

What Will He Do With It, Book 11.

Edward Bulwer-Lytton

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Title: What Will He Do With It, Book 11.

Author: Edward Bulwer-Lytton

Release Date: March 2005 [EBook #7669]
[Yes, we are more than one year ahead of schedule]
[This file was first posted on April 1, 2003]

Edition: 10

Language: English

Character set encoding: ASCII

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK WHAT WILL HE DO WITH IT, V11 ***

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BOOK XI.

CHAPTER I.

"THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE NEVER DOES RUN SMOOTH!" MAY IT NOT BE BECAUSE WHERE THERE ARE NO OBSTACLES, THERE ARE NO TESTS TO THE TRUTH OF LOVE? WHERE THE COURSE IS SMOOTH, THE STREAM IS CROWDED WITH PLEASURE-BOATS. WHERE THE WAVE SWELLS, AND THE SHOALS THREATEN, AND THE SKY LOWERS, THE PLEASURE-BOATS HAVE GONE BACK INTO HARBOUR. SHIPS FITTED FOR ROUGH WEATHER ARE THOSE BUILT AND STORED FOR LONG VOYAGE.

I pass over the joyous meeting between Waife and Sophy. I pass over George's account to his fair cousin of the scene he and Hartopp had witnessed, in which Waife's innocence had been manifested and his reasons for accepting the penalties of guilt had been explained. The first few agitated days following Waife's return have rolled away. He is resettled in the cottage from which he had fled; he refuses, as before, to take up his abode at Lady Montfort's house. But Sophy has been almost constantly his companion, and Lady Montfort herself has spent hours with him each day--sometimes in his rustic parlour, sometimes in the small garden-plot round his cottage, to which his rambles are confined. George has gone back to his home and duties at Humberston, promising very soon to revisit his old friend, and discuss future plans.

The scholar, though with a sharp pang, conceding to Waife that all attempt publicly to clear his good name at the cost of reversing the sacrifice he had made must be forborne, could not, however, be induced to pledge himself to unconditional silence. George felt that there were at least some others to whom the knowledge of Waife's innocence was imperatively due.

Waife is seated by his open window. It is noon; there is sunshine in the pale blue skies--an unusual softness in the wintry air. His Bible lies on the table beside him. He has just set his mark in the page, and reverently closed the book. He is alone. Lady Montfort--who, since her return from Fawley, has been suffering from a kind of hectic fever, accompanied by a languor that made even the walk to Waife's cottage a fatigue, which the sweetness of her kindly nature enabled her to overcome, and would not permit her to confess--has been so much worse that morning as to be unable to leave her room. Sophy has gone to see her. Waife is now leaning his face upon his hand, and that face is sadder and more disquieted than it had been, perhaps, in all his wanderings. His darling Sophy is evidently unhappy. Her sorrow had not been visible during the first two or three days of his return, chased away by the joy of seeing him--the excitement of tender reproach and question--of tears that seemed as joyous as the silvery laugh which responded to the gaiety that sported round the depth of feeling with which he himself beheld her once more clinging to his side, or seated, with upward loving eyes, on the footstool by his knees. Even at the first look, however, he had found her altered; her cheek was thinner, her colour pale. That might be from fretting for him. She would be herself again, now that her tender anxiety was relieved. But she did not become herself again. The arch and playful Sophy he had left was gone, as if never to return. He marked that her step, once so bounding, had

become slow and spiritless. Often when she sat near him, seemingly reading or at her work, he noticed that her eyes were not on the page--that the work stopped abruptly in listless hands; and then he would hear her sigh--a heavy but short impatient sigh! No mistaking that sigh by those who have studied grief; whether in maid or man, in young or old, in the gentle Sophy, so new to life, or in the haughty Darrell, weary of the world, and shrinking from its honours, that sigh had the same character, a like symptom of a malady in common; the same effort to free the heart from an oppressive load; the same token of a sharp and rankling remembrance lodged deep in that finest nerve-work of being, which no anodyne can reach--a pain that comes without apparent cause, and is sought to be expelled without conscious effort.

The old man feared at first that she might, by some means or other, in his absence, have become apprised of the brand on his own name, the verdict that had blackened his repute, the sentence that had hurled him from his native sphere; or that, as her reason had insensibly matured, she herself, reflecting on all the mystery that surrounded him--his incognitos, his hidings, the incongruity between his social grade and his education or bearing, and his repeated acknowledgments that there were charges against him which compelled him to concealment, and from which he could not be cleared on earth; that she, reflecting on all these evidences to his disfavour, had either secretly admitted into her breast a conviction of his guilt, or that, as she grew up to woman, she had felt, through him, the disgrace entailed upon herself. Or if such were not the cause of her sadness, had she learned more of her father's evil courses; had an emissary of Jasper's worked upon her sensibilities or her fears? No, that could not be the case, since whatever the grounds upon which Jasper had conjectured that Sophy was with Lady Montfort, the accuracy of his conjectures had evidently been doubted by Jasper himself; or why so earnestly have questioned Waife? Had she learned that she was the grandchild and natural heiress of a man wealthy and renowned--a chief amongst the chiefs of England--who rejected her with disdain? Was she pining for her true position? or mortified by the contempt of a kinsman, whose rank so contrasted the vagrancy of the grandsire by whom alone she was acknowledged?

Tormented by these doubts, he was unable to solve them by such guarded and delicate questions as he addressed to Sophy herself. For she, when he falteringly asked what ailed his darling, would start, brighten up for the moment, answer, "Nothing, now that he had come back"; kiss his forehead, play with Sir Isaac, and then manage furtively to glide away.

But the day before that in which we now see him alone, he had asked her abruptly, "If, during his absence, any one besides George Morley had visited at Lady Montfort's--any one whom she had seen?" And Sophy's cheek had as suddenly become crimson, then deadly pale; and first she said "no," and then "yes"; and after a pause, looking away from him, she added: "The young gentleman who--who helped us to buy Sir Isaac, he has visited Lady Montfort--related to some dear friend of hers."

"What, the painter!"

"No--the other, with the dark eyes."

"Haughton!" said Waife, with an expression of great pain in his face.

"Yes--Mr. Haughton; but he has not been here a long, long time. He will not come again, I believe."

Her voice quivered, despite herself, at the last words, and she began to bustle about the room--filled Waife's pipe, thrust it into his hands with a laugh, the false mirth of which went to his very heart, and then stepped from the open window into the little garden, and began to sing one of Waife's favourite simple old Border songs; but before she got through the first line, the song ceased, and she was as lost to sight as a ringdove, whose note comes and goes so quickly amongst the impenetrable coverts.

But Waife had heard enough to justify profound alarm for Sophy's peace of mind, and to waken in his own heart some of its most painful associations. The reader, who knows the wrong inflicted on William Losely by Lionel Haughton's father--a wrong which led to all poor Willy's subsequent misfortunes--may conceive that the very name of Haughton was wounding to his ear; and when, in his brief, sole, and bitter interview with Darrell, the latter had dropped out that Lionel Haughton, however distant of kin, would be a more grateful heir than the grandchild of a convicted felon--if Willy's sweet nature could have admitted a momentary hate, it would have been for the thus vaunted son of the man who had stripped him of the modest all which would perhaps have saved his own child from the robber's guilt, and himself from the robber's doom. Long since, therefore, the reader will have comprehended why, when Waife came to meet Sophy at the riverside, and learned at the inn on its margin that the name of her younger companion was Lionel Haughton--why, I say, he had so morosely parted from the boy, and so imperiously bade Sophy dismiss all thought of meeting "the pretty young gentleman" again.

And now again this very Lionel Haughton to have stolen into the retreat in which poor Waife had deemed he left his treasure so secure! Was it for this he had fled from her? Did he return to find her youth blighted, her affections robbed from him, by the son of Charles Haughton? The father had despoiled his manhood of independence; must it be the son who despoiled his age of its only solace? Grant even that Lionel was worthy of Sophy--grant that she had been loyally wooed--must not that attachment be fruitless--be fatal? If Lionel were really now adopted by Darrell, Waife knew human nature too well to believe that Darrell would complacently hear Lionel ask a wife in her whose claim to his lineage had so galled and incensed him. It was while plunged in these torturing reflections that Lady Montfort (not many minutes after Sophy's song had ceased and her form vanished) had come to visit him, and he at once accosted her with agitated inquiries: "When had Mr. Haughton first presented himself?--how often had he seen Sophy?--what had passed between them?--did not Lady Montfort see that his darling's heart was breaking?"

But he stopped as suddenly as he had rushed into his thorny maze of questions; for, looking imploringly into Caroline Montfort's face, he saw there more settled signs of a breaking heart than Sophy had yet betrayed, despite her paleness and her sighs. Sad, indeed, the change in her countenance since he had left the place months ago, though Waife, absorbed in Sophy, had not much remarked it till now, when seeking to read therein secrets that concerned his darling's welfare. Lady Montfort's beauty was so perfect in that rare harmony of feature which poets, before Byron, have compared to music, that sorrow could no more mar the effect of that beauty on the eye, than pathos can mar the effect of the music that admits it on the ear. But the change in her face seemed that of a sorrow which has lost all earthly hope. Waife, therefore, checked questions that took the tone of reproaches, and involuntarily murmured "Pardon."

Then Caroline Montfort told him all the tender projects she had conceived for his grandchild's happiness--how, finding Lionel so disinterested and noble, she had imagined she saw in him the providential agent to place Sophy in the position to which Waife had desired to raise her; Lionel, to share with her the heritage of which he might otherwise despoil her--both to become the united source of joy and of pride to the childless man who now favoured the one to exclude the other. Nor in these schemes had the absent wanderer been forgotten. No; could Sophy's virtues once be recognised by Darrell, and her alleged birth acknowledged by him--could the guardian, who, in fostering those virtues to bloom by Darrell's hearth, had laid under the deepest obligations one who, if unforgiving to treachery, was grateful for the humblest service--could that guardian justify the belief in his innocence which George Morley had ever entertained, and, as it now proved, with reason--then where on all earth a man like Guy Darrell to vindicate William Losely's attained honour, or from whom William Losely might accept cherishing friendship and independent ease, with so indisputable a right to both! Such had been the picture that the fond and sanguine imagination of Caroline Montfort had drawn from generous hope, and coloured with tender fancies. But alas for such castles in the air! All had failed. She had only herself to blame. Instead of securing Sophy's welfare, she had endangered Sophy's happiness. They whom she had desired to unite were irrevocably separated. Bitterly she accused herself--her error in relying so much on Lionel's influence with Darrell--on her own early remembrance of Darrell's affectionate nature and singular sympathies with the young--and thus suffering Lionel and Sophy to grow familiar with each other's winning characters, and carry on childlike romance into maturer sentiment. She spoke, though briefly, of her visit to Darrell, and its ill success--of the few letters that had passed since then between herself and Lionel, in which it was settled that he should seek no parting interview with Sophy. He had declared to Sophy no formal suit--they had exchanged no lovers' vows. It would be, therefore, but a dishonourable cruelty to her to say, "I come to tell you that I love you, and that we must part for ever." And how avow the reason--that reason that would humble her to the dust? Lionel was forbidden to wed with one whom Jasper Losely called daughter, and whom the guardian she so venerated believed to be his grandchild. All of comfort that Lady Montfort could suggest was, that Sophy was so young that she would conquer what might be but a girl's romantic sentiment--or, if a more serious attachment, one that no troth had cemented--for a person she might not see again for years; Lionel was negotiating exchange into a regiment on active service. "Meanwhile," said Lady Montfort, "I shall never wed again. I shall make it known that I look on your Sophy as the child of my adoption. If I do not live to save sufficient for her out of an income that is more than thrice what I require, I have instructed my lawyers to insure my life for her provision; it will be ample. Many a wooer, captivating as Lionel, and free from the scruples that fetter his choice, will be proud to kneel at the feet of one so lovely. This rank of mine, which has never yet bestowed on me a joy, now becomes of value, since it will give dignity to--to Matilda's child, and--and to--" Lady Montfort sobbed.

Waife listened respectfully, and for the time was comforted. Certainly, in his own heart he was glad that Lionel Haughton was permanently separated from Sophy. There was scarcely a man on earth, of fair station and repute, to whom he would have surrendered Sophy with so keen a pang as to Charles Haughton's son.

The poor young lovers! all the stars seemed against them! Was it not enough that Guy Darrell should be so obdurate! must the mild William Losely be also a malefic in their horoscope?

But when, that same evening, the old man more observantly than ever watched his grandchild, his comfort vanished--misgivings came over him--he felt assured that the fatal shaft had been broken in the wound, and that the heart was bleeding inly.

True; not without prophetic insight had Arabella Crane said to the pining, but resolute, quiet child, behind the scenes of Mr. Ruggie's show, "How much you will love one day." All that night Waife lay awake pondering--revolving--exhausting that wondrous fertility of resource which teemed in his inventive brain. In vain!

And now--(the day after this conversation with Lady Montfort, whose illness grieves, but does not surprise him)--now, as he sits and thinks, and gazes abstractedly into that far, pale, winter sky--now, the old man is still scheming how to reconcile a human loving heart to the eternal loss of that affection which has so many perishable counterfeits, but which, when true in all its elements--complete in all its varied wealth of feeling, is never to be forgotten and never to be replaced.

CHAPTER II.

AN OFFERING TO THE MANES.

Three sides of Waife's cottage were within Lady Montfort's grounds; the fourth side, with its more public, entrance, bordered the lane. Now, as he thus sate, he was startled by a low timid ring at the door which opened on the lane. Who could it be?--not Jasper! He began to tremble. The ring was repeated. One woman-servant composed all his establishment. He heard her opening the door--heard a low voice; it seemed a soft, fresh, young voice. His room-door opened, and the woman, who of course knew the visitor by sight and name, having often remarked him on the grounds with Lady Montfort and Sophy, said, in a cheerful tone, as if bringing good news, "Mr. Lionel Haughton."

Scarcely was the door closed--scarcely the young man in the room, before, with all his delightful, passionate frankness, Lionel had clasped Waife's reluctant hand in both his own, and, with tears in his eyes, and choking in his voice, was pouring forth sentences so loosely knit together that they seemed almost incoherent; now a burst of congratulation--now a falter of condolence--now words that seemed to supplicate as for pardon to an offence of his own--rapid transitions from enthusiasm to pity, from joy to grief--variable, with the stormy April of a young, fresh, hearty nature.

Taken so wholly by surprise, Waife, in vain attempting to appear cold and distant, and only very vaguely comprehending what the unwelcome visitor so confusedly expressed, at last found voice to interrupt the jet and gush of Lionel's impetuous emotion, and said as drily as he could: "I am really at a loss to conceive the cause of what appears to be meant as congratulations to me and reproaches to yourself, Mr.--, Mr. Haugh--;" his lips could not complete the distasteful name.

"My name shocks you--no wonder," said Lionel, deeply mortified, and bowing down his head as he gently dropped the old man's hand.
"Reproaches to myself!--Ah, sir, I am here as Charles Haughton's son!"

"What!" exclaimed Waife, "you know? How could you know that Charles Haughton--"

LIONEL (interrupting).--" I know. His own lips confessed his shame to have so injured you."

WIFE.--"Confessed to whom?"

LIONEL.--"To Alban Morley. Relieve me, my father's remorse was bitter; it dies not in his grave, it lives in me. I have so longed to meet with William Losely."

Waife seated himself in silence, shading his face with one hand while with the other he made a slight gesture, as if to discourage or rebuke farther allusion to ancient wrong. Lionel, in quick accents, but more connected meaning, went on--

"I have just come from Mr. Darrell, where I and Colonel Morley (here Lionel's countenance was darkly troubled) have been staying some days. Two days ago I received this letter from George Morley, forwarded to me from London. It says--let me read it: 'You will rejoice to learn that our dear Waife'--pardon that name."

"I have no other--go on."

"'Is once more with his grandchild.'" (Here Lionel sighed heavily--sigh like Sophy's.) "'You will rejoice yet more to learn that it has pleased Heaven to allow me and another witness, who, some years ago, had been misled into condemning Waife, to be enabled to bear incontrovertible testimony to the complete innocence of my beloved friend; nay, more-- I say to you most solemnly, that in all which appeared to attest guilt, there has been a virtue, which, if known to Mr. Darrell, would make him bow in reverence to that old man. Tell Mr. Darrell so from me; and add, that in saying it, I express my conviction of his own admiring sympathy --for all that is noble and heroic.'"

"Too much--this is too, too much," stammered out Waife, restlessly turning away; "but--but, you are folding up the letter. That is all?--he does not say more? he does not mention any one else?--eh?--eh?"

"No, sir; that is all."

"Thank Heaven! He is an honourable man! Yet he has said more than he ought--much more than he can prove, or than I--" he broke off, and abruptly asked--"How did Mr. Darrell take these assertions? With an incredulous laugh--eh?--" "Why, the old rogue had pleaded guilty!"

"Sir, Alban Morley was there to speak of the William Losely whom he had known; to explain, from facts which he had collected at the time, of what nature was the evidence not brought forward. The motive that induced you to plead guilty I had long guessed; it flashed in an instant on Guy Darrell; it was not mere guess with him! You ask me what he said? This: 'Grand nature! George is right! and I do bow my head in reverence!'"

"He said that?--Guy Darrell? On your honour, he said that?"

"Can you doubt it? Is he not a gentleman?" Waife was fairly overcome.

"But, sir," resumed Lionel, "I must not conceal from you, that though George's letter and Alban Morley's communications sufficed to satisfy Darrell, without further question, your old friend was naturally anxious to learn a more full account, in the hope of legally substantiating your innocence. He therefore despatched by the telegraph a request to his nephew to come at once to Fawley. George arrived there yesterday. Do not blame him, sir, that we share his secret."

"You do? Good heavens! And that lawyer will be barbarous enough to--but no--he has an interest in not accusing of midnight robbery his daughter's husband; Jasper's secret is safe with him. And Colonel Morley--surely his cruel nephew will not suffer him to make me--me, with one foot in the grave--a witness against my Lizzy's son!"

"Colonel Morley, at Darrell's suggestion, came with me to London; and if he does not accompany me to you, it is because he is even now busied in finding out your son, not to undo, but to complete the purpose of your self-sacrifice. 'All other considerations,' said Guy Darrell, 'must be merged in this one thought--that such a father shall not have been in vain a martyr.' Colonel Morley is empowered to treat with your son on any terms; but on this condition, that the rest of his life shall inflict no farther pain, no farther fear on you. This is the sole use to which, without your consent, we have presumed to put the secret we have learned. Do you pardon George now?"

Waife's lips murmured inaudibly, but his face grew very bright; and as it was raised upwards, Lionel's ear caught the whisper of a name--it was not Jasper, it was "Lizzy."

"Ah! why," said Lionel, sadly, and after a short pause, "why was I not permitted to be the one to attest your innocence--to clear your name? I, who owed to you so vast an hereditary debt! And now--dear, dear Mr. Losely--"

"Hush! Waife!--call me Waife still!--and always."

"Willingly! It is the name by which I have accustomed myself to love you. Now, listen to me. I am dishonoured until at least the mere pecuniary debt, due to you from my father, is paid. Hist! Hist!--Alban Morley says so--Darrell says so. Darrell says, 'he cannot own me as kinsman till that debt is cancelled.' Darrell lends me the means to do it; he would share his kinsman's ignominy if he did not. Before I could venture even to come hither, the sum due to you from my father was repaid. I hastened to town yesterday evening--saw Mr. Darrell's lawyer. I have taken a great liberty--I have invested this sum already in the purchase of an annuity for you. Mr. Darrell's lawyer had a client who was in immediate want of the sum due to you; and, not wishing permanently to burthen his estate by mortgage, would give a larger interest by way of annuity than the public offices would; excellent landed security. The lawyer said it would be a pity to let the opportunity slip, so I ventured to act for you. It was all settled this morning. The particulars are on this paper, which I will leave with you. Of course the sum due to you is not exactly the same as that which my father borrowed before I was born. There is the interest--compound interest; nothing more. I don't understand such matters; Darrell's lawyer made the calculation--it must be right."

Waife had taken the paper, glanced at its contents, dropped it in confusion, amaze. Those hundreds lent, swelled into all those thousands returned! And all methodically computed--tersely--arithmetically--down to fractions. So that every farthing seemed, and indeed was, his lawful due. And that sum invested in an annuity of L500 a year--income which, to poor Gentleman Waife, seemed a prince's revenue!

"It is quite a business-like computation, I tell you, sir; all done by a lawyer. It is indeed," cried Lionel, dismayed at Waife's look and gesture. "Compound interest will run up to what seems a large amount at first; every child knows that. You can't deny Cocker and calculating tables, and that sort of thing. William Losely, you cannot leave an eternal load of disgrace on the head of Charles Haughton's son."

"Poor Charlie Haughton," murmured Waife. "And I was feeling bitter against his memory--bitter against his son. How Heaven loves to teach us the injustice that dwells in anger! But--but--this cannot be. I thank Mr. Darrell humbly--I cannot take his money."

"It is not his money--it is mine; he only advances it to me. It costs him really nothing, for he deducts the L500 a year from the allowance he makes me. And I don't want such an absurd allowance as I had before going out of the Guards into the line--I mean to be a soldier in good earnest. Too much pocket-money spoils a soldier--only gets one into scrapes. Alban Morley says the same. Darrell, too, says, 'Right; no gold could buy a luxury--like the payment of a father's debt!' You cannot grudge me that luxury--you dare not--why? because you are an honest Man."

"Softly, softly, softly," said Waife. "Let me look at you. Don't talk of money now--don't let us think of money! What a look of your father! 'Tis he, 'tis he whom I see before me. Charlie's sweet bright playful eyes--that might have turned aside from the path of duty--a sheriff's officer! Ah! and Charlie's happy laugh, too, at the slightest joke! But THIS is not Charlie's--it is all your own (touching, with gentle finger, Lionel's broad truthful brow). Poor Charlie, he was grieved--you are right--I remember."

"Sir," said Lionel, who was now on one knee by Waife's chair--"sir, I have never yet asked man for his blessing--not even Guy Darrell. Will you put your hand on my head? and oh! that in the mystic world beyond us, some angel may tell Charles Haughton that William Losely has blessed his son!"

Solemnly, but with profound humility--one hand on the Bible beside him, one on the young soldier's bended head--William Losely blessed Charles Haughton's son--and; having done so, involuntarily his arms opened, and blessing was followed by embrace.

CHAPTER III.

NOTHING SO OBSTINATE AS A YOUNG MAN'S HOPE; NOTHING SO ELOQUENT AS A LOVER'S TONGUE.

Hitherto there had been no reference to Sophy. Not Sophy's lover, but

Charles Haughton's son had knelt to Waife and received the old man's blessing. But Waife could not be long forgetful of his darling--nor his anxiety on her account. The expression in his varying face changed suddenly. Not half an hour before, Lionel Haughton was the last man in the world to whom willingly he would have consigned his grandchild. Now, of all men in the world Lionel Haughton would have been his choice. He sighed heavily; he comprehended, by his own changed feelings, how tender and profound an affection Lionel Haughton might inspire in a heart so fresh as Sophy's, and so tenacious of the impressions it received. But they were separated forever; she ought not even again to see him. Uneasily Waife glanced towards the open window--rose involuntarily, closed it, and drew down the blind.

"You must go now, young gentleman," said he, almost churlishly.

The quick lover's sense in Lionel divined why the blind Avas drawn, and the dismissal so abruptly given.

"Give me your address," said Waife; "I will write about--that paper. Don't now stay longer--pray--pray."

"Do not fear, sir. I am not lingering here with the wish to see--her!"

Waife looked down.

"Before I asked the servant to announce me I took the precaution to learn that you were alone. But a few words more--hear them patiently. Have you any proof that should satisfy Mr. Darrell's reason that your Sophy is his daughter's child?"

"I have Jasper's assurance that she is; and the copy of the nurse's attestation to the same effect. They satisfied me. I would not have asked Mr. Darrell to be as easily contented; I could but have asked him to inquire, and satisfy himself. But he would not even hear me."

"He will hear you now, and with respect."

"He will!" cried Waife, joyously. "And if he should inquire and if Sophy should prove to be, as I have ever believed, his daughter's child, would he not own, and receive, and cherish her?"

"Alas, sir, do not let me pain you; but that is not my hope. If, indeed, it should prove that your son deceived you--that Sophy is no way related to him--if she should be the child of peasants, but of honest peasants--why, sir, that is my hope, my last hope--for then I would kneel once more at your feet, and implore your permission to win her affection and ask her hand."

"What! Mr. Darrell would consent to your union with the child of peasants, and not with his own grandchild?"

"Sir, sir, you rack me to the heart; but if you knew all, you would not wonder to hear me say, 'I dare not ask Mr. Darrell to bless my union with the daughter of Jasper Losely.'"

Waife suppressed a groan, and began to pace the room with disordered steps,

"But," resumed Lionel, "go to Fawley yourself. Seek Darrell; compare the

reasons for your belief with his for rejecting it. At this moment his pride is more subdued than I have ever known it. He will go calmly into the investigation of facts; the truth will become clear. Sir--dear, dear sir--I am not without a hope."

"A hope that the child I have so cherished should be nothing in the world to me!"

"--Nothing to you! Is memory such a shadow?--is affection such a weathercock? Has the love between you and Sophy been only the instinct of kindred blood? Has it not been hallowed by all that makes Age and Childhood so pure a blessing to each other, rooted in trials borne together? Were you not the first who taught her in wanderings, in privations, to see a Mother in Nature, and pray to a Father which is in Heaven? Would all this be blotted out of your soul, if she were not the child of that son whom it chills you to remember? Sir, if there be no tie to replace the mere bond of kindred, why have you taken such vigilant pains to separate a child from him whom you believe to be her father?"

Waife stood motionless and voiceless. This passionate appeal struck him forcibly.

"And, sir," added Lionel, in a lower, sadder tone--"can I ask you, whose later life has been one sublime self-sacrifice, whether you would rather that you might call Sophy grandchild, and know her wretched, than know her but as the infant angel whom Heaven sent to your side when bereaved and desolate, and know also that she was happy? Oh, William Losely, pray with me that Sophy may not be your grandchild. Her home will not be less your home--her attachment will not less replace to you your lost son--and on your knee her children may learn to lisp the same prayers that you taught to her. Go to Darrell--go--go! and take me with you!"

"I will--I will," exclaimed Waife; and snatching at his hat and staff: "Come--come! But Sophy should not learn that you have been here--that I have gone away with you; it might set her thinking, dreaming, hoping--all to end in greater sorrow." He bustled out of the room to caution the old woman, and to write a few hasty lines to Sophy herself--assuring her, on his most solemn honour, that he was not now flying from her to resume his vagrant life--that, without fail, please Heaven, he would return that night or the next day.

In a few minutes he reopened the room-door, beckoning silently to Lionel, and then stole into the quiet lane with quick steps.

CHAPTER IV.

GUY DARRELL'S VIEWS IN THE INVITATION TO WAIFE.

Lionel had but inadequately represented, for he could but imperfectly comprehend, the profound impression made upon Guy Darrell by George Morley's disclosures. Himself so capable of self-sacrifice, Darrell was the man above all others to regard with an admiring reverence, which partook of awe, a self-immolation that seemed almost above humanity--to him who set so lofty an estimate on good name and fair repute. He had not only willingly permitted, but even urged Lionel to repair to Waife and persuade the old man to come to Fawley. With Waife he was prepared

to enter into the full discussion of Sophy's alleged parentage. But apart even from considerations that touched a cause of perplexity which disquieted himself, Darrell was eager to see and to show homage to the sufferer, in whom he recognised a hero's dignity. And if he had sent by Lionel no letter from himself to Waife, it was only because, in the exquisite delicacy of feeling that belonged to him, when his best emotions were aroused, he felt it just that the whole merit and the whole delight of reparation to the wrongs of William Losely should, without direct interposition of his own, be left exclusively to Charles Haughton's son. Thus far it will be acknowledged that Guy Darrell was not one of those men who, once warmed to magnanimous impulse, are cooled by a thrifty prudence when action grows out of the impulses. Guy Darrell could not be generous by drachin and scruple. Not apt to say, "I apologise,"--slow to say, "I repent"; very--very--very slow indeed to say, "I forgive"; yet let him once say, "I repent," "I apologise," or "I forgive," and it was said with his whole heart and soul.

But it must not be supposed that, in authorising Lionel to undertake the embassy to Waife, or in the anticipation of what might pass between Waife and himself should the former consent to revisit the old house from which he had been so scornfully driven, Darrell had altered, or dreamed of altering, one iota of his resolves against a Union between Lionel and Sophy. True, Lionel had induced him to say--

"Could it be indisputably proved that no drop of Jasper Losely's blood were in this girl's veins--that she were the lawful child of honest parents, however humble--my right to stand between her and yourself would cease." But a lawyer's experience is less credulous than a lover's hope. And to Darrell's judgment it was wholly improbable that any honest parents, however humble, should have yielded their child to a knave like Jasper, while it was so probable that his own persuasion was well founded, and that she was Jasper's daughter, though not Matilda's.

The winter evening had closed, George and Darrell were conversing in the library; the theme, of course, was Waife; and Darrell listened with vivid interest to George's graphic accounts of the old man's gentle playful humour--with its vague desultory undercurrents of poetic fancy or subtle wisdom. But when George turned to speak of Sophy's endearing, lovely nature, and, though cautiously, to intimate an appeal on her behalf to Darrell's sense of duty, or susceptibility to kindly emotions, the proud man's brow became knit, and his stately air evinced displeasure. Fortunately, just at a moment when further words might have led to a permanent coldness between men so disposed to esteem each other, they heard the sound of wheels on the frosty ground--the shrill bell at the porch-door.

CHAPTER V.

THE VAGABOND RECEIVED IN THE MANOR-HOUSE AT FAWLEY.

Very lamely, very feebly, declining Lionel's arm, and leaning heavily on his crutch-stick, Waife crossed the threshold of the Manor-house. George sprang forward to welcome him. The old man looked on the preacher's face with a kind of wandering uncertainty in his eye, and George saw that his cheek was very much flushed. He limped on through the hall, still leaning on his staff, George and Lionel at either side. A pace or two,

and there stood Darrell! Did he, the host, not spring forward to offer an arm, to extend a hand? No; such greeting in Darrell would have been but vulgar courtesy. As the old man's eye rested on him, the superb gentleman bowed low--bowed as we bow to kings!

They entered the library. Darrell made a sign to George and Lionel. They understood the sign, and left visitor and host alone.

Lionel drew George into the quaint old dining-hall. "I am very uneasy about our dear friend," he said, in agitated accents. "I fear that I have had too little consideration for his years and his sensitive nature, and that, what with the excitement of the conversation that passed between us and the fatigue of the journey, his nerves have broken down. We were not half-way on the road, and as we had the railway-carriage to ourselves, I was talking to him with imprudent earnestness, when he began to tremble all over, and went into an hysterical paroxysm of mingled tears and laughter. I wished to stop at the next station, but he was not long recovering, and insisted on coming on. Still, as we approached Fawley, after muttering to himself, as far as I could catch his words, incoherently, he sank into a heavy state of lethargy or stupor, resting his head on my shoulder. It was with difficulty I roused him when he entered the park."

"Poor old man," said George feelingly; "no doubt the quick succession of emotions through which he has lately passed has overcome him for the time. But the worst is now passed. His interview with Darrell must cheer his heart and soothe his spirits; and that interview over, we must give him all repose and nursing. But tell me what passed between you--if he was very indignant that I could not suffer men like you and my uncle Alban and Guy Darrell to believe him a picklock and a thief."

Lionel began his narrative, but had not proceeded far in it before Darrell's voice was heard shouting loud, and the library bell rang violently.

They hurried into the library, and Lionel's fears were verified. Waife was in strong convulsions; and as these gradually ceased, and he rested without struggle, half on the floor, half in Darrell's arms, he was evidently unconscious of all around him. His eye was open, but fixed in a glassy stare. The servants thronged into the room; one was despatched instantly to summon the nearest medical practitioner. "Help me--George--Lionel," said Darrell, "to bear him up-stairs. Mills, light us." When they reached the landing-place, Mills asked, "Which room, sir?" Darrell hesitated an instant, then his grey eye lit into its dark fire. "My father's room--he shall rest on my father's bed."

When the surgeon arrived, he declared Waife to be in imminent danger--pressure on the brain. He prescribed prompt and vigorous remedies, which had indeed before the surgeon's arrival suggested themselves to, and been partly commenced by, Darrell, who had gone through too many varieties of experience to be unversed in the rudiments of leechcraft. "If I were in my guest's state," asked Darrell of the practitioner, "what would you do?"

"Telegraph instantly for Dr. F-----."

"Lionel--you hear? Take my own horse--he will carry you like the wind. Off to -----; it is the nearest telegraph station."

Darrell did not stir from Waife's bedside all that anxious night. Dr. F----- arrived at morning. He approved of all that had been done, but nevertheless altered the treatment; and after staying some hours, said to Darrell: "I am compelled to leave you for the present, nor could I be of use in staying. I have given all the aid in my power to Nature--we must leave the rest to Nature herself. That fever--those fierce throes and spasms--are but Nature's efforts to cast off the grasp of the enemy we do not see. It now depends on what degree of rallying power be left to the patient. Fortunately his frame is robust, yet not plethoric. Do you know his habits?"

"I know," answered George--"most temperate, most innocent."

"Then, with constant care, minute attention to my directions, he may recover."

"If care and attention can save my guest's life, he shall not die," said Darrell.

The physician looked at the speaker's pale face and compressed lips. "But, Mr. Darrell, I must not have you on my hands too. You must not be out of your bed again tonight."

"Certainly not," said George. "I shall watch alone."

"No," cried Lionel, "that is my post too."

"Pooh!" said Darrell; "young men so far from Death are not such watchful sentinels against his stroke as men of my years, who have seen him in all aspects; and, moreover, base indeed in the host who deserts his own guest's sick-chamber. Fear not for me, doctor; no man needs sleep less than I do."

Dr. F----- slid his hand on Darrell's pulse. "Irregular--quick; but what vitality! what power!--a young man's pulse. Mr. Darrell, many years for your country's service are yet in these lusty beats."

Darrell breathed his chronic sigh, and turning back to Waife's bedside, said to the doctor, "When will you come again?"

"The day after to-morrow."

When the doctor returned, Waife was out of immediate danger. Nature, fortified by the "temperate, innocent habits" which husband up her powers, had dislodged, at least for a time, her enemy; but the attack was followed by extreme debility. It was clear that for days, perhaps even weeks to come, the vagrant must remain a prisoner under Darrell's roof-tree.

Lionel had been too mindful of Sophy's anxiety to neglect writing to Lady Montfort the day after Waife's seizure. But he could not find the heart to state the old man's danger; and with the sanguine tendencies of his young nature, even when at the worst he clung to belief in the best. He refrained from any separate and private communication of Waife's state to Lady Montfort, lest the sadness it would not fail to occasion her should be perceptible to Sophy, and lead her to divine the cause. So he contented himself with saying that Waife had accompanied him to Mr. Darrell's, and would be detained there, treated with all kindness and honour, for some days.

Sophy's mind was relieved by this intelligence, but it filled her with wonder and conjecture. That Waife, who had so pertinaciously refused to break bread as a guest under any man's roof-tree, should be for days receiving the hospitality of Lionel Haughton's wealthy and powerful kinsman, was indeed mysterious. But whatever brought Waife and Lionel thus in confidential intercourse could not but renew yet more vividly the hopes she had been endeavouring of late to stifle. And combining together many desultory remembrances of words escaped unawares from Lionel, from Lady Montfort, from Waife himself, the truth (of which her native acuteness had before admitted glimpses) grew almost clear to her. Was not Mr. Darrell that relation to her lost mother upon whom she had claims not hitherto conceded? Lionel and Waife both with that relation now! Surely the clouds that had rested on her future were admitting the sun through their opening rents--and she blushed as she caught its ray.

CHAPTER VI.

INDIVIDUAL CONCESSIONS ARE LIKE POLITICAL; WHEN YOU ONCE BEGIN, THERE IS NO SAYING WHERE YOU WILL STOP.

Waife's first words on recovering consciousness were given to thoughts of Sophy. He had promised her to return, at farthest, the next day; she would be so uneasy he must get up--he must go at once. When he found his strength would not suffer him to rise, he shed tears. It was only very gradually and at intervals that he became acquainted with the length and severity of his attack, or fully sensible that he was in Darrell's house; that that form, of which he had retained vague dreamy reminiscences, hanging over his pillow, wiping his brow, and soothing him with the sweetest tones of the sweet human voice--that that form, so genial, so brotherlike, was the man who had once commanded him not to sully with his presence a stainless home.

All that had passed within the last few days was finally made clear to him in a short, unwitnessed, touching conversation with his host; after which, however, he became gradually worse; his mind remaining clear, but extremely dejected; his bodily strength evidently sinking. Dr. F----- was again summoned in haste. That great physician was, as every great physician should be, a profound philosopher, though with a familiar ease of manner, and a light off-hand vein of talk, which made the philosophy less sensible to the taste than any other ingredient in his pharmacopoeia. Turning everybody else out of the room, he examined his patient alone--sounded the old man's vital organs, with ear and with stethoscope--talked to him now on his feelings, now on the news of the day, and then stepped out to Darrell.

"Something on the heart, my dear sir; I can't get at it; perhaps you can. Take off that something, and the springs will react, and my patient will soon recover. All about him sound as a rock--but the heart; that has been horribly worried; something worries it now. His heart may be seen in his eye. Watch his eye; it is missing some face it is accustomed to see."

Darrell changed colour. He stole back into Waife's room, and took the old man's hand. Waife returned the pressure, and said: "I was just praying for you--and--and--I am sinking fast. Do not let me die, sir,

without wishing poor Sophy a last good-bye!"

Darrell passed back to the landing-place where George and Lionel were standing, while Dr. F----- was snatching a hasty refreshment in the library before his return to town. Darrell laid his hand on Lionel's shoulder. "Lionel, you must go back to London with Dr. F-----. I cannot keep you here longer. I want your room."

"Sir," said Lionel, aghast, "while Waife is still so ill! You cannot be thus unkind."

"Inconsiderate egotist! would you deprive the old man of a presence dearer to him than yours? George, you will go too, but you will return. You told me, yesterday, that your wife was in London for a few days; entreat her to accompany you hither; entreat her to bring with her the poor young lady whom my guest pines to see at his bedside--the face that his eye misses."

CHAPTER VII.

SOPHY, DARRELL, AND THE FLUTE-PLAYER. DARRELL. PREPARES A SURPRISE FOR WAIFE.

Sophy is come. She has crossed that inexorable threshold. She is a guest in the house which rejects her as a daughter. She has been there some days. Waife revived at the first sight of her tender face. He has left his bed; can move for some hours a day into an adjoining chamber, which has been hastily arranged for his private sitting-room; and can walk its floors with a step that grows daily firmer in the delight of leaning on Sophy's arm.

Since the girl's arrival, Darrell has relaxed his watch over the patient. He never now enters his guest's apartment without previous notice; and, by that incommunicable instinct which passes in households between one silent breast and another, as by a law equally strong to attract or repel--here drawing together, there keeping apart--though no rule in either case has been laid down;--by virtue, I say, of that strange intelligence, Sophy is not in the old man's room when Darrell enters. Rarely in the twenty-four hours do the host and the fair young guest encounter. But Darrell is a quick and keen observer. He has seen enough of Sophy to be sensible of her charms--to penetrate into her simple natural loveliness of character--to feel a deep interest in her, and a still deeper pity for Lionel. Secluding himself as much as possible in his private room, or in his leafless woods, his reveries increase in gloom. Nothing unbends his moody brow like Fairthorn's flute or Fairthorn's familiar converse.

It has been said before that Fairthorn knew his secrets. Fairthorn had idolised Caroline Lyndsay. Fairthorn was the only being in the world to whom Guy Darrell could speak of Caroline Lyndsay--to whom he could own the unconquerable but unforgiving love which had twice driven him from the social world. Even to Fairthorn, of course, all could not be told. Darrell could not speak of the letter he had received at Malta, nor of Caroline's visit to him at Fawley; for to do so, even to Fairthorn, was like a treason to the dignity of the Beloved. And Guy Darrell might rail at her inconstancy--her heartlessness; but to boast that she had lowered herself by the proffers that were dictated by repentance, Guy Darrell

could not do that;--he was a gentleman. Still there was much left to say. He could own that he thought she would now accept his hand; and when Fairthorn looked happy at that thought, and hinted at excuses for her former fickleness, it was a great relief to Darrell to fly into a rage; but if the flute-player meanly turned round and became himself Caroline's accuser, then poor Fairthorn was indeed frightened; for Darrell's trembling lip or melancholy manner overwhelmed the assailant with self-reproach, and sent him sidelong into one of his hidden coverts.

But at this moment Fairthorn was a support to him under other trials--Fairthorn, who respects as he does, as no one else ever can, the sanctity of the Darrell line--who would shrink like himself from the thought that the daughter of Jasper Losely, and in all probability not a daughter of Matilda Darrell, should ever be mistress of that ancestral hall, lowly and obscure and mouldering though it be--and that the child of a sharper, a thief, a midnight assassin, should carry on the lineage of knights and warriors in whose stainless scutcheons, on many a Gothic tomb or over the portals of ruined castles, was impaled the heraldry of Brides sprung from the loins of Lion Kings! Darrell, then, doing full justice to all Sophy's beauty and grace, purity and goodness, was more and more tortured by the conviction that she could never be wife to the man on whom, for want of all nearer kindred, would devolve the heritage of the Darrell name.

On the other hand, Sophy's feelings towards her host were almost equally painful and embittered. The tenderness and reverence that he had showed to her beloved grandfather, the affecting gratitude with which Waife spoke of him, necessarily deepened her prepossessions in his favour as Lionel's kinsman; and though she saw him so sparingly, still, when they did meet, she had no right to complain of his manner. It might be distant, taciturn; but it was gentle, courteous--the manner which might be expected, in a host of secluded habits, to a young guest from whose sympathies he was removed by years, but to whose comforts he was unobtrusively considerate--whose wishes were delicately forestalled. Yet was this all that her imagination had dared to picture on entering those grey walls? Where was the evidence of the relationship of which she had dreamed?--where a single sign that she was more in that house than a mere guest?--where, alas! a token that even Lionel had named her to his kinsman, and that for Lionel's sake that kinsman bade her welcome? And Lionel too--gone the very day before she arrived! That she learned incidentally from the servant who showed her into the room. Gone, and not addressed a line to herself, though but to condole with her on her grandfather's illness, or congratulate her that the illness had spared the life! She felt wounded to the very core. As Waife's progressive restoration allowed her thoughts more to revert to so many causes for pain and perplexity, the mystery of all connected with her own and Waife's sojourn under that roof baffled her at tempts at conjecture. The old man did not volunteer explanations. Timidly she questioned him; but his nerves yet were so unstrung, and her questions so evidently harassed him, that she only once made that attempt to satisfy her own bewilderment, and smiled as if contented when he said, after a long pause: "Patience yet, my child; let me get a little stronger. You see Mr. Darrell will not suffer me to talk with him on matters that must be discussed with him before I go; and then--and then--Patience till then, Sophy."

Neither George nor his wife gave her any clue to the inquiries that preyed upon her mind. The latter, a kind, excellent woman, meekly devoted to her husband, either was, or affected to be, in ignorance of

the causes that had led. Waife to Fawley, save very generally that Darrell had once wronged him by an erring judgment, and had hastened to efface that wrong. And then she kissed Sophy fondly, and told her that brighter days were in store for the old man and herself. George said with more authority--the authority of the priest: "Ask no questions. Time, that solves all riddles, is hurrying on, and Heaven directs its movements."

Her very heart was shut up, except where it could gush forth--nor even then with full tide--in letters to Lady Montfort. Caroline had heard from George's wife, with intense emotion, that Sophy was summoned to Darrell's house, the gravity of Waife's illness being considerably suppressed. Lady Montfort could but suppose that Darrell's convictions had been shaken--his resolutions softened; that he sought an excuse to see Sophy, and judge of her himself. Under this impression, in parting with her young charge, Caroline besought Sophy to write to her constantly and frankly. Sophy felt all inexpressible relief in this correspondence. But Lady Montfort in her replies was not more communicative than Waife or the Morleys; only she seemed more thoughtfully anxious that Sophy should devote her self to the task of propitiating her host's affections. She urged her to try and break through his reserve--see more of him; as if that were possible! And her letters were more filled with questions about Darrell than even with admonitions and soothings to Sophy. The letters that arrived at Fawley were brought in a bag, which Darrell opened; but Sophy noticed that it was with a peculiar compression of lip, and a marked change of colour, that he had noticed the handwriting on Lady Montfort's first letter to her, and that after that first time her letters were not enclosed in the bag, but came apart, and were never again given to her by her host.

Thus passed days in which Sophy's time was spent chiefly in Waife's sick-room. But now he is regaining strength hourly. To his sitting-room comes George frequently to relieve Sophy's watch. There, once a day, comes Guy Darrell, and what then passed between the two men none witnessed. In these hours Waife insisted upon Sophy's going forth for air and exercise. She is glad to steal out alone--steal down by the banks of the calm lake, or into the gloom of the mournful woods. Here she not unfrequently encounters Fairthorn, who, having taken more than ever to the flute, is driven more than ever to outdoor rambles, for he has been cautioned not to indulge in his melodious resource within doors lest he disturb the patient.

Fairthorn and Sophy thus made acquaintance, distant and shy at first on both sides; but it gradually became more frank and cordial. Fairthorn had an object not altogether friendly in encouraging this intimacy. He thought, poor man, that he should be enabled to extract from Sophy some revelations of her early life, which would elucidate, not in favour of her asserted claims, the mystery that hung upon her parentage. But had Dick Fairthorn been the astutest of diplomatists, in this hope he would have been equally disappointed. Sophy had nothing to communicate. Her ingenuousness utterly baffled the poor flute-player. Out of an innocent, unconscious kind of spite, on ceasing to pry into Sophy's descent, he began to enlarge upon the dignity of Darrell's. He inflicted on her the long-winded genealogical memoir, the recital of which had, on a previous occasion, so nearly driven Lionel Haughton from Fawley. He took her to see the antiquary's grave; he spoke to her, as they stood there, of Darrell's ambitious boyhood--his arid, laborious manhood--his determination to restore the fallen line--the very vow he had made to the father he had so pityingly revered. He sought to impress on her the

consciousness that she was the guest of one who belonged to a race with whom spotless honour was the all in all; and who had gone through life with bitter sorrows, but reverencing that race, and vindicating that honour; Fairthorn's eye would tremble--his eyes flash on her while he talked. She, poor child, could not divine why; but she felt that he was angry with her--speaking at her. In fact, Fairthorn's prickly tongue was on the barbed point of exclaiming: "And how dare you foist yourself into this unsullied lineage--how dare you think that the dead would not turn in their graves, ere they would make room in the vault of the Darrells for the daughter of a Jasper Losely!" But though she could not conceive the musician's covert meaning in these heraldic discourses, Sophy, with a justness of discrimination that must have been intuitive, separated from the more fantastic declamations of the grotesque genealogist that which was genuine and pathetic in the single image of the last descendant in a long and gradually falling race, lifting it up once more into power and note on toiling shoulders, and standing on the verge of age, with the melancholy consciousness that the effort was successful only for his fleeting life; that, with all his gold, with all his fame, the hope which had achieved alike the gold and the fame was a lying mockery, and that name and race would perish with himself, when the earth yawned for him beside the antiquary's grave.

And these recitals made her conceive a more soft and tender interest in Guy Darrell than she had before admitted; they accounted for the mournfulness on his brow; they lessened her involuntary awe of that stateliness of bearing which before had only chilled her as the evidence of pride.

While Fairthorn and Sophy thus matured acquaintance, Darrell and Waife were drawing closer and closer to each other. Certainly no one would be predisposed to suspect any congeniality of taste, intellect, experience, or emotion, between two men whose lives had been so widely different--in whose faults or merits the ordinary observer would have seen nothing but antagonism and contrast. Unquestionably their characters were strikingly dissimilar, yet there was that in each which the other recognised as familiar to his own nature. Each had been the victim of his heart; each had passed over the ploughshare of self-sacrifice. Darrell had offered up his youth--Waife his age; Darrell to a Father and the unrequiting Dead--Waife to a Son whose life had become his terror. To one man, NAME had been an idol; to the other, NAME had been a weed cast away into the mire. To the one man, unjoyous, evanescent glory--to the other, a shame that had been borne with a sportive cheerfulness, dashed into sorrow only when the world's contumely threatened to despoil Affection of its food. But there was something akin in their joint experience of earthly vanities;--so little solace in worldly honours to the triumphant Orator --so little of misery to the vagrant Mime while his conscience mutely appealed to Heaven from the verdict of his kind. And as beneath all the levity and whim of the man reared and nurtured, and fitted by his characteristic tendencies, to view life through its humours, not through its passions, there still ran a deep undercurrent of grave and earnest intellect and feeling--so too, amidst the severer and statelier texture of the once ambitious, laborious mind, which had conducted Darrell to renown--amidst all that gathered-up intensity of passion, which admitted no comedy into Sorrow, and saw in Love but the aspect of Fate--amidst all this lofty seriousness of soul, there was yet a vivid capacity of enjoyment--those fine sensibilities to the pleasurable sun-rays of life, which are constitutional to all GENIUS, no matter how grave its vocations. True, affliction at last may dull them, as it dulls all else that we took from Nature when she equipped us for life. Yet, in the mind

of Darrell, affliction had shattered the things most gravely coveted, even more than it had marred its perceptive acknowledgment of the sympathies between fancies that move to smiles, and thoughts that bequeath solemn lessons, or melt to no idle tears. Had Darrell been placed amidst the circumstances that make happy the homes of earnest men, Darrell would have been mirthful; had Waife been placed amongst the circumstances that concentrate talent, and hedge round life with trained thicksets and belting laurels, Waife would have been grave.

It was not in the earlier conferences that took place in Waife's apartment that the subject which had led the old man to Fawley was brought into discussion. When Waife had sought to introduce it--when, after Sophy's arrival, he had looked wistfully into Darrell's face, striving to read there the impression she had created, and, unable to discover, had begun, with tremulous accents, to reopen the cause that weighed on him--Darrell stopped him at once. "Hush--not yet; remember that it was in the very moment you first broached this sorrowful topic, on arriving here, and perceived how different the point of view from which we two must regard it, that your nerves gave way--your illness rushed on you. Wait, not only till you are stronger, but till we know each other better. This subject is one that it becomes us to treat with all the strength of our reason--with all the calm which either can impose upon the feelings that ruffle judgment. At present, talk we of all matters except that, which I promise you shall be fairly discussed at last."

Darrell found, however, that his most effective diversion from the subject connected with Sophy was through another channel in the old man's affections, hopes, and fears. George Morley, in repeating the conversation he had overheard between Waife and Jasper, had naturally, while clearing the father, somewhat softened the bravado and cynicism of the son's language, and more than somewhat brightened the touches of natural feeling by which the bravado and cynicism had been alternated. And Darrell had sufficient magnanimity to conquer the repugnance with which he approached a name associated with so many dark and hateful memories, and, avoiding as much as possible distinct reference to Jasper's past life, to court a consultation on the chances of saving from the worst the life that yet remained. With whom else, indeed, than Jasper's father could Darrell so properly and so unreservedly discuss a matter in which their interest and their fear were in common?--As though he were rendering some compensation to Waife for the disappointment he would experience when Sophy's claims came to be discussed--if he could assist in relieving the old man's mind as to the ultimate fate of the son for whom he had made so grand a sacrifice, Darrell spoke to Waife somewhat in detail of the views with which he had instructed Colonel Morley to find out and to treat with Jasper. He heard from the Colonel almost daily. Alban had not yet discovered Jasper, nor even succeeded in tracing Mrs. Crane! But an account of Jasper's farewell visit to that den of thieves, from which he had issued safe and triumphant, had reached the ears of a detective employed by the Colonel, and on tolerably good terms with Cutts; and it was no small comfort to know that Jasper had finally broken with those miscreant comrades, and had never again been seen in their haunts. As Arabella had introduced herself to Alban by her former name, and neither he nor Darrell was acquainted with that she now bore, and as no questions on the subject could be put to Waife during the earlier stages of his illness, so it was several days before the Colonel had succeeded in tracing her out as Mrs. Crane of Podden Place--a discovery effected by a distant relation to whom he had been referred at the famous school of which Arabella had been the pride, and who was no

doubt the owner of those sheepskin account-books by which the poor grim woman had once vainly sought to bribe Jasper into honest work. But the house in Podden Place was shut up--not a soul in charge of it. The houses immediately adjoining it were tenantless. The Colonel learned, however, from a female servant in an opposite house, that several days ago she had seen a tall, powerful-looking man enter Mrs. Crane's street-door; that she had not seen him quit it; and that some evenings afterwards, as this servant was closing up the house in which she served, she had remarked a large private carriage driving away from Mrs. Crane's door; that it was too dark to see who were in the carriage, but she had noticed a woman whom she felt fully sure was Mrs. Crane's servant, Bridgett Greggs, on the box beside the coachman.

Alban had been to the agent employed by Mrs. Crane in the letting of her houses, but had not there gained any information. The Colonel believed that Mrs. Crane had succeeded in removing Jasper from London--had, perhaps, accompanied him abroad. If with her, at all events for the present he was safe from the stings of want, and with one who had sworn to save him from his own guilty self. If, however, still in England, Alban had no doubt, sooner or later, to hunt him up.

Upon the whole, this conjectural information, though unsatisfactory, allayed much anxiety. Darrell made the most of it in his representations to Waife. And the old man, as we know, was one not hard to comfort, never quarrelling irrevocably with Hope.

And now Waife is rapidly recovering. Darrell, after spending the greater part of several days, intent upon a kind of study from which he had been estranged for many years, takes to frequent absences for the whole day; goes up to London by the earliest train, comes back by the latest. George Morley also goes to London for a few hours. Darrell, on returning, does not allude to the business which took him to the metropolis; neither does George, but the latter seems unusually animated and excited. At length, after one of these excursions, so foreign to his habits, he and George enter together the old man's apartment not long before the early hour at which the convalescent retires to rest. Sophy was seated on the footstool at Waife's knee, reading the Bible to him, his hand resting lightly on her bended head. The sight touched both George and Darrell; but Darrell of the two was the more affected. What young, pure voice shall read to HIM the Book of Hope in the evening of lonely age? Sophy started in some confusion, and as, in quitting the room, she passed by Darrell, he took her hand gently, and scanned her features more deliberately, more earnestly than he had ever yet seemed to do; then he sighed, and dropped the hand, murinuring, "Pardon me." Was he seeking to read in that fair face some likeness to the Darrell lineaments? If he had found it, what then? But when Sophy was gone, Darrell came straight to Waife with a cheerful brow--with a kindling eye.

"William Losely," said he.

"Waife, if you please, sir," interrupted the old man. William Losely," repeated Darrell, "justice seeks to repair, so far as, alas! it now can, the wrongs inflicted on the name of William Losely. Your old friend Alban Morley supplying me with the notes he had made in the matter of your trial, I arranged the evidence they furnished. The Secretary for the Home Department is one of my most intimate political friends--a man of humanity--of sense. I placed that evidence before him. I, George, and Mr. Hartopp, saw him after he had perused it--"

"My--son--Lizzy's son!"

"His secret will be kept. The question was not who committed the act for which you suffered, but whether you were clearly, incontestably, innocent of the act, and, in pleading guilty, did but sublimely bear the penalty of another. There will be no new trial--there are none who would prosecute. I bring back to you the Queen's free pardon under the Great Seal. I should explain to you that this form of the royal grace is so rarely given that it needed all the strength and affecting circumstance of your peculiar case to justify the Home Secretary in listening, not only to the interest I could bring to bear in your favour, but to his own humane inclinations. The pardon under the Great Seal differs from an ordinary pardon. It purges the blood from the taint of felony--it remits all the civil disabilities which the mere expiry of a penal sentence does not remove. In short, as applicable to your case, it becomes virtually a complete and formal attestation of your innocence. Alban Morley will take care to apprise those of your old friends who may yet survive, of that revocation of unjust obloquy, which this royal deed implies--Alban Morley, who would turn his back on the highest noble in Britain if but guilty of some jockey trick on the turf! Live henceforth openly, and in broad daylight if you please; and trust to us three--the Soldier, the Lawyer, the Churchman--to give to this paper that value which your Sovereign's advisers intend it to receive."

"Your hand now, dear old friend!" cried George. "You remember I commanded you once to take mine as man and gentleman--as man and gentleman, now honour me with yours."

"Is it possible?" faltered Waife, one hand in George's, the other extended in imploring appeal to Darrell--"is it possible? I vindicated--I cleared--and yet no felon's dock for Jasper!--the son not criminated by the father's acquittal! Tell me that! again--again!"

"It is so, believe me. All that rests is to force on that son, if he have a human heart, the conviction that he will be worse than a parricide if he will not save himself."

"And he will--he shall. Oh, that I could but get at him!" exclaimed the preacher.

"And now," said Darrell--"now, George, leave us; for now, upon equal terms, we two fathers can discuss family differences."

CHAPTER VIII.

SOPHY'S CLAIM EXAMINED AND CANVASSED.

"I take this moment," said Darrell, when left alone with Waife--(ah, reader, let us keep to that familiar name to the last!)--"I take this moment," said Darrell, "the first moment in which you can feel thoroughly assured that no prejudice against yourself clouds my judgment in reference to her whom you believe to be your grandchild, to commence, and I trust to conclude forever, the subject which twice brought you within these walls. On the night of your recent arrival here, you gave this copy of a French woman's declaration, to the effect that two infants had been placed out with her to nurse; that one of them was my poor

daughter's infant, who was about to be taken away from her; that the other was confided to her by its parent, a French lady, whom she speaks of as a very liberal and distinguished person, but whose name is not stated in the paper."

WIFE.--"The confession describes that lady as an artiste; distinguished artiste is the expression--viz., a professional person--a painter--an actress--a singer--or--"

DARRELL (drily).--"An opera-dancer! I understand the French word perfectly. And I presume the name is not mentioned in the document, from motives of delicacy; the child of a distinguished French artiste is not necessarily born in wedlock. But this lady was very grateful to the nurse for the care shown to her infant, who was very sickly; and promised to take the nurse, and the nurse's husband also, into her service. The nurse states that she herself was very poor; that the lady's offer appeared to her like a permanent provision; that the life of this artiste's infant was of the utmost value to her--the life of my poor daughter's child of comparative insignificance. But the infant of the artiste died, and the nurse's husband put it into his wife's head to tell your son (then a widower, and who had seen so little of his child as to be easily deceived), that it was his infant who died. The nurse shortly afterwards removed to Paris, taking with her to the artiste's house the child who in reality was my daughter's."

"It seems very probable, does it not--does it not?" said the ex-comedian eagerly.

"It seems to me," replied the ex-lawyer, "very probable that a witness, entering into court with the confession of one villanous falsehood, would have little scruple to tell another. But I proceed. This rich and liberal artiste dies; the nurse's conscience then suddenly awakens--she sees Mr. Hammond--she informs him of the fraud she has practised. A lady of rank, who had known Matilda, and had seen both the infants when both were living under the nurse's charge, and observed them more attentively than your son had done--corroborates the woman's story, stating that the artiste's child had dark eyes instead of blue; that the artiste herself was never deceived--but, having taken a great fancy to the spurious infant, was willing to receive and cherish it as her own; and that she knows several persons who will depose that they heard the artiste say that the child was not her own. On this evidence your son takes to himself this child--and this child is your Sophy--and you wish me to acknowledge her as my daughter's offspring. Do not look me so earnestly in the face, my dear and respected guest. It was when you read in my face what my lips shrank from uttering that your emotions overcame your strength, and your very mind deserted you. Now, be firmer. Your Sophy has no need of me--she is under your charge, and your name is cleared. She has found a friend--a protectress--in her own sex. Lady Montfort's rank gives to her a position in the world as high as I could offer; and as to mere pecuniary provision for her, make your mind easy--it shall be secured. But bear with me when I add, resolutely and calmly, that this nurse's attestation is to me a grosser and poorer attempt at imposture than I had anticipated; and I am amazed that a man of your abilities should have been contented to accept it."

"Oh, Mr. Darrell, don't say so! It was such a blessing to think, when my son was lost to me, that I might fill up the void in my heart with an innocent, loving child. Don't talk of my abilities. If you, whose abilities none can question--if you had longed and yearned for such a

comforter--if you had wished--if you wished now this tale to be true, you would have believed it too; you would believe it now--you would indeed. Two men look so differently at the same story--one deeply interested that it should be true--one determined, if possible, to find it false. Is it not so?"

Darrell smiled slightly, but could not be induced to assent even to so general a proposition. He felt as if he were pitted against a counsel who would take advantage of every concession.

Waife continued. "And whatever seems most improbable in this confession, is rendered probable at once--if--if--we may assume that my unhappy son, tempted by the desire to--to--"

"Spare yourself--I understand--if your son wished to obtain his wife's fortune, and therefore connived at the exchange of the infants, and was therefore, too, enabled always to corroborate the story of the exchange whenever it suited him to reclaim the infant, I grant this--and I grant that the conjecture is sufficiently plausible to justify you in attaching to it much weight. We will allow that it was his interest at one time to represent his child, though living, as no more; but you must allow also that he would have deemed it his interest later, to fasten upon me, as my daughter's, a child to whom she never gave birth. Here we entangle ourselves in a controversy without data, without facts. Let us close it. Believe what you please. Why should I shake convictions that render you happy? Be equally forbearing with me. I do full justice to your Sophy's charming qualities. In herself, the proudest parent might rejoice to own her; but I cannot acknowledge her to be the daughter of Matilda Darrell. And the story that assured you she was your grandchild, still more convinces me that she is not mine!"

"But be not thus inflexible, I implore you;--you can be so kind, so gentle;--she would be such a blessing to you--later--perhaps--when I am dead. I am pleading for your sake--I owe you so much! I should repay you, if I could but induce you to inquire--and if inquiry should prove that I am right."

"I have inquired sufficiently."

"Then I'll go and find out the nurse. I'll question her. I'll--"

"Hold. Be persuaded! Hug your belief! Inquire no farther!"

"Why--why?"

Darrell was mute.

Waife passed and repassed his hand over his brow, and then cried suddenly: "But if I could prove her not to be my grandchild, then she might be happy!--then--then--ah, sir, young Haughton tells me that if she were but the daughter of honest parents--no child of Jasper's, no grandchild of mine--then you might not be too proud to bless her at least as his bride! And, sir, the poor child loves the young man. How could she help it? And, at her age, life without hope is either very short, or very, very long! Let me inquire! I should be happy even to know that she was not my grandchild. I should not love her less; and then she would have others to love her when I am gone to Lizzy!"

Darrell was deeply moved. To him there was something in this old man-

ever forgetting himself, ever so hurried on by his heart--something, I say, in this old man, before which Darrell felt his intellect subdued and his pride silenced and abashed.

"Yes, sir," said Waife, musingly, "so let it be. I am well now. I will go to France to-morrow."

Darrell nerved his courage. He had wished to spare Waife the pain which his own persuasions caused to himself. Better now to be frank. He laid his hand on Waife's shoulder, and looking him in the face, said solemnly: "I entreat you not! Do you suppose that I would not resume inquiry in person, nor pause till the truth were made amply clear, if I had not strong reason to prefer doubt to certainty?"

"What do you mean, sir?"

"There is a woman whose career is, I believe, at this moment revived into fresh notoriety as the heroine of some drama on the stage of Paris--a woman who, when years paled her fame and reft her spoils, as a courtesan renowned for the fools she had beggared, for the young hearts she had corrupted, sought plunder still by crimes, to which law is less lenient; charged with swindling, with fraud, with forgery, and at last more than suspected as a practised poisoner, she escaped by suicide the judgment of human tribunals."

"I know of whom you speak--that dreadful Gabrielle Desmarets, but for whom my sacrifice to Jasper's future might not have been in vain! It was to save Sophy from the chance of Jasper's ever placing her within reach of that woman's example that I took her away."

"Is it not, then, better to forbear asking who were your Sophy's parents, than to learn from inquiry that she is indeed your grandchild, and that her mother was Gabrielle Desmarets?"

Waife uttered a cry like a shriek, and then sate voiceless and aghast. At last he exclaimed: "I am certain it is not so! Did you ever see that woman?"

"Never that I know of; but George tells me that he heard your son state to you that she had made acquaintance with me under another name, and if there was a design to employ her in confirmation of his tale--if he was then speaking truth to you, doubtless this was the lady of rank referred to in the nurse's confession--doubtless this was the woman once palmed upon me as Matilda's confidante. In that case I have seen her. What then?"

"Mother was not written on her face! She could never have been a mother. Oh, you may smile, sir; but all my life I have been a reader of the human face; and there is in the aspect of some women the barrenness as of stone--no mother's throb in their bosom--no mother's kiss on their lips."

"I am a poor reader of women's faces," said Darrell; "but she must be very unlike women in general, who allows you to know her a bit better if you stood reading her face till doomsday. Besides, at the time you saw Gabrielle Desmarets, her mode of life had perhaps given to her an aspect not originally in her countenance. And I can only answer your poetic conceit by a poetic illustration--Niobe turned to stone; but she had a great many daughters before she petrified. Pardon me, if I would turn off by a jest a thought that I see would shock you, as myself, if gravely

encouraged. Encourage it not. Let us suppose it only a chance that inquiry might confirm this conjecture; but let us shun that chance. Meanwhile, if inquiry is to be made, one more likely than either of us to get at the truth has promised to make it, and sooner or later we may learn from her the results--I mean that ill-fated Arabella Fossett, whom you knew as Crane."

Waife was silent; but he kept turning in his hand, almost disconsolately, the document which assoiled him from the felon's taint, and said at length, as Darrell was about to leave, "And this thing is of no use to her, then?"

Darrell came back to the old man's chair, and said softly: "Friend, do not fancy that the young have only one path to happiness. You grieve that I cannot consent to Lionel's marriage with your Sophy. Dismiss from your mind the desire for the Impossible. Gently wean from hers what is but a girl's first fancy."

"It is a girl's first love."

"And if it be," said Darrell, calmly, "no complaint more sure to yield to change of air. I have known a girl as affectionate, as pure, as full of all womanly virtues, as your Sophy (and I can give her no higher praise) --loved more deeply than Lionel can love; professing, doubtless at the time believing, that she also loved for life; betrothed too; faith solemnised by promise; yet in less than a year she was another's wife. Change of air, change of heart! I do not underrate the effect which a young man, so winning as Lionel, would naturally produce on the fancy or the feelings of a girl, who as yet, too, has seen no others; but impressions in youth are characters in the sand. Grave them ever so deeply, the tide rolls over them; and when the ebb shows the surface again, the characters are gone, for the sands are shifted. Courage! Lady Montfort will present to her others with forms as fair as Lionel's, and as elegantly dressed. With so much in her own favour, there are young patricians enough who will care not a rush what her birth;--young lords--Lady Montfort knows well how fascinating young lords can be! Courage! before a year is out, you will find new characters written on the sand."

"You don't know Sophy, sir," said Waife, simply; "and I see you are resolved not to know her. But you say Arabella Crane is to inquire; and should the inquiry prove that she is no child of Gabrielle Desmarets--that she is either your own grandchild or not mine--that--"

"Let me interrupt you. If there be a thing in the world that is cruel and treacherous, it is a false hope! Crush out of every longing thought the belief that this poor girl can prove to be one whom, with my consent, my kinsman can woo to be his wife. Lionel Haughton is the sole kinsman left to whom I can bequeath this roof-tree--these acres hallowed to me because associated with my earliest lessons in honour and with the dreams which directed my life. He must take with the heritage the name it represents. In his children, that name of Darrell can alone live still in the land. I say to you, that even were my daughter now in existence, she would not succeed me--she would not inherit nor transmit that name. Why?--not because I am incapable of a Christian's forgiveness, but because I am not capable of a gentleman's treason to his ancestors and himself;--because Matilda Darrell was false and perfidious; because she was dead to honour, and therefore her birthright to a heritage of honour was irrevocably forfeited. And since you compel me to speak rudely,

while in you I revere a man above the power of law to degrade--while, could we pass a generation, and Sophy were your child by your Lizzy, I should proudly welcome an alliance that made you and me as brothers--yet I cannot contemplate--it is beyond my power--I cannot contemplate the picture of Jasper Losely's daughter, even by my own child, the Mistress in my father's home--the bearer of my father's name. 'Tis in vain to argue. Grant me the slave of a prejudice--grant these ideas to be antiquated bigotry--I am too old to change. I ask from others no sacrifice which I have not borne. And whatever be Lionel's grief at my resolve, grief will be my companion long after he has forgotten that he mourned."

CHAPTER IX.

POOR SOPHY!

The next morning Mills, in giving Sophy a letter from Lady Montfort, gave her also one for Waife, and she recognised Lionel Haughton's handwriting on the address. She went straight to Waife's sitting-room, for the old man had now resumed his early habits, and was up and dressed. She placed the letter in his hands without a word, and stood by his side while he opened it, with a certain still firmness in the expression of her face, as if she were making up her mind to some great effort. The letter was ostensibly one of congratulation. Lionel had seen Darrell the day before, after the latter had left the Home Secretary's office, and had learned that all which Justice could do to repair the wrong inflicted had been done. Here Lionel's words, though brief, were cordial, and almost joyous; but then came a few sentences steeped in gloom. There was an allusion, vague and delicate in itself, to the eventful conversation with Waife in reference to Sophy--a sombre, solemn farewell conveyed to her and to hope--a passionate prayer for her happiness--and then an abrupt wrench, as it were, away from a subject too intolerably painful to prolong--an intimation that he had succeeded in exchanging into a regiment very shortly to be sent into active service; that he should set out the next day to join that regiment in a distant part of the country; and that he trusted, should his life be spared by war, that it would be many years before he should revisit England. The sense of the letter was the more affecting in what was concealed than in what was expressed. Evidently Lionel desired to convey to Waife, and leave it to him to inform Sophy, that she was henceforth to regard the writer as vanished out of her existence--departed, as irrevocably as depart the Dead.

While Waife was reading, he had turned himself aside from Sophy; he had risen--he had gone to the deep recess of the old mullioned window, half screening himself beside the curtain. Noiselessly, Sophy followed; and when he had closed the letter, she laid her hand on his arm, and said very quietly: "Grandfather, may I read that letter?"

Waife was startled, and replied on the instant, "No, my dear."

"It is better that I should," said she, with the same quiet firmness; and then seeing the distress in his face, she added, with her more accustomed sweet docility, yet with a forlorn droop of the head: "But as you please, grandfather."

Waife hesitated an instant. Was she not right?--would it not be better

to show the letter? After all, she must confront the fact that Lionel could be nothing to her henceforth; and would not Lionel's own words wound her less than all Waife could say? So he put the letter into her hands, and sat down, watching her countenance.

At the opening sentences of congratulation, she looked up inquiringly. Poor man, he had not spoken to her of what at another time it would have been such joy to speak; and he now, in answer to her look, said almost sadly: "Only about me, Sophy; what does that matter?" But before the girl read, a line farther, she smiled on him, and tenderly kissed his furrowed brow.

"Don't read on, Sophy," said he quickly. She shook her head and resumed. His eye still upon her face, he marked it changing as the sense of the letter grew upon her, till, as, without a word, with scarce a visible heave of the bosom, she laid the letter on his knees, the change had become so complete, that it seemed as if ANOTHER stood in her place. In very young and sensitive persons, especially female (though I have seen it even in our hard sex), a great and sudden shock or revulsion of feeling reveals itself thus in the almost preternatural alteration of the countenance. It is not a mere paleness—a skin-deep loss of colour: it is as if the whole bloom of youth had rushed away; hollows never discernible before appear in the cheek that was so round and smooth; the muscles fall as in mortal illness; a havoc, as of years, seems to have been wrought in a moment; flame itself does not so suddenly ravage—so suddenly alter—leave behind it so ineffable an air of desolation and ruin. Waife sprang forward and clasped her to his breast.

"You will bear it, Sophy! The worst is over now. Fortitude, my child! --fortitude! The human heart is wonderfully sustained when it is not the conscience that weighs it down—griefs, that we think at the moment must kill us, wear themselves away. I speak the truth, for I too have suffered!"

"Poor grandfather!" said Sophy, gently; and she said no more. But when he would have continued to speak comfort, or exhort to patience, she pressed his hand tightly, and laid her finger on her lip. He was hushed in an instant.

Presently she began to move about the room, busying herself, as usual, in those slight, scarce perceptible arrangements by which she loved to think that she ministered to the old man's simple comforts. She placed the armchair in his favourite nook by the window, and before it the footstool for the poor lame foot; and drew the table near the chair, and looked over the books that George had selected for his perusal from Darrell's library; and chose the volume in which she saw his mark, to place nearest to his hand, and tenderly cleared the mist from his reading-glass; and removed one or two withered or ailing snowdrops from the little winter nosegay she had gathered for him the day before—he watching her all the time, silent as herself, not daring, indeed, to speak, lest his heart should overflow.

These little tasks of love over, she came towards him a few paces, and said: "Please, dear grandfather, tell me all about what has happened to yourself, which should make us glad—that is, by-and-by; but nothing as to the rest of that letter. I will just think over it by myself; but never let us talk of it, grandy dear, never more—never more."

CHAPTER X.

TREES THAT, LIKE THE POPLAR, LIFT UPWARD ALL THEIR BOUGHS, GIVE NO SHADE AND NO SHELTER, WHATEVER THEIR HEIGHT. TREES THE MOST LOVINGLY SHELTER AND SHADE US, WHEN, LIKE THE WILLOW, THE HIGHER SOAR THEIR SUMMITS, THE LOWLIER DROOP THEIR BOUGHS.

Usually when Sophy left Waife in the morning, she would wander out into the grounds, and he could see her pass before his window; or she would look into the library, which was almost exclusively given up to the Morleys, and he could hear her tread on the old creaking stairs. But now she had stolen into her own room, which communicated with his sitting-room--a small lobby alone intervening--and there she remained so long that he grew uneasy. He crept softly to her door and listened. He had a fineness of hearing almost equal to his son's; but he could not hear a sob--not a breath. At length he softly opened the door and looked in with caution.

The girl was seated at the foot of the bed, quite still--her eyes fixed on the ground, and her finger to her lip, just as she had placed it there when imploring silence; so still, it might be even slumber. All who have grieved respect grief. Waife did not like to approach her; but he said, from his stand at the threshold: "The sun is quite bright now, Sophy; go out for a little while, darling."

She did not look round, she did not stir; but she answered with readiness, "Yes, presently."

So he closed the door and left her. An hour passed away; he looked in again; there she was still--in the same place, in the same attitude.

"Sophy, dear, it is time to take your walk; go--Mrs. Morley is in front, before my window. I have called to her to wait for you."

"Yes--presently," answered Sophy, and she did not move.

Waife was seriously alarmed. He paused a moment--then went back to his room--took his hat and his staff--came back.

"Sophy, I should like to hobble out and breathe the air; it will do me good. Will you give me your arm? I am still very weak."

Sophy now started--shook back her fair curls--rose--put on her bonnet, and in less than a minute was by the old man's side. Drawing his arm fondly into hers, they descend the stairs; they are in the garden; Mrs. Morley comes to meet them--then George. Waife exerts himself to talk--to be gay--to protect Sophy's abstracted silence by his own active, desultory, erratic humour. Twice or thrice, as he leans on Sophy's arm, she draws it still nearer to her, and presses it tenderly. She understands--she thanks him. Hark! from some undiscovered hiding-place near the water--Fairthorn's flute! The music fills the landscape as with a living presence; the swans pause upon the still lake--the tame doe steals through yonder leafless trees; and now, musing and slow, from the same desolate coverts, comes the doe's master. The music spells them all. Guy Darrell sees his guests where they have halted by the stone sun-dial. He advances--joins them--congratulates Waife on his first walk as a convalescent. He quotes Gray's well-known verses applicable to that

event, and when, in that voice sweet as the flute itself, he comes to the lines:

["See the wretch who long has tost," &c.--GRAY.]

"The common sun, the air, the skies,
To him are opening paradise"

Sophy, as if suddenly struck with remorse at the thought that she, and she alone, was marring that opening paradise to the old man in his escape from the sick-room to "the sun, the air, the skies," abruptly raised her looks from the ground, and turned them full upon her guardian's face, with an attempt at gladness in her quivering smile, which, whatever its effect on Waife, went straight to the innermost heart of Guy Darrell. On the instant he recognised, as by intuitive sympathy, the anguish from which that smile struggled forth--knew that Sophy had now learned that grief which lay deep within himself--that grief which makes a sick chamber of the whole external world, and which greets no more, in the common boons of Nature, the opening Paradise of recovered Hope! His eye lingered on her face as its smile waned, and perceived that CHANGE which had so startled Waife. Involuntarily he moved to her side--involuntarily drew her arm within his own--she thus supporting the one who cherished--supported by the one who disowned her. Guy Darrell might be stern in resolves which afflicted others, as he was stern in afflicting himself; but for others he had at least compassion.

Poor Waife, with nature so different, marked Darrell's movement, and, ever ready to seize on comfort, said inly: "He relents. I will not go to-morrow as I had intended. Sophy must win her way; who can resist her?"

Talk languished--the wintry sun began to slope--the air grew keen--Waife was led in--the Morleys went up into his room to keep him company--Sophy escaped back to her own. Darrell continued his walk, plunging deep into his maze of beechwoods, followed by the doe. The swans dip their necks amongst the water-weeds; the flute has ceased, and drearily still is the grey horizon, seen through the skeleton boughs--seen behind the ragged sky-line of shaft and parapet in the skeleton palace.

Darrell does not visit Waife's room that day; he concludes that Waife and Sophy would wish to be much alone; he dreads renewal of the only subject on which he has no cheering word to say. Sophy's smile, Sophy's face haunted him. In vain he repeated to himself: "Tut, it will soon pass --only a girl's first fancy."

But Sophy does not come back to Waife's room when the Morleys have left it: Waife creeps into her room as before, and, as before, there she sits still as if in slumber. She comes in, however, of her own accord, to assist, as usual, in the meal which he takes apart in his room helps him --helps herself, but eats nothing. She talks, however, almost gaily; hopes he will be well enough to leave the next day; wonders whether Sir Isaac has missed them very much; reads to him Lady Montfort's affectionate letter to herself; and when dinner is over, and Waife's chair drawn to the fireside, she takes her old habitual place on the stool beside him, and says: "Now, dear grandfather--all about yourself --what happy thing has chanced to you?"

Alas! poor Waife has but little heart to speak; but he forces himself; what he has to say may do good to her.

"You know that, on my own account, I had reasons for secrecy--change of name. I shunned all those whom I had ever known in former days; could take no calling in life by which I might be recognised; deemed it a blessed mercy of Providence that when, not able to resist offers that would have enabled me to provide for you as I never otherwise could, I assented to hazard an engagement at a London theatre--trusting for my incognito to an actor's arts of disguise--came the accident which, of itself, annihilated the temptation into which I had suffered myself to be led. For, ah, child! had it been known who and what was the William Waife whose stage-mime tricks moved harmless mirth, or tears as pleasant, the audience would have risen, not to applaud, but hoot, 'Off, off,' from both worlds--the Mimic as the Real! Well, had I been dishonest, you--you alone felt that I could not have dared to take you, guiltless infant, by the hand. You remember that, on my return to Ruge's wandering theatre, bringing you with me, I exaggerated the effects of my accident--affected to have lost voice--stipulated to be spared appearing on his stage. That was not the mere pride of manhood shrinking from the display of physical afflictions. No. In the first village that we arrived at, I recognised an old friend, and I saw that, in spite of time, and the accident that had disfigured me, he recognised me, and turned away his face, as if in loathing. An old friend, Sophy--an old friend! Oh, it pierced me to the heart; and I resolved, from that day, to escape from Ruge's stage; and I consented till the means of escape, and some less dependent mode of livelihood, were found, to live on thy earnings, child; for if I were discovered by other old friends, and they spoke out, my disgrace would reflect on you; and better to accept support, from you than that! Alas! appearances were so strong against me, I never deemed they could be cleared away, even from the sight of my nearest friends. But Providence, you know, has been so kind to us hitherto; and so Providence will be kind to us again, Sophy. And now, the very man I thought most hard to me--this very Guy Darrell, under whose roof we are--has been the man to make those whose opinion I most value know that I am not dishonest; and Providence has raised a witness on my behalf in that very Mr. Hartopp, who judged me (and any one else might have done the same) too bad to be fit company for you! And that is why I am congratulated; and, oh, Sophy, though I have borne it as Heaven does enable us to bear what of ourselves we could not, and though one learns to shrug a patient shoulder under the obloquy which may be heaped on us by that crowd of mere strangers to us and to each other, which is called 'the WORLD,' yet to slink out of sight from a friend, as one more to be shunned than a foe--to take like a coward the lashings of Scorn--to wince, one raw sore, from the kindness of Pity--to feel that in life the sole end of each shift and contrivance is to slip the view--hallo, into a grave without epitaph, by paths as stealthy and sly as the poor hunted fox, when his last chance--and sole one--is, by winding and doubling, to run under the earth; to know that it would be an ungrateful imposture to take chair at the board--at the hearth, of the man who, unknowing your secret, says, 'Friend, be social'; accepting not a crust that one does not pay for, lest one feel a swindler to the kind fellow-creature whose equal we must not be!--all this--all this, Sophy, did at times chafe and gall more than I ought to have let it do, considering that there was ONE who saw it all, and would--Don't cry, Sophy; it is all over now."

"Not cry! Oh, it does me so much good."

"All over now! I am under this roof--without shame or scruple; and if Guy Darrell, knowing all my past, has proved my innocence in the eyes of those whom alone I cared for, I feel as if I had the right to stand before any crowd of men erect and shameless--a Man once more with Men!

Oh, darling! let me but see thy old happy smile again! The happy smiles of the young are the sunshine of the old. Be patient--be firm; Providence is so very kind, Sophy."

CHAPTER XI.

WAIFE EXACTS FROM GEORGE MORLEY THE FULFILMENT OF ONE OF THOSE PROMISES WHICH MEAN NOTHING OR EVERYTHING.

The next day George Morley visited Waife's room earlier than usual. Waife had sent for him. Sophy was seated by her grandfather--his hand in hers. She had been exerting herself to the utmost to talk cheerfully--to shake from her aspect every cloud of sorrow. But still THAT CHANGE was there--more marked than even on the previous day. A few hours of intense struggle, a single night wholly without sleep, will tell on the face of early youth. Not till we, hard veterans, have gone through such struggles as life permits not to the slight responsibilities of new recruits--not till sleepless nights have grown to us familiar will Thought seem to take, as it were, strength, not exhaustion, from unrelaxing exercise--nourish the brain, sustain the form by its own untiring, fleshless, spiritual immortality; not till many a winter has stripped the leaves; not till deep, and far out of sight, spread the roots that support the stem--will the beat of the east wind leave no sign on the rind.

George has not, indeed, so noticed, the day before, the kind of withering blight that has passed over the girl's countenance; but he did now--when she met his eye more steadfastly, and had resumed something of the open genial infantine grace of manner which constituted her peculiar charm, and which it was difficult to associate with deeper griefs than those of childhood.

"You must scold my grandfather," she said. "He chooses to fancy that he is not well enough yet to leave; and I am sure that he is, and will recover more quickly at home than here."

"Pooh!" said Waife; "you young things suppose we old folks can be as brisk as yourselves; but if I am to be scolded, leave Mr. George unawed by your presence, and go out, my dear, while the sun lasts: I know by the ways of that blackbird that the day will be overcast by noon."

As soon as they were alone, George said abruptly: "Your Sophy is looking very ill, and if you are well enough to leave, it might be better for her to move from this gloomy house. Movement itself is a great restorative," added George, with emphasis.

"You see, then, that she looks ill--very ill," said Waife deliberately; "and there is that in your manner which tells me you guess the cause."

"I do guess it from the glimpse which I caught of Lionel's face after he had been closeted a short time with Mr. Darrell at my uncle's house two days ago. I guess it also from a letter I have received from my uncle."

"You guess right--very right," said Waife, still with the same serious, tranquil manner. "I showed her this letter from young Haughton. Read it." George hurried his eye over the letter, and returned it silently.

Waife proceeded:

"I was frightened yesterday by the strange composure she showed. In her face alone could be read what she suffered. We talked last night. I spoke of myself--of my old sorrows--in order to give her strength to support hers; and the girl has a heroic nature, Mr. George--and she is resolved to conquer or to die. But she will not conquer." George began the usual strain of a consoles in such trials. Waife stopped him. "All that you can say, Mr. George, I know beforehand; and she will need no exhortation to prayer and to fortitude. I stole from my room when it was almost dawn. I saw a light under the door of her chamber. I just looked in--softly--unperceived. She had not gone to bed. She was by the open window--stars dying out of the sky--kneeling on the floor, her face buried in her hands. She has prayed. In her soul, at this moment, be sure that she is praying now. She will devote herself to me--she will be cheerful--you will hear her laugh, Mr. George; but she will not conquer in this world; long before the new year is out, she will be looking down upon our grief with her bright smile; but we shall not see her, Mr. George. Do not think this is an old man's foolish terror; I know sorrow as physicians know disease; it has its mortal symptoms. Hush! hear me out. I have one hope--it is in you."

"In me?"

"Yes. Do you remember that you said, if I could succeed in opening to your intellect its fair career, you would be the best friend to me man ever had? and I said, 'Agreed, but change the party in the contract; befriend my Sophy instead of me, and if ever I ask you, help me in aught for her welfare and happiness;' and you said, 'With heart and soul.' That was the bargain, Mr. George. Now you have all that you then despaired of; you have the dignity of your sacred calling--you have the eloquence of the preacher. I cannot cope with Mr. Darrell--you can. He has a heart--it can be softened; he has a soul--it can be freed from the wither that tether it down; he has the virtues you can appeal to; and he has the pride which you, as a Christian minister, have the right to prove to be a sin. I cannot argue with him; I cannot reprove the man to whom I owe so much. All ranks of men and of mind should be equal to you, the pastor, the divine. You ministers of the gospel address yourselves unabashed to the poor, the humble, the uninstructed. Did Heaven give you power and commandment over these alone? Go, Preacher! go! Speak with the same authority to the great, to the haughty, to the wise!" The old man's look and gesture were sublime.

The Preacher felt a thrill vibrate from his ear to his heart; but his reason was less affected than his heart. He shook his head mournfully. The task thus assigned to him was beyond the limits which custom prescribes to the priest of the English Church;--dictation to a man not even of his own flock, upon the closest affairs of that man's private hearth and home! Our society allows no such privilege; and our society is right.

Waife, watching his countenance, saw at once what was passing in his mind, and resumed, as if answering George's own thought:

"Ay, if you were but the commonplace priest! But, you are something more; you are the priest specially endowed for all special purposes of good. You have the mind to reason--the tongue to persuade--the majestic earnestness of impassioned zeal. Nor are you here the priest alone; you are here the friend, the confidant, of all for whom you may exert your

powers. Oh, George Morley, I am a poor ignorant blunderer when presuming to exhort you as Christian minister; but in your own words--I address you as man and gentleman, you declared that 'thought and zeal should not stammer whenever I said, Keep your promise.' I say it now--Keep faith to the child you swore to me to befriend!"

"I will go-and at once," said George, rising. "But be not sanguine. I see not a chance of success. A man so superior to myself in years, station, abilities, repute!"

"Where would be Christianity," said Waife, "if the earliest preachers had raised such questions? There is a soldier's courage--is there not a priest's?"

George made no answer, but, with abstracted eye, gathered brow, and slow, meditative step, quitted the room, and sought Guy Darrell.

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