not likely to be wrong merely on that account."

Thus welcomed, Berry was taken possession of by the wondering Rose, who was not in the least surprised to find that, on assisting her fitful guest to unroll herself from her travelling garb, not a word of explanation was given; and all the natural inquiries after Dorcas and the Summerfields, sundry neighbours—not forgetting the dog and cat—were

answered in monosyllables. On returning to the drawing-room, and while Berry refreshed herself with a cup of tea—that best of all restoratives after a journey—Dr. Franks, with a half-amused, half-puzzled look, said, "Is it forbidden to inquire what—besides the desire to give us pleasure—has brought you to London?"

"Well, I certainly did not come for my own pleasure; and as to the pleasure of others, I don't know that it is in my power to promote that. Pleasure-seeking, or finding, or giving, does not lie in my way. But I am come ——"

"So we see," said Herbert.

"Nonsense! Herbert; don't be flippant. I'm come on a search of importance; I can't tell you anything definite, for I know nothing, and that must be all my answer at present."

"Rasp!—Rasp! the same as ever."

"Why did you not bring Martha with you?"

"With me, Dr. Franks? Oh! I hate being followed about."

"What! by helpers?"

"Hindrances I find them. Yes; even friends are often impediments."

"Impediments to what?"

"To independent action. I fancy myself a lunatic with a keeper when Martha follows my footsteps."

The word lunatic suggested evidently two names.

"That poor Mrs. Stillwell, is she better, Berry?" said Dr. Franks.

"And the old squire?" added Rose.

"Mrs. Stillwell will never be better. I saw her last week. She did not know me. She raves about her son, fancies he is constantly threatening her life. It is a long agony. As to Cumb'ry people, everything there is as bad as can be."

"Have you been there, then?" said Herbert.

"Oh! I know the ways of the place, and I ——"

"Haunted it?"

Berry slightly bent her head in assent, and there was a silence, in which all were so occupied by their own thoughts that it continued for a long time. At length Berry said abruptly—

"Twirk and his wife live near here. I mean to visit them."

"Visit them!" echoed Rose wonderingly.

"To what end?" inquired Dr. Franks.

"Perhaps for old acquaintance sake."

"Pshaw! Berry; people you detest."

There was no answer. Berry rose, walked to the instrument, and, as if to avoid further questioning, sat down and played a little sighing melody that thrilled them all.

Rose started up, and, running to the piano, said, "No, not to-night, such mournful music;" and her hands, running down the keys, struck out gay laughing tones, Berry saying, "Well, be it so; all are parts of the one universal language, sighs, no less than laughter."

Soon afterwards the evident weariness of the little creature caused Rose to propose their retiring early, and Dr. Franks and Herbert were left alone. Far into the night went their swift pens—Dr. Franks encouraged by the near completion of his work; and Herbert feeling the ennobling influence, of all others the most salutary to a young man, of a virtuous love giving a purpose to his life, at once stimulating and consecrating his energies.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE TRACK.

"Early in life, when we can laugh aloud,
There's something pleasant in a social crowd,
Who laugh with us; but will such joys remain
When we lie struggling on the bed of pain?"—CRABBE.

ARRANGEMENTS had been made for Rose occupying a bed in a little dressing-room that led out of her usual sleeping-room, which she had given up to Berry. The exciting incidents of the day were not likely to promote sleep, and for some hours after Berry had sunk into sound slumbers, Rose was awake, thinking of the new interest which life had for her, and not unmindful, amid her own happiness, of the very different feelings that might be agitating Miss Apsley. Rose could understand that nothing must be so agonizing as discovering the unworthiness of a beloved object. A short time previously, and she would have said such a discovery would render it easy to banish the offender from the heart for ever. Now she understood—dimly it may be—for happy love dazzles the perceptions—that the heart does not so very easily part with its cherished ones; and her kindest wish for Miss Apsley was, that she might know something of that only secure refuge in the storms of life to which Rose had, from her childhood up, been directed. This thoughtfulness, which continued many hours, was followed by a long, deep, tranquil sleep far into the morning; and when she awoke, and hastily rose to call Berry, she found that the room was deserted. Reproaching herself as she dressed, for her unwonted idleness, when she descended she found Dr. Franks and Herbert already at breakfast. They would not have

her disturbed, and on her inquiring for Berry, she found that she had gone out before any one but the servant of the house was up. After her old plan, a cup of milk and water and a little bread had sufficed for her morning meal, before she set out on her errand. No one felt any particular alarm about the erratic movements of Berry; they were accustomed to her vagaries, and when Dr. Franks suggested that London would not be so safe for Berry as to preclude all thoughts of danger or accident in her wanderings, Herbert re-assured him by saying—

"No one knows what Berry has studied or made herself familiar with. I have seen her, years ago, pore over the map of London by the hour together. She will not venture to walk, and she is well enough able to direct the driver she employs. No fear of Berry."

In a short time each had gone to their morning's pursuits —Dr. Franks to read at the British Museum, Herbert to the Hospital, and Rose to Miss Pendrainly's. When she arrived at Felix House she found that lady in tears. Two letters were on the table before her, and on Rose entering, the invalid handed them to her, saying—

"I hoped—no disparagement to you—it was Dr. Franks. My sweet Roselle, they'll kill me among them. I must get some one to take the responsibility of advising—of acting —what is to be done?"

The helpless way in which this was said aroused all Rose's best feelings. She read the letters: one was from Miss Jessie Strong, complaining that she had received no answer to her two last letters; and stating in pretty plain terms that "her papa was indignant with Mr. Vesey, and she shared his sentiments."

As neither heart nor—as Rose thought—honour had entered into this compact, it did not seem to her a bad thing

that it should be broken off; though Miss Keziah kept complaining, "How worldly! just as trouble comes to our family they pick a quarrel. Dr. Strong, too, is as bad as his daughter. And, my dear, I hear—Carver tells me—that Owen has gone off to the Continent, taken no leave of Miss Apsley, and so *that's* at an end. I certainly did discover, years ago, in my own case, that there was no truth in man. That's no news; but it comes rudely again before me in these events."

The second letter was anonymous, and very painful. It described the squire as a prisoner in his own house, cruelly hectored over and ill-used by his wife and the gardener.

It bore external evidence of being genuine, though Rose regretted it was anonymous. It could not be acted on; might be malicious. While she was reading and re-reading it, trying to find something comforting to say to Miss Pendrainly, the latter said—

"But the worst of all is Vesey's absence. What on earth keeps him away at this time? He's good for very little, but he might do something; my brother is not to be lost. I know in the hunting season Vesey is often away for weeks; but now his letters are all unanswered. It puts me in mind, my dear, of a trick he played us a year ago last spring, just after Mrs. Vesey's death—that was in the racing season—he went off with that odious young Stillwell. I heard it whispered his losses then were immense."

At this moment the attendant, Carver, entered the room and gave her mistress a card.

"Mrs. Twirk—Twirk? I don't know any lady of that name," said Miss Pendrainly musingly; "besides, Carver, I see no strangers."

"This is not a stranger, ma'am; and she says she has urgent business. You will know her; she was once your maid."

As she spoke, Mrs. Twirk, who was much too confident a

person to be easily repulsed, entered the room, looking bonier, stiffer, and harder than ever. She had arrayed herself in her grandest attire of brocaded gown and velvet mantle, and was quite resplendent in chains and brooches, while the amber-tipped feathers on her bonnet bent, rather more courteously than she did, to Miss Pendrainly.

"Why, really!—can it be Gribber?"

"Twirk, Miss," was the reply in a lofty tone.

Rose, with a shiver, left her seat—that voice stirred some dim, far-off deeps of memory; she was retiring to the adjoining room; but the visitor said condescendingly, "No one needs to withdrawer—on my account; what I've come to say, I wish to say before anybody and heverybody."

Timidly, and yet impatiently, Miss Keziah waved her hand, as if uttering the words, "Say on then; get it over, and go."

The manner of the woman was so strange that Rose involuntarily lingered, though from instinctive dislike and dim memory of something the name suggested, she shrunk behind Miss Pendrainly's sofa into the shadow of the window-curtain. No one thought of offering Mrs. Twirk a seat; but she took one opposite the invalid, and said, "What I've come for is this: I can't, and indeed I wont, have your nephew at my house any longer."

"My nephew!—what! Vesey?"

"Yes; and a most troublesome time we've had with him. Ours is one of the most respectablest houses in the trade. It's not our only concern. We've another helsewhere; but that's neither here nor there. What I say is this: Vesey Pendrainly, what with his drinking and goings on, ain't a hinmate that suits us. He terrified me last night that ever was with trying to throw hisself out of winder. The pains I've took with him, and my husband the same. The pains

we've both took! And I wanted to call a doctor to him last night, and he wouldn't hev one. Obstinate he was, and obstinate he is; and there's no doing nothing with him; and no more drink will I supply him with."

"But tell me, good woman, where *is* your house?"

"Good woman, indeed! I don't know that I'm more a good woman than you, Miss, when everybody has their own. There's some as holds their heads mighty high, as'll perhaps come to be good womaned, and not able to help theirselves with a friend in their pocket."

"Did you wish Mr. Pendrainly's friends to send for him? Is he too ill to come away from your house?" said Rose in a tone that, with all its mildness, was authoritative.

"Why, yes; that's what I'm here for, to tell Mr. Pendrainly's friends. I've warned him his own self till I'm tired. I've been as good as a mother to him—which he would have left days ago if he'd a-listened to my advice; but he'd his pals a colleaging there, and they ordered drink, and there it was. They defied poor me; but I said this morning, as an old friend of the family at Cumb'ry, I'd bear a great deal; but any more of sich goings on, as last night, I wont bear. So mind you understand, Miss, I come to give you notice that he must be fetched away, and no time to be lost. I wont hev my 'ouse disgraced with him a-dying in it, and his friends a-saying he was encouraged, cause I'm come to tell you that's not correct."

"Dying!" gasped Miss Pendrainly in a faint voice.

"Yes; and if it hadn't been for me he'd a-been dead before this! Why, there's no way of managing a man that you darn't leave a bottle of brandy near, but he empties it."

"There, say no more, Mrs. Twirk," said Rose. "Miss Pendrainly understands, and will send for her nephew."

"Yes, you can go," added the invalid feebly.

"Oh! I don't want to stay by no manner of means. I'm going; but I take Mrs. Carver, and this young body—whoever she may be—and you, Miss Keziah, to witness—I've warned you, and giv you notice that you moves Mr. Vesey." Tossing her head, as if for the satisfaction of setting her feathers nodding; and pulling out her handkerchief with an air that made her bracelets jingle, Mrs. Twirk marched out of the room and down stairs, saying to the maid-servant in the passage—"Tell your mistress that I came to give notice that Miss Pendrainly should remove a customer that has made hisself very disagreeable in my house; and wun as we should ha' turned out last night, but we kep out o' respec' for his fam'ly."

She was no sooner gone than Rose, leaving Miss Pendrainly in the care of Carver, wrote a hasty note to Herbert, and sent off a messenger with it to the hospital. She had scarcely given her directions, and seen the porter off with the note—and was yet standing in the hall telling the landlady, that Miss Pendrainly's nephew would come—when two powerful men entered the doorway, bearing between them, in a standing posture, a man wrapped up in rugs, whose face was concealed by his hat being slouched over his head. With a feeling of shame—for Rose was new to such a spectacle—she retreated to prepare Miss Pendrainly; but the landlady smiled at her alarm, as if intemperance was too venial a sin to cause more than a passing annoyance. She gave orders for the gentleman to be carried to a room up stairs.

The men, however, objected, saying, "He's as senseless and heavy as a log; we've had enough of getting him down stairs this bout:" so they were fain to put him in the back parlour, and lay him on a sofa. As they came out, the landlady inquired if his cravat was loosened; and the men, laughing, said, "Yes; he'll take no harm; he's sound enough for one while."

CHAPTER IX.

BERRY'S DOINGS.

"My own friend—my own friend,
There's no one like my own friend;
For all the gold the world could hold
I would not give my own friend."—WOLFE.

WHILE these incidents occurred, Berry was pursuing a course that, eccentric as they knew her to be, would have puzzled even those most accustomed to her peculiarities. She had taken a fancy apparently for visiting the churches dedicated to St. Ann. She drove to St. Ann's, Blackfriars, then to St. Ann's, Aldersgate, afterwards to St. Ann's, Soho. Her business did not seem to detain her long; unless, as in the first instance, she had to wait for the arrival of the parish clerk. On leaving St. Ann's, Soho, late in the afternoon, she told the man to drive to Felix House; and just as her cab drew up at the door, Herbert and Dr. Franks, accompanied by another gentleman, were on the threshold. They were in deep conversation, and passed in before Berry alighted, and, therefore, without observing her. As she entered the house in their wake, she noticed Herbert through the opening of the back parlour door. In the casual glimpse she caught of him, he looked unusually pale and serious. But Berry's business was up stairs, whither, at her request, she was conducted by Carver, who exclaimed, "Why, Miss Berry, is it possible? you in London?"

This recognition removed what had been Berry's greatest difficulty. Conscious of the shock her appearance had alway caused Miss Pendrainly, she wished that lady to be prepared for seeing her, and was able to explain this to Carver in her usual way. "I must see Miss Keziah. I bring her

good news that may atone for my venturing into her sight. I believe I frighten or disgust her usually." Rose was still with Miss Pendrainly; and recent events, as we have seen, by substituting real for fancied troubles, had effected some salutary alterations. Rose, in the course of the day, had mentioned Berry's arrival, and spoken of her character in terms that had made the invalid say, "I hope she will come and see me. I should like to talk with her on some past matters." So that Carver's announcement of her presence was very welcome. As the cripple glided into the room, and with her cautious tread, crept round on the most shadowy side of the room to Miss Pendrainly's chair, she noticed that an unusual awe was on the features both of that lady and Rose.

"You find us in great trouble," said Miss Pendrainly.

"I had hoped to lighten some that you have recently suffered from," was the reply, as Berry drew an envelope from her pocket, and continued, "The last time I saw you was at the squire's marriage. It was natural that should annoy you. It will do so no more." She laid the envelope on the table.

"What is it? what do you mean? Rose, look; I can't well see."

Rose opened it, and saw it was a marriage certificate, and contained the names of Anne Clinch and Robert Jeffs. The date was June, 1851.

"What does it all mean?" again tremulously repeated Miss Pendrainly.

"It means," said Berry, "that your late maid married in London at that time, and that she afterwards found means to obtain the employment of her husband as head-gardener at Cumb'ry. The rule of the house was strictly against married servants, and hence the motive to secrecy.

Since then a deeper scheme has been planned between them.

"Married before!—husband alive! Then she is not my brother's wife?"

"Of course not."

"However did you find it out?"

"I watched them since the marriage, pitying the old squire. I had long observed an intimacy, which has been the source of scandalous remarks in the neighbourhood. I remembered that in the year of the Exhibition the lady's maid at Cumb'ry went to London with Mrs. Stillwell. It struck me that I might, even from the incoherent words of the poor lunatic, learn something; so I went to see her. She did not know me, but she was willing to talk of the year of the Exhibition. She instantly concluded that I was this woman, and began referring to a marriage. It was tedious work piecing together her disjointed remembrances; but a St. Ann's Church was named. The date of the visit I knew well, and my course of investigation was plain. I wish all else that has for years puzzled me was as plain."

"Not his wife!" exclaimed the invalid, with a sigh of relief and wonder. "How am I to thank you sufficiently?"

"Do not thank me at all."

"Alas! this news would indeed be welcome, but for the misery we are in about Vesey. He was brought here some hours since, and is now below, dying."

Rose then explained the events of the day, adding, "Herbert came as soon as my note reached him. He has summoned other professional aid, but they say there is no hope. Congestion of the brain, which must have set in hours ago."

As she spoke, Herbert entered the room, and addressing Miss Pendrainly said, "I come to redeem my promise; if you insist on seeing him in life, you had better come now;

but it will answer no purpose." He gave his arm to Miss Keziah to assist her down stairs. She looked at Rose, entreating her to follow. After a moment's hesitancy, the latter complied, and Berry, unforbidden, indeed unnoticed, went after them.

Candles were lighted in the room they entered, but their light was so shielded that the whole room was in shadow. Dimly through the gloom they discerned the prostrate form on the couch; white and rigid were the handsome, well-cut features. The hands, looking already dead, were lying across the laboriously heaving chest. It was a solemn sight, the strong man in his prime laid low by his own follies! The aunt bent over him and called his name—in vain. Whether the fixed eyes saw, or the dull ear heard, they could never know. Not the alteration of a single muscle gave any token of returning sense. As Rose stood there motionless, she thought—she could not help thinking—how many privileges this man had possessed—what good he might have done; and now, when all was ended, who was the better for his having lived?—who, of those who were of his kindred, could ever mention him without a pang of distress, or a blush of shame?

It was a death-bed—alas! there are many such—in which no one knew what to say. The holy words of consolation, so often used, seemed there a profanity. Rose sunk down involuntarily on her knees, as if she could not stand in that awful presence. Berry crept to her side, and rested her long hands tenderly on the young girl's shoulders as she knelt, whispering in her ear meanwhile, "Pray, Rose, pray for guidance; nothing is so terrible as being left to our own devices."

Suddenly there seemed a strange pause in the breathing. Every ear listened intently. Hark! is that the last? No; there came one breath—long, like a groan—and then the

light in the wide-open, glassy eyes went out, quenched in darkness for ever.

Herbert and Dr. Franks supported Miss Keziah, who was weeping bitterly, from the room. They gave orders for her immediately retiring to rest; and after Rose had seen her safely in bed, and commended her to the care of Carver and the landlady, she was thankful to compose her own spirit by returning home, accompanied by Berry.

In two hours afterwards, when Rose, who had deeply felt the scene she had witnessed, was induced by the persuasion of Herbert to retire to rest, Berry was again cloaked and ready, at her own request, to accompany him to see his pensioner, Flammerton. Herbert called a cab, for Berry's frame was weak, however strong her spirit might be; and as they were driven to the lodgings, they conversed on the strange manner of Flammerton towards Rose.

"I thought it well that he should see her," said Herbert; "for her's is a face to put even a hardened sinner in mind of a better world; and if there is reality in his repentance she would make it more real, especially if he has ever injured her. But he seems afraid or unwilling to come to particulars."

"I always thought, as I have told you, that Twirk robbed that man who brought Rose to us," said Berry; "though having no one to listen to me, or to help me if I made the charge, and no definite ground to go upon, I was powerless."

Hovering over a little fire, groaning with a bitter access of his rheumatism, they found the old man. He was entirely thrown off his guard by seeing Berry. He tried for a moment to appear indifferent, and said, lightly, "Ah, Rasp; I'm come down. It's hard when I've helped to build so many up. You've a pretty income now, I'll be bound, out of the Raven."

"Not I," said Berry angrily; "I never have, and never will touch the blood-money. Miss Asberry, of Claydip, has left me my small income—it was honestly come by—and shall go to do good."

"Blood-money!" hesitated Flammerton.

"Yes; that's the right name, not only for such money as Twirk robbed the dead of, but for that which is gained by spreading ruin and death."

"Twirk's a villain, I know; but—mind-shoo—as to his robbing, that I never found out till years after—never. At the time I was as innocent as you were."

"Humph! I suppose when you discovered that Twirk had committed a robbery, you found out something about that child which you ought to have told?"

"Ah! there you have me, Rasp; and I never cared about it till I saw her—blessings on her kind face! When that she-wolf turned me from her door, to think that innocent, kind, lovely creature, should be the one to pity me! Ah! that struck home. That shilling she gave me was like a live coal flung on my heart; but I've asked her forgiveness. I'll own it all; only I'm a poor old creature. I don't want to end my days—they wont be long—in a prison, if I've done anything against the law."

"We are come from a death-bed here," said Herbert. "Mr. Vesey Pendrainly died this night. He had no time for thought or penitence; but you ——"

"O Lord!—dead—I'm not going to die—I can't bear to think of it. Why, Rasp, all I know is this,"—as he spoke, he fumbled in his chest, and brought out an old canvas money-bag, from which he took a leather pouch, saying,—"I've had reason to think this was once filled with notes. When I took it out of Twirk's private desk it was as you now see it, only maybe a bit fresher-looking. But I'm innocent of all, but not telling."

Berry and Herbert looked at the pouch; it was of dark-green leather, and bore inside the name of Donald Fernandez. Herbert started as he read and re-read the name. It was evidently familiar to him; while Berry, after the first glance, was drawing out and opening—her long, thin fingers trembling with eagerness—the bit of paper, worn into holes at the edges of the folds, that lay within it. There were two slips folded into a small compass; they were two certificates—the one of marriage, the other of baptism. Berry's eyes were so dimmed by nervousness that she could not decipher them. Herbert, looking over her shoulder, and lifting up her hands, which still continued to grasp them, read the record of the marriage of Frederick Wilson Pendrainly to Bertha Fernandez, at the church of St. Austell, in the county of Cornwall, March 183—; and the other was a certificate of the birth of Bertha Florence, 184—, the daughter of the above, at Florence.

"Bertha! Florence! Yes, to be sure," said Berry; "it must have been her baby attempts to pronounce those names that made them give her the pet names of 'Birdie' and 'Flower.' I wonder I never thought of that."

"Why," said Herbert, "the pet names were in themselves so appropriate, if they were once thought of, they would be sure to be used. But Fernandez! that amazes me."

"Pendrainly!" exclaimed Berry. "Why, that must be our Boveycum family. What?—was the eldest nephew called Frederick *Wilson?* I never heard that he was."

"As to notes, or anything else than those two papers," said the old man in his cracked tones, "I'll take my solemn oath I never saw; and I never should have seen this—mind-shoo—but the year that I came to the Twirks, in one of their rows, that she-wolf tossed the writing-desk at her husband's head. It was but a slight concern, and it broke as it fell. I helped

him to pick up the contents. He was called away, and this pouch somehow attracted me."

Speaking some words of re-assurance that no harm should come to him, they left the old man to the care of his landlady, and went out homeward. It was a clear, frosty night; a brilliant moon and myriads of sparkling stars glittered in the deep blue sky.

In silence Herbert slowly paced along, Berry keeping close to his side, screened like a child by the folds of his coat. Both were thinking, but Herbert much more definitely than Berry, for he knew more. Suddenly the latter said—

"It will be a shock, after all, to our dear girl to learn that her father is dead."

"Dead?" said Herbert inquiringly, adding, "Yes. The family have always said, or allowed the report to go uncontradicted, that Mr. Frederick died in America."

"Umph! their saying, or allowing it to be said, does not prove it to be so. There has been a stranger at Cumb'ry lately, very lately—a lady. I saw her repulsed from the house, and denied access to the squire. The same lady came up in the train with me. I tried to invite her into the same carriage, but I saw she shrunk from me. Poor thing! her own sorrow ought to have made her pity me."

"Sorrow?" inquired Herbert. "How do you know, Berry, this lady had any special sorrow?"

"Oh! I saw it—I knew it. There's a freemasonry of grief. I never saw a sweeter or a sadder countenance."

"Than that of this lady? What was she like?"

"Past her youth, but scarcely what one would call middle-aged; dressed in deep mourning, tall and slender, with dark complexion and a foreign air; but what chiefly struck me was the deep melancholy in the eyes, and the touch of tender

sadness in the voice. Oh! she had suffered much; I know she had."

At that moment two men passed them in deep conversation. The voice of one struck on Berry's acute ear; she had long been familiar with its tones. It said—

"If she belonged to me, I'd find some way of being rid of her, or I'd give her leg-bail."

"Ay, ay, it's fine talking; if I could realize now, unbeknown'st to her, I'd be off in quick sticks."

"Well, I've made you a good offer."

Hardly were the words spoken than a woman rushed past, and then turning, confronted them, and, setting her arms akimbo, began in a taunting tone to say—

"Ho, gents! my service to you, Mr. Stillwell and Mr. Twirk. I don't want to interfere, certainly not, with Mr. Stillwell. He may walk about if it pleases him all night; but you, sir, if you walk about, I walks with you." Linking her arm forcibly in her husband's, the virago uttered a taunting laugh, and the man, gnashing his teeth, muttered deep curses—no lost spirit in the lowest deeps of perdition was more miserable than he.

Herbert and Berry turned from the sight, each conscious that no human punishment, and no pangs of pain or sickness, are so terrible as the misery that bad people can inflict on each other. "The prison that would relieve that man, from living with that woman, would be a welcome refuge," said Herbert as he and his companion entered the door of their home, and mounting the stairs, found Dr. Franks awaiting them. Berry soon retired, leaving Dr. Franks and Herbert to converse over the confession of Flammerton, and consult what was to be done to reinstate Miss Pendrainly at her brother's house, and to investigate the claims that the discovery of the certificate involved.

CHAPTER X.

LIGHT IN DARKNESS.

"O my blessing!
I feel a hand of mercy lift me up
Out of a world of waters.
O my reviving joy! thy quick'ning presence
Makes the sad night of sickness and of years
Sit like a youthful spring upon my blood.
I cannot make thy welcome rich enough
With all the wealth of words."—MIDDLETON.

ONE of those changes of weather for which our climate is so famous occurred in the night, and a heavy fog completely enveloped in its yellow-grey folds every object on the succeeding morning. Berry rose from her bed, filled with wonder at the continued darkness, groped to her window, and lifting the curtain, discerned merely a dim, red, hazy spot, on a greenish-black ground, where she knew the gas lamp generally shone. She could scarcely comprehend the phenomenon. And when Rose, kindling a light, came through the door that connected their chambers, with her watch in her hand, to show Berry that it really was past their usual hour for rising, they both, for the first time, understood, as they tried to peer into the opaque gloom beyond the window-panes, how terrible a thing is a London fog.

Herbert had sat up the greater part of the night writing to the lawyer at Boveycum, who was the squire's man of business, requesting his immediate attendance on Miss Pendrainly. Fortunately, the district post-office was within a few doors of the house; and Herbert, unwilling to give trouble on such a morning, had himself stepped out and groped his way with his letters to the post-box.

Mrs. Woodly adopted the plan, the best in such cir-

cumstances, of turning day into night, and making the house bright with lights, and ventilating it with fires. When Berry and Rose descended the stairs, they saw, for the first time, that the door on the landing-place, that communicated with the adjoining house, was open, and Dr. Franks was coming through it, having been called up, as he explained, in the night by the invalid, who was very sensitive to the sudden change in the weather. As Berry, after breakfast, from time to time peered restlessly through the windows, an interdict was put on her going out, by Dr. Franks, who, after an interval of complete abstraction, suddenly looked up and said, "You cannot leave this house to-day. When cabs refuse to ply, and omnibuses do not run, it is a case of necessity that ladies stay at home."

"I only wanted to go to the Twirks; it is just at hand," said Berry.

Mrs. Woodly entering at the time to ask for orders on household matters, interposed her experience, and said, "We shall hear of plenty of accidents, you may depend. It was just such a fog as this when our poor old postman that had served the district full twenty years, walked into the water and was drowned. We all said he could find his way blindfold—and so, I fancy, he would; but my German neighbour, Mr. Schwiller, kindly gave the poor old man a good glass of neat brandy to keep the fog out. I'm sure he wanted it, walking so many miles a-day as he did; and no doubt it would have done him good; kept his inside all right—for these fogs get down one's throat so—only, as ill luck would have it, his head must have got a little confused—which made him take the wrong turning. Leastways, something of the sort was said at the inquest."

"Did this Mr. Schwiller you speak of get pepper or sugar at the inquest, Mrs. Woodly?" said Berry sharply.

"Law! Miss, how you talk! Who could blame him? He meant well."

"Yes. And so I suppose the man 'meant well' who treated the railway guard to glasses of spirits, and sent him to sleep when he should have been looking out for the signals; very kind generous gentleman, no doubt! He only caused a few deaths, and made a few cripples like me, and ruined the guard, and got clear off, that's all. And the man means well, I suppose, who makes himself comfortable with what he calls his night-cap before he goes to bed, and contrives to set the house on fire, and spread dismay and ruin around. Pray, Mrs. Woodly, how many of the fires that happen in this London are reasonably accounted for, eh? A mystery as dark and deep as this fog rests on them."

"Deary me! I'm sure I never thought of things in that light, Miss. If they'd known beforehand ——"

"Thought! No," said Berry impatiently; "people neither think beforehand nor afterwards in this drinking matter. Year after year goes on. It's all plain enough; but seeing, they see not; and hearing, they hear not."

"Be patient, Berry," said Dr. Franks. "It has been a long night, but the dawn is at hand."

"Ah! there are times when energy is depressed. The evil around is so rife, the good makes such slow progress, that even when there is the calmness of both mental and bodily health in those who seek to mitigate the one, and promote the other, they are ready to sink down and say despondingly, 'How long, O Lord, how long?'"

"Come, come; you think too deeply, Berry," said Herbert. "Allay this gloomy spirit with music. I must write more letters, and Miss Pendrainly must be visited; but the piano, so far from hindering, always helps me."

"No—no," replied Berry with a sigh; "I cannot play."

"Let Rose, then," said Herbert, "cheer us."

"Indeed, if I can do so, I will," said Rose, going to the instrument and playing over several airs that she knew were favourites with Berry. Herbert, unnoticed by them both, went to the landing-place and opened the door, exchanging, as he did so, a look with his father. Then he re-seated himself at the writing-table opposite Dr. Franks, and appeared absorbed in his pursuits.

Rose continued her playing, and was opening a volume of Beethoven, when Herbert said—

"No—no, Rose. Something simple—playful. We've mist enough to-day; let's hear some of your little childish songs—that one you used to sing years ago, when you called yourself 'Birdie.'"

"I forget it," said Rose, her hands wandering over the keys.

"Surely not."

"The words—no; but I cannot play it."

"*I* can," said Berry; "I arranged it for her from her baby-singing;" and, gliding to the piano, she took Rose's place, while Herbert said, "You *must* sing it, Rose."

"It always makes me sad," she murmured; but Dr. Franks looking up with an asking face, very unusual to him, prevented any further hesitation, and she began tremulously, though her voice strengthened in the singing, "Little Birdie."

"Louder!—louder! Rose; you've surely lost your voice," said Herbert nervously, while Berry made the prettiest varied accompaniment that charmingly threw out the tones of the singer. Two verses had been sung, Rose standing with her back to the drawing-room door, and a little behind Berry as she played. She did not see, though Dr. Franks and Herbert, with their pens held off the paper, their heads raised, their eyes fixed, and their very breath suspended,

saw, that through the door on the landing, and now on the threshold of the drawing-room, there was one whose look and manner might well arrest their gaze.

It was a lady, plainly dressed in deep mourning; her fine face was pale as marble, and looked all the paler from the bands of black hair that were braided back, from brows so curved and knit together with emotion, that the expression of the countenance was fearful. The dark, dilated eyes blazed as if filled with molten fire; and the white lips drawn apart were convulsively working, without producing any sound. Slowly the lady tottered forward, shaken like a reed by the tumultuous heaving of her chest. Just as the first line of the last verse was being sung, and the word "Flower" was on Rose's lips, her shoulder was grasped tightly like a clutch, and she was turned right round by a sudden exertion of strength that she could neither comprehend nor resist. Berry dropped her hands on the instrument with a crash, and, turning on the screw stool, looked with an amazed stare at the cause of the interruption. There, confronting each other with mutual awe, stood Rose and the stranger. The voice of the latter came at length in thick gasps, "How dare you? Tell me, I ask you. O great God! what is this?—who are you?—where—where did you learn—learn that?"

As she spoke, she shook Rose to and fro in her agitation; and the reply of the latter was a startled scream, as she called out, "Herbert, Herbert, who is this?"

"Tell me," gasped the lady, seizing both her hands, and wringing them in her grasp; "that's my child's song—my dear, lost, murdered child! I made it for her—only her, my pretty one. I'm not mad, don't fear me. Oh! pity me, my good, sweet girl, and tell me!"

"*Your* child!" said Rose in a dreamy voice, every tint of

colour fading from her face. "What do you mean?—I'm Birdie!" As she spoke, her trembling knees gave way, and she sank down on the ground, the stranger still holding her hands, and bending, panting, over her. Herbert rushed to them, saying, "Dear madam—dear Mrs. Wilson—let me explain; compose yourself." Dr. Franks, with a glass of water in his hands, came hastily forward and held it to the lady's lips, as, still holding Rose's hands, she sat on the chair that Herbert dragged towards her. Rose's head, as if dizzy with the shock of contagious emotion, rested on the lady's lap, who, as she bent over her whispered faintly, "Birdie! did you say Birdie?" There was a pause, in which all were as mute as death. The clock ticking on the mantel-piece seemed to vibrate painfully on the ear. Dr. Franks, fearing for both, in the tension that still held them, said, in a concentrated voice of enforced calm—

"Fourteen years ago this autumn, a child who could only name herself Birdie, was left at an inn in the West of England—this is that child."

"It was my child, this—she is mine—mine!"

Rose lifted up her head a moment, and as a flood of blessed tears rushed from her eyes, nestled down to the panting bosom, and sobbed out the one sweet word "Mother!" as clasped close, mingling sighs and tears in a tumult of feeling, they wept together.

The three spectators of this emotion drew aside, and as they felt the tears running from their own eyes, were thankful that relief had come to the agony they had witnessed.

Very beautiful, and yet very piteous it was to notice, that as a momentary calm came to the mother, she lifted up the fair young face from her bosom, held it at a distance, and with hungry eyes perused the lineaments; drew her silky curls through her trembling fingers, and then, with a fresh

embrace, clasped her close, moaning out a little tender murmur as if it was a young child restored to her. All the weary intervening years were for the moment obliterated; it was the long-lost little Birdie whose soft cheek rested on her mother's aching bosom.

It might have been a few minutes, or an hour—by their feelings they could not know—when some small measure of composure was gained, and Rose began the inquiry.

"How was it?—did you not say your murdered child?—was I stolen, then?—how was it?"

"I cannot tell you now; I will explain all. Surely I should have known that face anywhere—'tis the softened image of ——. Oh! how will he bear it?—how shall I tell him?"

"Who?"

"Your father."

Rose looked involuntarily through the folding doors towards the other room, where the group were standing, and dreamily re-echoed the word "Father."

Dr. Franks, thinking he was called, came towards them; and then the thought evidently glanced through Rose's mind—"No father's claim can be like his;" and she said lovingly to him, "My dear father." The words and their meaning fell on the ear of the lady, who exclaimed quickly, "You must love your poor father! Oh! never, never do you visit on him the sorrows of the past; his load has been so heavy, his life so bitter. God's hand has chastened him sore; yours must soothe him, O my child!" It was salutary, in that full tide of feeling, that the remembrance of a great sorrow, still impending, was a check to the current; for, rising and kissing her again and again, Mrs. Wilson looked to Dr. Franks and Herbert, who were speedily at her side, and said, "We have all much to explain; but I must

go to him. How is he to know it? How will he bear it? Can it indeed be true?" Then, as if suddenly stricken with another shock, she said, "My brother! where is Donald? How selfish of me that I never thought of him."

"Be satisfied with a child restored," said Dr. Franks, in a tone that was instantly interpreted aright.

"Then *he* was wrecked; and how did the child escape?"

"Be composed both of you; the present moment is too full for any more to be added. Unless you are most careful, this joy will prove more terrible than grief."

It was wonderful to see the change these words wrought in the demeanour of Mrs. Wilson. It was evident that fidelity to duty had been the guiding principle of her life. Struggling to be calm, and saying—with another embrace—"I will return shortly," she retired through the landing-place door, followed by Dr. Franks.

Berry had, unnoticed, glided from the room; and we, perhaps, dear readers, had better follow her example; for Herbert and Rose are scarcely rational enough to detain us. The incoherences they uttered, the bright tears that Herbert kissed away, need not be commented on. Suffice it, they were supremely foolish and happy.

And yet, amid all the tremor of this new-born joy, there was special cause for anxiety. A very perilous thing it is to find unaccustomed duties rise up in our path of life. Rose was nervous to depression about this father. Her mother's face seemed like the realizing of a sweet vision. In what long vista of memory, in what recesses of her being, had the expression of those loving eyes lingered? Rose felt she knew them. Her heart had leapt up like a fountain to meet them; but it pained her that no such emotion came at the word father. With a miser's eagerness she seemed to treasure up the feeling that she already had a father. Another was like an intruder.

While these thoughts and feelings were agitating Rose, and not unfelt by Herbert, and had suggested themselves very fully to Berry, the fog without continued as dense as ever. The streets were unusually silent, not merely from the absence of traffic, but from the stifling vapour deadening the sound. Now and then a glare on the windows told them that little boys were lighting passengers along; and occasional shouts of warning or distress, muffled, as if sent through wool, came to their ears. Suddenly Mrs. Woodly entered the room and said, "There's something to do up at the Felix. Some policemen with torches have gone there. I hear there was a terrible quarrel there last night, but that's no news." Her communication was cut short by the return of Dr. Franks, who said to Herbert, "He cannot hear it just now. He is miserably low to-day. They are best alone. I left it to her discretion; and such a woman, O my Rose! I think you will have indeed a blessing in such a mother."

"Did you know it, sir? How is it? I cannot bear this ignorance; it weighs me down until I cannot enjoy—as I should—the discovery, that I have hoped for ever since Berry described to me all the incidents of my being left at the Raven."

"My dear," replied Dr. Franks, "the chain of circumstances that led us to the knowledge we have is very simple. Berry always thought Twirk had robbed your uncle. Our encounter with Flammerton, and his remorse, led to his betraying what he had discovered of that robbery. To do him justice, he was ignorant of it at the time; at all events, beyond the merest suspicion. Some years afterwards, as the poor decoy had sunk deeper and deeper in degradation, a leather case came into his possession that contained certificates of marriage and baptism. He knew the parties. Of course he did you a great wrong."

And after a minute's musing Rose said, "And my name, then, is Wilson?"

"All that, my dear, will be explained; I need say no more just now on that head. Some family misunderstandings have estranged these Wilsons for years from their native land and kindred. The name Fernandez—that of your uncle, who died at the Raven—is not common. Herbert knew it as that of an aged relative of Mrs. Wilson's. Last night we were planning how to ascertain whether our suspicions were correct. It seemed impossible to introduce you, a stranger, to people who seldom saw even friends; and cruel to ask questions that might needlessly tear open an old wound. Herbert thought of the song you used to sing. It was always Berry's fancy that song might be the means of making you known to your kindred, and hence her care in transcribing it from your broken words, and arranging the tune from your wild notes. I obtained leave to visit our patient by having the door of communication opened on the landing-place—a favour for which I fancy I have chiefly to thank the fog. Indeed, as the door goes at once into their drawing-room, it is no wonder they usually close it. And now, my dear, there is certainly more to learn. Whether it will be fully communicated I know not. Enough you can no longer say you have neither name nor lineage. May these new-found relatives love you as I have done! I don't know that they can love you better."

"Better? No—never! Nor I them, dear sir—dear father! And yet to have a mother, oh! it is sweet."

"Inexpressibly so, my child."

Rose came nearer to Dr. Franks, while Herbert still retained her hand in his, and whispered very low—

"Tell me, sir, something about this new father."

"He is one who may hourly say, 'The Lord has chastened

me sore, but he has not given me over to death.' One who has died daily, as far as suffering goes, for many, many years. But all the causes that have brought him to this, I do not know. Though I can well understand that, sick in body and spirit, he has kept himself in rigid seclusion, soothed by a love that has been vivid as life, and stronger than death."

"Dear mother!" sighed Rose; "I will try to be to her what she has been to him."

Berry entered the room, and, gliding up to Rose, said, petulantly, "And I shall be forgotten. That's the natural course of things."

The only answer Rose gave was to press her red lips on the pale cheek and brow, as if she would blot out the thought with caresses.

Surely it mattered not how thick the fog was without, these people knew how to make their own sunshine.

Yet, amid the engrossing and tumultuous thoughts that, like a wild surge, rushed through all their minds, Miss Pendrainly was not forgotten. Herbert and Berry decided to go to her, as it was well that Rose should wait the summons that might come any minute from her mother. Dr. Franks, too, remained.

The day wore on. Rose tried to calm her agitation by walking up and down the room. To sit still was impossible. Even Dr. Franks, with all his self-discipline, could not steady his hand to write. His pen was discarded for a book; the book for a paper; and then he commenced a series of attacks on the fire. At length they heard the door open, and saw the dear, pale face that had so impressed them all, wet with streaming tears, as, without speaking, she signed them both to come with her. For a moment Rose hung back half in terror. Dr. Franks' sustaining arm stayed her trembling steps, as she

passed the threshold of the door, under the folds of a curtain, and found herself in a drawing-room dimly lighted, where, seated on an invalid chair, was a man bending eagerly forward, his thin hair of silver whiteness wet with the perspiration that bedewed his high, yet furrowed brow. The large blue eyes were full of melancholy sweetness, mingled with awe; the long hands, so wasted that they were almost transparent, were stretched out pleadingly. Rose involuntarily paused and gazed at him with a fixed look.

"Stay—stay," he said, in a low, faint whisper, yet perfectly distinct; "stay a moment; let me breathe awhile."

"Love, you promised to be calm," said the wife, bending over his chair.

"Oh! to see her in life once again. Bertha, I thought she would confront me before God. I dreaded those dear eyes. Come! 'tis the same sweet face—come." Rose could not stand, if she would. Dr. Franks half-carried her forward, and as she made an effort to kneel—

"No, no; not to me, child; I need to kneel to you."

The strong grasp of Dr. Franks held Rose up, as the thin arms were wound round her waist, and she felt a father's kiss on her brow—heard his blessing breathed out in feeble moans, and all fear seemed to melt away in a tide of pitying love.

Not another word was spoken. Mother and child sat at the invalid's feet, clasped his hands in theirs, and rested against the arms of his chair, as in a calm, like a blissful swoon, he gazed at them alternately. Large tears rolled slowly down his cheeks, and evidently relieved him, for his breathing lost its tension, and came softly as that of a child.

When, after a long silence, he had recovered his voice, he said, with perfect clearness, "Bertha, let us pray." It was a wise suggestion. Only the Almighty hand can still the

tremors, and touch with healing balm the stricken heart. It was happily no new thing for Dr. Franks to kneel in prayer with his dear ward. And he came from the window at which he had just been standing, and knelt at her side, as in all humility and faith the prayer ascended. The words were simple—the accents feeble; but all felt that it was prayer—the pleading and thanksgiving of a spirit that was able to say, "It was good for me to have been afflicted."

"What am I, O my Saviour! that Thou hast been thus mindful of me? I that rejected Thy gifts, and broke Thy law; and Thou hast brought me to Thyself, shown me Thy love, and given me back the sweet treasure I had thrown from me by my sins. Oh! help me henceforth, heavenly Father, to be a father to this child. Draw me by these dear human ties nearer to Thyself. Thou perfect life and love! shed abroad Thy Spirit in my poor trembling heart. Help me, help us all, to live in love—to live to thee."

And there was a great calm.

. . . . . .

The day had seemed very long, so many events had transpired, so much had been felt. But like many invalids of peculiarly sensitive temperament, a wonderful re-action took place in the evening. He completely, for the time being, mastered his agitation; light beamed in the full eyes, and a spot of brilliant colour glowed on the cheek, that half-concealed its thinness. Though his hair was white, he looked, when thus animated, but little past the early prime of manhood, scarcely yet middle-aged.

Dr. Franks, fearing that the excitement and fatigue, so wonderfully borne hitherto, would be too much, proposed retiring, and said, a little tremulously, "I must share with you this treasure. To give her up wholly to any one would be like tearing out my heart."

Then all perceived, as with an instantaneous flash, what, in the hurry and pardonable rush of overwrought personal feelings, they had not fully thought of—Dr. Franks' claim to his adopted daughter; and that if he had not spoken of himself before, it was not because he had not felt.

"The right is with you—her preserver—her friend! How much better than her father you shall hear this night before you leave."

"You are not equal to it," interposed the wife.

"I am. I will speak at once. Better say what I have to say at once, than that unspoken thoughts should seethe and surge in boiling eddies in my mind, torturing me to madness! I feel clear that I ought to tell Dr. Franks; that it will relieve me more than anything." Rose made a movement of retreat. He saw it, and added, "My child, remain. It is due to you—to my wife—that I tell you of the sins that have so heavily fallen on the innocent."

"It is not for me to hear such a record; I know a daughter's duty."

"Nay, suffer it, my child, for my sake. You owe me little—nothing; but yet I plead for this obedience."

Thus adjured, she sat down by the side of Dr. Franks listening sadly; while the invalid, propped up by another pillow, and with one hand resting in his wife's clasp, said—

"You have no doubt heard, Dr. Franks, that I was for years my uncle's heir. He it was who obtained first of all for me the legal right to the family name, though I ever grudged giving up that of my own father. It is not for me to extenuate my faults by accusing those who brought me up. Suffice it, indulgence and extravagance were the rule, discipline and self-control unknown. Sir, the sorrows of my life have taught me that discipline surely comes. Withhold it in cruel indulgence from the child, and the grown man

inflicts it on himself, or the hard world inflicts it on him. My life, at home, at school, was like a May game, in which I was always victor. Good health and strength, great talents also—men said—were mine. It cost me no effort to acquire—to display; if it had, I should not have made it. I loved applause—cared more for that tribute than for the worth of those who offered it.

"I determined not to be a mere country gentleman. I would be that, and something more; and was entered at one of the inns of court. So far well. But the gay, the idle, the profligate, and the parasite, were my companions. We differed, doubtless, in our vices and our follies. But amid all varieties of self-indulgence, there was one auxiliary to pleasure that was always employed, to give a zest to every mad debasing pursuit. I need hardly name it—wine! We were not drunkards; but we drank enough to lull reason, to feed the fires of base passions; enough to dwarf virtue and foster vice. Sir, the foundations of an edifice may be sapped long before the walls rush down in crumbling ruin. I was musical. Among my friends was one—a bold, careless, dreadnought fellow. The makings of a dozen brave men were in him had he known how to use his gifts—this Donald Fernandez, remotely of Spanish descent. A seafaring life was naturally his choice, and a nobler sailor never trod a deck. When yet very young he was a captain in the merchant service. He traded generally from the port of London; and, on his return from his voyages, nothing pleased us both better than a carouse, in which laughter and song were not enough for pleasure—wine came to madden the mirth and taint the gaiety. I learned from my friend that he had an old father, and aunt, and a young sister, who resided in Wales in great retirement. I had heard so much from Donald's lips about this sister that I resolved to make a tour for the purpose of seeing her.

Twenty years ago this autumn, my uncle, for the third time, had paid my debts. He wrote me then a letter that might have touched my better nature, but it was written so incoherently, blurred, and stained with blots, and wine, and ended with such coarse threats, that the only comment I made on its advice was the well-known adage, 'Satan correcting sin.' Presuming both on my uncle's indulgence and his intemperance, I slighted his letter. The common error, that a man could not be hard on faults that were only a modification of his own, was mine. I had yet to learn that none are so severe on others as those who are in fault themselves. I made my tour; introduced myself to the family of my friend, and found this dear, true-hearted——O my Bertha! it had been better you had died by any death than have met me."

"Pray, don't say that. I entreat you, do not. Pause awhile," exclaimed the anxious wife, pressing firmly the thin hand she held in hers.

"No, I will not pause; I need to tell the story of our love,—that is as old as Eden, as young as youth.

"I asked my Bertha from her father. He was sorrowing and rejoicing over his son; hope and fear banishing all salutary repose, and wearing the old man more than age. He saw me as I was, and hesitated to place his daughter in my arms. At this time tidings came of Donald being shipwrecked. Many of his crew and his fine vessel was lost. Donald and his father were part owners; all the old man's savings—and he was not rich—were thus lost; for there was such manifest fault or mismanagement that the insurance was not paid, and Donald did not dare to bring an action. He feared complete ruin, for he knew the ship was lost through intemperance.

"This blow was too much for the old man; he took to his

bed and died, without the medical men assigning any disease beyond general debility. Bertha was alone in the house when her father died. Her aunt had been summoned to a relative in a distant county, and was detained by attendance on a lingering death-bed. I took advantage of Bertha's loneliness and sorrow to wring from her a consent to a hasty marriage—a marriage that, like a coward, I kept secret.

"A lady near my western home had a right to think of me as her future husband. In the vanity of youth I had made overtures to her. My uncle paid my debts the last time, on the understanding that I should return and claim her as my bride. Little did my gentle Bertha know of the falsehood in my heart; yet one pure feeling lingered there still: it was my love for the wife I had won. Had I then bravely proclaimed my love, to my family—taken all consequences, and with youth, health, talent, and above all, good principles, faced and fought the world, I might have been a man this day, and not a miserable stray waif, left like drift upon the shores of time."

"My love!—pray ——"

"Hush, Bertha, I must speak. I went abroad for a time with my wife, and there my eldest child was born.

"Many months before then, my uncle, out of all patience, had commanded me, on peril of being disinherited, to fulfil my engagement to the heiress he had set his heart on seeing me married to. Perhaps prompt confession on my part might have prevented a complete rupture; as it was, delays and subterfuges, and all the crooked policy of lying cowardice inflamed to complete exasperation the never very patient temper of my uncle. After some delay we met. Neither of us were sober. Between the calmness of sobriety and the madness of inebriation there are many dangerous stages. Words, nay, blows passed between us; he left me

with hate in his eyes and curses on his lips; nor was I slow to return both. Then came gaunt ruin like a famished wolf. I drank to the dregs the bitter cup of mortification. The sneer of scorn—the withering, cold contempt of those who had called me friend, were more than I could bear. I had drank deeply in gaiety, now I drank in despair deeper still.

"I forbear to stir the ashes of that dreary past. What were my sufferings compared with Bertha's! She wanted me to let her try her talents as a singer. I forbade it, more from petulance and pride than tenderness. I was harsh, exacting, bitter—yes, Bertha, I was."

"Well, well, it's all over, dearest—all forgotten."

"At length, to escape arrest, and in the hope of getting time to make some appeal to my family about some property that was my mother's, I crossed again to the Continent, leaving my wife for a time in England. Alone in London, I can guess—from her I never heard—what she suffered. Our little girl had grown amid our poverty as freshly as a primrose on a bleak bank unfolds amid wintry winds. One infant boy had looked for a few weeks upon us, and then departed to better care; and when I left, a motive for not taking my wife with me was that another infant was expected. With my usual rashness, I thought my affairs would soon be settled, and I should have returned, ere another claimant on my care came. It was early summer when I left, and, with my habits, life among the profligate English in Boulogne was utter perdition—in the gulf of hell a lower gulf.

"Donald, who had been a long voyage, came home just before I left. I avoided him. He had not corresponded with us regularly. He did nothing regularly. Our ruined circumstances were not known to him. Bertha complained to no one. It seems he postponed the seeking us until he returned from a cruise of pleasure with a young

nobleman, who that summer launched a yacht and made a trip to Norway. When at length he came home, a letter of his aunt's, relating her fears about us, roused his latent affection; it blazed out all the more fiercely that it had been long stifled. He found Bertha. She has owned to me that he was like a madman in his rage when he saw the destitution she was reduced to. Yielding to her tears and entreaties, he did not reveal the secret of his sister's marriage, bitterly as that secrecy chafed him. A continuous, settled, deliberate mode of action is never that which a votary of wine adopts. He acts by fits and starts. So, if he purposed, he postponed his purpose. He became passionately fond of our little girl, and she returned his love with an infantine rapture of delight. It had been her mother's solace to teach her to sing; and the child had all sorts of droll sayings and pretty ways, that made her a doting-piece—a creature formed for love."

There was a moment's pause, in which Mrs. Wilson gave a restorative draught to the invalid, and he proceeded.

"They both, it seems, taught her songs they made for her. She was the poetry of their life. At this time, in a brawl—a miserable, drunken brawl—no other words describe it truly—I received a hurt. Blows had been exchanged; I had dragged my antagonist to an open window; our strife was deadly. Before the police could interpose, and all others stood aloof in panic-fear at the sight, we fell, rolling together in one grip of hate and rage, down from the casement. I was impaled on some iron spikes; my antagonist fell on the green sward, escaping with a fractured limb. Of the cause of this murderous quarrel, of its details, beyond the fact of the scuffle and the fall, I know nothing. We were both, for the time, maniacs, with this addition, we had made ourselves such. For days and weeks death

hovered near me; shook me to and fro over the dark gulf, but delayed to strike—forbore to hurl me down. My wife was summoned a few hours after the 'accident,' as it was called. She came, poor darling, came at once, leaving her child under her brother's care. He was either to wait her return, or to bring the child to us. I imagine that the expectation of hearing daily of my death kept him from coming. He was also busy making engagements to take the command of a new ship in the Baltic trade—the 'Ulrica;' and his habit of procrastination kept him from fulfilling his purpose—if, indeed, as we were afterwards told, it was his intention—of crossing the channel, and bringing the child to us before he sailed. He drank hard. Who am I that I should remember this against him? Poor Donald, my friend, my enemy!

"He was a thousand times better than I; he had, it seems, an honourable motive—a straightforward plan; but between the conception and the execution of his thought, his evil habits stepped in and marred all. He had heart disease, and also a morbid thirst—one of the commonest effects of excess. I am right, sir?"

"Undoubtedly, as in Porson's case, and that of multitudes," replied Dr. Franks.

"This became chronic with him; he bitterly felt the unacknowledged marriage and the ambiguous position of his sister. Whenever he was inebriated he always threatened to go and proclaim her rights to my family. While I remained a breathing, shattered mass, insensible to all, even pain, my wife, worn out with fear and grief, had a premature confinement. Her infant was dead; another death to swell the dark register against me."

"Blotted out!—blotted out, O my husband!"

"Ah! can that be? Donald had supplied my wife

with money when she fled to me. We afterwards learned he had received a sum amounting to some few hundreds. The last act of his that we could ever trace, was his sending the dear child's luggage and his own on board his ship. He left London to join her, taking the child with him. The equinoxial gales that year were very heavy; many fearful wrecks occurred along the English coast; and when, weeks afterwards, my poor wife recovered from the fever that followed her confinement, the contents of a letter from her aunt, Miss Fernandez, caused her a relapse. In it she learned that the 'Ulrica' had been lost, and every soul on board had perished. A box was afterwards washed ashore; it contained our little girl's wardrobe, and made the sad assurance of her fate sure beyond doubt. I woke, after my long insensibility, to conscious life and torment. Oh that awakening! I believe I was mad. What with agony of body and mind—the last the worst—I learned what lost spirits feel."

"No, dear; you still had hope and me."

"I had neither for a long time—how long I know not—for we have only that we realize. But enough; tossed on scalding waves of pain, how was it that I lived? Could it be called life when I only felt torture? Well might I say, in the pangs of my remorse, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?'"

The soothing voice of the faithful wife interposed—"The Deliverer came—the strong Deliverer, mighty to save—to save to the uttermost."

There was a reverential pause, in which a sense of calm, like a cool hand laid on a feverish brow, stole over them, and tears, free as rain, streamed from the eyes of the invalid.

At length, taking up the narrative, Mrs. Wilson said—"It was three years before we left Boulogne, before, indeed,

my husband could travel. Spinal injuries induced fits; and as the furnace of affliction did its purifying work, he thought too much of the past, too much of me. Many have sinned, few have repented as he did. The pride—he will pardon my calling it a foolish pride—that prevented his allowing me to employ the talents I had, gave way before stern necessity. I taught singing. For a time I did not let him know this, he grieved so about it."

"Was I, then, after blasting your life, to profit by your toil, and not to feel it?"

"And he was ingenious in self-reproach about our child. I know I may say it now, when this wonderful joy has come, not only to give brightness to the present and future, but to strike a ray through the dark past, my husband always thought himself to blame in leaving me and the child, and my brother to blame for the loss of the 'Ulrica.'"

"I thought myself to blame, certainly. Traced to its source, my intemperance was the cause of all the evil; *that* I must ever think. Even Donald, if I had been a real friend to him, might have been saved. He loved me, and I used my influence for evil, and I cannot think, I cannot look, and not know the truth. The conviction is as deeply traced on my mind as it is on my frame—as it is on your pale face. And that dear child!—come hither, my sweet darling; but for Dr. Franks, what a fate! worse, a thousand times worse, than the untimely death we mourned, might have befallen her. Oh! God is merciful; I have had no pain, no sorrow, compared with what might have been."

As his daughter was folded in his arms, Dr. Franks said, "Dear sir, say no more to-night; we are all too highly wrought. You at least must allow me to interpose my authority."

"I will submit, friend and brother—father of my father-

less one! but my heart would have burst if I had not relieved it by telling you—telling her, the past."

"Yes," said Mrs. Wilson; "and I must add a few incidents now, for we may not, nay, certainly shall not, often recur to these painful themes. My husband, as soon as he could use his hands, wrote to his uncle, stating his marriage and his troubles, and in four days received his letter back, torn in two, the seal unbroken, and on the outer envelope—I grieve to tell it—a written curse!"

"That harmed me less than it did him. I had cursed myself far too deeply to feel any curse from a poor sinful mortal like myself; but it decided me on never taking his name. I had gone by my own—my wife preferred it—and the name of Pendrainly never passed our lips."

"Pendrainly?" said Rose, starting.

"Yes, dear," said Dr. Franks; "your father is that nephew of whom you have so recently heard Miss Pendrainly speak."

"Then does he—does my father know?" she whispered, the name of Vesey hovering on her lips.

"Hush! not yet," replied Dr. Franks, in a voice as low as her own, adding aloud, "Pardon, we interrupt."

"My aunt, Miss Fernandez," resumed Mrs. Wilson, "transmitted to me from time to time, as it could be realized, some remnants of property I inherited from my mother. We wandered a little on the Continent, seeking such places of resort as were likely to afford me pupils. We never ceased to mourn our lost child; but we never questioned the correctness of the statement as to hers and my brother's fate; but in thinking over the incidents that you, Dr. Franks, have related, I clearly recognize my brother's plan. He took the certificates and the child—being probably heated by wine—and set off to fulfil his often-uttered threat, of making the proud Pendrainlys acknowledge his sister's marriage with their heir, and

showing them the child of that marriage, whom he was fond of saying, ‘ The highest noble in the land might be proud to own.’ All this was just like Donald, as was also his lingering by the way, and being boon companion wherever jovial song and brimming glass circulated. Poor Donald! And so he died in his bed, not fighting, as we thought, with winds and waves; and instead of a wandering ocean grave, he rests in a quiet churchyard. Poor Donald! I have often said his life was wild as a wave, and broken and wasted like its spray. But I must not linger. After years of wandering, and trying all sorts of baths in vain, we drifted homeward to the Isle of Wight. There I taught a lady, who begged me to place my husband under the care of Mr. M‘Blanque, a surgeon there. Some benefit from a new method of treatment was derived; and, in the island, contrary to my husband's fixed habits of seclusion, he made an acquaintance—my friend, Mr. Herbert Franks—who sometimes came down on brief visits to the Apsleys. By the advice of Mr. M‘Blanque and Herbert, my husband was induced to come to town to consult Dr. M‘Blanque, an elder brother of our Isle of Wight friend. I should say also that Boveycum was incidentally spoken of by Herbert. Without making himself known, my husband asked many particulars of the place and people. He resolved again on writing there. During an access of illness he thought he would return there to die. Many things appeared different to him now, and he yearned to be at peace with the old man who had reared him—with his only brother, of whom he seemed to know so little. Again and again he wrote, and grew feverish and restless at neither having his letters returned, nor any answer. We had, meanwhile, come here, and heard, casually, of the marriage of Mr. Pendrainly. To calm my husband I resolved—knowing nothing of the lady—to go down. I felt

emboldened to appeal to her to use her influence. My husband's description of his aunt had always repelled me. I went. I must have stayed at the very house in which my brother died. I had rather not enter into details as to my visit to Cumb'ry. The worst enemy of Mr. Pendrainly would pity his fate with that woman. She had destroyed the letters. The homely proverb, "Curses, like chickens, go home to roost," is true indeed there.

A moan from the invalid, whose hands fell listlessly down, warned them to part; and with embraces and promises of making some arrangements for the future, in which the parents and Dr. Franks should both share in Rose's daughterly attentions, they separated for the night.

CHAPTER XI.

CLEARING UP.

"Wild spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver, hear, oh, hear!
. . . . . .
Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind;
Be through my lips to unawakened earth
The trumpet of a prophecy. O wind!
If winter comes, can spring be far behind?"—SHELLEY.

IF Berry's pale face could look paler, it did so when, on Dr. Franks and Rose entering their own drawing-room, they found her there crouched down by the fire, holding her thin hands out to the blaze. Rose's luring arms and loving kiss ought to have warmed her; but she shivered as she said—

"God's judgments are abroad this fearful night. Have you heard, Dr. Franks?"

"Heard!" he replied. "So much, Berry, have I heard that I am more ready to say, God's mercies are abroad this night."

"Both, sir—both. His judgments are sure and righteous, and 'His mercy endureth for ever.' Herbert is at the Felix. The miserable people quarrelled, it seems, last night, and in a fit of rage Twirk rushed out of the house, and was followed by his wife. They were heard brawling near the banks of the Canal, by the Lock Bridge. They have not returned. People speak of screams and a scuffle dimly heard through the fog; but nothing yet is known, except that they are missing."

"But why is Herbert at the Felix?"

"At Miss Pendrainly's request, to speak to Jasper Stillwell, who, it seems, is there, about some papers belonging to her brother. A lawyer is with Miss Pendrainly, and it appears that title-deeds, and leases, and valuable papers, have been removed by Mr. Vesey Pendrainly from the care of the family lawyer. It is thought the Twirks and Stillwell can be indicted for a conspiracy." At this instant Herbert returned; and, in answer to their inquiries, said he had been waiting for Stillwell, who was out when he went there, and had not yet returned,—nor ever would return. "The wicked flee when no man pursues." When Herbert entered the front door of the Felix, as soon as his name was announced to Jasper, who, trembling at the mystery of the Twirks' disappearance, was lurking about in dread, suspecting foul play from his associates rather than any accident to them—no sooner did he hear Herbert's name than he retreated from the door in the rear of the premises, and, blessing the fog for its coat of darkness, contrived to pursue his way into the main avenues, stumbling at curb-stones, and thumping himself against posts now and then. Instead of going into town he

kept along the Harrow Road, in the western direction; and after groping about for three or four miles he found the fog less dense, and walked straight forward, until, to his right, he dimly saw the lights of the Harrow Station on the North-Western Line. Covered with mud, and shaken by not a few falls, he reached the platform, just in time to take his ticket and go by the night train to Liverpool.

The morning in London brought no alteration in the fog; it lasted, with little intermission, three days. On the third night a wind sprung up, the curtains of the mist furled their dark folds, and revealed what had been hidden. Floating on the canal, her clenched hand grasping a short lock of grizzled hair, her teeth, despite the fallen jaw, keeping hold of a remnant of neckcloth that she had torn by biting, lay, grim in death as in life, Mrs. Twirk. The solemn hand that gives repose to the harshest lineaments, had failed to smooth out that hard scowl, or unbend those firm-knit brows. Her frown was too strong—death left it.

Bent nearly double, hands and knees bruised and torn, telling of a long and desperate struggle, the drags brought up Twirk. Whether he and his wife stumbled accidentally into the water, or whether, as was supposed, he tried to hurl her in, and found her grip too strong to save himself, none could tell, and none cared. When honest labourers and innocent children's deaths were recorded, as among the fatal casualties of the Great Fog, there was no time or inclination for lamentations over these poor castaways; for of them we may reverse the pious saying, "Their death was the world's gain."

Very busy to the chief persons of our narrative were the days that followed that night of explanations. After Vesey's funeral, the investigation of his affairs showed them in hopeless confusion. One fact only was clear, that he had not

only ruined himself, but his aunt, by a fraudulent use of her name.

The disappearance of Stillwell suggested accident, suicide, everything but flight. And before the slightest clue to his whereabouts was discovered by the police, he was on his way to New Orleans, where, among rowdies, and bullies, and all the seething scum of a slave-holding population, he would doubtless find plenty to help him to kill both body and soul, with the least possible delay.

Another fugitive scented ruin on the wind, and took to flight, all the more readily that his wife had contrived to punish him so terribly by her airs and caprices that, during the few weeks she had called herself mistress of Cumb'ry, Jeff the gardener's life was unendurable. Like many others at that time, he had a poison-panic; and knowing how shamelessly unscrupulous his wife had been, he feared either for his own life, or the poor old squire's. His cowardice exaggerated the danger. Such clumsy wickedness was below the talents of a wife who, like the Twirks, understood how to make people destroy themselves. But, being a weak man, he decamped to Plymouth, with enough ready money of his wife's to pay his passage to Port Natal.

The old squire was too completely in his dotage to comprehend fully the deliverance that, it must be confessed, he did not deserve. He was unable to appear against the woman, for no coherent testimony could be got from him, so she ultimately escaped with a few weeks' imprisonment. Like a child released, he felt glad she was gone; and when his sister came back, a sadder and wiser woman than she had ever been, his salutation to her ignored a score of years; and his shattered mind, lingering on some past emotions that were not all "of the earth, earthy," prompted him to say, "Kizzy, where's Fred? I want Fred—send for him."

Whether he ever understood clearly that Vesey was dead, or, when his elder nephew was brought, recognized in the invalid the Frederick whom he called for, was very doubtful. There was no capacity left for repentance. It would be pleasant to write differently; but truth is stern. There is a way in which people may so kill the mind and weaken the soul that nothing can rouse them. No wholesome tempest breaks up the dead calm—no salutary pain wrings the torpid nerves. Of them the words, as awful as any in Scripture, may be spoken—"Ephraim is joined to his idols: let him alone."

. . . . . .

'Tis a summer day in Boveycum—a bright June day. The elm trees near the station are in full foliage, and the old sign that used to hang in the chequered shade cast by their branches is gone. The bird of ill omen has departed. A little jet of water sparkles up instead—a drinking fountain. And the house, too, is no more. A working-man's hall stands on the site. Enter: there's a reading-room—a town library—a lecture-room—a conversation-room—and a good bowling-green at the back; for Dr. Franks, who planned it, believes in balls and bats, as well as in books. Wisdom and mirth should dwell together. The clear head, the strong arm, the stout heart, the reverential soul, in his creed, make up "the fullness of the stature of a man in Christ Jesus." The bells are ringing a merry peal. The hall is open, and tables are being laid for a plentiful dinner. The town is keeping holiday.

There was a marriage at the old church this morning—Herbert Franks and Bertha Florence Pendrainly; no, we will still call her Rose, or Birdie. Very bird-like she looked in her dress of plain, clear muslin, and her filmy veil floating like white wings around her—very rose-like with her blushing face

and meekly bending head. Many eyes gazed on bride and bridegroom through joyful tears; many hearts were full of prayers for them. With blessings numerous, and kisses not a few, they are gone to look a little at the distant world together, or perhaps to realize, more fully than amid loving friends they could do, that they belong henceforth, all life's journey through, to one another, till, perfected in love, the Master comes, not to dissolve the union, but to complete it in Him for ever. And there is mirth and gladness among the wedding guests, high and low, unpolluted by the wine-cup: spontaneous joy that never seethed in a distiller's vat, or fermented in a beer barrel. The sober men of Boveycum were ready to laugh loud and long, when they thought so bad a tribute was paid to their wit or wisdom, their merriment and gaiety, as that it was made for them by any brewer or distiller.

"We've a golden brewery of our own," said big John Vosper, with a shout, as, filling a goblet at the fountain, he lifted the glass in the sunshine, and drank off the sparkling draught. Yes, truly, Boveycum folks had drawn up truth from the well, where the ancients were not so far wrong in believing she dwelt; and they, and their neighbours, and their town, were all the better for it.

We do not dismiss our friends to the enjoyment of wealth. Great losses had reduced the old property. The squire had, in obedience to domination, destroyed his will, but he had not been well enough to make another. So, in the due course of events his nephew would succeed him.

Berry, out of her small fortune, had bought the Raven, heavily mortgaged as it was by Vesey's fraud, and had it made into a place of sober resort. She had not entirely given it, until a moderate dividend could be paid on her outlay—well, she was content to wait.

Miss Keziah, who had spent much money in a law-suit, to set aside a deceased sister's will, who had left some money to build alms-houses, withdrew her claim, and allowed the houses, long unfinished, to be completed,—old Flammerton being the first poor old wreck that went into dock there. Any youth who wanted to see how a clever, jaunty decoy looks, after the wear and tear he has had in his master's service, could hardly behold any sight more impressive than this poor, battered, old hulk. He had been too tough to go to pieces on the rocks, as many better craft do; he hung together, creaking, a little while. So let us leave him.

Dr. Strong, in high dudgeon, and with tolerably well-filled pockets, left the town. He and his daughter set out, intending to join Owen on the Continent; but they found it pleasanter to keep a few score of miles between them and the drunkard and gambler whose kinship they grew ashamed of. Ultimately the doctor settled at a German Spa, whose waters were famous for the cure of those who certainly never tried drinking water, either for the prevention or cure of any disease, in their own country; but great expense, a long journey, and a nauseous, gaseous draught at the end of it, every one knows must be better than pure water (no stimulants) at home.

Dr. Franks, at the request of a deputation from the Town Council, suffered his windows to be re-placed, and much good-natured country wonderment there was, among a new generation—for the railway has brought plenty of new inhabitants to Boveycum—at the ignorance of that old time—not so long ago—when the wages men paid their benefactors were hisses and broken windows. The doctor has published his book, and got what he wanted more than fame or money, earnest readers: men who, after Lord Bacon's noble maxim, "read not to cavil and find fault; not to agree and take for

granted; but to weigh and consider." Berry has taken up her abode in his house. He knows her ways, and does not interfere when a fit of wandering takes her to the churchyard—though that now is seldom—or to the more dismal scene of the mad-house, where, made as comfortable as may be, grown burdensomely corpulent, sits a woman, who insists on having a gay cap, and wearing gloves; who, tapping on her snuff-box, simpers out, "The best house in the town, sir," and then breaks into feeble wailing, "Jasper, Jasper, you didn't mean to strike me, did you?"

There's a new house at the top of the town on the road to Cumb'ry; here Herbert and his bride are to settle down—he to practise his profession in conjunction with his father, no longer any reason to fear opposition or persecution.

"Why should Herbert practise?" says Miss Keziah, a little sentimentally, to Dr. Franks. "There's Cumb'ry must come to him. Neither my brother nor my nephew, poor fellow, can live long. Why practise?"

Dr. Franks did not tell her that some portion of the Cumb'ry property Herbert never would inherit; that he intended to devote fully as much as ever had been gained from the traffic, to improvements in the dwellings of the poor, and to the draining and reclaiming of some marsh land, the fever-trap of the district. With larger expectations, and from less questionable sources, Herbert was never likely to be rich in anything but good works. Dr. Franks contented himself with saying to Miss Pendrainly, "Herbert is fond of his profession, and not afraid of work; let him toil—It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth; it makes him more a man."

Miss Keziah did not exactly understand all this; but she was thoroughly satisfied of Herbert's goodness, and loved her pretty niece, Roselle, as heartily as she had ever loved

anything; and, under all the wrappings and frippery of her outer life, there did beat a heart not wholly incapable of love, as she proved by trotting about after her poor old brother—the feeling that she was of some use being so far salutary as a new sensation, that better days dawned upon her as the winter of her life was closing in.

In the rooms that he had occupied at Cumb'ry when a boy, looking out of the windows on a slope that led to the broad stream under the alders, on whose banks he had passed the happiest and most innocent of his early days, Frederick Wilson Pendrainly took up his abode. Never quite without pain, yet some days having great mitigations of his sufferings, and able to bless the stern discipline that had brought him to the feet of Jesus, his life wore on more usefully and more happily than that of many in the full tide of health and wealth. No one entered into the plans of Dr. Franks and Herbert with more zeal and intelligence than he did; and whenever a sinner, trembling on the verge of ruin, was found by the active emissaries of the temperance cause, if every other argument failed, they would bring him to the invalid; and none ever resisted his pleadings. He spoke as one who had just come out of the pool of Siloam, and felt the immediate healing in his soul. And his wife—she who had never once faltered in her love through all the flinty way that she had tracked with bleeding feet, who had seldom complained, self-renunciation in her was so complete: the hope sure and steadfast—the anchor within the veil—had held her fast to duty. She had long seen by faith the view beyond the dark river—the green pastures and the still waters; and when, in much mercy, flowers of loveliness, and serene skies, were permitted to her on this side that river, her joy was full. To have found her child—and such a child—more than compensated for all. In her gentle, pious way, she helped in every work that her

daughter and Berry promoted; and though she never left her invalid, who perceptibly grew weaker, yet there were pleasant gatherings in those rooms at Cumb'ry; and Berry's skilful hand upon the keys would set free the imprisoned soul of harmony; and the voices of mother and daughter would often blend in strains sweet and pure as love and faith. So, blest in each other, and spreading blessings around, let us leave our "Drift." Some indeed is real treasure-trove, some mere "waifs and strays;" but yet, O reader! pacing on the shores of the great ocean, these human "waifs and strays" are worth regarding.

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