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LETTICE LISLE.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "STONE EDGE."

WITH THREE ILLUSTRATIONS.

LONDON:
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[v]

PREFACE.

DIALECTS are fast dying out in England under the influence of books, newspapers, and schoolmasters; yet they often contain pithy words, which it is a loss to the language to part with— inflexions which show the history of our tongue— racy expressions ill-exchanged for the Latinisms of would-be fine writing— many forms of speech, indeed, which are to be found in our older classics, in Chaucer, Shakspeare, the translation of the Bible, and even as late as in Milton.

Ralph Higden, a monk of Chester who lived under Edward III., and died about 1362, after mentioning the decline of French and the advance of English among the upper class in his time, says that "there were three speeches in England, the northern, midland, and south country." The first and third continue still very distinctly marked, the second has

[vi]

much ado to keep apart from its encroaching neighbours.

Lettice Lisle is the last of three stories which attempt to save some of the relics of speech and thought still remaining from the old days, but which are disappearing so rapidly before advancing "civilization."

If it is thought that so small a work (in every sense) has no business with such weighty matters, it may be pleaded that Mr. Max Müller, in his *Science of Language*, observes that if the dialectic varieties, the proverbs and traditions of a district, were collected, much that is interesting and even useful to the history of our English tongue might be preserved.

[vii]

CONTENTS.

[viii]

ILLUSTRATIONS.

[1]

LETTICE LISLE.

CHAPTER I.

A YEOMAN'S ESTATE

> “ These hedgerows, hardly hedgerows, little lines
> Of sportive wood ran wild, this pastoral farm,
> Green to the very door, with wreaths of smoke
> Sent up in silence from among the trees. ”—WORDSWORTH.

“So they just go on locking the gates as usual! I can't think what they want to be so very private for,” said a disagreeable-looking man, mounted on an exceedingly good horse, as he tried at a gate which led out of the deep hollow lane where he was riding into a

neglected grass-grown road. He got down and tried to take it off its hinges, but it was secured at that end also. He uttered an oath, and then, seeming to know the place well, rode on to a field-gate which opened on the lane further down, and came back across the pasture to his point. It was a beautiful bit of ground, lying just where

[2]

the land fell away in a gentle slope to the valley below; tossed about in every possible direction, with a clear pool at the bottom of the little dell in the heart of it, and with peeps at blue distance from all the higher points. But all was neglected and dilapidated: the fences, like overgrown thickets, were badly mended, the magnificent trees stood so thickly as to spoil each other, the gates, with the exception of the one into the lane, were all half broken, and there was a sad poverty-stricken look about everything. The horseman rode along the grassy unused road, across which lay the evening shadows, up to a sort of wide irregular avenue, the large branches of the tall elms arching in a great green space, which ended in a farmyard, woodyard, rickyard, all in one. Beyond these stood a curious old timbered house, its gables and many mullioned windows showing that it had once been a place of much greater pretension than as belonging to the poor yeoman its present possessor.

All was very still: the echo of an unseen flail in a barn close at hand, the cawing of the rooks in the trees above, and an occasional low from a distant cow coming home to be milked, were the only sounds to be heard, and there was no one to be seen about the house.

He called several times without receiving any answer. At last he caught sight of a little girl standing quietly in a sort of island of light, where the sunshine came through an opening in the high trees down upon her golden hair.

[3]

“ Is nobody at home? ” said the horseman impatiently.

“ Granny's in the house,” replied the child in a very low, shy voice. He fastened his horse to a broken paling, and walked up to the beautiful old wooden porch, with a

curious pinnacle in the carved gable, hung with a neglected tangle of vine and jessamine, and with a stone seat on each side. As he came near, a tall, dark, stern-looking woman of about fifty, dressed in black, appeared at the open door. Her features had the remains of having once been very handsome, but now the sad dreary determination in her face was its striking part.

She motioned her visitor, without speaking, into the house: he was evidently no welcome guest. In a few minutes he came out again. " You'll tell Wynyate what I say," he called out, as he mounted his horse and rode away in an opposite direction to that in which he had come.

The child had continued almost motionless in the place where she had first seen him, but when he disappeared she gave a sigh of relief; she did not know him, but her instinct was as strongly against him as that of a bird which cowers away before a hawk.

She went on with her solitary play. A tall chestnut, a magnificent tower of bloom, stood at the end of the aisle of arching branches, leaving the blackness of the shadows under them still more striking. A shower of the blossoms had fallen after a little rain, and the child

[4]

was stringing them upon a blade of bent. She had hung herself over with long daisy chains, and the old shepherd smiled kindly at her as she passed.

" Thou'st made thyself rare and fine, my little maid," said he, affectionately.

Suddenly her grandmother's harsh voice was heard.

" Lettice, come in directly, child; it's time for you to be abed."

The little girl rose slowly, though obediently— bed has a gruesome sound on a May evening, flowers blooming, birds singing, cows lowing— it seems a terrible hardship to be shut up with eyes closed to all this beauty, while the sleep, which makes it endurable, if not pleasant, is not counted in a child's imagination.

As she reluctantly walked towards the house with her finger in her eye, a tall boy, about fifteen, with a merry look on his rosy brown face, came up behind her.

" Why, Lettice, what's the matter now, little one?"

And he took her up in his arms as he spoke.

" Oh, uncle Edward," said she, flinging her arms round his neck in an ecstasy of hope, " mayn't I stay up for your supper; please mayn't I? It isn't seven o'clock yet. Oh, please," and she hugged him tightly.

" We'll see about it, little 'un; don't ye put yourself in such a way," answered he, carrying her straight into the sort of houseplace, half kitchen, half sitting- room, shut off from the entrance by a curious sort of black oak screen.

A grave, sad-looking man was standing by the

[5]

latticed window at the farther end, but he did not seem to see them come in. He was the true son of his mother—the same high forehead and deep-set eyes—but there had been a cross in the blood: the stern mouth and chin had not descended to him; there was a great deal of tenderness about the lines in his face, and what might be contemplation, or the indecision produced, as sometimes happens, by the fear of giving pain.

" Mayn't Lettie stay up for supper to-night, Amyas? " said the boy, going up to his brother with the child still in his arms.

Amyas seemed to bring his thoughts up out of some far-off deep well, and even then required to have the question repeated before he took it in.

" She's much better abed, " observed her grandmother, in a short tone.

" Nay, let the child stay with us this once, mother, " replied Amyas, gently.

Mrs. Wynyate did not answer, and began in silence to make preparations for the meal.

" I should like some bread-and-milk to-night, mother, " said the boy. And, without any observation or assistance from her, he went from the dairy to the pantry and back again to the kitchen fire, Lettice, in the full glory of " sitting up, " following him like a little dog, carrying the plate, taking back the jug, and watching the boiling of the saucepan.

Two other brothers, strong sturdy fellows, strolled in. “ Les quatre fils d'Aymon ” were very unlike.

[6]

These two seemed hardly above the level of labourers, and the few words which they uttered about their work, the way in which they cut their great slices of bread- and-cheese and cold fat bacon, and drank their deep draughts of thin cider, were of the same character—while Amyas had had a good deal of schooling as the eldest of the family, and so had Edward as the youngest.

“ Could ye give me a dish o' tea, mother? ” said Amyas, looking round rather drearily at the comfortless meal as he sat down to the long deal table.

“ Tea's six shillings a pound, ” said Mrs. Wynyate, with a sort of short sigh, as she filled the teapot.

He drank his tea eagerly, but touched nothing else. It was a serious meal—it could hardly be otherwise with that stern woman seated at one end of the table, and that silent sad man at the other. But Lettice, sitting upon Edward's knee, was like the bit of sunshine in the avenue: she fed him with the bread-and-milk, and a low ripple of laughter went on between them at the landing of each “ fish ” out of the pool of milk into his mouth.

Mrs. Wynyate looked on with increasing disfavour.

“ Sit up to the table, Ned, and don't crumb about, ” said she at last.

“ They're not making a mess, ” said her uncle Amyas, gently, looking at Lettie with the ghost of a smile. “ She's a tidy little lass, — neat, like her grandmother. ”

It was the second time that evening that he had interfered in her behalf, and she laid her soft little

[7]

cheek against his arm as she sat next him in a passion of gratitude.

But execution came after the reprieve— the supperthings were soon carried away and the child led off in earnest. She escaped from her stern grandmother's hands, however, once again and ran back.

“ Good-night, uncle Amyas, ” said she, climbing up on his knee and putting her arms tenderly round his neck.

He kissed her very fondly, and set her silently down, and then justice had its course.

“ Good-night, uncle Job, good-night, uncle John, good-night, Ted,” she cried, as she was led off.

“ You mustn't call your uncle, Ted, ” said Mrs. Wynyate, gravely.

Job and John kept hours with the cows and poultry; they were up with the sun, and thought no shame to go to bed with it. Edward had some boyish operation on a forked sort of root, which he was shaping with a knife, which took him a little longer, but even he soon disappeared, and Amyas and his mother were left alone.

“ And he threatened they'd foreclose the mortgage? ” said he, with a sort of dreary sigh.

“ Did he say how much time they'd allow to pay? ”

Mrs. Wynyate was refooting a stocking by the miserable light of a “ tallow dip.”

“ He said the interest hadn't been paid regular this dozen years; hardly ever in full, nor by yer father nor

[8]

by you, and that yer couldn't expect any one to be kep out of his money like that.”

“ And I'm sure I don't know where the money's to come from; with wheat down where 'tis, the farm didn't much more than pay the interest last year, and six mouths to feed off it.”

“ He said why didn't ye cut the trees: they was spiling one another and the land too, they were so thick.”

“ I meant to have done it this spring, but I couldn't find a good sale. We must cut'em, but I hate touching the old timber,” said Amyas, with a sort of groan.

“ I'll see and mark'em now, however; but it's too late to fell the oak this spring,” he added, with a kind of relief. And after sitting in silence for some time he, too, rose and

went off to bed in the dark. Mrs. Wynyate's glimmering light, however, shone on hour after hour, as she sat and sewed, and mended, and darned, and patched, till far on into the night.

[9]

CHAPTER II.

AMYAS WYNYATE AND HIS HOME.

" For evil is wrought
By want of thought
As much as by wicked will."

THE Woodhouse was a yeoman's estate. It had been in the family of the Wynyates for many generations, gradually becoming more and more impoverished, mortgaged as it was almost up to the value of the last acre; which is the case, indeed, with most of these properties. In the old days the yeoman class seems to have been prosperous and useful, but, under the present state of things, they cannot apparently keep pace with the farmers of other men's land, who bring in fresh capital and fresh ideas and energy, and are everywhere in England gradually dying out,— a curious contrast (whether for good or evil) to the " morcellement " going on in France. Although when Mrs. Wynyate married she was supposed to have made rather a grand match, her husband, if it had not been for the honour of it, might as well have been without a foot of land. He was a good-natured, weak, self-indulgent man, " nobody's enemy but his own:" virtue was not amiable under his wife's stern aspect, and he took refuge in something a little more jovial at the " Marquis of Granby " or the " Barley

[10]

Mow." Disagreeable virtue has a good deal of harm to answer for of this kind in the world. Feckless and wasteful, the little chance there was of setting the property straight

vanished under his hands, and one winter's night, after a drunken bout, he did not return. He was not discovered till morning, when he was found in a sort of quagmire: he had ridden round and round a field half through the night, for " there weren't ne'er a gate in it," he said. He never recovered the cold and exposure, rheumatic fever came on, and, at not quite fifty, he died, leaving a wife and five children, the youngest not six years old, to be provided for out of the land, weighed down as it was with debt. Amyas had lived almost entirely with his mother's brother, an old man with some money and a tanyard at the cathedral town near: a staunch Dissenter, in the days when Dissent entailed an amount of petty persecution and annoyance which we have nearly forgotten. It was very real suffering for righteousness' sake, but sometimes, as in Amos King, it induced a certain manner of conscious virtue, of superior sanctity, which was trying to the nerves of weaker vessels. He had set his heart upon Amyas becoming a " minister:" he was a readin' lad, " a pious youth," and would be " a shining light " in the communion. As time went on, however, his nephew's tender heart and rather fastidious taste revolted against certain parts of the creed and discipline; he was sticking at the doctrine of " reprobation," to his uncle's infinite, distress, who was indeed as much horrified at the young

[11]

man's daring to dissent from him, as the stoutest old canon in the close at his own nonconformity, and he complained in much the same sense, if not terms, at the " carnal self-sufficiency," the " wicked wilful blindness " which alone could produce such results. The right of private judgment was by no means an article of the Protestant faith (fifty years ago).

Poor Amyas was in a most painful state of perplexity and distress, when the knot was cut for him, by being suddenly summoned home on his father's death. There was no will or provision for the widow or her younger children; the property all came to him, and he found himself at three-and-twenty the head of the house, with the maintenance of a large family on his hands and little but debt to support them on. He knew more of theology than of farming, but he did his best, poor fellow: he never married, for how

could a second family be maintained? He had toiled day and night to keep things together and to pay the interest, and now, after nine years, it seemed to him as if he had been " pouring water into baskets."

His mother was one of those stern, strong-willed women who go through life constantly worsted. She had never had the smallest influence with her husband or her only daughter, a beautiful self-willed girl, on whom she doated, perhaps the more for their not having a single quality in common. There is a slow power in fools, a strength in the weak, with which it is hopeless to contend. What impression can be made on water,

[12]

which returns to its level again after the most convincing pressure?

A year after her father's death, when she was about eighteen, Letitia Wynyate had fallen in love with a man whom she had met at the neighbouring miller's, of whom her mother, with reason, thought very ill. After some furious scenes between the two, Letitia, who had never been crossed by either parent, went off to her friend's house, and was married from thence against her mother's most positive commands. Mrs. Wynyate never forgave it. Letitia made a sort of " offer " at friendship about two years after, but her mother's resentment was too deep: they once met, but it was coldly and stiffly. At the end of five years, however, peace was made in another way: Letitia died, leaving one child, whom she entreated her mother to take charge of, " or the poor thing would have nobody to look after her! " The implied slur on her husband mollified Mrs. Wynyate almost as much as the death itself, while the dreary feeling that she should never see her child again, and the thought of those long years of enforced silence, aged her ten years and more. But it did not soften her towards her granddaughter: she bore her a grudge, as if it had been the child's fault. She was very unlike her mother, and therefore Mrs. Wynyate determined that she reminded her of her father, and she " did her duty " to Lettie, which is of all things the most aggravating.

As the only representative of woman, however, in

[13]

the house (no one could insult Mrs. Wynyate by considering her as belonging to the gentler sex), her four uncles, each in his own way, loved her and spoiled her, as is fit and proper for a little girl. Hers was a solitary little life in one sense; there were no children near to he had, but her playmates included the whole animal and vegetable creation within the domain of the Wood-house. As she sat on the ground next morning, with her great hunch of bread in one hand, and the tin porringer, which uncle Job had filled with new milk as he passed with his pail into the dairy, the chickens flocked round her on the tenderest and most equal terms; the wheeling pigeons swooped within a foot of her head; the calves, the dogs, the horses, all seemed to treat her as a pet thing belonging to themselves. There was nothing about the place which disputed her supremacy but her grandmother and the old peacock, the most tyrannical and shrewish of his race, who led his hens a perfect life of it, and insulted Lettie whenever he met her. She had finished her breakfast and was now standing, trying to hold out an olive-branch to this, after all, the least formidable of her enemies.

“ Piccocks, piccocks, come and eat! ” said she, when her uncle Job, on his road once more between the dairy and the cows, came up as the fierce bird made a snatch at her, and drove him away.

“ Thee must na' ha' nought to do with that surly beast, do'st thou hearken me, Lettie? ”

[14]

“ I want for to make friends wi' him,” said the child, trembling all over.

“ There's some folk, the more you calls 'um the more they won't come,” said Job, sententiously; “ and now ye go to Gabriel Grove, as is tumbling the butter in the milk-house,” added he, as he went about his work.

The child went on willingly to the dairy. The Archangel's namesake was a little wizened, tottering old blind man who did the churning under Amyas' benevolent rule, and was her best playfellow when Edward was at school.

He was standing in deep thought with the handle in his hand.

“ Well, 'tis queer,” said the old man, “ how the butter won't come nohow some days! I b'lieve 'tis bewitched. Lettie, you get me two twigs of the rowan-bush: we'll make a cross and stop that, anyways.”

“ How is it the witches does it? ” inquired the child when she had brought the desired charm.

“ Well, I can't say. My old woman she had a sovereign cuddled away in a drawer, and it's gone and no one's been nigh the house; but she did see a hare a-runnin' off that evenin', close to the skillen, and p'r'aps that were she—the witches turn themselves into hares, they do, by-times, like Mall Do,* yer know, and my missis she flung a pobble-stone at her, and p'r'ps that's the reason I'm so bad. I hets and burns and smerts

*** This remarkable zoological fact is chronicled on Mall Do's tombstone at Beaulieu.**

[15]

all night, and my head he noises so that I be quite froghtened.”

“ P'r'ps you've a got the ague fever,” said Mrs. Wynyate, looking in from the top of the stone steps to see how the butter was getting on.

“ No, I've got no faver,” answered the old man, doggedly. “ I've got that as won't let it be faver,” he whispered to Lettie as her grandmother retired.

“ What is it, Gabriel? ” replied the child, in a low voice.

“ Nay, thou beesn't old enow to understand,” said the old man, importantly. “ I got he from the wise woman.” He had miscalculated Mrs. Wynyate's distance, however; she had only retired as far as the passage closet.

“ Show me what it is, Gabriel,” said she imperiously, from her vantage-ground.

“ It ain't lucky for to look at he,” replied the old man, peevishly; but she insisted, and at last, with a deep sigh, he pulled out a dirty little bag, which she cruelly ripped open; it contained the charm on a bit of parchment.

“ When Jesus Christ went to be crucified
He said I have both ague and faver,
If ye shall kip my commandments

Yer neiver shall have naythe r ”—

ran the rude rhyme.

“ *That'll* do ye no good,” said Mrs. Wynyate, dictatorially; she had no faith in any nostrums but her own.

[16]

“ I'll giv ye some boiled snails or some Good-Friday bread.”

“ Madam allays has her own way, she's so stomachy* and high-minded,” he said sadly to the child, who was doing her best to sew up the amulet again for him as before. “ It'll have spoiled the vertue on it; but I shan't take the snails. She rubs one the wrong way o' the stuff like a cat, and it sets a body's back up, it do.”

Mrs. Wynyate, busy as she was, took great pains in making the horrid decoction, but it was with the utmost satisfaction that he declared to Lettie, “ 'Twere an ugly hansel, and I just hulled it a' into the pig-wash.”

That evening Ned came up to Lettie with the knobbed root, at the end of which, with his ever active knife, he had been shaping a kind of rude head.

“ Here's a nice baby for you, Lettie,” said he.

A child's imagination is so rich, so active, that it rather prefers a formless foundation on which it can build at its pleasure. It is not the grand pink and white lady in gorgeous clothing and a string to open and shut its eyes, but the battered, wretched thing without arms or legs, who is pressed passionately to its tender mother's breast, and only taken away at bed-time with tears. It seems to be the same with all uncultivated minds. “ The wonder-working images are not the *chef-d'oeuvres* of Raphael, but the blackened pictures, the formless stones,” says a great man. Diana of

*** “ Whoso hath a proud look and high stomach.”— Psalm 101.**

[17]

Ephesus, “ the image fallen from heaven,” was probably nothing but a lump of ironstone. Therefore when Ned wrapped the root in a red pocket-handkerchief of his

own, and tied it with a string round what was by courtesy called its " waist," Lettie, in a rapture of delight, took it at once to her heart, and it became to her a " baby," and the most valuable confidant of all her griefs and joys. Most things were wrong in Mrs. Wynyate's code. She was a very conscientious woman, but her creed and her disposition reacted on each other; her sorrows and her Methodism combined to throw a dark veil over the world, in which all amusements were tabooed, and even " of laughter she said in her heart, it is mad." Lettie was too young to understand all this, but a sort of instinct made her keep her precious baby out of her grandmother's sight, and it was some time before the criminal was discovered. At last, however, one day off her guard, she came into the kitchen hugging and nursing her prize, and singing lovingly to it.

" What's that horrid bundle? " said her grandmother, angrily. " I don't choose to have dolls in the house, don't you know that, Lettice? I shall burn the nasty thing." And she turned towards the fire, only stopping to save the handkerchief, and delayed by untying the curious knots in which it was twisted before she carried out the sacrifice.

It is strange how entirely grown people forget the intense misery which children are capable of enduring;

[18]

because of its short duration, that something else soon takes its place, men, and women too, laugh and talk of childish sorrows as " being nothing." They are as real as they are poignant, and a great deal more absolute than the pain which their elders endure: a child's horizon is so limited that it sees no issue to its woes, no hope, no remedy, no future—its sorrow as its joy absorbs its whole little being. When Lettie saw her beloved " baby " about to be cast into the flames, her horror was as great as that of the mother depicted in the " Judgment of Solomon," which hung upon the wall above in very gorgeous pink and yellow colouring. She stood in a sort of tearless agony, with her hands clasped.

" Nay, mother," said Ted, with a smile, taking hold of her arm, " what harm can it do? Let the little mayd have her dollie! "

“ I tell ye, I won't have her spoilt i' that fashion; it's dress and fine clothes and all them things that ruins the girls,” said Mrs. Wynyate, vehemently, which was not quite in point, considering the attire and appearance of the monster.

“ Mightn't she be buried, not burned? ” said Lettice, in a low voice, as she watched the fate of her child trembling in the balance; “ it wouldn't hurt her so much! ”

At that moment Amyas came in at the kitchen door.

“ Why, what's the matter? ” said he, struck by the exceedingly tragic appearance of the company.

[19]

“ Mother wants to burn Lettie's dollie as I made for her. What hurt can it do for her to have one? ” said Edward, sulkily, while Lettie ran up and embraced her uncle's leg as a deliverer of virtue in distress.

Amyas took the child up in his arms, pale with agitation. “ Why, 'twould be like burning my little Lettie for me,” said he, smiling. “ I think Granny will spare it if we ask her,” he added, turning kindly to his mother.

Lettie held out her arms for her rescued infant on this Solomon decision, and silently embraced her uncle and the hideous image with an equal passion of affection.

Mrs. Wynyate turned away without a word; her son had his own way by might of extreme gentleness and tenderness, and she rarely resisted his quiet fiats.

That night, after every one was in bed but himself, Amyas came in from looking after a sick horse; it was very late, and the moonlight streamed into the house through the two great unshuttered mullioned windows, and threw broad paths of light across the pavement.

As he closed the door behind him he saw the child in her little white bedgown, and barefoot, passing like a spirit noiselessly across the hall.

“ Lettie,” said he, lifting her up and taking her cold hands in his, “ what are you doing, my little 'un, running about at this time o' night? ”

“ I was looking to see whether Mary was safe,” she said, shyly.

“ Who's Mary? ” answered her uncle.

[20]

“ Dollie, I mean,” she said, with a blush. A child is very reticent in general about what she most cares for. “ I put her in a box in the parlour, and I wanted to be sure she was quite safe,” she repeated, with a little nervous trembling all over her.

“ This'll never do,” muttered Amyas to himself; “ she'll be down in a nervous fever next. Do you trust me, Lettie? ” he said, turning her small face towards him in the moonlight. The child's expression was the very ideal of faith.

“ Then look, dear, I promise you that no harm shall happen to Mary; and now, little mayds make themselves ill if they run about o' this fashion in the night, and Lettie must promise when she goes to bed to lie still and sleep.”

“ I promise,” said Lettie, religiously.

He carried her upstairs and put the little cold atom into his mother's bed.

“ What's the matter? ” said Mrs. Wynyate, rather crossly as she awoke, but Amyas was gone, only saying, —” I'll tell ye to-morrow; don't talk to her to-night, mother,” as he left the room.

He never discussed, and the next morning all the explanation which she received was—

“ We won't say anymore about the child's pastime; just leave it, mother; I've promised that it shall take no, hurt.”

Amyas was a curious compound of strength and weakness. “ You're so inconsistent,” his mother often

[21]

complained, which is more satisfactory to one's self-conceit than saying we don't understand a character.

In Amyas the power of reflection overbalanced the powers of action. He saw so many sides to a question that it often made him seem irresolute, or he suffered so much from seeing pain inflicted by some act of his own (far more, indeed, than the supposed victim,) that he undid decisions which it had cost him much pain to arrive at. Somehow, in business matters, “ il n'avait pas la main heureuse:” if he bought a cow she turned out

a bad milker, his sheep had the foot-rot, his horses came to more grief than other men's—the “ luck ” always seemed against him, the tide turned while he was considering how to use it. His perceptions were very keen for all that concerned his affections: it did not answer to say or do anything before him under the idea that so apparently absent a man would not notice it; he saw and heard, by fits and starts it is true, but sometime very inconveniently—having never, however, seen his estate in any other condition, going nowhere so as to compare it with others; and without sixpence to spend upon it, the luxuriant fences and the weedy fields, the tumbling barns and the unmended roads, went on unchanged from year to year, though he was up early and down late, while the toiling and the moiling seemed to bear no fruit but in the furrowing of his own cheeks and the premature whitening of his own head.

[22]

CHAPTER III.

FISHING IN THE HERON'S POOL.

“Since trifles make the sum of human things,
And half our misery from our temper springs.”

THERE was a good deal of timber cut the next spring, and the sound of the axes resounded through the fields and woods. Amyas went daily round among the woodcutters, secretly lamenting over each tree as it fell, with a feeling as if it had been a living thing. Lettie accompanied him whenever she could get away, insisting conscientiously on climbing each fallen trunk, and being jumped down at the highest end. Her uncle submitted with unwearied patience; indeed if he had not been so patient it would have been better for the farm. Every labourer on the estate knew that it was impossible to put the “ Master ” out; if a man was so old and infirm that no one else would employ him, that was a reason why Amyas kept him on; if a boy was too young

to be of much use to the neighbouring farmers, and wanted work, Amyas found a place for him. It would have taken a large fortune to pursue farming on such principles.

The two went on their devious way: Amyas with his hands clasped behind him and his meditative look;

[23]

Lettie springing about like a parched pea, scrambling up a hedge for a flower, poking into the bushes after a nest, and coming up to explain her prizes in words which tumbled over each other from their eager interest. He saw more than she did, in spite of those bright little eyes of hers.

“ That's a night-jar a-making that noise. Look at those ants marching like a regiment of soldiers? ”

Her grandmother generally, however, insisted on some abominable bit of hemming, some grievous buttonholes, just at the critical moment. She did not approve of the saturnalia of enjoyment consequent on going out with uncle Amyas.

“ Why, that handkercher's grimed with dirt, Lettice, it's been so long about! I suppose you'll have finished that bit o' knitting by the time you're forty. Little girls should take to their needle, Amyas; I won't have ye muddle away the child's time with such nonsense. What's night-jars to her? and she gets in such a mess. You'll learn her no end o' untidy ways.”

“ Why, ye keep her always as neat as a new pin, mother,” said Amyas smiling. “There's no fear of slatterns in your house.”

Mrs. Wynyate was a very conscientious woman: she would have cut off her hand and cast it into the fire for what she believed to be right; but then she would have done it also by any of her children, which is not exactly the same thing—inflicting martyrdom is not quite so meritorious as enduring it, as some people seem to think.

[24]

She was at work from morning till night, never sparing herself in any toil or trouble; it was wonderful how one pair of hands got through so much. She laboured like the

virtuous woman in Proverbs, and refused herself every indulgence and every pastime; but she had been brought up in the most rigid Methodist creed: she had an unfortunate temper, and it was aggravated instead of mended by her conviction that it was her duty to be stern. Discipline was much more thought of fifty years ago,—" Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it out for him," as she often put it, and the rod was therefore in constant requisition.

The Sabbath-day had always been a day of grief and wailing and gnashing of teeth to her children under her grim creed; but her sons had now pretty nearly grown beyond her power; she had almost come, indeed, to regard man as a stiff-necked creature from whom no good result could be expected, but Lettice was a little girl whom it was her duty to mould, and it would be her fault if this small vessel of wrath was not rescued from reprobation. Sad was the sobbing, the putting in closets, the whipping over the stiff Methodist catechism, each point of doctrine proved by a string of texts, the chapter and verse given to each, and all to be learnt accurately; for Lettice, quick enough at her hymns, and who liked her chapter and her psalm, never could accomplish her " answers." Any concrete image may be seized by a child—it is very open to the beauty of

[25]

melody and rhythm, but an abstract metaphysical proposition is to it a mere string of unintelligible words which might as well be in Greek; and terrible were these engines of oppression for children (fifty years ago).

" She can learn fast enough when she likes it," said her grandmother, in answer to Amyas's doubtful remonstrances. " I heerd her singing no end o' silly nonsense Ned had teached her only the t'other day,"— which was true enough, *i.e.* she could recollect when there was anything for her memory to take hold of; but this was beyond Mrs. Wynyate's comprehension, who honestly considered the child very naughty, and punished her accordingly.

One Sunday evening, her task still undone, the tearful Lettie took refuge with her book by her uncle, who was sitting meditatively in the orchard; but she was not attending, as

she ought to have been doing, to " The other benefits that we receive with justification are adoption and regeneration,"—the milk for babes " of seven years and upwards," which she had to learn. As she sat on her three-legged "cricket" by Amyas's side her quick little eyes caught sight at one moment of a duck, followed by her brood, going down to the pond; at another the cooing of the pigeons in the high trees above their heads made her look up.

" Isn't it very wicked of the birds, uncle Amyas, doing same as they does upon weekdays, like that? " said she at last, feeling that her case was hard, and that if they were allowed to play, she ought at least to have

[26]

the comforts of self-righteousness, and the pride of looking down on their evil ways. Amyas was so modest a man that he always doubted his own judgment when opposed to others, and he had a beautiful respect for his mother, whom he really loved in spite of her sternness: moreover, he was too uncertain in his doubts as to the truth of her doctrines to formularise his opposition even to himself, and he was puzzled.

" Well, Lettie," he said at last, " thee see'st God made 'um so, and, I suppose, He knew 'twas best. They can't sit still and read (not the birds), and p'r'aps He thinks they're praising him in their own way o' that fashion all the days of their lives, not only on the Sabbath-day; and that's best of all, thou knowest, Paul says."

Luckily, Lettie was not logical, or she might have asked, like a celebrated prelate of late, whether something of the same kind might not be said in behalf of the children. Some of the most cruel things in the world have been done by the most excellent people; mistakes, want of imagination, ignorance, inflict almost as much suffering as wickedness. The early inquisitors were most conscientious, benevolent men, only anxious for the souls of their victims; Luther directed that a child possessed by the devil should be drowned; Sir Matthew Hale burnt a witch, all upon the highest principles: and Mrs. Wynyate made Lettie's life miserable from the sincerest desire to do right by the little

[27]

girl's soul. Still, when we undertake the part of Providence to a child, it is perhaps well to make quite sure we have done our best to enlighten ourselves as to what is and what is not desirable.

“ Uncle Amos is dead sudden, and they send word to bid me to the funeral, mother,” said Amyas a day or two after.

“ Dear heart, but 'tis a dreadful sudden take off; I trust he had assurance of his soul. I know he was ever one of the elect from his youth up,” replied Mrs. Wynyate.

Fifteen miles in those days was such a gulf that they rarely had any intercourse with Amos King, who, besides, had given his nephew to understand that he considered him as little better than a castaway, one who had put his hand to the plough and taken it away again. In spite of this estrangement, however, it was a sad expedition to Amyas's affectionate nature: he felt as if he ought not to have left the old man so long without a sign, and it was with a sore heart that he prepared to ride over one evening, to return the next day after the ceremony.

Mrs. Wynyate was doubly busy in his absence, and Lettie had a sort of holiday. At the bottom of the orchard was a wild tangle of hawthorn and holly, a secluded place where the child used to take refuge when she was afraid of being seen in the farmyard. Ned, too, when he was at home from school, had his own operations there: he was a born sportsman, and every

[28]

hedge-row at the Woodhouse being a miniature copse, there was a good deal of game about, none of which came amiss to him: rabbits, weasels, pike and eel fishing, rat-hunts in the big barn, “ nestes ” of wildfowl, on which Lettie reported progress with the utmost zeal.

It was the last day of his holidays, and a beautiful afternoon, when he came out to look for her, his mouth full of lines, both hands occupied with bait, and a landing-net over his shoulder. She was a pleasant little companion, and though he felt it to be a condescension on his part, he liked to have her with him.

There were some tall white lilies in the neglected bit of garden at the upper end of the orchard, which grew in a retired corner among the thorns and thistles and great dock-leaves, and looked almost more striking in their desolate beauty than set in trim borders. Lettie was sitting before them with her doll in her arms, talking and answering herself eagerly, quite unconscious that any one was near. A whole story seemed to be enacting:

“ And the white ladies they say to me and baby, ‘ Little girl, take her up tight in your arms, and we'll go and dance with the king and the queen, and we fly up in the air so high over the tops of the trees '... ”

“ What are you doing, Lettie? ” said the boy coming up, laughing, behind her. “ Who are you talking to? who are the white ladies? Why, it sounds as if there were a dozen of ye! ”

[29]

The little girl blushed deeply. Children have a curious horror of being laughed at.

“ Who are the white ladies? ” he repeated.

She pointed to the lilies; she did not like even so far to destroy the illusion as to name them.

“ And what were they telling ye about the dance with the king and the queen? ”

“ You shouldn't laugh so, uncle Ned,” said she, indignantly, driven to bay, and carrying the war into the enemy's country; “ you tell yourself tales at school; there's that one about the gentleman as went away in a ship and found the great bird and the diamonds, and the old man that sat upon his shoulders. What are diamonds, uncle Ned? ”

“ No, we tell ourselves no tales except sometimes at dinner-time, and then we don't waste our time with rubbish stories about white ladies,” said her uncle, in a grand and moral mood. “ Now come down to the Heron's Pool: we'll set some night-lines,” he added, making peace with this to him the most delightful occupation in the world.

It was a charming spot; the branches of the great oaks still left swept down close to the little gravelly shore; a heron stood contemplating life and the chance of a gudgeon on one leg at the upper end on a small spit of sand, and a dabchick was diving on the other side.

Lettie, for some time, was perfectly happy among the leaves and flowers, presently she came up with a bunch of quaking grass, “ Isn't it nice and tickly, uncle Ned? ”

[30]

said she, creeping behind, but he was threading a “ hobergeon ”* on his line, and the important nature of his avocations did not admit of such trifling.

“ Go and play a little farther off, Lettie,” said he.

“ May I go and paddle, uncle Ted? ”answered the child, who was under strict orders never to go near the water by her little self, and for whom it therefore had a special attraction.

He was much too busy to reply, but he nodded his head; and Lettie, to her infinite delight, unreproved, pulled off her shoes and stockings and walked slowly into the tiny stream which ran out at one end of the pool, and as she grew bolder into the lake itself. Presently, although she thought she was very careful, the tail of her frock dipped into the water behind, and she wrung it dry with much trouble: then the little white feet slipped upon a stone and the front fell into the mud, and the more she rubbed the worse the stains appeared; her grandmother's coming wrath grew terrible in her mind— the “ you bad child ” which was perpetually heard; but as she knew all sins were alike in the eyes of a certain Draconian impartial justice, she now became reckless in her crimes, for the frock was past all hope of concealment. At last she spied a coot's nest, and creeping under the boughs she crawled along a half-dead willow-trunk which stuck far out into the water, and was just stretching out her hand to take out one of the eggs, when, to her horror, she saw her grandmother, who

*** “ Hobergeon,” a chrysalis.**

[31]

hardly ever left the immediate precincts of the house, coming along the road. She had been to look after a “ cade lamb ” in Amyas's absence; she now saw her own suspended in the air, and called out in a wrathful voice,—

“ Lettice, what are you doing there? Come back directly! ”

The child turned in terror, lost her hold on the slippery green moss, and tumbled into the deep water with a cry. Edward, who was close at hand, sprang up at the sound, and had plunged in and brought her to land almost before she sank. As he carried her home, dripping like himself from head to foot, Mrs. Wynyate, excessively angry with them both, followed behind, reproaching him with such effect, that whereas at first he had been both pained and penitent for what had happened, by the time they reached the house he was in as furious a state as his mother.

“ Danger! not a bit of it: the water wasn't up to my waist,” he repeated. He was in an amphibious state of discipline between home and school, which made her cling the more to her waning authority. As for Lettie, she had torn and dirtied her frock and narrowly escaped drowning, two almost equally unpardonable offences in her grandmother's eyes. Even Amyas could not have saved her this time had he reached home; she was whipped and put to bed, after which operation Mrs. Wynyate followed Ned, who had gone up to his own garret to change his wet clothes, and stood fiercely scolding

[32]

over him all the time. He answered in her own tone, and she suddenly locked the door and left him supperless for the evening.

A little time afterwards, Amyas, coming in sadly from his uncle's funeral, found Lettie sobbing in an agony of fright and repentance upstairs, while Ned, who had climbed out of the window of his garret prison, and let himself down by the old pear-tree against the wall, at the risk of his neck, was marching up and down the room with her, fuming at the injustice and absurdity of his mother's punishments.

“ As if I couldn't get out of that room easy enough! and as for Lettie, she'd never have fallen in a bit if it hadn't been for mother calling of her in a voice as would have frightened the dead! She blared at the little mayd like a polecat. I was close by—there wasn't no danger—where was the harm? She were with me fishing; where could she be

better, I'd like to know? And who's a right to fish (you letting of me) sooner nor me, I wonder? ” cried Ned, passionately.

Injustice has generally a different effect on boys and girls: a little girl's conscience is much more active; the sense of justice is much stronger in a boy. Lettie was overwhelmed with grief at her own wickedness in being nearly drowned, Ned was furious at the idea of punishing a misfortune, brought on, as he believed, by the judge herself.

“ It's mother as ought to be beat! I'll tell ye what, Amyas, I won't stand it any longer; I've been thinking

[33]

of it this age: I'll go out somewhere, into a trade or summat. I'll not stay any more, and be sat upon by my mother rampaging about like anything: I'm a man now, I'm a'most sixteen! ”

Lettie's tears fell faster at these terrible threats. Amyas was silent.

“ We'll talk of it all to-morrow, Ned,” he said at last, quietly. “ If you're a man you should behave as such, and not speak as you did to mother but now. You'd best perhaps go to bed now; I'll fetch the key and your supper up here. Quiet the little one a bit,” he whispered kindly, as he went out; “ see, she's like to go into a fit she's so flustered. And be thankful, my boy: we should have been bad off if aught had befallen her.” Ned's under lip had begun to quiver, and it was evident that if it had not been for his manhood the hardened sinner would, by this time, have burst out crying.

Amyas found his mother sternly preparing supper, with a pretence to herself that all was right upstairs, and that her conduct had been most judicious.

“ And now ye tell me about yer uncle,” said she as he took the basin of bread-and-milk which she offered him and turned to carry it upstairs. “ I warn yer, Amyas, it's just flying in the face of Providence” (whatever that curious process may be), “ for you to give them children their own way i' that fashion.”

“ Dear mother,” he answered quietly, as he went out, “ they're not having their own way: Ned is going

[34]

to bed with a sore heart, and the little 'un's frightened half'out o' her wits; they'll not do that again anyhow.”

The two culprits fed together in silence, Lettice hardly touching the food, and the boy went off to bed.

“ And now, my little 'un, what's that pretty hymn-carol you says? ‘It was not down to housen gay, that Christ a child came for to stay,' ” said Amyas, looking at the small, flushed, tear-stained face.

The child knelt up, looking like an infant Samuel, laid her head tenderly against him, and repeated the half-charm, half-prayer.

“ And now my little Lettie's going to sleep, God bless her, and all will be right to-morrow! ” And under the shadow of his wing she lay down to rest.

“ Uncle Amyas, are you there? ” she started up once or twice to say; but he was still standing at the window, waiting patiently till she was asleep, and looking out at the deepening twilight. He had had a trying day, and would have been glad of a quiet evening; and here on his return he found that in the course of her one day's driving, his mother had contrived to upset the coach: a painful proof, which he could have dispensed with, that he was master in his own household. And then his thoughts went back to the scene at his uncle's funeral: when the will was opened after their return from the churchyard, it was found, to his astonishment, that the old man, who had quarrelled with his daughter and her husband, had left Amyas nearly all his property. He had immediately taken steps

[35]

to transfer the whole to his unlucky cousin, who scarcely thanked him, but observed coldly that “ so far as she could see he had only done his duty like as everybody ought to do.” And Amyas was quite of the same mind, and thought also that such a self-evident thing as one's duty was the only one possible, and required no thanks.

It was not the property that now was in his mind: he was thinking regretfully, that he should never see the old man again. “ And I could have asked him help find a place for Ned,” said he to himself. He was not so alarmed about the wickedness of the world as his mother, but the boy was full young to be sent out to fare for himself, and he began to inquire within himself whether he was not to blame in the management of the lad: it somehow never seemed to occur to him to find fault with anybody but himself. A very tender conscience becomes occasionally an unconscionable tyrant.

“ And you haven't telled me anything yet about yer uncle Amos,” said his mother, when he came downstairs.

“ And how did he die? and how were it with his soul, taken off so sudden? And about his will, what have he a done with all that nice little bit o' property as he owned? ” she went on, somewhat glad to escape out of the “ ignorant present ” of the concerns about her.

And Amyas told her everything excepting the important part of his day's work, and the way in which he had

[36]

disposed of his uncle's legacy. What was the use of discussing the matter?

“ I did think as he'd a left you or me summat out o' all that money,” said Mrs. Wynyate, somewhat discontentedly, “ and his daughter marrying to disoblige her family.”

“ Surely, mother, it's his own child a man should leave his fortune to, if he's got one,” replied Amyas, quietly, as he went off to bed. “ And Susan have a sent you the old cuckoo-clock as were your father's, you know, as a keepsake.”

“ Well, and I shall be glad for to see its old face again, and hear the chime. I mind that cuckoo singing that way ever sin I were a child—eh, what a many years ago! ” said Mrs. Wynyate, with unwonted feeling.

And Amyas did not mention that when he had asked for this little waif out of the property which he had given up, as a recollection for his mother, Mrs. Susan had demurred at parting with it, and had only finally yielded because, as she said, “ after all, we've a got a better one at home, and it loses so as I don't know as we've any use for it

in the kitchen here." Amyas was a perfect non-conductor for all cross words or unkind actions; they all died a natural death and were buried when they reached him.

The next morning Ned was firm in his fancy to leave home, and Amyas could not but agree, though it went to his heart to part with the boy. He could not afford to keep him longer at school, and there was

[37]

no room for him in the Wynyate household, where the feud between him and his mother was always smouldering. She expected the submission of a child from the great lad, while her efforts of strong-willed, impotent authority were always made without the hope that the master of the house would stand by her in her unreasonable claims. She had attempted the same with her husband about the public-house, and with her daughter about her acquaintance and her marriage, never considering the use of laying down positive commands which she had no power to enforce. As with many other people, there was a confusion in her thoughts between her own will and the will of heaven: she had an unfortunate temper, and she often could not distinguish between its decrees and those of Providence; her own opinion and abstract right were honestly the same in her eyes, and there is evidently positive impiety in viewing a thing or acting differently from abstract right.

" So young Ned's a-goin' to leave us! I thowt as it weren't for nowt as I heerd the old ash-tree a-groanin' by our door last night," said the old blind man next day, when the great event was announced to him. " I bean't sure as it isn't quite right; he's the littlest* on 'um, but he's ever been the most rumbustical: and when childer takes to their ranties, seems as if we'd no

*** " Little, littler, littlest," are all in country use. Why should we impoverish our language by dropping the degrees of comparison from so many words?**

[38]

call for to kip 'um at home any more. So dunnot ye cry, my little mayd, he'll do well enough. If they can't be comf'able in their nestes at home, my old woman used allays for to zay, zays she, ‘ Why, let 'um goo; they must jist fight along like as we did afore 'um.' 'Tis like the birds: when they're big enough they just flies away from the old 'uns, and it's a chance they never sees 'um again, or else how ever could there be folk enough out in the wide world for to make all things goo? ”

“ But what shall I do without him, Gabriel? ” said the tender-hearted Lettie, not at all consoled by this philosophic view of the demands of humanity upon man. She looked very pale and shaken with the performances of the day before.

“ He'll come back fast enough, child: an he's ailing or sorrowful, the old place will look fair in his eyes when he's a long way off, and 'twill have long strings to his heart for to pull it back. Don't ye be afraid, poor dear heart, he'll rub along.”

[39]

CHAPTER IV.

LETTIE'S SCHOOLMASTERS.

“A maid wi' many gifts o' greace,
A maid wi' gently smilen' feace,
A growen up in childhood's pleace,
Upon the lawns of Allen.
'S a walken where its streams do flow,
A blushen where its flowers do blow,
A smilen where its sun do glow,
Upon the lawns of Allen.
An good, however good's a waigh'd,
'S the sweet vaiced maid of Allen.”—BARNES

AMYAS had so few ties with the outer world that it was with great difficulty a small place as clerk, without any salary, was at length found for Edward at a little seaport town some twenty miles away.

The boy's courage rather failed when he found himself committed to leaving home, but his dignity held him up, and when the time at last arrived, he went off apparently undismayed and of good courage. Amyas was, indeed, the most distressed of the two, which gave the lad a reason for heroism and a feeling of dignity as the strong man of the family.

" Don't cry! " said he, majestically, to Lettice, who hung round him, drowned in tears, as if he had been

[40]

going to the antipodes. " I dare say you'll all do pretty well in a short time, little 'un, without me. You'l get over it, Lettie, in a while," he repeated; " and mind you don't forget the terrier pups: they're to be ready afore I come home again for rabbiting, you'll recollect? " And as he drove off in the taxed-cart to join the coach, he called out once more to his sorrowing relatives, " You'll not forget the pups! "

The boy, indeed, would have been shocked to see how well everything went on at the Woodhouse after his important departure. Lettie's tender little heart never quite forgot him, and in her solitary plays " uncle Edward " always enacted the part in her mind of all the heroes, and good knights and genii; else all was as before. Her chief playfellow now was the old blind man.

One bright beautiful day that autumn there was high feast and festival going on in the great old orchard behind the house, for the cider-press had arrived, and everybody about the farm had come in to help. The apple-trees, large and spreading, covered with the weird grey moss which clothes the branches in that soft damp climate with a sort of hoary hair, were hung with red and golden fruit and looked very idyllic. It was a prolific year, and the boughs were so laden that they would have broken under the weight of apples if they had not been propped up. Great baskets stood about in all directions to receive them; and a good deal of rude jollity was going on in this English

[41]

vintage. The men were perched in the higher branches, and the women stood below catching the fruit, collecting it on the ground, picking out the decayed apples, and emptying the others into the insatiable maw of the rude cider-press, which turned with a harsh creaking, grating noise, pressing out the juice into pails on one side, while the most imperfectly crushed apples were carried off on the other for the pigs.

" It's pretty late: you go and fetch Gabriel home from the cider-wring; he's tired, and you too," said her uncle, smiling at Lettice, who had been running in and out all day, assisting greatly, as she considered, in all the processes, with her pinafore full of apples.

" We've pretty nigh done now," said the old man, wearily, as she steered him carefully up among the piles of fruit. " He's a beautiful man, yer uncle, he is. I'm terrible much obliged to he. Madam Wynyate's trimming comikle in her temper, contrairy like, and I should just ha' toddled away years agone if it weren't along o' he: I knows that well enough."

" But you do a greatish deal, Gabriel, up and down," said the child, as he stumbled among the apples.

" Well," answered the old man, with some pride,

" I'm tottery, and creaky, and wheezy, but I can twiddle about after summat as well as most on 'um, and I'm none for wasting my time as the young 'uns is. There ayn't narrer an orchat anywhere as this 'un; and that

[42]

ratheripe* allays do bear such a wonderful deal o' his** fruit," he said, looking about with the curious affectation of being able to see, which is common among the blind. " The moon's at the full to-night, an' they'll well-nigh finish wi' the cider, I take it, with the help o' she."

" Them marks on her face looks so plain," mused Lettie. " What is they, Dannel? "

" That's the man as stole a nitch of wood o' the Sabbath-day," replied he, " and he were sot up there for a warnin' to them as wants it — I don't. Yer granny allays thinks ill o'

folk; she takes 'um by the wrong end, she do," muttered he, his wrongs rankling in his mind as they approached the house, and he heard Mrs. Wynyate's voice stern and sad.

" So yer uncle left yer the money after all, and not to Susan a bit," she was saying, rather reproachfully, to Amyas. " I've just a heerd it from the man wi' the cider-wring, and he heerd it over at Wallcott's when he were there. Wallcott laughed, he did, and said how could ye be so soft, and pressed for money so bad? "

" Susan were poor and wanted it," replied Amyas, in an apologetic tone.

" And who was poor and wanted it here, I'd like to know? " grumbled his mother, as she went off to the cider. She was proud of his conduct for all this, though

*** " Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies."— *Lycidas*.**

**** " If the salt have lost his savour."— " Its " does not occur once in our translation of the Bible, and only three times in Shakspeare.**

[43]

upon principle she spoke (and at great length too,) when things were wrong, but kept silence when they were right, which is a depressing and dispiriting way of conducting life.

" There, that's just him and her all over," continued the old man half aloud. " I mind one day when Norton Lisle were a-courtin' after yer mother. . . . What's come o' yer father?" he said, suddenly turning to the child.

" My father! " cried Lettie, surprised. No one ever mentioned him, and he had quite died out of her little life; but the word recalled old times in her childish recollections of something painful, though she could not have told what they were.

" Yea, he ayn't much of a one for to boast on, but he is thy father anyhow, and thou oughtest not to be kep from knowin' o' him, as I take it they does by thee," the old man went on with some glee. " I likes to rip up a mystery," he mumbled to himself, " and 'twill vex madam."

" Why doesn't he come here? " asked the little girl in an awe-struck whisper.

" I take it thy grandmother couldn't abide he, and then he's a deal up and down a-doin' what he likes, and he have just a dropped thee into anither's nest like a cuckoo, and goes about the world free like, wi'out incumbrances. I heerd on him last down at Southport,

sailin' for furrin' parts, Australee or 'Merikee, or some o' them. P'r'aps he mayn't come back agin at all, who

[44]

knows? But don't ye tell madam as I talked on him," said he, as they entered the house.

That winter Amyas's fortunes seemed to improve a little. There was a further fall of timber, the price of wheat rose, as did that of bark in the spring, and he was able to tide over some of his difficulties, for a time at least.

He began to look a little after Lettice's education, and she learnt more of the three R's than Mrs. Wynyate at all approved of.

" As for reading, there isn't much use, as I see, for more o' that than 'll do the Catechism;" and as for arithmetic, anything beyond what was required to calculate the pounds of butter was sheer robbery of the dairy. Still, Lettice was quick at learning, and got on in spite of her grandmother's warnings of all sorts of evil connected with knowledge, ever since the days of grandmother Eve.

A considerable part of one's education, however, is that which nobody has given or is answerable for: the accidental inferences, the chance ideas, which are sown like seeds before the wind, and bear fruit, no one knows how or whence.

The old " dark " man was exceedingly fond of her, but, with the love of power so common among the blind, he exercised it somewhat despotically.

" And what d'ye hear o' yer uncle? " he would say, importantly. "I'm in hopes as he's a got plenty to do, and does it, not all along like yer father. What is it

[45]

yer little hymn says?— ' And Satan finds some mischief still for idle folk to do.' And, I take it, the Devil's always uncommon handy for to tempt them as holds out their hands to him. Ye know he's like a ragin' lion up and down the world."

" Was he ever seen lately, d'ye think, Dannel, anywhere hereabouts? " whispered Lettie, almost too frightened to put her query.

“ Bless ye, child, yes! Lambourne see'd he as plain as the church tower, at the turn in the Deep Lane, like a calf wi' saucer eyes, and I heerd o' one as had a sore struggle wi' him for's soul, dying down at Fordingdean.”

Pleased with the effect he produced, the old man's stories grew more and more dreadful, and his accounts of the real presence of the Evil One began to take possession of the young girl's imagination. One night, as she was preparing for her little evening devotions, it seemed to her as if “ he ” was himself present in bodily form in the room, to prevent her from uttering her prayer. St. Agnes herself could hardly have seemed a more unlikely subject for the assaults of the fiend than the young girl, standing trembling in the shadow of the still moonlight, and looking the very emblem of purity, in her long white night-dress. The wide old latticed window had been partially walled up to save the tax, and the single high upright stone mullion which remained, with its horizontal bar, threw the shadow of a cross on the floor and over her little bed, as she had often liked to see. At length, though in a paroxysm of terror, she

[46]

knelt down close by it as a sort of protection and pronounced the holy words in his despite, and then, taking her Bible in her hand—the recognized amulet against the power of the Devil—she turned with desperate courage to face and confound him. To her infinite amazement and relief there was no one to be seen. He was not there!

From that time she began to doubt whether there might not be a little mistake, and whether Satan was in the habit of walking into people's houses in this familiar way, at the present time, whatever might have been the case in former days. Her scepticism did not reach further, for was there not a formidable picture of the Witch of Endor in the folio Bible, which she always turned over in an agony of dread lest the horrid image should haunt her dreams, though, Eve like, having once “ peeped ” at it, her caution was of little use.

Some time after this last experience she was sitting by her uncle as usual on the Sunday evening, as she dearly loved to do, when the whole world seemed at rest, and he had

time for " discourse." It was still broad sunshine, and warm, which disposes to courage; and private, which disposes to confidence.

" Uncle Amyas," said she, suddenly, " did you ever see the Devil your own self? "

" No, child," he answered, laughing (and a great comfort the laugh was to her mind), " nor any one else that I know of. Are ye afraid of meeting him some day out walking? "

[47]

" But, uncle Amyas," said she, evading the home thrust, " ye know it's said about his coming roaring to Bunyan, and how he was always hearing of him calling out all manner of temptations, and many folk have seen him too in the books, or how should they ha' told how he was made, ye know ? Them horns and his tail, ye know. *Some*body must have seen him sometime." *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *Bunyan's Life* were almost her only reading beside the Bible.

" Well, my little 'un," answered Amyas, slowly, " for a' that I don't believe that he's seen. Evil temptations is strong enow in our own hearts in a' conscience, and p'r'aps they thinks of him till they believe they sees him wi' their eyes. I can't say; but I take it, even if the Devil is as they tell on, that he's felt, not seen. No; I don't believe in him one bit," he went on with sudden energy; " 'twould be a good God and an evil God if he's so strong and powerful as all that. Don't thee mind in Job how Satan's just sent out like one of the other angels—that's a very different concern. Don't ye be frightened that way, my little mayd. Ye needn't be afraid o' him nor any other ' bugs;'* God is about us in all our ways, both to will and to do; not that other one."

Lettie was trying to prove the worth of her convictions in real life. Her grandmother's teaching had borne its fruit: she honestly believed in her own

*** " For "Warwick was the bug that feared us all."— *Henry IV*. part ii. Also as in Bugbear.**

[48]

exceeding wickedness, over which, by fits and starts, she lamented herself with most sincere sorrow. A curious feeling of unreality about it sometimes however came over

her, but she put it from her with horror, and only esteemed it a fresh proof of her " parlous state." An odd volume of *Fox's Book of Martyrs* had got into the house, together with a dozen cotton umbrellas and a pile of manuscript violin music—effects from a bad debt (somehow Amyas often had bad debts)—and the stories of their sufferings had a grim attraction for her imagination. One night, as she sat in the window reading, and considering whether she could have suffered for her faith like Latimer, or like Faithful in Vanity Fair—the one was to her as real an historical event as the other— she put her finger close to the candle to try. She held it manfully there for about half a second, but snatched it away when it began to sting, and she cried bitterly afterwards as she bewailed her extreme sinfulness, proved thus by this searching test. She was carrying out her little experiments in philosophy and religion like greater folk.

[49]

CHAPTER V.

FATHER AND SON.

" That from everything I saw
I could some invention draw,
And raise pleasure to its height,
Through the meanest object's sight,
By the murmur of a spring,
Or the least bough's rustelling,
By a daisy whose leaves spread,
Shut when Titan goes to bed."— WITHERS.

IT was nearly ten years since Edward had departed. Ten years makes but little difference in people of a certain age: Amyas and Mrs. Wynyate were neither of them much altered; the wrinkles in her face were a little more numerous, and the furrows of care deeper in his, but this was all; Job and John had remained exactly what they were,

though John had sought his fortunes elsewhere; but to Lettice the change had been one from a child to a woman, and Edward had become a trustworthy officer of his Majesty's Revenue Department.

Things had gone on much the same at the Woodhouse. A good deal more timber had been cut, the money-lender had been down more than once upon Amyas; but he had contrived hitherto to keep, not his whole head perhaps, but at least his eyes and nose, as it were, out of water.

[50]

But the years had been bad, the interest accumulating, and this summer Wallcott, with wrath in his soul, was again riding up the hollow lane on his road to the Woodhouse. He was not alone this time: he had brought his son with him; and as they rode along together he expounded his schemes to the young man— who did not seem to take the smallest interest in them, but was gazing with much fervour into all the hedges and ditches as he passed, his whole attention engaged upon the plants and insects there.

“ And now,” said his father, “ I shan't go on any more after this fashion: I've had patience too long. I've just bought up the last bit o' the mortgage, and I shall foreclose for certain sure. It's as pretty a bit of property as there is about: just look at the trees: shows what land it is if it were made anything like proper use of.”

Everhard *was* looking at the trees, and with great attention.

“ I never saw so old a hornbeam,” said he; “and those twisted roots of the pollard-oak that grow down into the lane—why, they're as big as trunks! ”

“ I wasn't talking of that rubbish,” answered his father, testily; “ I meant the large elm above—as good a stick of timber as ever I saw grown.”

“ Yes,” said his son, dreamily looking round, “ it is a beautiful place.”

The dark lane was fringed with exquisite ferns: bright pink lichens and blue harebells shone out

[51]

between; it was hung with wreaths of wild hop, briony, and honeysuckle: nothing could be more lovely.

“ And there's that rare vetch! I never saw it growing before,” added he, catching sight of a flower, “ and such a sphinx butterfly.”

“ You're enough to drive a man mad, lad, I declare! I'm talking about business to you, and you go off about a lot of stupid weeds and flies of no use nor signification whatever except to a stupid nincompoop like you!” said Wallcott, angrily.

Everhard was silent, and followed his father as he rode in once more at the field-gate.

“ What a pretty spot,” said he, admiringly, as they crossed the meadow and looked over the waving trees in the dell to the pool at the bottom, and the peeps at blue distances over the brow on the other side.

“ Well, I'm glad you've sense enough to see *that*,” answered his father, a little soothed.

“ And six butterfly orchises together, I declare! ” muttered Everhard to himself, luckily unheard.

They rode on towards the house.

“ I've bought this last lot of timber standing—under Filmer's name—not to be cut till called for,” observed Wallcott. “ It won't do to strip the place; it'll bring its money better with the trees growing, than they'd fetch if they were down.”

“ I never saw anything prettier than it is,” answered his son, enthusiastically, as they rode along up the old avenue.

[52]

“ Well, I'm pleased you think so much on it,” said his gratified father. “ I've never telled ye before, but it's yer mother's money mostly as is set on it, and I've been thinking as p'r'aps we might keep it and come and live here ourselves when it falls in some time. If ever I got tired of business, it 'ud make a nice box; and there's capital fishing for you if it were preserved— it's some of the best water in the country: it'll be dirt cheap, after all, considering everything.”

“ What, does the land run down to the river? ” inquired Everhard, eagerly. He was an ardent angler, and it was the first time that he had seemed to understand what his father

was driving at: they generally, indeed, talked and thought in two parallel lines, which never touched each other at any one point.

Old Wallcott was the owner of a small paper-mill on the little river, where it ran through the cathedral town some fifteen miles away; but new inventions had come in since the war— there had been some difficulty about the water, and the business had gradually been suffered to go to decay. He had married for the second time a widow with some property, and employed his superfluous energies, which were great, in lending money in small sums and at high interest up and down the country. The Woodhouse was by far the largest of his ventures; he had gradually possessed himself of the other mortgages on the property, and the net was fast closing in, as poor Amyas's chance of repaying became smaller every year.

[53]

Everhard was a curious son of the old moneylender; but nature seems often to indemnify herself for over-exertion in one generation by a contrary extreme in the next. He was fond of beasts, and birds, and flowers, and insects— " bug-hunting,"* as it was irreverently called in the shipowner's office where he was at work. He had that amount of poetic instinct which enables a man to see with his eyes and hear with his ears what nature is doing, and having been a weakly child, the last survivor of many, his father had impatiently endured these most unnatural, absurd tastes as some of Everhard's " maggots."

In right, too, of his weakliness, he had spent most of his time near the sea at his grandfather's, where his mother had persuaded the old curate of the village to look after his education. Mr. Denver, however, had infused a very small quantity of useful knowledge into the lad—whom he taught as a great favour—and a large amount of the natural history and geology which interested himself: all the things, in short, which were considered in those days most "useless and out of the way; " and Wallcott uttered deep sighs whenever he thought of the waste of the good money upon "such a lot of ridic'lous nonsense."

“ If I'd ever known Mr. Denver's head was addled after such like rubbish,” grumbled he, “ Everhard shouldn't never ha' gone nigh him.”

“ But he's got his health,” said his mother, who,

*** Insects of all kinds. “ Lightning bugs,” *i. e.* fireflies.— AMERICA.**

[54]

with a puzzled, awe-struck respect for her son's education, was nearly as much disappointed as her husband at the turn it had taken. “ He's grown quite strong and hearty, and eats his vittles as well as e'er a gentlefolk of 'um.”

“ I should like to know how ever he's to earn his living,” groaned his father. “ Yer cousin a took he into his office, but he'll never do nothing at the work! He knows no more about getting money nor Lord Hopton's son,” added he with a dismal pride.

“ At all events them things don't spend it,” said his mother consolingly. “ And what for, ye know, did ye have him called Everhard (such an out-of-the-way name) if ye didn't want to make a gentleman of him? ” added she with a sort of sigh, for, after all, she felt that her son was drifting a long way from her; she had begun to suffer from the gulf which a great difference of education between parent and child inevitably brings with it, even with the most affectionate intentions.

Meantime the father and son rode on together, and the old wood-yard at last opened upon them, with the deep dark shadows lying across it. A peacock sat sunning himself on a red cart, and all kinds of living things were enjoying themselves sleepily in the bright summer's day.

“ Hey, I say, who's at home? come out, somebody! ” cried Wallcott, somewhat consequentially, before the porch, as became an owner *in petto*. “ Get off, Everhard,” said he as he threw his own still active leg

[55]

off the saddle. They fastened their horses to the broken fence and went in. As before, Mrs. Wynyate stood at the door.

“ Amyas is not in,” said she shortly, as Wallcott made his way past her into the hall.

“ Well, Mrs. Wynyate, he never is when I call! I can't think what he fancies I'm made on— sugar, I suppose, to melt in his mouth— that he's to go on in this fashion with arrears, and the interest on arrears— compound interest.”

“ He's in the wood close; I'll send for him if you wish to speak with him,” replied she, without moving a muscle.

“ No; I'll go to him myself, and see what the crops are like with ,my own eyes. Come, Everhard,” said he, looking over his shoulder, as he turned on his heel, followed by Mrs. Wynyate.

But Everhard did not seem to hear.

The large low old room, with its panelled walls and ornamental ceiling, half hall, half kitchen, was cool and pleasant coming out of the hot glaring June day: a dark oak screen shut it in from the entrance, against which were fastened some branching antlers; a leathern jack hung from one of these: a rusty helmet, matchlock, and partizan were laid across the rest, a bad portrait or two were against the walls, and a great tankard of old blue china stood above some polished carved black furniture. It struck the young man's sense of beauty, or rather it all served as a becoming frame to the picture in

[56]

his mind, which he remembered unconsciously afterwards.

At the other end of the room, just risen from her place in the old-fashioned window-seat, stood Lettice, with her work in her hand: the sunshine, subdued by the latticed windows, and the vine and jessamine leaves outside, threw changing shadows upon the pure lines of her face, the clear soft complexion, a little pale, the long eyelashes and dark-blue dreamy eyes: there was a peculiarly tender, delicate expression about her whole manner and appearance.

“ She looks like a white violet,” said the young man to himself.

There was metal more attractive here than quarrelling about compound interest out of doors. Instead of following his father and Mrs. Wynyate, the young man walked straight up to her, drawn on as if he could not help himself.

“ I hope Mr. Wallcott is not going to be angry with uncle Amyas,” said she, gravely and anxiously, looking after them without the least shyness, and quite unconscious of the expression in the young man's eyes.

“ I believe Mr. Wynyate has been behindhand with his money lately,” answered he, with sudden interest in the mortgage, and trying to remember what his father had said about it; but it was so jumbled up in his mind with a host of like transactions, with which he had always been infinitely bored, that his recollections were of the most hazy description.

[57]

“ Uncle Amyas is so good to everybody,” said the girl, with tears in her eyes, “ and so just. I'm sure he'd pay if he could.”

Everhard had no time to explain that these were not the usual terms on which money was lent in the world, even if he had wished it, for at that moment the horses outside began to bite and kick each other, and a loud neigh of complaint came from the aggressor (as usual), who had begun the fray and was least hurt.

“ Oughtn't they to be put into the stable? ” said Lettice, looking out through the “ quarrels ” of the lattice. “ They'll hurt each other, I'm afraid.” And taking up the little sun-bonnet by her side, she went out, followed by Everhard, undid the reins of the nearest to her, and led the way into an empty stable, lower down in the farmyard.

“ I'm glad it was my horse she got hold of instead of father's,” said the young man to himself.

He fastened them both up. “ Shall I give them a lock of fresh hay? ” said she, going to a laden waggon which had just been brought in. No one was to be seen about the farmyard: all the world were away in the hayfield, and she carried in an armful of the scented grass to the manger. There was a little wicket-gate opposite the place where they were standing, arched in with great “ snowballs ” and sweet-smelling lilacs, which led into the orchard.

“ May I go into that cool place? ” said he, turning

[58]

from the glare. The sun shone fiercely between the barns and brick walls of the outhouses.

They passed together into the shady silent orchard, girdled in with great trees, and with the rich luxuriant vegetation which is so striking in the southern counties of England. Two little milk-white calves, with soft dark eyes, came running up to her, and rubbed affectionately against her shoulder.

“ They're very fond of me,” said Lettice, apologetically, putting her arms round one of them.

“ I dare say they are,” said the young man in a very convinced tone.

Lettice had lived all her life chiefly with men, and was not in the least shy with them; but this was quite a new variety of the species: she did not understand what he could mean, and looked up surprised.

“ I feed them with milk, you know,” she said simply, explaining.

“ I don't think that's the reason,” answered he; “ we seem to think beasts care for nothing but their stomachs. A dog loves his master best, though other people may feed him; and even bees have their likes and dislikes. Don't they sting one person, and let another do what he pleases? ”

“ Yes,” observed Lettice, thoughtfully. “ The hives always sting granny, and they let me come quite nigh when they're swarming even.”

He smiled. “ People talk a great deal of rubbish about the difference between reason and instinct,” said

[59]

the young man warmly, growing grand, pragmatical, and instructive with such an exceptionally attentive listener. “ I should like to know where they draw their line, and what's the difference between an elephant and a stupid man that isn't to the elephant's advantage? ”

Lettice listened with the utmost reverence: it was “ beautiful,” she thought, to hear such talk. Uncle Amyas was very clever and very kind, but he had grown very silent of late

with the weight of his anxieties, and besides, his discourse was never half so fine as this. She had never heard anything of the kind before: observations on isolated facts were chiefly dealt with at the Woodhouse.

They walked on into the orchard, green and still in its deep shade, full of the hush of the hot June day, with nothing stirring but a buzzing beetle: even the birds were silent with the heat—the exquisite shadows of the great trees were thrown across the sward, the brilliant lights gleaming on a bunch of May in one direction, or the golden cluster of laburnum in another. Through the tall trunks were peeps at the little dark pools in the dell beneath—the ancient fish-ponds of old Catholic days—three of which lay one below the other at the bottom of a steep descent, cool and delicious to look at, in the midst of a wild tangle of hollies and oak and hawthorn, hung with travellers'-joy and honeysuckle, while the tall foxgloves grew in groups with a sort of stately grace, and were reflected in the water.

[60]

“ What a pleasant place,” said Everhard, with much enthusiasm; “ and it's so hot and hard and dusty in the world outside.”

They strolled on in and out of the shadows.

“ What enormous nests those are up in the high elms yonder,” said he.

“ The herons build in those trees,” answered Lettice, shyly.

“ There aren't above a dozen heronries in all England, I believe,” cried he, with great interest, “ and see those two squirrels running round and round on to the beech-trunk after each other.”

“ One of 'um dropped on my shoulder as I sat very still under the tree on Sunday,” she said in a low voice.

“ Ah, he thought you made a nice step for him; and what did he say when he found you out? they're very temperous is scugs.”

“ He looked up so wondery out of his eyes to see I were live like he was, and then he scolded me quite loud,” said she, led on as he artfully began to extract all the lore

concerning the birds, beasts, and fish of the Woodhouse which the departed Edward had so carefully instilled into his niece in past days.

They turned home again by Lettice's favourite corner, which she was almost as fond of as in old child days,— it was shut in by a great cedar-tree, one of the relics of the past glories of the place, where a few straggling flowers still grew in a quiet nook sheltered by the old brick wall of the neglected kitchen-garden,

[61]

with its curiously moulded coping, the rich shades of dark red variegated with lichen, half hidden under showers of clematis and ivy. The air was murmurous with bees, and the wind, soft and low, began to breathe in the tall tree-tops above their heads with a soothing ripple of sound.

“ It's so nice and quiet here to come to,” said she, “like a sort o' nest, and they all, the birds and the bees, seem to say such pretty things.”

He did not answer except with a smile. She looked very much in keeping with it all: it was a very harmonious “ song without words,” and required none, he felt. A tall white rose-tree was blooming high in the air above their heads as they stood: the hay had just been cut in the orchard and lay in fragrant swathes under the apple-trees, besides which

“ What's lovelier than the new-blown rose?
What's sweeter than the new-mown close?
The breath of love ” —

says the old Handel duet, and this was beginning to be felt in the air as a just faintly added perfume.

At last Wallcott's loud voice was heard in the distance, on the other side of the house, in the still air, and Mrs. Wynyate's shrill and angry answers.

“ They'll be wanting— us,” Lettice was going to say, but it sounded too intimate to her, and she changed it into “ the horses,” as she led the way hurriedly through the back-door into the house. Ever-

[62]

ever did he get to? ” observed her grandmother, parenthetically.

Lettice, however, was studying the figure-book in the window, and could not be expected to hear.

“ Wallcott's son? Why, he rode away with his father, surely! ” answered her uncle, taking the “calculator” from her to work the sum himself; and Lettice ran upstairs, though she could not have told why; she felt as if something had happened, though she would have been utterly puzzled to say, even to herself, what it was.

[65]

CHAPTER VI.

PLEASANT WATERS.

“And beauty, born of murmuring sound,
Hath passed into her face.”—WORDSWORTH.

WALLCOTT and his son rode on in silence, the father grumbling to himself as he went along, till they came in sight of the beautiful river through the trees, rapid, clear, and transparent.

“ I wonder to whom Mr. Wynyate lets his fishing? ” said Everhard, suddenly.

“ Lets it! ” cried his father, with a horse-laugh. “Ye may be sure he's such a soft that he lets it to nobody: he's just the sort of man to give it away. Not having a penny to bless himself with, he's sure to be generous: that's just as he did wi’ what Amos Young left him, and he owed it to me as 'twere, and had no right to give it up o' that fashion. I say, fellow,” he called out to a man in brown leather leggings and a dark green surplice (smock-frock), who was setting up some hurdles, “who hires your master's fishing? ”

“ My brother gives it to whomsumdever he pleases, at his pleasure,” said Job, with some grandeur.

[66]

“ And to whom now may it be his pleasure? ” inquired Wallcott with a sneer. Job, however, vouchsafed no answer, but turned away to the lambs he was penning.

“ I'll just make him give it to me, if that's how 'tis,” said Wallcott, savagely, as they rode on. “ To keep me out of my money, and then be generous with what isn't his'n! ”

“ Surely we ought to pay for it,” observed his son, anxiously.

“ Well, I don't care; we'll deduct it from the interest,” answered his father. “ I shall write to-night and tell him if I can't get money out of him I'll take it out in trout. You're allays worriting me about that fishing at Mapleford, which 'ud cost no end o' money: here, you take this 'un, as you can have for naught as one may say. You may begin to-morrow if you like to.”

Everhard jumped eagerly at the opportunity which his father so unwarily put within his reach; he had a holiday from the shipowner's office, and immediately set about his fishing. It was too far to ride over every day from home, and he secured a bedroom at a farmhouse so situated as to make it necessary for him to cross by the Woodhouse on his road to the river; and whenever he had any spare time, which was much oftener than was good for him, he went over there.

Amyas was more annoyed at the proceeding when he heard of it than at anything which had yet occurred. It looked to him like the beginning of taking the

[67]

management of his property out of his hands: there was no help for it, however—he was entirely in the money-lender's power; but when Everhard attempted to make friends with him, it was more than even his patience could stand, and he avoided the young man most determinedly.

The fishing had now been going on for two whole days, but Everhard's passage to and fro had been in vain, and he began to think himself very ill-used, having seen nothing more interesting than the top of Mrs. Wynyate's formidable cap. She was very busy

supplying the mowers; and Lettice, hard at work in the kitchen and the dairy, had heard and seen nothing of the fishermen, when on the third day,—

" 'Tis long past dinner-time " (*i. e.* twelve o'clock), " and Job not home," said her grandmother. " I hates to have the food loiterin' and litterin' all day like that. One can't eat a bit oneself, one gets so sick o' seeing it about, allays doing in the kitchen as Nancy and me is now, and she's so slow at her choors.* That man from Dorset says he's used to seven meals at har'st time; his dewbit, breakfast, nuncheon, crunsheon, nammet, crammet, and supper: he'll eat us out of house and home if he goes on like that. What ever I'm to do wi' him I can't think. You take his nuncheon-bag to yer uncle; he must be kep by them nasty lambs."

Lettice did as she was bid. It was not often that she now went beyond the garden, and all the birds

*** " Char "-woman. American, " chores."**

[68]

seemed to make her welcome as she came out among them. She passed through the hayfield, where the great waggons were loading, the horses standing sleepily by, eating the scented grass. The pleasant music of the mowers whetting their scythes (ill-exchanged for the harsh grating sound of the hay-cutting machine) seemed to fill the air; while the part of the meadow still unmown, with daisies pied, lay before her, " you scarce could see the grass for flowers." Over all hung the summer haze, " the pride o' the marnen," as it is called on that country-side. Job, however, was not to be seen, and the obnoxious " Dorset man " directed her forwards. "He's gone t'other side to Langley Bottom but now."

She turned down through a little coppice wood which shelved to the river, where the rich luxuriance of vegetation in those southern districts was in all its glory: the brilliant green of the tall fern, the bright midsummer shoots, the wild tangled undergrowth under the taller trees, as if nature enjoyed the very fact of existence and loved to be alive: it is a perfect paradise of trees and flowers, though Amyas might perhaps have complained that his crops did not relish the light soil so well. She went along the path, singing in a

low voice, as she unconsciously always did at her work whatever it was, rather to her grandmother's annoyance: when she came upon a man industriously threshing the water, and stopped short, for she recognized Everhard, who began to wind up his line as he walked towards her.

[69]

“ I suppose your herons are so fond of fishing that they don't leave much for other people,” said he. “ Does your uncle get much when he's at home? I've caught next to nothing.”

“ Sometimes,” replied she, shyly, annoyed with herself for not finding anything better to say.

“ I wonder what flies he used,” mused Everhard, looking over his own collection.

“ He used to shoot the trout, by times.”

“ Shoot them! But that wasn't fair.”

“ Granny was wishful of fish some days for dinner, and he hadn't no time for his rod allays.”

There was an awkward pause as they walked on silently, side by side, by the river's brink, while they were both wondering where all the words in the English language seemed to have gone.

“ There was a big old trout lived at that turn further on under the alder, I mind he used to say,” said she, feeling as if she were inhospitable, and making an effort.

“ If you would but tell me the haunts where the fish live? It is such a thing to get some one who knows the river,” said he eagerly, as if his whole soul were in his rod.

“ But I don't know them now,” answered she. “ Uncle Ted comes so seldom to us.” He kept by her as she moved along the little copse path, but said not a word, feeling as if he had expended all his ammunition.

“ There,” said she, “ that's one place where the

[70]

fish used to love to bide." And she pointed to where a large trout was holding his own in the strong current, his head against the stream, balancing himself with an almost imperceptible motion of his orange fins. She stood for a moment leaning over the river. Nothing could be more exquisite than the rapid bright clear stream, which, coming down from the chalk hills beyond, rushed past swift as an arrow, though the plain looked perfectly flat—so brilliant, so dark, so light, the water ever changing, and yet the stream ever the same, the " busy river " flowing on for ever, in such haste and never arriving, the most changeless thing in its ceaseless motion. The trees, and even the hills, seem touched with signs of decay and age, but the bright water flows on as fresh as the day when it first came out of the fountains of the earth: the little wavelets rose cool in the hot sunshine, quiet, yet never resting: there was a strange fascination in watching it. The may-flies were fluttering over it, a kingfisher darted restlessly across, giant dragon-flies flashed fiercely to and fro among the tall willow-herb and meadow-sweet, and blue forget-me-nots swayed in the stream. The girl steadied herself by the stump of an old willow, and stood gazing into the cool translucent depth.

" How beautiful it is! one feels almost as if it would be so nice to throw oneself in," said she, with a dreamy smile.

Everhard suddenly drew her from the brink, and set her back a couple of yards or more as if she had been a

[71]

child. She turned round with an expression which she intended to be very angry and annoyed.

" How like a fawn," said the young man to himself (his comparisons ran all among the birds and beasts), as he looked at the startled shy look of her large soft eyes and delicate nostrils and mouth. " I beg your pardon," he went on aloud; " but you looked exactly as if the water-nixies were trying to lure you in."

" What are the nixies? " answered she, half smiling

" Water-sprites with bad intentions," replied he, laughing.

“ But,” said Lettice— for here was an opportunity of further settling her mind on that difficult point in theology which still tormented her, with one whom she considered very wise— ” you don't believe in our meeting evil spirits here, do you? I don't mean water-nixies,” she added, with a smile: “ that's nonsense, I know. But,” she added, in a low voice, “ the preacher in chapel on Sunday said, 'Demons, devils, hundreds of them, with the Prince of Darkness at their head, were always about us.' “ And she looked anxiously at him.

He could hardly help smiling at the extreme incongruousness of the question and the questioner: the pure, innocent little face before him did not seem to have much to do with evil spirits.

“ Uncle Amyas doesn't think we can see them,” she added, uneasy at his hesitation. Supposing, after all, that this learned pundit should differ from her uncle?

He looked up and saw her expression.

[72]

“ No, certainly, I don't believe it a bit,” said he, very positively, to her great and evident relief. Strictly speaking, his opinion was not perhaps of great value, as the question had never occurred to him before; but it is said that a judge's decision has the greatest weight when no reasons whatever are given for it: and as Everhard's oracular decision seemed quite satisfactory to Lettice, he prudently made a quick descent on things which he knew a little more about.

“ Listen! That's the sedge-warbler. It's a nice pretty note, isn't it? And how those missel-thrushes do sing. I never heard such a place as this is for birds.”

“ You know them all by their voices to set their names to,” answered Lettice, admiringly. “ I'm always strivin' to hearken what they says one to another; and never gets to know their faces like. What's that a-moving in your pocket? You haven't a got the birds in there? ”

“ It's only a tame snake,” said Everhard, pulling one out of his pocket. “ Wouldn't you like to have it? It's very quiet and harmless, and it's marked so pretty.”

What can a man do more than offer the most precious of his possessions— the best that he has?

“ I don't think granny would quite like it in the house,” replied Lettice, shrinking a little back as she tried to feel grateful and to admire the uncanny pet sufficiently. They had reached the gate which led out of the wood into the farther field.

“ Are you going already? ” said he, regretfully.

[73]

“ I'm wanted at home,” answered she, a little reluctantly; “ and there's uncle Job must have his bag. It's he will tell you about the grayling.”

“ I'm afraid Mr. Wynyate is very vexed at my father taking the fishing: he won't even speak to me when I meet him up and down; so I didn't dare to send him any fish yesterday.”

“ Perhaps it's because as your father talked of— ”

and she stopped.

“ I don't wonder,” he answered, a little sadly; “ but I'm in hopes as he'll think better, and give time about the mortgage. I'll do my best. Couldn't ye say to your uncle some time, that we'd no thought to annoy him, and that I wouldn't for all in the world do any harm to anything of his.”

“ He'll come right: uncle Amyas is allays so kind,” said she, moving off to Job— who was standing looking at them in a “ brown stud,” as he leant on a gate which led into a field so gorgeous with poppies and cornflowers that the wheat seemed quite a secondary part of the concern.

“ Those flowers look just like a garden,” said Everhard, admiringly.

“ Well, what on earth can folk think them pretty for, I wonder? ” replied Job. “ The tilth ain't nothing as it should be to-year;* the ground haven't a had richment enow, though there's no saying where Amyas were to get manure for't, I'm sure.” Then, as he watched

*** “ To-year ”—As in “ to-day ” or “ to-morrow.”**

[74]

Lettice moving homewards, and Everhard's eyes following her, he went on to himself,— ” Eh, he's sweet upon Lettie is the young Wallcott, and that's a good thing. Maybe 'twill make the old 'un easier about the money. Amyas seems allays to think as I bean't so sharp, but I've a very long head when I chooses,” concluded Job, with a nod worthy of Lord Burleigh, as he prepared to answer Everhard's questions about the fishing.

Therefore after this, whenever the young man came to the farmyard and loitered about till Lettice appeared, and made excuses to discuss farming matters with Job, and broke his landing-net, and found a dozen transparent reasons for strolling up to the Woodhouse, that patient man was quite “agreeble,” and Lettice embarked unconsciously on these difficult waters with only this very unversed pilot to guide her.

A day or two after, the young man entered the house with a remarkably fine trout in his hand. “ The finest I've caught yet, and I thought you ought to have it, out of your own river, Mrs. Wynyate,” said he. “ Might I ask for some silk-thread to mend my rod?” And, her grandmother standing sternly by, Lettice produced the skein, and with rather trembling hands wound it silently round the broken bits which he held together, and there was a charm in the very constraint.

Another time it was, “ I've been over to Seaford on business for my father, and seen your son Ned, Mrs. Wynyate: he sends ye word they're so busy that he can't be spared to come home: there's been so much

[75]

smuggling lately down the coast, that they're at it day and night with the cutter, and he can't get away, he says, even for a day.”

“ Well,” replied she, “ it's all in the day's work as 'twere; 'tis his business, and Amyas is dead agin they 'fair traders'—he thinks no end o' harm on 'um. But run goods is a great conveniency, there's no denying o' that: what wi' th' duties and such like, tea's up at no end of a price, and brandy too, and the cider's so cold upon the stomach as I must keep some in the house now. And what the King and the Queen is about I can't think, as

they're so hard on poor folk now about the taxes and things! What ever does they do wi' all that money we pays, I wonder? ”

Instead of attending to which instructive remarks, Everhard had turned to where Lettice stood preparing a heap of golden apples for an immense “ pasty ” which Mrs. Wynyate was constructing, with a crust half-an-inch thick: a tremendous “ piece of resistance.” There was no weak indulgence of the appetite in her culinary régime, and even a tart in her hands took a serious and mortificatory aspect.

“ What beautiful fruit,” said he, beginning to eat the “ pigs ” into which she was cutting it, and which she put before him without looking up. “ 'Twill taste rare and good when it's baked,” he added in a very suggestive tone.

Lettice looked up at her grandmother with the bright colour rising in her cheeks; but Mrs. Wynyate

[76]

was not given to hospitality: she hated a stranger, and was even unsoftened by the praises of her pie. It is bad manners, however, in a farm-house, not to offer “ refreshment,” at whatever hour in the day; and she suddenly turned on Lettice as she bethought herself of a compromise.

“ Here's my keys, child: do you fetch that bottle of hard batch” (wine made from the outdoor grapes); “ 'tis in the corner cupboard.”

Lettice rather unwillingly obeyed, for the mixture was so like verjuice that even her long-suffering uncle had declared after the first taste that “ he thought he had had enough.” As she poured it out accordingly for Everhard, she looked up in his face with a half smile of annoyance— a comic look of deprecation at being made to offer it to him.

But Everhard was equal to the emergency. He drank off the horrid stuff with the air of a hero who will dare this and even more for his lady's sake! There was a conscious virtue about him incidental to the state of “ veal,” as some one has called that intermediate

phase of a man's life; but even this sacrifice was of no avail, and he was obliged to take his leave.

All through that summer weather, however, he went and came. He discovered that the Woodhouse was on the nearest road to every place; and as it did not add above half the distance to his journeys, no one but his horse had any reason to complain. He and Lettice met continually, although Amyas still persistently avoided

[77]

him. The young man made several attempts to be friendly, but after a while he thought it wisest to wait a better time, and gave up the trial.

Sometimes it was a request, sometimes an offering, which brought him up to the house; and the girl's eyes grew bright, and the unconscious colour rose to her cheeks, and a wistful look came into her face when they met, and he thought it was the most eloquent speech which he had ever come across.

The fish appeared constantly at dinner: for Mrs. Wynyate received the tribute graciously, but Amyas made no observation upon them. Lettice watched anxiously for an opportunity, hoping to put in a word in the fisher's favour. Her uncle, however, ignored the subject so entirely, that she had not the courage to begin on it.

“ Wallcott's son takes uncommon care not to do no hurt anywhere: he's a very 'tentful man, and he's a sort of right like to be here, ye know, one may say,” said Job one day—which did not make the matter better in his brother's eyes. Amyas did not answer: he knew better than the others how near the precipice of ruin they stood with Everhard's father, and wished to have no dealings with the son.

[78]

CHAPTER VII.

A SUMMER'S NIGHT.

“ He came not; no, he came not:

The night came on alone,
The little stars sate one by one
Each on his golden throne;
The evening air passed by my cheek,
The leaves at once were stirred,
But the beating of my own heart
Was all the sound I heard."—LORD HOUGHTON.

IT was above a fortnight since Everhard had been heard of; he had left no sign as to when he might be expected again, and he hung by so loose a thread that no one had the smallest ground by which to calculate his movements.

" I suppose that young fella's pretty nigh tired o' his fishing," said Job one evening. " I haven't a seen him about this ever so long."

Lettice stepped out at the door with a sigh: she had finished her day's work and was very weary: her grandmother had been more than usually trying, and as she made a few steps out upon the grass in the orchard she felt very lonely. " I wish I'd somebody young just for to speak to, granny's so old " (she did not like to

[79]

say, even to herself, " so cross "); "and uncle Amyas is grown so sad like," she said to herself, generalizing her particular feeling into the desire for sympathy. Perhaps Everhard was gone " for good," as she justly said to herself. There was clearly no reason why he should come back—he might have had enough of fishing; and two great tears, to her own surprise, began to creep down her little cheeks. And then she asked herself what it meant, with a sudden qualm at the dismal change which had come upon her unawares. Lovemaking was an occupation so entirely unknown at the Woodhouse that it did not enter into Lettie's experience, and she was not versed in all the methods and circumstances of " falling " into it by which young novel-readers of the present day know to an iota what will happen, and what ought, must, and should be said under every possible conjuncture. This new and strange feeling was one which nobody at the farm,

and, therefore, in the world, had ever to her knowledge undergone, and she blushed and grew pale again: for as most of the things she said and did were wrong according to her grandmother's creed, probably this nameless pang was so too.

The evening grew darker: the deep red crimson and gold of the sunset was fading into the sky, with a sort of luminous twilight which yet was not night. The sounds gradually died away: an occasional cackle from the poultry as they tucked their heads under their wings, the lowing of a cow in a distant pasture, or the bleating

[80]

of a complaining sheep, sank each after each into the silence as she stood just beyond the old porch. It was too bright for any stars to be seen but one great planet, probably Venus, who was evidently in the ascendant, which hung like a little moon above the trees.

A strange feeling of loneliness came over her which she had never known before, as if she had no friends: she felt a sort of hunger at her heart as she strayed timidly with a kind of shiver into the warm still night with a low sigh, and wished humbly that she had a sister or a brother, or “ something young.” “ Einsam bin ich, nicht allein,” is the burden of the lovely melody which Weber makes poor Preciosa sing; and to be alone was a great luxury, which poor Lettice longed for often and very seldom obtained.

Mrs. Wynyate had been complaining all day. “ I'm afraid I must be very bad,” said the girl to herself, in that painful perplexity as to who was in the wrong, which is real suffering. In those days it was the rankest rebellion to suppose your elders and parents could be otherwise than infallible, and the first dawn of such a heresy was a painful wrench to a very conscientious mind. Such struggles are generally saved at the present time, as in any difference of opinion with their elders the young do not feel the smallest doubt as to who must be in the wrong.

And she covered her face with her hands, and some sad tears fell through them; the feeling that she never satisfied her grandmother hung heavily on her

[81]

heart. No one knows, unless they have watched it, how depressing it is for a young spirit to live under the weight of constant dissatisfaction; it is like the absence of sun to a flower; ungrudging praise and tenderness are as necessary to the human plant. Her conscience had been unnaturally stimulated, out of which either a reckless feeling or a morbid sensitiveness arises.

" I must be quite bad," thought Lettice sadly. " I never do nothing right. I wish I'd somebody to help tell me what's good."

It was the stillest possible evening. Presently the nightingales began their song: full-throated, clear, and rich the melody welled forth: it seems impossible that such a body of sound could come out of that little grey bird; the thick-warbled notes literally thrilled in the air, and then from the distant wood came the answer, so clear, so brilliant, one prolonged note after the other, and the rapid joyous shake at the end. Who could ever have called the nightingale sad?

" Everybody's got somebody to speak to but me," sobbed Lettice to herself, looking up however and listening, for the instinct of music was strong in her nature, and the song made her feel less lonely.

Just beyond the corner of the house was a bank on which she saw the little green lamp hung out by a glowworm for her winged spouse: she went a few steps out under the trees, and as she stooped to pick it up, she heard the click of the little wicket-gate, as Teazer, Everhard's Scotch terrier, wisest and most solemn of

[82]

dogs, laid his paw on the latch— as was his wont— opened it for himself, and came gravely up to salute her. Presently she heard her uncle's voice,—

" What, so you've come back, young 'un!" Job always considered his dignity involved in treating Everhard rather majestically. " I thowt you'd pretty nigh done with us."

" I've been at Seaford this fortnight," replied he. " There was business there in the ship-office, and I was wanted. I saw Ned just before I came away, and I've brought a parcel from him for your niece."

“ Lettie was in the archat but now, under the Welsh nuts” (walnuts), said the sapient Job. “ Here, child,” he called out, “ you come here in no time; 'tain't often as a handsel comes to the Woodhouse, for whomsoever it may be.”

And Lettice came shyly up to the little gate, oh the other side of which stood Everhard and her uncle.

He drew the small packet out of some inner pocket and held it out to her; when she took it, however, he did not leave his hold, but kept both her hand and it.

Lettice scarcely knew what to do— “ because it will look as if I were in such a hurry if I pull it,” reasoned she to herself; “ and if I leave go 'twill seem as I didn't care.”

“ Mark Giles were just a-saying to me as he didn't know what to do wi' the nets and rods, we were such a mortal long time without hearin' aught on ye,” observed Job.

[83]

“ Have you thought it a long while, Lettie,” said Everhard, in a low voice, leaning over the gate towards her, and without answering Job.

Lettice was silent, and hoped that it was too dark to see her tell-tale blushes.

“ What are ye doing out there, Lettice, wasting o' yer time o' this fashion, and that spikenard all littering about in the window-seat, and yer uncle's plate and glass not set by yet? Come in directly, child; I want to shut up,” cried her grandmother, sharply, at the open door.

Now Lettice had been hard at work the whole day, and the bits of lavender which she had laid out to dry to put with her uncle's shirts did nobody any harm: so that this reflection on her housewifeliness, before the only stranger she had ever known, seemed to her to be cruel. She wrung away her hand hastily, and went into the house, with the tears in her eyes.

“ What call has mother crying out like that? ” soliloquized Job. “ Why, the little lass 'ud run herself off of both her feet to pleasure a body, that's what she would. She's a good little maid, as does her dooty by all folk.”

But Lettice did not hear her defender.

“ What's that you've got there in your hand? ” said her grandmother; “ and who was you talking to out there by the wicket? ”

Lettice half unconsciously unfolded her parcel as an answer and a protection against overmuch questioning.

“ Uncle Ned sent it as a present by Mr. Everhard, from Seaford,” she said, slowly.

[84]

“ And so that young fella's come back again, whipping of the water day after day; and a pretty way of spendin' his time for an immortal soul, that is! And what call has Ned for to send you blue ribins for yer hat, I'd like to know? Such waste! and you that goes nowhere,” went on Mrs. Wynyate, looking with much disgust at the obnoxious bit of silk as she locked the door. “ And I don't like that new afternoon frock of yourn: there's too much white in it; I telled ye so when you bought it,” added she, in an annoyed tone, looking at Lettice with a disapproving snort.

It was a most innocent pale blue and white cotton; but somehow she could not help everything which she put on partaking of the dainty look of her own little person; and she certainly looked a great deal too pretty for her grandmother's theories.

“ Nay, mother,” said Amyas, who came up, “ I like her to be so trim and neat; 'tain't much that's pretty as we've got about the house to look at, as we can afford to do without Lettie's frock.” And he stroked her head fondly as they all went upstairs to bed.

When Lettice had put out her light she looked through the open lattice once more into the night, and saw a dark shadow still moving under the old trees, and crept away half frightened in her coy, shy way, instead of leaning out of the window; and then lay awake for hours thinking what “ it ” meant and “ he ” meant, and the “meaning” of the world in general.

[85]

CHAPTER VIII.

A “ FROST IN JUNE.”

" But now will canker sorrow eat my bud,
And chase the native beauty from its cheek."

THE next morning it seemed to Lettice as if the world were all in a sort of maze, and although she took great pains to tell her body to go about its business faithfully, her soul was not, as it ought to have been, among her preserving-pots, but wandering about somewhere outside by the river, or wherever Everhard might be at that moment.

" I can't think what ails ye, child, to-day," said Mrs. Wynyate, in an aggrieved tone. " Are ye grown dunch all of a sudden? Why, I telled ye three times as the black currant warn't to go in them jars."

Lettice blushed guiltily: she knew only too well that she had been listening intently for another voice, and could not hear her grandmother's. It was quite late in the morning before she had done her work: when suddenly seeing a fight going on between Teazer and her own particular white kitten, she ran out to the rescue on the green before the house. Teazer was a serious dog, a high-minded dog, but he was not above

[86]

the delight of tormenting a kitten; he was getting rather the worst of the battle, however, when she took up the indignant little spitfire, although he danced barking round her, as if he was being defrauded of his prey.

" Lettice," said Teazer's master, in a low voice, from behind the cedar, much pleased at the success of his manœuvre, and certainly as much to blame as his dog in the attack on her pet, " won't you come into the orchard? "

Now it happened that Wallcott, passing near the Woodhouse, had taken it into his head that very day to come and look after his son's most pertinacious fishing: he had been much pleased at Everhard's going so often to the place, as it seemed in his eyes like a proof of his future ownership; it was not that he suspected mischief of any kind: he had never seen Lettice with the eyes of his mind, whatever he might have done with those of his body; he had a sort of notion that there was a " woman child " at the Wynyates', but

that was all. He liked, however, spying into by-places where he was not expected, and finding out secret ways: they were often useful to him in his business. He put up his horse at a little wayside inn not far off, and walked up, and as he came quietly in near the gate into the orchard he stumbled on another listener, the blind man, who almost ran against him in suddenly turning the corner of some farm-buildings.

“ They thinks as I can't see 'um,” chuckled Gabriel

[87]

in his exultation, not regarding to whom he might be speaking; “ but I heerd 'um pass all one as if I did, he and she too, into the archat.”

“ Who, you old fool? ” said Wallcott, in an angry tone of command. He smelt mischief; here was a secret which he had not bargained for.

“ Our young missis,” answered the old man, reluctantly, and with a sudden chill, as he felt that he had let out what ought not to have been told to a mere stranger.

“ And who was with her? ” repeated the other, angrily.

The old man was silent.

“ I will know,” said Wallcott, taking hold of his staff and shaking it.

“ The young 'un as is down here fishing,” replied the trembling old man, in great distress at what he had done.

Wallcott strode on with an oath towards the orchard; but he changed his mind, and turned to the house.

“ So that's your game, Wynyate? ” he cried, in his loud insolent voice, to Amyas, whom he found at the door. “ Luring my son on in this way, and thinking that'll pay your debts, I'll be bound. You're quite out there, and she too, I can tell ye. It's a burning shame! ”

Amyas looked so completely at sea that it would have convinced any one less prejudiced how entirely innocent he was.

[88]

“ Now don't you pretend not to understand. Where's yer niece at this minnit? ”

“ I'm sure I can't tell,” said Amyas, striving to be calm.

“ She and Everhard are making love in the orchard, confound 'um! Come and see for yourself.”

“ Then it ain't more to my pleasure nor yours that she's aught to do with him,” said Amyas, with an expression almost of disgust as they both hurried across the green shaven sward.

And Everhard had just said to Lettice, as with the white kitten in her arms they sauntered down under the bright flickering lights and shadows in the shadiest part of the grove, near the deep quiet pools, “ Lettie, I've been away to try and see plain into my own feeling, and whether I could manage to live without you, my darling” (with the unconscious selfishness whereby a man often considers that his share in the concern is the only really important part of the matter); “ but,” he went on, “ you've got my heart too tight in that small hand of yours for me to disentangle. Give me your own instead, my little one.”

And Lettice blushing from head to foot, as it seemed to her, turned away from him, for the flowers and the birds and the wind all seemed to her to be telling her secret, and to be whispering, “ You know you've got it already;” and as he drew her towards him she raised her eyes, with the shy fawn look in them, and he seemed to read it there too. “ At least it's gone away from me,” she put in.

[89]

And the two delinquents stood, her hand in his and the smile gathering on her face, too much engrossed with each other to see the storm approaching— when, instead of the answer which each expected, two angry voices at the same moment began:—

“ Lettice, come here to me directly. How can you have anything to do with that fellow?”

And Wallcott's furious, “ I'll tell yer what, sir: I'll disown yer for my son unless ye come off instantly. A lot of scheming ruined cheats, trying to make a market out on ye.”

In the first surprise they had drawn a little apart, but Everhard took hold once more of her hand as he answered, “ If there's been any scheming, it's been mine to win her. I'll give her up for no hard words.”

“ You're a blind fool not to see what they're after,” cried his father, angrily; while Amyas, seizing Lettice's other hand, and leading her off, was saying,—

“ I won't have ye stay to hear such things said by any man. Come away with me, Lettie.”

The bewildered girl looked from one to the other in utter dismay.

“ I'll be true to you, be true to me,” said Everhard, in a low voice, as his father almost drove him before him in the other direction. He had been a spoilt child all his life: in his weakly days his mother would not allow him to be crossed, and as he grew up his father's pursuits and tastes were so opposed to his that they

[90]

hardly ever came into collision. He had often seen Wallcott in a passion, but never before with him, his only child, the object of his pride and ambition. He had fancied that in anything on which he really set his heart his father would quickly yield, and was so utterly confounded and astonished at this vehemence of indignation, that he suffered himself to be led off in a way which confirmed Amyas's dislike and his feeling that the young man was only trifling with Lettice for the amusement of his idle time.

“ Uncle,” said the poor girl, sobbing violently, “ what does it mean? Why do ye send him away like that? ”

“ How could ye let that fellow make up to you, child? ” cried Amyas, more sternly than she thought possible for him.

“ I thought no harm,” said the girl, gently; “ he's so good and true.”

“ He's comet of a bad father, who's ruining me inch by inch: a cheating, insolent knave. He's got a rope round my neck, and he tells me to my face I'm saving myself by dragging in his son for to marry ye. I'd rather see ye in yer coffin, Lettie, before ye wedded with such as he.”

“ But he said he'd soon see and set all right with his father about the mortgage, as you shouldn't be troubled,” said Lettice, pitifully.

“ I want none of his charity; let him mind his own business and keep hisself to hisself. Set all right

[91]

indeed! I should like to see Wallcott's face when he offered to meddle wi' such matters! Don't ye see, Lettie, he's just playing wi' ye; how he went off when his father drove him like a sheep. Why didn't he speak up more to his face, if he really cared for ye? ”

“ What were all that row about? ” said Job, coming up from the other side as they returned to the house. “ I heerd ye hollering and squealing* all over the farm.”

“ It were that fellow Wallcott's son as has been making up to Lettie,” answered Amyas, much excited. ”Of all the men that's in the world the very last as should have anything to do with her.”

“ Well, and what's the harm o' him? ” answered Job, philosophically.

“ And then Wallcott flings it in my teeth that I'm a-drawing and wiling in his son for to marry her to set matters straight as 'twere about the money! ”

“ Well, and what did that sinnify? Where could he find a better? Ain't she as good a lass as any man need have? and the young 'un can throw a line as neat as any one I e'er come across; he were as sharp as a needle t'other day arter the rabbits, and he'd make her a good husband! ”

Amyas almost smiled. “ Well, we needn't argufy it; Wallcott'll no more let it be than he'd fly,—nor I neither.”

*** “ And ghosts did shriek and squeal about the streets.”— *Julius Caesar*.**

[92]

“ But why not, Amyas? ” persisted Job. “ The young 'un always said as how he'd circumvent his father and keep him quiet along o' the mortgage, and that 'ud be a terrible fine thing for you, ye know.”

“ And that's just what I don't choose,— to set Lettie's love barter like for the money on the farm. But what's the use o' talking? you can't odds it with me nor with Wallcott neither.”

Lettice looked from one to the other in a maze of surprise and misery.

“ You're a silly fella, Job,” interposed Mrs. Wynyate, who had come up and was looking out of the low window as they stood just outside the house, but had listened hitherto in silence. “ Don't ye see Wallcott's one who'd sooner leave his money to the pigs if his son married to disoblige him? You're quite out in yer reckoning. Excuse the mortgage! he'd sooner by far see him a beggarman for crossing him.”

Lettice wandered upstairs and sat down in her little room, tearless and hopeless; the “ frost in June,” as it were, had fallen upon her garden in full bloom.

“ Ye should have seen to the girl, mother,” said Amyas, who hardly ever uttered a syllable of blame to her. “ How ever could you let her make free with that fellow? ”

“ I'm sure I'd no more thought of her o' that fashion nor the crows, and she such a child!” replied her grandmother, angrily.

“ How old is she? ” said Amyas.

[93]

“ Eighteen,” answered Mrs. Wynyate, after some consideration.

“ Sure her mother weren't such a very deal older, were she, when she took on wi' Norton Lisle? ”

“ Scarce nineteen,” sighed the old woman, with a host of melancholy recollections thronging over her. “ It's queer how soon these young 'uns grows up, too; 'tis like the beanstalks, up ever so high when one's back's turned and one isn't looking. 'Twere but yesterday, seems, as Lettice came to us ever such a little 'un, after that time her mother died!”

The old blind man had been anxiously wandering round the farm to see what had come of the match he had so unconsciously helped in firing. In the afternoon he met Lettice going sadly about her work.

“ Well, little 'un, how's it all going? ” said he. “ It's a proper job, that's what it is! I knows all about yon young chap, more nor he thinks of, and o' all the folk as he comes on. My son Thomas were wi' the old 'un for to mind the horses and the garden, and 'twere one of the hardest placen* he've ever a had.”

“ Tell me, Gabriel,” answered Lettice, sadly.

“ Ye see Wallcott were a widowman wi' a family, and this as is his second wife had a been married and had a child, and then there come this 'un. So there were his'n, and her'n, and their'n, ye see. And they all died just one after another, like flies, but Everhard;

*** The plural “en,” as in German, is preserved in several words— housen, hosen, ashen, &c.**

[94]

and a queer name it were to give a crisson child; but 'twere Wallcott's mother's maiden name, I've a heerd tell. And they both sets no end of store on this, as is the last chick they've got, and no end o' money for him; and that's where 'tis: and they thinks naught's too good for him, not if it were a princess born and bred. Though for that matter, Joe's wife see'd the King a-posting down to Weymouth wi' the Queen likewise, years back, and she allays said as how she were an ugly old thing, wi' not a mossel o' crown upo' her head, and her bonnet not much to speak on.”

“ I know I'm not good enough for him,” said poor Lettice, humbly, reverting to her own woes, and not so much interested in Queen Charlotte's old bonnet as was expected of her.

[95]

CHAPTER IX.

THERE'S NO SMOKE, BUT THERE'S FIRE.

“Like as the waves make to the pebbled shore,
So do our minutes hasten to their end,
Each taking place of that which went before,
In sequent toil, all forward do contend.”
—SHAKSPEARE: *Sonnets*.

IT is unnatural for a young girl to have no outlet for her thoughts, no one with whom she is intimate enough to feel sure of equal sympathy. Mrs. Wynyate's consolation took the form of remarks that " it was a cross, and she hoped that Lettice's soul would be the better of it." Delicate perplexities were not Job's forte, and his sympathy was chiefly shown by observing repeatedly " that there was many a better horse to be picked up about nor that there young 'un." And since the scene concerning Everhard she felt cut off from her former unfailing refuge—her uncle Amyas. Troubles look so different seen from above and when one is in the thick of them. She thought "he could not understand her!" With that ingratitude which seems the necessary consequence of the absorbing interest of the present in the young, even in so mild a nature as Lettice's, the fact of his opposing her wishes had become the principal part

[96]

of their relation to each other. The old time seemed swept away, and as if between them there was a great gulf fixed.

Amyas felt it keenly, but he was too reserved to complain or explain. Besides, there was nothing which admitted of explanation; it was simply that, for the time at least, the feeling between them which had been so much to both was gone, and there is no more doleful task than to search among the ashes of past enthusiasms and find no spark. To have faith is the only comfort in such cases— faith in what is really good and true in the character of our friend, in that which underlies the clouds and sharp hail, and bitter rain of complaint and misunderstanding, which shall pass away some time, though maybe for many not here, only when we shall see each other face to face, and shall know even as we are known. But the bitter moments of pain which the young so often inflict in their intercourse with their elders are never understood or atoned for till they themselves feel the knife in their own hearts, and utter no cry; but life grows sadder, and there is an ache at their hearts, and outsiders wonder to see a person look ill and worn without any apparent reason of sickness or sorrow for the dismal change. Amyas said nothing, but his heavy burden seemed to grow heavier, and the light to have gone out of his life; while Lettice seemed as if she were wandering in a grey mist, half unconscious of what

was doing and feeling outside. It is a strange sensation when all things around are absolutely the same,

[97]

and it is only one's own perception of them which has changed. She had been looking at the world through rose-coloured spectacles, and now that the glasses had darkened, the same world had become to her dim and colourless.

One morning a week or two later, a man lounged into the " hall-place " as the family were sitting at dinner. He was a strong-built, athletic fellow, with a determined look, and a great shock of red hair; it was not exactly a disagreeable face, but the sudden changes of expression made it a very unreliable one.

" Why, Norton! " said Mrs. Wynyate, in by no means a pleased tone.

" Well, good folk, here I am at last, you see," said he, looking round with a rather awkward laugh at the company, whose welcome was certainly not a cordial one. " And this is Lettie, I suppose? " he went on, turning to his daughter, who had risen anxiously, and was looking at him in extreme wonder and dismay.

" I think she might say a trifle to her father." Lettice came up to him with a puzzled, painful look in her face; he took hold of her, kissed her coldly, and said, " Why, you're grown out of all knowledge, child! "

" Like enough," observed Mrs. Wynyate: " you haven't seen her sin she were a scrap of six."

" Well," replied he, " I can't say as the welcome I've got makes me anyways sorry I didn't come for it before. I've a been out where there's icebergs, but they're a trifle warmer nor you. However, that's not

[98]

my look-out. You wrote," he went on, turning to Mrs. Wynyate, " as I'd never paid for the girl's board, nor nothing."

" You didn't beg from him, mother? " cried Amyas, angrily. Every one seemed bent on assisting him in ways which be most disliked; and of all uncomfortable things, to be

helped along a road where you do not wish to go, by means which you detest, is the worst.

She did not answer.

“ Well, we won't say beg,” said Norton Lisle; “ there weren't no harm in what she wrote. *That* slip of a girl haven't a cost much to rear though, I'm thinking. Why, she looks as if she hadn't a drop of blood in her veins,” he went on, with a sort of laugh, as he looked at her pale, anxious face. “ However, I've a brought fifty pounds for it, whatsoever it is.” And he threw a little roll of dirty notes on the table. “And now I shall be glad of the girl with me if you ain't. I'm going to set up housekeeping again, and she'll do for me; I've a took a brick and tile yard, with a house on it convenient, and I want to get me a bit of a home again. How soon shall ye be ready for to come wi' me, Lett? ”

“ Do ye think I'll sell the girl in that fashion? ” cried Amyas, almost fiercely. “ Take back yer money. Who's looked after her and cared for her all these years, and who's the best right to her now, I'd like to know? ”

[99]

“ I can't say as to that,” answered Norton, angrily; “ but I take it the law o' the land is as a girl of (eighteen, is it, Lettie?) must go with her father if he choose for to have her. But as for the money, you're noways bound to keep *that*,” said he, in a vexed tone, stretching out his hand towards it, “ and if you don't want it I do, and the girl too.”

“ Granny,” entreated Lettice, pitifully, “ keep it; take it for my sake, if I'm to go; let me think there's that little help coming in anyhow.”

“ I won't have ye touch it, mother,” cried Amyas ; “ how do I know how 'twas got! ”

“ It were got in as good traffic as your'n,— buying and selling merchandise,— I can tell ye, you that takes away other men's characters.”

“ There ain't much for to part with o' that anyhow,” muttered Job.

“ What! you're the fool of the family still, are ye? ” said Norton, turning fiercely upon him. “ What are you waiting for? ” he cried, looking at Lettice, who still lingered white and tearless. “ I telled ye to go and get ready.”

“ Leave her till to-morrow, Norton,” said Amyas, striving to be calm. “ You don't expect her to go off at half-an-hour's notice i' this way; she can't get ready her things nor aught.”

“ I've a brought a cart and all ready now,” said Norton, rather discontentedly.

“ There's the miller been asking after ye not a week

[100]

back,”, put in Job with considerable skill; “ he said he wondered he hadn't heerd anythink on ye sin ye came from beyond seas.”

“ Well, I'll go down to he for the night, but the girl must be ready to-morrow. I can't wait any longer nor then not by no means,” said Norton at last, as he left the house. He had come intending to be friendly and condescending, and liberal with his money, and was a good deal annoyed at the tone in which he had been received.

That afternoon and evening poor Lettice moved about as if she had been in a dream, while she collected her little possessions and bade adieu to all her friends in and out of the farmyard, as if she had been going to the other end of the world. The whole household was in commotion; Amyas said nothing to his mother, but went about dismally in silence, while Mrs. Wynyate got so far in doubting the wisdom of her interference in opposition to his express commands, as to be very angry with Norton for obeying her summons.

“ What on earth did he come here for, I can't think; that weren't what I meant a bit when I wrote,” said she, in an angered tone.

“ Ye may turn out a cow to the pasture, but ye can't tell to what hedge she'll bite,” observed Job, sagely.

The next morning came, and with it Norton in his taxed-cart.

“ That's a first-rate traveller,” observed Job, scientifically

[101]

passing his hand down the horse's leg as a way of putting its owner into better humour.

Norton smiled. “ She'll go her ten mile i' the hour easy, if so be 'twere wanted. What, yer don't expect me to take that big box? ” grumbled he, like his betters, over that everlasting bone of contention, women's luggage.

“ Then you'll have to buy things for her,” cried Mrs. Wynyate: “ the girl can't go naked.”

With a good deal of angry arguing, the box was at last allowed to be hoisted in.

“ She won't be alone in the house where you're taking her? ” said Amyas, anxiously.

“ There's a very tidy woman there as I've got to see to things and do for me,” replied he.

“ Look, Norton,” Amyas went on, with a sort of spasm at his throat: “ you're one that fears neither God nor devil, but I do believe as you'd not dare to do aught that's wrong against the girl.”

“ I tell ye a hair o' her head shan't come to harm,” cried he, evidently quite in earnest, to Amyas's great relief. “ I'm a-goin' to set up again in England, and I want somebody for to keep house for me. What the devil, mayn't a man have his own girl to live with him without all this fuss? ”

There was quite a little crowd round the door—the blind Gabriel, the. deaf woman who did the “ choores,” Job, the peacock, the calves, and a great variety of other birds and beasts—to witness Lettice's departure. She

[102]

did not speak, but fell on her uncle Amyas's neck, with a sort of remorse for the cold chill of the last days, and then kissed her grandmother with a warmth which surprised herself. There was a scowl on Norton's face as they drove away; but happening to catch sight of his daughter, looking very white and utterly miserable, he burst into a loud laugh.

“ If the girl isn't frightened out of her wits! Look, child,” he said, more kindly, “ the devil isn't so black as he's painted. There's no love lost betwixt me and them at the Woodhouse, and they'll have telled ye no end o' stories about me? ”

“ No, they never did,” said Lettice, growing bold in her defence of home.

“ I ain't so bad as all that; you do as I bid ye, and we shall be comf'able enough. Yer mother and I never could hitch our horses together; she would have her own way, and so would I, so we never did gee; but if so be ye mind me, and are a good wench, *I* shan't harm ye. I'm a-takin' ye because I want ye to serve me, not for to do ye any hurt: so ye needn't be afraird, child.”

Lettice's spirits somewhat revived as they drove on. Everything in life to her was new and strange, and as her fears went off, and the fresh air of the beautiful autumn day blew in her face, she could not help to a certain degree enjoying the adventure.

They drove on across a wild tract of forest-country, much in the same state as when the Red King hunted

[103]

there: wide open heaths, succeeded by beautiful knolls, covered with gnarled old oaks, interspersed with hollies and thorn and moss-grown beech, among which the deer were trooping.

“ They say 'twere better for to kill a man than a deer in the Red King's time,” said Norton. “ And here's the ford where Tyrell's horse, as killed him and ran for it, were shod, and pays a fine to the King until this day; tho' small loss were he anyhow—that is, the Red King— if all tales be true.”

From the higher ground glimpses of the blue sea, with a shining sail or two, were seen over the rich wooded slopes of hill, and the pale lilac hills of “ the Island ” in the far distance. They passed along solitary roads, through wide uncultivated tracts, rich in beauty of colour and natural outline, now fast dying away before the straight hedgerow and the square bare field. Is civilization necessarily and essentially unpicturesque and unlovely?

They-seemed to keep to the bypaths; but at that season of the year, on that dry gravelly soil, it is possible to drive over the greensward, tufted with fern and bilberries, in almost every direction. Occasionally, in some out of the way place, Norton stopped to recall himself to an old acquaintance, and Lettice was a little amused as she gradually saw

how both she and the brickyard were trotted out as a sign of settled life and extreme respectability in the eyes of the world.

[104]

At last he drove up to a little old wayside inn, so old that its very sign, " The Bugle,"* had lost its meaning, and had to be interpreted by the picture of an ox, which swung on the bough of an old oak and creaked in the wind. The host stood at the door, and greeted Norton as an old acquaintance.

" What are ye after now, Norton, I wonder? and who have ye got there? " said he, without taking his hands out of his pockets.

" I've a took that place down at the Puckspiece and the brickyard. I think I can make a good thing of it: I've got it for next to nothing. He were a great fool as built it and ruined hisself to death; but 'twill be very gain for me. And here's my daughter coming to keep house for me."

" Whew! " answered the man; " *that's* summat new. Why, the place is full of pucks and pixies, ghosts and goblins, they all says."

" Nayther ghost nor goblin will meddle with me or mine, I take it," said Norton, with a grin. " I've business here, and the horse must bait," he went on, turning to his daughter, and making her get down. The house was fall of rough, noisy men, and Lettice took refuge in a stuffy, dismal little unused parlour, hung with strange prints of gentlemen in blue coats and yellow breeches, making love to ladies with a whole forest of feathers growing out of the top of their heads. With

*** " Bugle," a wild ox, from ' Buculus.' "— *Johnson*. " Thy bugle eyeballs," ox-eyed.— *As You Like It.***

[105]

an almost impossible pen, on the half of an old bill which she had got from the landlady, she was trying to scrawl a letter home. " If anybody was to take it to the Woodhouse, they'd give 'um a shilling willing," said she, earnestly, as they were starting again; the post was almost an unknown institution to her. Her father came up at the moment.

“ Look, Lettie,” said he, “ you leave that alone. Don't you be bringing Amyas and the rest upon us yet. I don't know but the place mayn't suit me, and then it wouldn't be for long.” And, though not unkindly, he took the letter away. “ They call me 'Norton' this side the country, and so do you too,” he explained to his daughter, as they drove on again.

The country grew barer, the trees died away, the road lay across a wide open heath, when they suddenly turned off to the left along a rough moorland track, up which Norton drove slowly, cursing the deep sandy ruts. The heather was brilliant in its purple bloom, the gorse was golden and smelt deliciously, but the day had grown grey, and a slight drizzling rain had come on. They reached at last a little settlement, six or seven houses dropped down as it were on the waste, round which were some frowsy ragged bits of inclosed land, and a long line of neglected, ruinous brick-sheds, backed by a strip of firwood behind. A little above them, on the side of the hill, was a large unfinished, abandoned house, roofed in, but with the great open windows, like eyeless sockets, staring out at the heath. There is something

[106]

peculiarly dismal and depressing about the decay of an unfinished, unused dwelling: the ruins of the past are beautiful, and sad, and interesting, but the perishing away piecemeal of what has never served any human being, such an utter waste and miserable shortcoming of an intention, vexes one with its hopeless dreariness and weakness. Lettice's heart sank within her at the bare, forlorn look as they drove up to a low lean-to, containing the kitchen at one end, which had been made habitable. A lame man was standing among the sheds, with a spade in his hand and a pipe in his mouth, doing nothing; he came lounging up to them.

“ Anything new about? ” said Norton, flinging the reins to him.

“ This ain't much the place for news; you don't come here for that,” answered he, with a sort of grunt.

“ Have ye found any better clay then yet? ”

“ We've got to the red marl, full o' Danes' blood,” said he, with some disgust. The blood of their ancient enemies is still believed by the descendants of the West Saxons to be thus found.

“ Why, they haven't boarded up them windows nor putin the casements! ” observed Norton, without attending to him, as he looked up at the house.

“ Carpenter busy, couldn't come,” replied Tony, who used few superfluous words, as he walked off with the horse to a sort of stable built into the side of the hill.

“ Here's my daughter come to stop with me, missis,”

[107]

said Norton to a decent work-a-day middle-aged woman, who came to the door wiping her hands, crinkled with washing, on her apron. She seemed surprised, and looked somewhat suspiciously at the new arrival; but it was a reliable face, and Lettice felt relieved.

“ But la, child, where ever are you to bide? ” said the woman, gravely. “ There's on'y the back-kitchen, where me and Tony sleeps, in all the house as is fit for a reremouse ”* (a bat). She was evidently a little afraid of being ousted.

“ She can sleep in the pantoney place easy,” replied her father; “ and I shall get in the casement to-day, and bide in the front room mysen. Tain't winter: I've had worse burrows nor that afore now; and, Lettie, you make yourself useful.”

It was still early. All the afternoon he was hard at work on the window; he seemed able to turn his hand to anything, but to care for nothing long. He had no time for Lettice: Mrs. Edney did not seem to want her; and towards evening the girl, having arranged her own little concerns in a wretched dilapidated room, which had been hastily floored and boarded in, in the main part of the house, went out to see what the place was like without.

Behind the house was a little pine-wood, which stretched all along the slope of the hill, and the aromatic smell of resin rose from the bed of dry needles

* **“ And war with reremice for their leathern wings.”— *Midsummer Night's Dream*.**

[108]

under her feet. The rain had ceased; the evening sun shone on the red trunks: the wind was sighing among the branches with a soft Æolian music, rising and falling, as if played by invisible hands; but under it all was a low thunderous dash and roar, which she could not make out. A few steps more brought her up to he edge of the sand-cliffs, with the great blue sea stretching out clear and bright at her feet. The first sight of the sea is always an event in one's sensations— it is so large, so wide, so bright, so open-airish, so unlike anything else; and to Lettice, brought up in the leafy, bowery, flowery land of the Woodhouse, it was more than usually striking— the space seemed illimitable of sea and sky together. She sat down, struck dumb, where she first caught sight of the shore. It was a calm evening: the waves came rippling up quietly one after the other. " Like as the waves make to the pebbled shore, so do our minutes hasten to their end." The white foam crawled up the shingly beach; she thought she never could be tired of watching it. She sat on till it was nearly night.

While she was away Mrs. Edney had discussed the position with her husband. " I can't see what call Norton has for to bring in that child, as if I wasn't yable for things."

" Why, you ain't but a stunpole, missis, after all's said. Don't ye see, when one and another axes questions o' he and how 'twere and all about it, he can tackle 'um up short wi' saying, ' Tidden queer, is it, anyhow, for a

[109]

man to take a bargain for his work, and have his. daughter to bide wi' him?' " And he returned to sit stolidly smoking and drinking grog with Norton, whom he seemed to know of old.

" I'm all in my dishabilles, quite in a caddie," said Mrs. Tony when Lettice returned. " Ye see Norton, when he gets back into these parts, he comes to Tony and says, 'You help take the brickyard wi' me, and yer missis to find for us.' And so 'twere, and we come up here in no time, and 'tis very ungain for me, but I wants nobody for to mend nor mar in my consarns."

After which assertion of her principles, finding that her meek little guest had no desire whatever for the reins of office, she gradually became kind and patronizing.

" W've a knowed yer father this ever so long," said she, when Lettice inquired— " sin' when yer mother were alive—eh, a sight o' years ago, and he's just come back, ye see, to the old country. What were yer mother like? Why, she were a nice, jolly" (in the sense of *jolie*) " young woman. You features her a good bit, but him and her was like cat and dog."

And this was all the information that Lettice was able to extract.

The next day, when she had finished helping Mrs. Edney in the house, she went off again and scrambled down a little steep " chine," where a small stream had worked a sort of cut in the yellow sandy cliff, and found herself on the shore. The day was bright and sunny; and the blue sea, with the green and

[110]

lilac and purple lights and shadows passing over it, was lovely to watch, and the music of the waves to follow. It was perfectly solitary. There was nothing to be seen within the horns of the little bay, with its bright yellow sandy cliffs, rusted here and there with dark brown iron stains, but the broad flapping wings of a white gull, or a black cormorant swooping on its prey. There is an inexpressible charm in the dreamy music of the sea to a particular mood of mind: the change, the variety, and yet the ever-recurring roar is a sort of companionship which grows upon one day by day. It was hardly healthy, however, for a morbidly sensitive mind like Lettice's, which required the active work of life to prevent it from dwelling on its own interior sensations. Day after day she sat on the shingle, watching the waves striving to attain, hurrying up passionately to gain their object, and, just as they seemed to reach it, falling back again, the power of the impulsive rush once over— ever seeming to win only to lose again.

" Poor things, I think I know how they feel," she said to herself.

She had often longed for the luxury of being alone, but the burden of her own sad thoughts seemed now to be harder to bear than when busy at work: as a man can carry a

weight when moving, under which he would be almost crushed if he attempted to stand still. The very beauty made her solitude grow more bitter.

Her affections and conscience had been almost morbidly active, and now she seemed to have nothing

[111]

to love, and hardly anything to do. " A little knowledge " is so far a dangerous thing that we always pay for unequal development. Proportion is the grand secret of happiness; that our aims and objects should be, at least to a certain extent, within our means of attaining— a balance between the powers of thought and action.

[112]

CHAPTER X.

NOTRE DAME DE BON SECOURS.

" Of Hampton all the baronage
Came and did Sir Bevis homage.
' He is now of greate myghte,
Beloved both of kyng and knighte.
Every man, both erle and baron,
Loved and dred Bevis of Hampton."
—ELLIS: *Metrical Romances*.

THE days went on. Her father was not unkind, and seemed to be quite satisfied that she should do pretty much as she pleased. He came and went very irregularly, attending at first a good deal to the affairs of the brickyard, but he evidently soon tired of this, and was sometimes away for nights together. Even when he was at home her attentions seemed rather to bore him.

“ What can ye do for me, child? ” he said, puzzled, when she proposed something timidly to him; “ why, mend my clothes for me, to be sure.”

Mrs. Edney was a taciturn, phlegmatic woman, very busy all day with her cooking, her washing, her baking and her cleaning. Lettice rather liked her, but as she would a dumb beast.

A place is never said to be haunted without excellent cause, and generally richly deserves its reputation, and

[113]

the Puckspiece had a character which was a treasure to its possessor: great flaring lights had been seen in its empty windows at unorthodox times; strange noises had been heard by belated travellers, and there was a general understanding that it was well to give it a wide berth.

“ What queer noises there was all last night,” said Lettice one day to Tony.

“ Rats,” answered he, sententiously.

“ I don't think it could be rats,” she said, timidly; “ it sounded like pecking with a pick more, muffled like.”

“ Makes their burries in the hill, p'r'aps,” observed Tony. “ I wouldn't 'sturb 'em; makes 'em bite.”

“ Are they such big ‘uns? ” inquired she, anxiously; “ it sounded like treads.”

“ They did say as the man who built this house cut his head off, and walks at night to look for't. Wouldn't look out when he comes, if I was you; they don't like it—not ghosts. Goes to the well, they says, and looks down it, to see whether it ain't there—that's his head. Don't ye go nigh the well.”

Full-grown men have no idea of the perfect delirium of fright into which a young girl can be thrown. Tony rather liked the “ little maid ” who filled his pipe, mixed his grog, and did everything she could for him; but he had no scruple in telling all the stories he could remember or invent of ghosts, pixies who haunt the bogs and lead wanderers astray, pucks after whom the

[114]

place was called, and murders, till the girl's blood ran cold; and although in the daytime she did not altogether believe them, she spent the night in an agony of terror, hiding her head under the bedclothes. When the light returned her fears vanished, and she discovered all sorts of excellent reasons for the strange noises; but not the less, when the dark came back again, was she listening again in the utmost distress; and there was a peculiarly dreary moan of the wind among the pine-trees when a storm was near, which always seemed, for some reason or other, to make the ghosts or the rats more active.

Tony seemed to lead rather an idle life, stumbling about with his lame leg among the sheds, making an odd brick or two from time to time, or firing the kiln; his stolid weather-beaten face utterly impenetrable; but one night, as she was returning home from the shore, she came suddenly upon him stumping up the hill at a great rate with her father, and hardly knew him, he seemed so lively.

“ Why don't they run the Dutchman up Ribstone Glen? ” he was saying. “Great fools, don't they see if once they gets the scent here, it's all up with us? ”

“ Now see you, there they be at it again! ” said Mrs. Tony, who heard him, aside to Lettice, with something of a sigh. “Men's so rampagious, they can't kip their hands out o' mischief. There ain't a bit o' harm in Norton; but he's like Mother Carey's chickens, never at rest, and biding nowhere. If they could but

[115]

sew a bit— that's the men— 'twould keep 'um quiet and do'um no end o' good.”

Mrs. Tony was pretty much of Pascal's opinion: “ *Tout le malheur de l'homme vient de ne pas savoir se tenir sur une chaise*.”

A good many sailor-looking fellows came up from time to time to the house, but Norton evidently wished to keep it quiet. One evening, however, he had a sort of carouse, and told Lettice angrily to come in and serve them; but she looked so shy and frightened that his mood suddenly changed, and he burst out laughing, and said she only spoiled sport, and called Sally in her stead.

“ Be ye goin' to ‘ The Chine? ’ ” said Mrs. Tony, a day or two after, to her husband, who had taken his squoyle (a stick laden with lead) after dinner. Tony nodded his head; he wasted no breath in words. “ The pilots was to bring me a pail, and the kettle's bursted: maybe Edwin* could tinker he up; I can't get nothing here. I want Mary to send me some sugar, and a bit o' coarse grey thread and a darning-needle, and— ”

“ I can't mind all them stupid women's things,” interrupted he.

“ Shall I go,” said Lettice, humbly, “ and get 'um for ye? ”

“ Yes. Take the child, Tony; 'twill be a change for her,” said the woman, kindly.

*** Names beginning with “ Ed,”— Edmund, Edgar, Edwin, Edward, &c., are all Anglo-Saxon.**

[116]

Tony warmed up a little out of his usual silence as they crossed the purple heath. He had a queer habit of standing still from time to time, and turning completely round, so' as to command every part of the horizon. “ They can take us afore a justice,” said he, in explanation, “ for lurking, waiting, or loitering wi'in five mile from the coast for to aid or help wi' run goods, and whip or keep us to hard labour for a month, and that's pretty justice, I take it! ”

At length they reached “ The Chine,” a repetition of the “ Bunny ” at the Puckspiece on a larger scale, where the little river had broken for itself a valley on its road to the sea,—a tumbled sort of glen, with firwood and small grassy spaces, and about a dozen scattered cottages here and there, each in its own close and garden; a few boats were drawn up on the beach, fishing-tackle was hung out to dry, and a pilot vessel was riding just off the mouth of the stream.

“ There, that's our'n. We calls it ‘ Edney's Chine,’ though that ain't its real name,” said Tony, looking down on the place with some pride. “ My father he died and left we a bit o' land: we was to split it up among us. There was six brothers, four on us pilots, and ye see 'twas a deal to us to get a good sight o' the offing; so there we just drawed lots, and the eldest— that's Jesse, and he's the heddest on us, too— he got the best lot, nighest the sea— and the pilot-boat's his'n; and the next lot 'twere the youngest, Caleb, and the last were just me. And ye see, after a while, my leg

[117]

he were well-nigh crushed in a big storm; and 'tis so anguish in bad weather as I were obliged to give in, and had to bide at home (though, for all that, I can do a many things tarblish well, up and down). And the rest is fishers and such like. But eh, how they customhouse folk do worrit! We mayn't do this'n and we mayn't do that'n; there's nothing scarce left as a man may put his hand to. If a boat's more nor an inch and a quarter deep to a foot long, they may take her away, she's forfeit. They'll be measuring the nose o' one's face afore long, and cut that off if it ain't to their mind! ”

Tony had become almost talkative, with the recollection of his wrongs. “ Hey, you come out there! ” he called out suddenly, as his quick look-out caught something moving among the furze and bramble-bushes, and a small boy, with beady, twinkling, black, mischievous eyes, came out rather unwillingly. “ What a moucher* you are, David! Allays after them blackberries and pixie-pears!** You take Norton's maid down to yer aunt Mary's: I want to go t'other road. I'll call for ye this evenin' for to fetch the pail,” he went on, turning to the girl.

The boy by no means graciously obeyed. He did not go as he was bid, however, but turned down a steep place in the cliffs, where Lettice could hardly follow.

*** *Falstaff*.— “ Shall the blessed sun of heaven prove a moucher, and eat blackberries? a question not to be asked.”**

**** Rose-hips.**

[118]

“ Where's Norton to-day? ” said he, condescendingly. “ But I dessay *you* can't tell! Them people's here and there and everywhere and nowhere like. I know,” the imp went on. “ And there's uncle Tony, as were found out ‘ fair-trading,’ and were broke for pilot, and his boat took away, cut across the middle. He never telled ye that much, I'll be bound,” said he with a grin. “ Eh, there's a big jelly-fish washed ashore! There, you go across the stream and up to that little white house. That's where aunt Mary and we lives.”

And he ran off.

The stream found its way to the sea through a spit of sand; and Lettice, seeing no bridge, went lower and lower to a place where the water looked shallowest, considering whether she was intended to wade across, when she gradually felt herself sinking into a quicksand— sucked in, as it seemed to her, horribly. She called for help, and a tall sailor, striding down to the fishing-boat, came across the little river and dragged her out. " You're going up to Mary? " inquired he; and then, as if land and water were equally indifferent to him, without giving her time for an answer, he took her in his arms and carried her like a child to the other side.

" Isn't there a bridge? " said Lettice, blushing, and too much frightened to thank him. She had seen him a day or two before at the Puckspiece.

" To be sure there is. What did that imp David mean to bring ye this gate? A pretty douse o' the ear

[119]

I'll give him once I catches him! Mary spiles him so, because he's an orphan she says; but that's no reason to give him his own way like that. I see'd ye hiding t'other day when I were up with yer father: what was ye afeard on? "said he, laughing. " There, that's the way round the sandy knowl to Jesse's—him's my brother, and there he stands atop o' his garden ground, wi' his telescope up to his eye. (Mary says by times she thinks 'twill grow there.) You tell her as I shall be up for summat t' eat once I've finished wi' the dingy."

The girl climbed up a flight of half steps cut in the steep sand-hill, and strengthened with staves, to the little house, " wattle and dab," half timber half mud, which stood in a garden edged with thrift and pebbles. A passion-flower with large yellow egg-like fruit hung over the door, and there was a myrtle growing mixed with rosemary in front. The vegetation is very southern on that coast.

" Well, my little maid," said the pilot, greeting her kindly, " and you're Norton's child? You're but a teary thing to come o' such a rough 'un as he." Then raising his glass again, " I thowt yon were a brig," said he, going on with his search; "but she ain't nothing o' the sort. I can't make her out nohow." His face was like an eagle's: the nose was large

and hooked, with a deep-set eye intent and keen, though the whole expression was mild and serious. Every atom of superfluous flesh seemed to have been blown away in his daily and nightly strife with wind and weather; and

[120]

his hair and beard were shaggy and grizzled. As he spoke his wife came to the door.

“ Bless us, child, how watchet ye are in the feet; and there ain't scarce a vaunk* o' fire left,” she added, regretfully, as she took the girl into the house and began to provide dry things for her. “What, it were Caleb as dragged ye out o' the quick, I reckon? ”

The little room was exquisitely clean, bright with whitewash, and hung with queer treasures from beyond seas, strange fish and seaweed and gay-coloured shells; and as Lettice unfolded the long chapter of Mrs. Tony's requests, she looked curiously round.

“ Them's things as grows in foreign parts,” observed Mrs. Jesse, answering her eyes. “ Curosities as is giv' to Jesse aboard the homeward-bound, from some outlandish place or 'nother.”

“ Master Tony said as he'd fetch the pail and me sometime, but it mightn't be till late. May I stop here till he come? ” said the girl, wistfully.

“ Stop, child? yes, as long as ever ye like, and welcome; 'twill be more cheerfuller for ye than up at the Puckspiece,” replied Mary, heartily.

She was a large, comely, prosperous-looking woman, and yet there were lines in her pleasant, handsome face which told that she had gone through sorrow, and knew how to help those who wanted it. In the little colony everybody was cousin to everybody else, and she seemed to be “ aunt Mary ” to them all, and to be ready with

*** “ Funke,” spark, German.**

[121]

help for all wants and miseries, both of body and mind.

Lettice remained at the pilot's cottage for the rest of the afternoon, and found plenty to do “ up and down,” as she helped her new friend skilfully with her neat-handed little ways.

“ Mother's out o' sugar,” said one little messenger, “ and would ye send her a pinch? she'll give it back agin”— an ingenious offer which is generally only one way of getting rid of the burden of gratitude, while it leaves one free to forget the repayment.

“ Tommy's just crazy wi' the colic, and mother says could ye gi'e her a pinch of bishopswort, for to make some hum water? ” said the next.

Mary was ready for all. Her husband, as the owner of a pilot-boat, and without children, was a very well-to-do man, and his wife was able as well as willing to help. “ Notre dame de bon secours ” she might have been called.

Lettice took to her greatly.

“ You'll have time to take yer bite wi' us, child,” said Mary, later on in the evening. “ Yer supper's ready,” she cried from the door to her husband, who was busy in the potato-beds.

“ There's a nice few on 'em to-year, thank God for it,” said the pilot, raising himself and uncovering his head reverently as he came up from the garden.

A few minutes after Caleb appeared, with a colour-pot in his hand.

[122]

“ Well, that boat is the biggest beauty ye ever see, now 'tis painted! ” said he with much satisfaction as he sat down to the table.

“ I wish as ye hadn't a painted yer hands so well likewise,” replied Mary. “ Lettie, you find up that bit o' soap as I set by but now.”

“ Well, captains must be minded aboard their own ships, I suppose,” replied he, making a wry face as he did as he was bid. “ What, is that little 'un here still? and all one, too, as if she were at home, one mid say.”

“ She's a waitin' for Tony, and she's a helpful little lass and well bringed up for work, I will say that for her.”

“ So you've gone and made the boat pea-green after all,” observed Jesse, laughing.

“ It don't scarce cost more to make her a pretty nor an ugly one; and I don't see why we shouldn't have it one as t'other if so be it ain't ill-convenent. Didn't I catch that there Davy a-droring his fingers all along the wet paint! If yer don't see to that boy, Mary,

he'll come to no end of bad. It was his doing leading that little lass into the quag but now."

" She didn't tell me that," said Mrs. Jesse, turning affectionately to the girl. " I'll thwack him when he comes in."

" Big words and little deeds," answered Caleb: " that's just women all over. They thinks as the world's a kep' going by talk! "

" Well, and so most on it is. They're powerful

[123]

things is words, for good and for bad too. What's that King David says on 'um, as Jesse reads by whiles? "

" Well, if it's the number on 'um will serve, there's a power on 'um as every woman can bring about one's ears concarning everythink and nothink," replied he.

" Caleb don't think much o' womenfolk," said Mary, turning laughing to Lettice: " he's allays the ill word for us."

The girl smiled absently: the sailor's opinion was very indifferent to her.

" And there's one as doesn't much mind which way he takes 'um, sims to me," said Jesse, with a quiet smile.

" She's a child, as slips into quags and can't get out, not a woman: so it don't sinnify how she thinks," retorted Caleb.

" I'm eighteen," said Lettice, with some majesty.

" And I'm nighabouts twice eighteen, so it stands to reason I'm more wiselike and purposelike to know about things nor you, I take it."

" Some things p'r'ps, not all," answered Lettice, shortly.

" There's a back-hander for you, Master Caleb," observed Mary, rather pleased at his rebuff.

" I didn't mean it," replied Lettice, blushing. " I on'y meant as there's some women as talks and some as don't, and likewise wi' menfolk: and a woman maybe best understands what's the ways of a woman."

" Tis a very shalla sea most times, and full of shoals

[124]

and sunken rocks, is women's tempers, and not much worth understanding," said Caleb, scornfully; " 'tis best to kip out o' such navigation."

" They wouldn't have ye— sour grapes! " observed Mary.

" Wouldn't they, though? " said the sailor, with a merry twinkle in his eye, as he looked up from his supper.

" Are ye goin' wi' me to-night or are you not, Caleb? we sha'n't niver be off if ye begin quarrelling like that; and there's that rope I lent Edwin to be fotch," said his brother, with his grave smile.

The young man went off. The sound of the knives and forks seemed to bring up David, for he ran in at one door as Caleb went out at the other. His prophecy as to any punishment of David's misdeeds came true.

" Thou wast a bad little lad," was all that Mary said to him. " What didst thou serve Lettice like that for? "

" Why, what a silly she were not to know a quicksand when she see'd it," said the undaunted urchin.

" It weren't my fault."

" And thou'st as ragged as a colt pixie, I declare, child," said Mary, catching hold of him and mourning over his torn jacket.* The pixies are (or were, for draining

*** " This Puck is but a dreaming dolt,**
Still walking like a ragged colt,
Of purpose to deceive us."
—DRATTON'S *Nymphidie*

[125]

seems as fatal to their existence as to rushes,) in the habit of luring men into bogs in the form of a ragged colt, and then vanishing.

" Let me mend it," said Lettice, eagerly taking up the unlucky garment.

" You'll have for to buy me some fustian for to make him another, this'n got so bad, next time you goes over to the Island," said Mary to her husband, rather dolefully.

“ How nigh it looks to-day—one can see the cliffs quite plain,” observed Lettice, stitching away as she stood by Jesse, who was hard at work on an old lanthorn, and looking over the Solent to the high land towards Freshwater and the Needles.

“ ‘Twere a long way for Sir Bevis* to ride over every arternoon, though,” observed the boy, with his mouth full. “ I wonder where 'twere exact as he done it? ”

“ Ride over the water! ” asked Lettice, opening her great eyes. “ Who were he, and how ever did he do such a thing? ”

“ Don't ye know *that*? ” replied he. “ *To* be sure! There's his figure, and the giant's as he killed, and his wife Jocyan the Bright, over the Bar Gate at Hampton, like as when they was living.”

“ But how ever did he get across? ” said Lettice, with breathless interest.

“ I take it 'twere dry land then,” observed Jesse. “ ‘Tain't but a smallish way from Hurst Castle to the

*** “ And Bevis of Southampton, who killed Ascapart.”— *Henry VI.***

[126]

Island, and there's big shoals enow betwixt and between them changing shingles. 'Tis a very narrer channel as we has to pilot 'um through. He might ha' cut across easy. 'Twere on the great horse Arundel.” (Probably some pre-historic legend of the time before the inroad of the Solent took place.)

“ And I sometimes wish as Bevis could ride over that bit now,” sighed his wife.

“ There wouldn't be much piloting wanted then, and thou wouldn't like my occupation gone,” replied Jesse, smiling: “ and so I must be off. I shall be back when it please God.”

His wife followed him, filling a bottle with the mead still common in the country—the favourite drink of gods and heroes when England was the “ honey island,” and putting up the provisions which she had got ready. She stood for a moment shading her eyes with her hand, looking after him as he went calmly down the hill, and gave a sigh as she came back into the room.

“ What a dreadful deal of lonely watching ye must have, 'aunt Mary,'“ said Lettice— falling into the habit of the community, and using the word as if it were a title of honour— “ all them nights when he doesn't come home, and when there's winds and tempest? ”

“ Storm and sunshine fulfilling His word,” murmured Mrs. Edney to herself.

“ Summer and winter, Tony says, when he passes, as your light isn't dowted most part of the night.”

[127]

Mrs. Jesse sighed. “ I get so restless lying there waiting, and 'tis cheerfuller to sit wi' a bit o' fire or light. Eh! them nights,” said the poor woman, after a long pause, “ with a gale sometimes fit to blow the nose off one's face, and a mile out at sea perhaps all ye love in the world, battling for their lives wi' the cruel sea, and ye can't do nothing. Them times one lives a many years in a night as one lies and prays. One while,” said she— looking out before her as if she heard and saw nothing but her own recollections— “ the wind had roared and beat so again the house, I'd been sitting up best part o' the night, and had just laid me down a bit when the light went out sudden— it must have been a fetch* candle, it must— and something seemed to take me like for to get up, and I went to the door, and in the grey o' the mornin' I looked out, and there were Jesse's cutter just come in, and they'd beached the boat, and was a-liftin' out a dead body. I see it now,” she said, with a shiver, “ arms and legs a' hanging down loose: 'twas too dim to see who 'twere, and I couldn't stir to go nigh 'um, but just waited upo' the door-sill, like as my very soul were dead, for to know which it would be— husband, or son, or any of the brothers; and it seemed so cruel for to pray as it might be some other woman as was to have her heart broke; and then to see it were my own lad as were brought in with his feet foremost into his home. Eh, child, them words in that Scriptur, 'and he was the only son of his

*** The light goes out when a soul departs.**

[128]

mother,' has more heartbreak in 'um nor any one can speak. But ye know," added the poor woman with a quivering sigh, " I ought to be thanking God A'mighty as the rest of the verse ain't true for me,— ' and she were a widder.' And such a mercy, too, you know, as he weren't lost."*

" Lost? " repeated Lettice, somewhat puzzled.

" Yes, as his body were brought ashore, ye know; and now he lies dry and comf'able in the graveyard at Denehead, where Jesse and I shall come alongside of him, please God, some time."

" How old were he? " said Lettice, after a long pause.

" Just about same as ye said ye were. And Caleb he were so kind and feelin' for me, just one as if I'd a been his own mother, for all he makes jokes like that; and were like a son to Jesse, he's so much younger, ye see; he's part owner wi' one of the other brothers in a fishing-boat, but he goes wi' Jesse a deal of his time. 'Tis strange too," said Mrs. Jesse, after a pause, apologizing to herself for her sudden confidence in the girl, " how you and me sits cosing on here as if I'd a know'd you all my life. I can't tell how 'tis, but with some folk one comes together so nateral as if it had been allays so; and there's other some as you may live cheek by jowl wi' for years, and never a bit nearer. To-

*** There is a curious horror at the corpse being lost. The extreme care for the preservation of the body seems common to all early faiths. Probably, the soul could not find its own again at the last if the members were dispersed by the ocean.**

[129]

morrow's the Sabbath day: do ye* come down, child, and go to chapel with me,—sure they can spare you,— and then ye can have yer dinner wi' me and David. Jesse 'll be out at sea and won't be back this ever so long," she ended, as Tony summoned the girl and the pail loudly from the foot of the steps.

*** " ye " (*ge*, A.S.), nominative and vocative.**

" you " (*eow*, A.S.), accusative.

" O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you.— *Gallio*.

[130]

CHAPTER XI.

TROUBLES AND SYMPATHY.

" Every one can master a grief but him that has it."
— *Much Ado About Nothing*.

THERE was no objection made by any one at the Puckspiece on the following morning to Lettice going to join Mary; indeed, Norton, when he heard of it, observed to his crony Tony as, with his hands in his pockets, he watched her setting off from the Puckspiece—

" I'm main glad she've a took that way; religion's a fine thing for the women: keeps 'um out o' mischief rarely."

In outlying hamlets and secluded places like Edney's Chine there was hardly any religious instruction possible in those days, except through the Methodists; the Church did not even attempt to reach them, and there would scarcely in some parts have been a semblance of Christianity without their help. The square red little Bethel stood at the head of the glen, hideous in its outward form and presentment, and in the vehement gesticulation and ranting of the worship within; but the self-sacrifice which had been required to build it, the earnest desire after a nearer communion with God which

[131]

it represented, were as holy and beautiful as that which had raised the magnificent minster in the cathedral town of the county, if only we could see through the ugly covering under which they were worshipping God to the best of their knowledge and ability. But we are slaves to beauty of form: it is a good deal of trouble to find out the substance underneath, and we don't like trouble in general.

Lettice had been used to rather a more orderly and educated style of worship, and Mary saw it in her face though she had not spoken.

“ 'Tain't nothing like when Jesse isn't there,” said she, almost apologetically. “ He most time preaches when he's at home. La, Russell ain't nothing to him; but our prayers goes up to God A'mighty and He hears 'um howsoever they be said: 'tain't the words as he looks to, and ourn be but stammerin' lips at the best on 'um,” she went on, as they passed along a winding path through the holly and dwarf oak which clothed the banks of the little chine. A rough slatternly woman standing at the door of her cottage on the other side the river called out some loud unintelligible greeting as they passed.

“ She and I had had words once before *that* time,” said Mrs. Jesse, musing as she went. “ She ballaragged me sorely, but she sent up a bit o' lad's-love (southernwood) and some 'fair-maids' (snowdrops) for to lay upon his coffin, and I've never forgot it to her,” she ended, with a sigh.

[132]

They reached the house and she began her preparations for dinner. As the heavy lump of suet-dumpling with a few plums stuck in it came tumbling out of the pot,— “ Figged pudding! ” cried David, with great glee. “ Give I some. I'se main glad and he clapped his hands.

“ Now, David, I won't have you so taffety ” (dainty). “ You don't see Lettie squealin' and squallin' after her vittles like that.”

“ Nay, but she ain't so nippy as I be,” answered the incorrigible David.

As long as that worthy was present he monopolized conversation; but after dinner he was safely disposed of in a sandy hole near the house, with a new puppy which Caleb had given him, and which led a hard life of it.

“ He worships (fondles) him so as he'll half kill the little beast,” said Mrs. Jesse, who had been busy within doors, and now followed Lettice out on the little terrace in front of the house. The girl was sitting on the low bench looking listlessly on the blue sea and the bright cliffs of the Island; everything was still—the “ Sabbath ” stillness—and lovely with the peculiar beauty of an autumn day—”as if it could not be, as if it had not been ”— which Shelley describes. The tiny waves which rippled to the shore and left no foam seemed only to make the quiet more sensible.

“ What was ye thinking on, child, so serious? ” said Mrs. Jesse, coming up to her, and laying her hand on

[133]

her shoulder. Lettice looked up at the grave motherly face with its kind eyes, and her own filled with tears. She took hold of the woman's gown and hid her face in its folds as if she had been a child. Mrs. Jesse stroked the bright golden hair and was silent. “ Is it aught that I can help, dearie? ” said she at last.

“ I care for somebody, and he cared for me,” she said, amidst her tears; “ and nobody isn't agreeable: his father and uncle Amyas and my grandmother: and my father don't mind much either way, but I know he'd be agin it. I've heard nought sin' I came here, and I don't know whether 'he' won't forget a' about it. Why shouldn't he? He don't even know where I am. And I'm so poor a thing, and life's so long; how ever shall I live through all them years till I'm old? ” cried the poor child passionately. “ Here's every day seems like a year —I wish I were dead.”

Mary sighed. “ Grief don't kill the body, dearie, only just the heart out on ye, if thou doesn't mind. Thou'st but at beginning o' thy road, when the sun's low and casts great shadders and everything looks so big: morning and evening's both alike for that: but there's a long day afore thee, please God; and at noonday one's too throng to heed as much.”

“ But I don't want to forget, no more than for he to do't.”

“ No, not to forget; it weren't not sent us to forget, but to use like. Sorrow's like yeast, I sometimes thinks,” went on Mrs. Jesse. “ If ye works it well in

[134]

wi' your life it raises the bread, and sweetens the taste on it; but if ye just leave it there to ferment, it turns all things bitter, and the dough's altogether sad, and *that* batch is spiled anyhow.”

“ And I've got nought to do like.”

“ Nay, dearie,” said Mary, shaking her head; “ there's plenty work an ye'll do it.”

“ But such stupid work,” answered Lettice: “ sweepin' and cleanin', without a soul to speak to at home but Ursley,* as is more like a tappit hen nor aught else.”

“ Who sweeps a room as in His sight, makes that and the action fine,” Mary would have said; but she had never heard of old Herbert, so her answer was more homely. “ We can't only do the work as God has given us: if there's sweepin' to do, 'tis like as He means thee for to sweep; but there's lots o' sick and sorry folk, child, round every place. *They're* not wantin' nowhere, poor bodies.”

“ I wonder ought one to be comforted by other folk's griefs? ” said Lettice, consideringly. “ After you telled me yesterday o' yourn, I just went home and could ha' cried a' the way, it seemed as if mine weren't nought to what you'd a gone through, and as though I were so took up wi' myself as 'twere wicked; but it wouldn't do. My ache's my own, and nobody can't feel it but just me in my own heart, and nobody

*** Ursula. The same contraction in James I.'s time.—See *Fortunes of Nigel.***

[135]

can't mend nor make there. Nobody knows the spirit o' man but the heart o' man that is in him.”

Mrs. Jesse was more used to act philosophy than to talk it, and she was silent. “ No,” she said at last, “ I don't see as it ought to comfort we for to know, bare like, as other folks is in sore straits as well as we; but I think 'tis God A'mighty's will, if ye can succour them as wants it, that somehow it eases yer own smart. I dunno what would ha' come to me that time I telled ye when the sorrow struck, but David's mother she were down in the faver after he were born, and nobody wouldn't a come nigh her; and only a little girl to tend her as died, and her own man out at sea for to get 'um a living; and I bided with her by night and by day, just coming home for an hour or two to fend for Jesse. He were a right down good man for to let me go, he were, he might ha' catched the faver from me,” said she, energetically; “but he telled me after, as he thowt the work kep' me alive, and were thankful for it. And after she died, he let me take the babby, that's David. It were a tewly thing, and sore trouble at night for to bring up, and Jesse

were so patient when it mourned as never were." She paused, and looked out at the sea, as if she were trying to see him.

" There's a tale as Jesse tells—he's full o' his yarns is Jesse (I can't tell it not as he do)—o' the building o' the minster at Mapleford. They wanted to have it at the top o' the hill where the people didn't dwell; and whatsumdever were put up in the day the angels pulled

[136]

it down by night; and the beams was too short, and the corner-stones wouldn't fit, till they give in and built it where 'tis now in the town; and when it came to evening there were ever one workman more as worked in the day and niver came up to pay time, which were Jesus Christ our Lord. And Jesse always said where we'd work to do accordin' to his word, there we'd find our Lord to give a hand to't, a-working with us both to will and to do. And it seemed to me ever as I went and come them nights as my beautiful Saviour were a-walking alongside of me up and down, and as He said, ' Peace, be still! ' to the raging of my grief. And he'll do it to thee, too, Lettie, an thee astes it of Him."

Lettice did not answer. Resignation is not a plant that thrives in young soils; making the best of that which is, seems more the virtue of the old, struggling to cure the evil the work of the young. " To suffer and be still " is the fruit of experience in pain— to do, to act, to try and throw off its sorrow by winning the goal is the instinct of the young; and perhaps Providence may know best, after all, as it is He that has made them so, or the world would stand comparatively still and become an abode of quietists.

It was the first time that Lettice had ever had a woman friend. She could have no confidences with her grandmother, and in spite of her affection for her uncle, they were both too shy to come near a number of her perplexities; while Mrs. Jesse seemed to have time and sympathy for everybody, and her work, of which she had

[137]

plenty, to be always done quietly and quickly, so as to leave her at liberty for others, instead of the way in which Mrs. Wynyate was miserable if she herself and every one under her were not continually on the stir.

In our days there is an indissoluble connection between the ideas of cultivation and reading and writing; it is now only the ignorant and stupid who cannot do both, and certain thoughts are never attained without those arts; but fifty years ago, books, except in the highest education, were the exception, and very clever men and women thought out their own thoughts and fancies with extraordinarily little assistance from anything beyond the Testament. Even in the upper classes reading was not very common among women. " My grandmother could hardly spell when she wrote, and she read nothing but her *livre d'heures*," said a Frenchman, who was well able to judge; " but she was far more witty and wise than women are now." There are other volumes in the world than written ones to be read; life is a book which may well last one's whole time, but it requires a great deal of intelligence to understand its difficult pages.

[138]

CHAPTER XII.

TEASING AND QUIBBLING.

"Straws show which way the wind blows."

LETTICE clung to her new friend with a passionate affection. It was one of those earnest friendships which are so beautiful between women of different ages, where the young one contributes the interest of the future, with a very refreshing mixture of reverence and love, and the older one the living experience which is not to be found except in the heart of man, and both are the happier and the better for the communion.

Mrs. Jesse had a great deal of work of different kinds for her own and other households, and Lettice was only too happy to help, and came down whenever she could be spared from the Puckspiece, which was pretty nearly every afternoon. She did not see much of

either of the men. Jesse was generally out with the pilot-vessel, and Caleb, who oscillated between it and his own fishing-boat, was seldom at home for many hours together. Lettice did not like him, and kept out of his way as much as possible. One day when she thought

[139]

that she had watched him safely out of the house, she came in and found Mrs. Jesse with a great heap of clothes before her, which he had just brought up.

“ I washes and mends him, ye know,” said she. “ I telled him t'other day as 'twere time to get him a wife, if so be he ever meant to; but he laughs and says, 'I never could see no sense in giving away half my vittles for to get the t'other half cooked;' and then he turns on me, grave like, and says, 'Sure, ain't you like a mother to me, Mary? and isn't that better nor ten wives?' 'Yes,' says I, 'lad, but not better nor one.' And with that he laughs again and goes off a-calling out, 'Let be, I'm satisfied wi' mine ye see as'tis.'“

Lettice was silent.

“ Ye don't like him, child, and 'tis quite as well. Some folk fancies one and some another,” answered Mrs. Jesse, philosophically. “ Caleb's a good 'un for all that. See thee, he brought me this here book one time, from no end o' way off. He's a beautiful book he is,” continued she, taking out a large Bible. “ I wraps he up choice, I do; and he's such good company, though I ain't quick at my letters, nor Jesse neither; but there, I reads a bit, and shuts my eyes, and then I gets at it again like, when he ain't at home.”

“ I wants sore to write home,” said Lettice, after a pause; “ uncle Amyas 'll be in no end o' trouble about me. I needn't say where I am if father don't wish it, but just to tell 'um as I am well treated, and

[140]

has found friends where I be. Couldn't the pilots put in the letter for me somewhere? I've a see'd Master Jesse a-writin': could ye give me a papernleaf? ”

“ There's Caleb will take it to Seaford most any time, and welcome,” answered Mary heartily, as she gave the required materials, and Lettice slowly concocted the document.

“ Seaford,” said she, when she had finished her letter, “ is that nigh here? ”

“ Not so very nigh by land, but by sea 'tain't such a journey neither; and they're often to and fro thereabouts piloting, or with the fishing-boats.”

“ That's where uncle Ned is with the Revenue officers,” replied the girl thoughtfully, (“ and most like Everhard too; I wonder what ever he's a-doin' of all these days? ” she added to herself.)

“ Well, one o' the pilots shall put it in somewhere else; you'd best kip clear o' them gauger folk at the present, considerin' what yer father's always arter. Kin don't count for much wi' them o' the coastguard, I take it. I wish as David could write a bit like you,” Mary went on, looking into the corner of the room where the child was after some ingenious mischief or other. “ Couldn't you learn him his criss-cross* line? 'twould be very handy for no end o' things.”

“ I'm a-goin' to sea soon as I'm big enough, and I haven't time for sich stupid things, have I, Caleb? ”

*** The old Horn-book had a “ Christ's Cross ” at the beginning.**

[141]

he cried, as the sailor appeared at the open door; “ and you'll take me to sea wi' ye come spring? ”

“ Will you put this letter for Lettie in somewhere when you're out wi' the boat, as it isn't Seaford? ” said his sister-in-law.

“ Good now, and why not Seaford, if I may be so bold? ” replied he coolly, as he put the letter into his pocket.

“ Because she've a got a uncle as is in the Revenue there, and 'tis trimming unlucky 'tis, as things is.”

“ And 'tis very wrong o' her, that's all I can say,” repeated Caleb, solemnly. “ What right have she to have a uncle as is a gauger, and her father in the fair-trading? Why didn't she see to it afore now? ”

“ I'm sure I couldn't help it,” Lettice began eagerly defending herself; whereupon he burst out laughing, and she turned away with a blush.

“ You've got some mar'ls in yer pocket for me, as I hear 'um shockling; and you let me walk up atop of you, as you does sometimes,” cried David, eagerly assaulting the good-natured sailor, and rifling his pockets.

“ Thank ye kindly, but I'm quite comf'able here,” replied Caleb, lazily sinking into Jesse's three-cornered seat; “ and it's quite too low in this here room for sich pastime.”

But David was not to be put off with any such subterfuges and excuses, and Caleb was presently dragged outside the door, where the boy climbed up him as up a mast.

[142]

“ Come out, aunt Mary, and look at me; come out, Lettice, I say,” shouted the young tyrant as he picked the grapes from the vine which trailed all over the roof of the cottage, and flung them at the girl; she was standing in the open doorway looking up at him earnestly with her clear eyes, and the evening light touching on her bright hair, as she knitted diligently at a pair of socks for his troublesome little feet.

“ David, you're not to pluck the fruit; yer uncle won't like it,” remonstrated Mary, vainly.

Sensible women sometimes make up for it by having a point where they are quite as foolish as their neighbours, and Mary was certainly no exception where David was concerned.

“ There, now you're as big as the giant Ascapart, and it ain't fit such a tall man should be teached his letters by such a little 'un as Lettie. I wouldn't stand it if I was you,” said Caleb, laughing, as he glanced down on the girl's upturned face.

“ Whose a-spilin' o' that David now? ” observed Mary, with a smile; “ but I will have him learned, if Lettice will look to it. All them words upo' the ships, and jography, and such like as Jesse loves, would all come easy once he had his letters.”

“ Jography! ” cried Caleb. “Why, he knows a deal more nor Lettie now! What's that o' the four quarters o' the world as the little sailor wi' the long nose in the collier's brig teached ye, David, that day I took ye to Seaford wi' me? ”

[143]

“ The four quarters o' the world,” said David, with great gravity, from his lofty position on Caleb's shoulders, “ is Roussia, Proussia, Durham, and Shields.”

“ There, Lettie, ye didn't know that, I'll be bound,” cried the sailor.

“ It ain't quite the same in uncle Amyas's book,” replied she, with some hesitation, never quite certain whether he was in jest or earnest.

“ Then the book's wrong,” answered Caleb, decisively; “ the man come from Shields hisself, so he must know! Well, I'll see and carry the letter for you, Mary, and put it in,— at Seaford I think you said 'twere to be? ” cried he, as he went away. “I won't forget.”

“ I'm glad he's gone,” said Lettice, breathing freer. “ He never gives over teasin' and stirrin' of me up when he's here.”

“ He's a bit spiled is Caleb. I don't say no,” answered Mary; “ he've nobody to pleasure but just hisself; and the bit o' land's hissen as Edwin hires, and gives him house-room when he pleases, and a share in the fishing-boat belongs to he. (I hope they ain't a-leading him into mischief wi' all them trips nobody knows where, up and down the coast as they goes.) And then he knows he's as welcome as the day here any time, Jesse's so glad to have him, and me too, to bide here ; but he sims more free-like to have his liberty at the t'other house p'r'aps. For all that Jesse don't say naught about it, Caleb knows pretty much what he thinks o' such goings on; and, after all's said and done,

[144]

his own way's what a young man loves better nor house and land. But he's a good 'un is Caleb for all that; he saved a man as was nigh drownded at Seaford no longer nor two months back. It tore his best shirt almost to ribbins; and there he never brought it me but now! See you here what rents there be! ”

[145]

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WITCH-CLOVER.

" Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves;
And ye, that on the sands with printless foot
Do chase the ebbing Neptune, and do fly him,
When he comes back; you demi-puppets, that
By moonshine do the green-sour ringlets make,
Whereof the ewe not bites; and you, whose pastime
Is to make midnight mushrooms."— *Tempest*.

THE weeks went on. There was a good deal of excitement at both the Chine and the Bunny, for there had been a successful run of goods farther down the coast. Sugar, tea, and brandy became very abundant, and the little colony was in a great state of suppressed exultation. Norton Lisle seemed to be in perpetual motion, running to and fro both by land and sea; and he received the congratulations of the community upon his exploits when all was over, with the grand dignity and complacency of a successful commander.

" To be sure it have a been trimming well done, and so secret," said he. " I don't know when we've a had a better stroke o' work. They thought they'd a got the fair-trading under along these parts," he added with a grin. " I wonder what they thinks now? Tony, you mind and have them things all ready to-night. I don't

[146]

know when we mayn't want 'urn," he ended, rather consequentially, as he went off, after helping to stable the cart and horses, which were nominally kept for the brickyard, but were used for much more exciting work.

" He's wonderful sprack, is yer father," said Tony to Lettice, who was standing by, in her little red hood, waiting to go to the Pilot's. " I'm three years and better younger nor he. But that leg he is such a detriment to me, or else I might ha' been a comfortable man by this; and now I'm like to have neither toft nor croft, and it's very hard. What call have

he to order me about like that? I'm as good as he at it," he ended, with a sigh at no longer being able to break the law.

" Ain't there nothing else as you could do? " said Lettice, sympathetically.

" Well, ye know, there's the deer in the Forest; and old Saul Saull, at the ' Bugle,' he's allays ready for to help off as many as I could get. There were a merry brown hare as was playing and grinning at me o' Toosday. But there, what's the use of 'um coming nigh like that, and I, as one may say, tied up by the leg? Things is sore changed now for the worse in all matters. They used to have fine times in the old days. I've heerd tell as how thirty or forty waggons, in broad daylight, with nigh a hundred men guarding of 'um, carrying of their tubs, and their faces blacked, would come up over Hengistbury Head, past the town, into the Forest. And for all folk was guilty, without their clergy, for a lot o' things as they ain't now, law it

[147]

didn't make a bit o' odds! Four-gallon tubs, and worth two or three guineas they was! They don't dare like that now."

" But d'ye think father 'll go on like that allays? " said poor Lettice, anxiously. " If the fair-trading's worth such a deal o' money, can't he just make enow and go away to have done wi' it? Surely, if you're cotch, it'll be a sore job for us all."

Tony never laughed; but he made the grin which was its equivalent in his face.

" Well, 'tis clear yer ain't but a woman, child. Why, 'tis half the fun for to circumvent them gaugers, and just be off with but half the hair o' one's head like. There, d'ye think it's the fox them red-coated 'unters is caring for when they goes hollerin', and howlin', and galloping like that all about? When they've a cotch him, they just flings him to the dogs. 'Tis the sport, child, as they're a-chasing of, gentle and simple both alike, 'ye see?"

" No," answered Lettice, half laughing. " I can't see as it's any pastime."

" That's why all them young chaps 'll follow Norton anywhere," Tony went on, without attending to her. " And them at Seaford is just as keen. They'd give summat if they could ha' tookt yer father this last time. There's two or three o' the top ones as is as bad as Jeffreys,* they is, after a man. They was in a fine pet to

*** Judge Jeffreys lives still in a proverb, near the scenes of his cruelties, though its origin is forgotten.**

[148]

be mated like that just when they thought they were safe to get he t'other day. You're off early to-day. What, Mary wants ye, does she? and Jesse's not up again wi' the rheumatics. Wonderful bad in his bones, I hear tell. There's nought like that for to hamper and hinder a man as one o' them bouts. And you're a learning o' that David his letters? He'll make a rare scholard! I'd as lief learn a cat for to play of the fiddle!" he called out after her, as she turned to go, with that love of alliteration which is so marked among " the people:" its music seems to have had a peculiar charm in most ancient ears, as in the 119th Psalm, every verse of which begins with the letter that heads the section. It probably was a great help to the memory, and was a principal feature in Anglo-Saxon and early English poetry: it survives to this day in the extreme love of the people for such assonance in their names and their descriptive nouns and verbs; and it is curious to see the rhythm revived with such effect in the choruses of Atalanta, much of the beautiful melody of which will be found to depend upon their alliteration.

Lettice went on her way gladly. The very sight of the thin blue smoke of the peat fire in the pilot's cottage, with its pleasant, racy smell, always gave her a sort of homey feeling when she neared it. As she opened the door she heard Jesse's slow, sonorous voice reading aloud; he was quite alone, however: there was no one in the room but himself.

He was sitting with his wife's red cloak wrapped

[149]

round him, and his noble-looking old head stood out against the cavernous depth of the great chimney-nook, which was almost as wide as the room itself, with the fire smouldering on the ground. He was not much above fifty; but exposure and hard living age a man far earlier than in the more cared-for classes, and, as the light fell upon him from a quaint little irregular window, with a sort of squint towards the sea, he looked like the Rembrandt picture of a philosopher. He laid down his well-thumbed Bible as the girl came in.

“ Mary said you'd be here afore long. They've sent for her but now to look after Edwin's wife, as is down wi' a baby. She do put herself about a very deal for 'um all to be sure. I mind her mother saying afore we married, ' My Mary's a golden girl!' ”

“ Be ye any better to-day, Master Jesse? ” said Lettice, timidly. She was a little afraid of the grave, still man.

“ Well, child, I don't know when I've a ailed so bad. I told* the clock, I believe, every hour all night. I think by whiles that it will be fine thing for to go away. But we must wait patient till we gets our orders; no man can sail wi'out them. The Lord he knows. I were just a searching into the Kingship o' Christ,” he said, with the far-seeing, abstracted look in his deep-set eyes of one intent on “spiritual experiences.”

* “ And every shepherd tells his tale.”— *Allegro*. Counts his number. “ He telleth the number of the stars.”

[150]

“ What was it, Master Jesse? ” said Lettice, after a pause, not feeling quite up to the point.

“ The Second Advent, child, ye know; and the thousand years, and the thrones, and the beloved city,” — and he began to read out, in his earnest, rapt tone, one of those chapters in the Apocalypse whose gorgeous eastern imagery seems to have such a fascination for the minds of the hard-working folk much driven by life.

“ 'Tis like the music of great waters,” said Lettice, earnestly, as the sound of the words died away. “ I used to dream of them in the white robes with the gold often and often beforetime.”

“ And then, ye see, there's to come a new heaven and a new earth, and there's to be no more sea. I wonder how ever that's to be? ” said the sailor, musing. “ 'Twill be like parting with an old friend, too, that will, for them as has had their business up and down, summer and winter, all their days, upon the deep waters. “I must have up Simon for to 'xaminate into that verse. Mary telled me o' the sarment upon it, Sabbath last, at chapel, and that weren't the Gospel as I'd a wish it prach.”

Lettice spent a quiet time looking after the sick man in his wife's absence. Even the spirit of the unconquerable David yielded before Jesse; he fetched in peat and water, positively did as he wad bid for the remainder of the day, and even consented to do his lesson " like a lamb." His instructor had had a sore

[151]

time of it; he had long refused to learn A, on the logical principle that it only entailed B, and an indefinite series of such disagreeable consequences; but he was standing up to-day with his hands behind him in a supernatural state of goodness, before the pilot, repeating his letters, for the most part right, although in rather arbitrary order, and with a great deal of prompting from Lettice, when Mary returned.

" Well, it is nice to hear him say 'em off so pretty," observed she, with much enthusiasm. " Such a mischiefful little dog as it is," she went on, looking fondly at him.

" Have ye seen any of the brothers? " said her husband. " I can't think what's become o' Caleb, as he haven't been here all day nigh me. David says the boat come back last night, too."

" Maybe he's along wi' Tony. Lettice, you're goin' home: you tell him to come, if ye see him, and the boy shall go with ye. Jesse'll be the better of that bottle o' ile as I lent 'um up at the Puckspiece t'other day."

The two set off together. There had been a good deal of bad weather, grey and dull, with sea-fogs, but it had cleared away, and as they turned up out of the little valley, the long sweeps of brown undulating heath, with an occasional glimpse at the sea, were lighted up by the evening sun: stray seagulls hovered over the land; and a magnificent pomp of crimson and gold spread up above their heads to the zenith, where it was met by a pale greenish blue.

[152]

Their progress was slow. One moment David had his head in a hole after a dormouse's nest, the next he was burrowing after a " want," or " palmer-worms." At last they came

to a stop altogether at a little island of green fern and grass, in a hollow amidst the sea of heather and gorse, still with some of the glory of its autumn colouring.

Lettice sat down and waited patiently while David prosecuted his researches into the natural history of the dumble-dore (humble-bee). She was singing to herself,

“ There is a land of pure delight, where sorrow cannot come.” Her voice was not a fine one, but it was pure, tender, and delicate, like herself: there was an unconscious pathos in it, sweet and low. Where could she have found the expression she put into the Psalm? she was too young to have gone through the experience of life necessary to understand it. *Elle avait des larmes dans la voix*. She had just finished, and was looking absently for the witch-clover as she sat and sang— a good omen, as is well known, for

“ Even ash and four-leaved clover,
You are sure your love to see
Ere the day be over— ”

when she started at Caleb's great shadow, which fell upon their green nest as he stood at the top of the hollow.

“ Who teached ye that hymn, Lettice? ” said he, with unwonted feeling. “ I've heerd my mother sing it. She were so fond o' that about

[153]

‘ Death like a narrer sea divides
That heavenly land from ours.’

She said it were so like what ‘tis here, looking athwart” — the Channel understood.

“ She’s but a twiddling little thing, but she can sing,” said David, patronizingly. “ Did ye never hear her tune up at chapel? I’ve a learnt her no end o’ songs sin’ she came here. 'King Arthur had Three Sons,' and ‘ There came Three Men out of the North.’*

She know'd scarce any but hymn tunes when she come, did ye, Lettie? Now tune up. She don't like singing afore folk," he added, apologetically for his pupil.

" Now let me hear whether you mind all as I've teached ye."

" I ain't listening," said Caleb, superciliously. " I've a got to look out to-night, and I must be off; but I don't believe she can sing all them verses of ' King Arthur' right through."

" Sing, Lettice," said David, shaking and pinching her violently; " he *shall* hear."

" Don't, David, you hurt me! I can't sing, if you strangle me like that."

" Well, then, will ye do it if I leave go? " said her tormentor, pulling off her little red hood.

Lettice began: she had the real soul of music in her, and soon forgot everything but her singing. She had chosen a more pathetic ballad of Arthur's death,

*** The west-country edition of " John Barleycorn," from which Burns took the idea.**

[154]

and sat, her little hands crossed in her lap, with a bunch of berries of the wythwind (convolvulus) and leaves in them, as she poured forth the delicate clear high notes, while the song rose and fell in the air like a lark's, and sank like it into the ground.

Caleb was apparently so engrossed with the look-out through his telescope over the country that he hardly seemed to bear.

Lettice had been singing without remembering her audience; but with the desire after sympathy of a real artist, she looked up to the tall sailor above her, when she had done, to see whether he liked it. He was standing, however, with his back to the setting sun, and she could not see his face, while the light fell full upon her, and almost blinded her when she turned towards him.

" Well, uncle Caleb," cried David, triumphantly, " what do ye say now? She's got it all right, ye see; and she sings it very nice, don't she? "

" Yes," replied he, shortly. " Ain't she going to sing the other one now? " he added, as Lettie arose out of their ferny hollow.

“ No,” she answered. “ I must be getting off home, and Master Jesse hopes you're going to he: he's been a-wondering sore not to see you all day.”

“ What is it you was looking at so hard, and where was you going to in such a hurry, and where does ye come from, uncle? ” said the boy, as Caleb still lingered.

[155]

“ I've come from where I've a been to, and I'm going there likewise,” laughed the sailor. “ I believe you've a got a touch of Lawrence,* and that you was changed at nurse, you're so curis; and a-sitting there where the pixies has their dwelling! ” said he, turning suddenly away with another laugh, as Lettie hurried out of the hollow.

“ This ain't the pixies' piece. Law, I wouldn't have let thee stop there, if it were,” said the boy. “ There's a fairies' ring, and no end o' pixy-stools** on the knap yonder, but not here; and, beside, you're an eldest born, ye know, and the Puck can't harm ye. Why, if ye haven't found the witch-clover!” he went on, snatching at the half-dead flowers and grass in her hand. “ On'y think! that is queer, to be sure. I wonder what ever 'twill sinnify for you? ”

Lettice looked down surprised. “ And I didn't so much as know it, and have looked for it this ever so long and never found aught! Well, it is strange, how ye seeks ever and dunnot find, and finds when ye dunnot seek, as folk say. Is it to mean as I'm to see Everhard, I wonder? ” she added to herself.

“ I can't think whatever Caleb were after to-night,” the boy went on presently, as he followed the girl, deep in thought. “ Eh, I know now! ” he burst out, clapping his hands. “ He've been getting ready for

*** “ Lazy Lawrence ” is a sort of Puck.**

**** “ The fairies, whose dancing makes the rings, naturally want the 'stools' to sit upon when they are tired.”**

[156]

the moonrakers at the great pool by the Stag's Head Knowl.”

“ What's them? ” asked she.

“ Eh, 'tis wonderful, Lettice! You don't re'ly know nothing but how to sing,” said this aged man of the world, in a grand and condescending manner, revenging himself for the wrongs of the alphabet.

Lettice always submitted to his superior intelligence in such matters, and seemed perfectly contented with her position of humble ignorance.

“ Why, 'tis when the gaugers is after them, and they flings the kegs into the ponds in the Forest, and fishes 'um out by nights.”

“ David, you come here,” cried Tony, as they reached the Puckspiece, “and help me drag in these Bavins;* we shall be done for if they're left out to get wet like this.”

*** Faggots.**

[157]

CHAPTER XIV.

TANGLING IN ONE'S HEART.

“ In olde dayes of the King Artour,
Of which that Bretons speken gret honour,
All was this lond fulfilled of faerie.
The Elf-quene, with hire joly compagnie,
Danced ful oft in many a grene mede:
This was the old opinion as I rede.”—CHAUCER.

NORTON did not come near Jesse's house, though he was often enough up and down “ The Chine.” “ Fair-trading ”— for the ill-sounding word “ smuggling ” was never used— was a regular profession, and no one was ill regarded on such a point; but Jesse had his own ideas of honour, and considered a “ bound pilot ” was “ swore ” not to dip his hands into such things; with which the delicate Puritan conscience of the man

refused to have anything to do. He was a respected chief of the clan, and no one questioned that he was indeed the “ heddest man ” in all things, morality included.

He judged no one, however, and Caleb had hitherto been allowed to come and go unquestioned from the pilot-boat to the little trading-vessel, of which he was part owner, and with which now Norton seemed to have a great deal to do.

Lettice often heard her father mentioned with great

[158]

respect. There was a very heartfelt admiration of his daring among the fishermen, and a chuckle of pride over his successful braving of the law, although they were apparently quiet-looking men, as respectable as their neighbours, and as unlike the traditional cutthroat, truculent smuggler, with cutlasses and pistols all round his belt, as the poetical chivalrous brigands, in velvet tights and silver buttons, are to the greasy ruffians who haunt the Apennines and carry off Moens.

The immense tract of wild ground, woodland and heath which composed the New Forest stretched out temptingly behind the shore, and pretty nearly every fisherman and labourer in that district some forty years ago was either a smuggler or a poacher, often both at once. They were recognized callings, like any others. But although an evil deed which is not considered such by your class, does not injure the individual conscience, or degrade the man to the extent of its wrongness, and a great many young fellows joined in “ a run ” from pure love of adventure: yet the perpetual breaking of the law gave a sort of wild, restless character to the inhabitants of a belt two or three miles wide, all along the southern coast of England, at that time, and did much harm.

Jesse had, however, been now at home for some time in consequence of his illness, and had heard and seen more than usual of what was doing among his brothers.

“ Come wi' me to-night, Caleb,” he said kindly, the first night that he went once more to sea. “ When it

[159]

were nought but the vally of a pound of bacca or a keg o' spirits here and there, I didn't know, and I didn't ho* anything about what you was doing as it were; but they say that the man have a died as were hit in the tussle down at Lady Cross, and I do hold that it's agin God A'mighty's law, let alone man's, for to risk your own life and other folks' in such like doings."

" Well, I'll see," replied Caleb, a little impatiently. " We ain't doing nothing to-night nor to-morrow, and I must speak to Norton; one can't break off sudden like that— soft and easy a bit."

" Them soft and easys leads a long way down the road to mischief," said his brother, gravely.

" Now don't ye hiessenny (forebode evil) like that, Jesse," replied the young man, with an uneasy laugh, and then turning to his sister-in-law, who had just come in, for something to change the conversation, " I don't know what to make o' that Lettie o' yourn." He had looked out of the door and seen her coming up the hill.

" Is she afraid o' me? She were watchin' and waitin' ever so long on the bridge the t'other day till I were gone past, as she thought."

" I wish you weren't so thick with Norton: he'll do ye no good," persisted his brother. " He's a boreright fellow, as'll get hisself and you into trouble, and never see he's on the rocks afore his boat's just going down as might be. 'Twere a sore chance for you when he come back from beyond seas. Here's a button off," added

*** Care.**

[160]

he, taking up his thick pilot-coat, as Lettice came in at the door, and he saw her anxious little face.

" Mayn't I sew it on for you? " cried she eagerly, delighted to do anything for him.

Jesse gave her the coat, with a smile. " You're allays handy and ready with them little fingers of yourn. Caleb, you bring it after me. I've got to see to the tiller ropes; I shan't be gone not just yet, if ye change yer mind," said he, as he went out of the house. Lettice began in haste.

“ Just you look at that button! ” cried Caleb, taking scornfully hold of her work. “ Didn't I tell you so! them women can't do even their own jobs as well as men. Now, *I'm* agoin' to show ye how it should be done! ”

“ Ye can't thread yer needle,” said Lettice.

“ Can't I just? ” he replied, as with much deliberation he set to work with his great big hands and succeeded. And then with a certain sailor-like awkward dexterity he certainly sewed on the button “ like a rock,” as he said, contemplating his work with his head on one side at a distance with great complacency.

“ But then what a time you took! ” observed Lettice. “I could ha' made a whole garment well nigh in the while ye was at it.”

“ Slow and sure wins the race,” answered Caleb. “Yer needles runs as fast as yer tongues, and neither on 'um ain't o’ much account. I can handle a swingel wi' any man o’ my inches at the Hocktide games.

[161]

Could you do much wi' a cudgel, Lettie? but ye're such a child! What's the use o' having such bits o' hands as yourn I wonder? ” said he, snatching hold of her wrist and holding it up to scorn.

“ I wish ye wouldn't treat me like a child when I ain't one,” said Lettice, kindling, and with the tears gathering in her eyes as she dragged away her hand.

“ Heyday, and what's the matter now? ” cried Caleb, laughing. “ What's that there hymn as David says? ‘But, children, you should never let, such angry passions rise.’ I'm afeard your grandmother didn't do her duty by ye, not proper, along o' them hymns, or ye were a naughty— ahem, I mustn't say child— and 'twere no good learning of ye good things. She's like one of them little green flies,” he said, turning to his sister-in-law. “ When ye vex it, it ups as if 'twould like to sting, but it hasn't the means,— so, it's just cross and makes believe; that's Lettie all over.”

“ You let her alone, Caleb,” said Mrs. Jesse; “ 'tis time for you to be off.”

“ And now, before I go, you just wind that there skein while I hold it, or you'll tangle it all to knots, as ye did the other t'other,” said he, taking hold of an unlucky lump of thread which lay “ in a mess ” in Lettie's lap.

“ My thread is small, my thread is fine, but he must be, a stronger than thee, that can break this thread of mine,” sings the Witch woman in *Thalaba*.

[162]

In another minute he was off like a shot.

“ I can't think,” said Lettice, looking up with a sigh of relief when he was gone, “ if he hates women-folk so much, what for he don't leave we alone? Here he've a spoilt all our talk, yourn and mine. I must be after going home in no time.”

“ He's wonderful took up wi' ye, child, whatever he may be scorning with others or no, though I'm not sure whether he knows it hisself,” said Mrs. Jesse, stitching away without looking at her.

“ Me! ” cried Lettice, incredulously, flushing up to the roots of her hair. “ Why, he never leaves worriting and tormenting of me.”

“ He watches for ye like a cat wi' a mouse, and he talks to noboddy when you're there; and I seen him t'other day come up from ever so far once he'd found the print o' yer little feet in the sand along this way,” said Mary, thoughtfully.

It had never occurred to the girl as possible. She had taken his attacks and scoffs quite literally as true expressions of his scorn for womankind, and the idea was as unpleasant as it was new to her. Two-and-thirty in her eyes was much the same as fifty, and she would as soon have expected Jesse himself to make love to her. She looked upon Caleb as belonging to an older generation, in spite of his quips and cranks. She had cared little about his opinion, and had therefore been shyly at her ease with him, and had answered him back again without much measuring what she said, and the directness

[163]

of her speech, contrasted with her extreme gentleness and shyness, had a certain piquancy which had a great charm.

There are a number of things, however, not noticed when one's mental eyes are elsewhere, but the truth of which flashes on one the moment they are heard. And Lettice knew now in her heart that this was true. Neither she nor Mary, however, said anything more, and in a few minutes the girl got up and went home.

“ I should like well to have her for our own,” said Mrs. Jesse to herself, looking after her as she turned down the steep path from the house.

“ Was that only what the witch-clover meant? ” thought Lettice as she stopped near the pixies' hollow on her road home. “ They says it's only cheating, them promises,” she sighed to herself.

[164]

CHAPTER XV.

MAN IS A HUNTING ANIMAL.

“ For human bodies are sic fules,
That when nae real ills perplex them,
They make enow themselves to vex them;
An’ ay the less they hae to start them,
In like proportion less will hart them.”
—BURNS, *Two Dogs*.

IT was the day after Lettice's departure from the Woodhouse, and Amyas was standing at the door preparing to go out to his work in the fields, and looking rather wistfully down the avenue.

“ I wonder will she write? ” he mused half aloud. “ I wish I'd telled her to. I’m afraid Norton will want to keep it dark where they're a-going.”

“ You maybe sure he will,” answered his mother. “ Hisn is works of darkness what don't love the light. What's that— a letter? ” added she sharply, as the carter, who had been

down to the nearest little town with a wood truck, appeared before the porch, with one in his hand. “Is that from the child already? ”

“ It's put on it as it's for the young missus herself,” observed the man; “ and they said down at the Post as it had been a-waiting there this ever so many days, but no one had a been down.”

[165]

“ Who can have a wrote to her, I wonder? ” said Mrs. Wynyate, as Amyas turned the letter over and over.

“ It's from Ned,” said he, slowly.

“ Whatever can he have got to write to she? he ain't so fond o' writing home neither; you'd best open it and see what 'tis.”

“ Nay, we won't do that; it ain't neither for thee nor me, mother. I'm doubtful as it's summat about that young fellow Wallcott; but I don't trust he anyhow, and we can't tell where she may be at these presents for to send it her, so it must just bide here awhile,” said Amyas with some satisfaction. “ And, mother, Norton ain't any great shakes; but I won't have it upo' my mind as we're the cause o' his ruin, we've no call for that anyhow: so don't ye write to Ned nor nothing nor nobody; we'll set no gauger folk upo' his track— they'll find him out fast enow, and I'm in hopes as he'll let Lettice come home again after a bit to us.”

“ I'm sure I trust she've a got some one for to rule and guide her where she is: she's but a poor weak child, given to vanity and not grace, to looking after the out'rd man that perishes, and not the inward as— ”

“ Well,” said her constant defender Job, “ I never see as she took on tittivatin' herself as some girls does; and it weren't she as made herself pretty for to look at. She can't help it; she growed so.”

“ Then there's that Norton, as ain't one bit fit to look after her,” sighed her grandmother. But although it was expressed in so ungainly a manner, the poor old

[166]

woman's heart was sore for her grandchild, snatched from what she considered her fostering care; and she was very seriously anxious and uneasy as she thrust poor Lettice's letter upon the high mantel-shelf in the kitchen, behind the end of the snuffer-tray: where, as " the chimney smoked that frightful to drive a cat mad," as Mrs. Wynyate often despondingly observed, it soon acquired the brownish yellow tinge of premature old age.

The letter indeed was written by Ned, but it had been dictated by Everhard. After the scene in the orchard he had quarrelled with his father to such an extent about Lettice, whom he refused absolutely to give up, that Wallcott declared in a fury, and in a tone which meant no mercy, that the first time he heard of his son's going down to the Woodhouse, or having anything to do with the Wynyates there, he would immediately enter proceedings against Amyas, foreclose the mortgage, and take possession. His mother had interfered with Everhard in behalf of peace, and had patched up a sort of hollow truce between father and son. He had retired to the office at Seaford in high dudgeon, and consoled himself in the society of Ned Wynyate, whom he caused to set forth these facts to his niece, with many asseverations of constant faith— all which remained ignored behind the snuffer-tray, while poor Lettice was wearing her heart out for a word or a sign.

Everhard's room at the shipowner's was a large garret in the roof; but any inconveniences it possessed were amply atoned for, in his eyes, by the opportunities

[167]

it afforded for " making a mess " with his pets and plants, undisturbed, except by a " tidying " in the household of more than ordinary strictness.

" I'll tell you what, Wallcott," said Ned, coming in at the door very early one morning two or three months after, with a bundle of papers under his arm, and looking very important, " they're in such a way at ours about the smuggling! They say it never were so bad; and there's been such a letter from the Board:— 'It is plain, from the last returns,

that there is an additional average of three and a half in the— district, which must be considered as showing an amount of carelessness.....' "

" Half what, Ned? Half a smuggler? What's that— a boy I wonder? " answered Everhard, indifferently, as he went on hunting among his shells and stones without attending. " I can't think what's become of that rare Echinus which I got for Mr. Denver— 'fairies' hearts' my grandfather used to call 'em. I'm sure I had it yesterday," he went on, anxiously. " That horrid woman's been rummaging again, I do believe, and thrown it away! What a shame!" His " museums " always came to a bad end, and had been perpetually consigned to the dust-hole by careful housewives, from his mother downwards.

" It's no joke, I can tell you, about the Board," answered Ned, sitting down astride the only chair, and pushing off unceremoniously the fossils and dusty seaweeds with which it was covered. " There's a fellow

[168]

they call Red Jack about, come back from foreign parts, they say, as used to give 'um no end o' trouble (it was before my time); and they think he's at the bottom o' it all now: we was quiet enow before. They're after the scent o' a great haul o' goods at this minute down the coast, and Dixon's got to be the head o' the party. He's allays standing in my way; it's very unfair. I'm sure I should ha' got to go in the cutter, if it hadn't been along o' him. He's allays striving to kip me down, he is; but I know where 'tis they fancy the cargo's like to land: and if I can get leave to be out, will you drive me there, across country? We can borrow a gig; and that mare of yourn's a rum 'un to look at, but she's a rare 'un to go, and would do no end o' work, only you're allays so nesh with her."

" I'd like you just to see my father's face if I knocked her up, and asked for another horse; I, who haven't scarce spoke to him this three months," replied Everhard. " But I don't mind, for once; I've always thought it would be great fun to see a tussle with the smugglers. It's very odd that you don't hear anything from home, Ned; and that Lettice has never sent me a word all this time," he went on.

“ No, it isn't a bit odd,” replied Ned, decidedly. “ Amyas is dead again you; and Lettice wouldn't write without he wished it: you may be quite sure o' that.”

“ Did you give my other messages last week, as I told you when you said you'd wrote? ”

[169]

“ I've had other fish to fry. Besides, they never writes to me, why should I to them? I shall be going back one of these days soon, and I can carry a whole barrow-load o' messages then, if you want it,” answered Ned, getting up as he spoke. He was a short man, though he had been a tall boy, and as he stood with his hands in his pockets, square, reasonable, and determined, he was a great contrast to Everhard, pottering over his fossils and plants. They were a most uncongenial pair of associates; but Everhard considered Ned as a part of Lettice, and had a feeling for him accordingly, while that quintessence of practical common sense valued his friend as being a round higher in the social ladder, and a good alliance for the uncle of his niece.

“ What on earth did you buy that ugly beast for? You have the queerest taste in pets to be sure,” he went on, standing superciliously before a large cage, where a hideous hawfinch was sitting on his perch in dignified solitude, having slain, in single combat, every companion put in to share his captivity.

“ He's very rare,” apologized Everhard.

“ Well, I'm sure that's lucky. I shouldn't care for one if he got so rare as he wasn't ever found at all. And there's that white rabbit,” he went on, looking at the hutch on the gutter in the roof, outside the window. “ Has she eat any more of her children, I wonder? They're so precious savage, your wild beasts all is. And this one's something fresh. What's going on

[170]

here? ” he inquired, with much scorn, peering into a large pan of sea-water, which stood in the corner of the room.

“ Those are my sea-anemones,” replied Everhard. “ Such beauties; I got 'em down the coast last week when I was after the fossils.”

“ Anemones! There ain't any anemones here.”

“ How stupid you are, Ned! Don't you know an Actinia when you see it? ” said Everhard, rather grandly, as he came up behind him. But it was too true; there was nothing to be seen but a crab walking about the pan in great honour and glory. “ It's that beastly crab which has eaten them all up, I do believe,” cried he, wrathfully poking the offender.

Ned burst out laughing. “ I wish they'd all eat each other up, I'm sure, and then you'd have got all your pets together convenient one inside t'other. Now, you leave all that rubbish nonsense and come along with me.”

“ You used to be very fond of birds and beasts, and sport, Ned, in old days, I know,” said Everhard, discontentedly. “ I can't think how you can laugh at it all in this way as you do.”

“ So I am fond o' sport now, only it's in a different fashion like. I've a took to hunting men; 'tis a deal more exciting,” answered he, a little grimly, “ as you'd find too if you was to try; but it ain't every one as has the knack o' that hunting. There's that fellow Dixon has no more notion how it should be done, nor how to

[171]

set a trap for 'um, nor nothing. You'd see, if *I* had but the chance, I wouldn't leave my man, not no more nor a ferret on a rabbit or one of them blood-hounds they tells such stories on in the Forest, till I catched him, and held him too. Now you come and see after the gig with me.”

“ Russell said I'd been away so much he wouldn't let me out any day more till evening, and I don't like bothering him for leave so soon again: he was quite mad last week. Besides, it's fifteen miles to Froyle Creek, if it's a step. There's a storm coming up— it's so close; look out to windward how dark it's growing.”

“ Evening will be quite time enow; they won't think o' landing till after dark. There's a moon as big as your hat now, and, storm or no storm, she'll give us light sufficient to drive by. Besides, the fair-traders love a bit o' hazy weather; it 'll only make 'um more sure to come in to-night.”

And the stronger will carried the day.

[172]

CHAPTER XVI.

AN APPEAL.

" Dieu n'est pas dans le trouble: l'inquiétude est le pire de tous
les maux, excepté le péché."

VERY sorrowfully Lettice went home: it seemed to her as if she were about to lose all the ease and comfort of her intercourse with Mary. She had not the smallest feeling even of interest in Caleb; and though she was too humble in her opinion of herself to fancy that it would make much difference to him, she kept out of mischief, and stayed carefully away from the Chine for the next two days, and always contrived to escape when Caleb, who seemed perpetually to have business with Norton, appeared at the Puckspiece. She knew that he must be going to sea almost immediately, and she strove, by all the means in her power, to stave off the evil day of meeting, of which she had an undefined dread.

" The lugger's off by now," she heard her father say to Tony at last; " I wonder what luck they'll have this time? 'Twere queer, too, what had come over that lad Caleb— he didn't sim to know his own mind an hour together to go or stop. 'Twere a hard matter for to get

[173]

him off, to be sure, this afternoon, and our hands is so short this time— 'twould never have done to leave the Dutchman longer, or we should ha' had 'um down on us from Seaford afore ever we could get in."

Towards evening, when she thought all was safe, tired of her seclusion, she scrambled down to the shore. It was very long now since she had had time to sit and dream there.

There was a fresh brisk breeze, not too strong: the little white horses came prancing in, and touched up the expanse of green water, " shot " with purple and grey and blue, with the sort of life which gives the sea the charm of an animate thing. The bits of rock at her feet were hung with an olive green seaweed, like slimy fur, which rose and fell as the tide came rolling in, and looked happy and enjoying, after its long drouth. The sand-hoppers made the very sand seem alive, and the little crabs hurried about merrily, as they crept in and out among the stones.

" And there they all has to sit and wait till the water comes back for 'um to drink, and can't do nothing like by themselves! " thought she to herself.

The smooth reaches of wet sand sparkled in the evening light, and every bit of pink seaweed and broken shell shone as if it had been made in fairy-land— though, as Lettice had found to her cost, when she carried them eagerly home at the beginning of her stay, they lost their glory, as fairy gifts are always known to do in possession. Pale, rose-coloured clouds were sailing in the delicate blue sky; Nature seemed dressed in her best gala, and

[174]

sparkled, and shone, and danced, and dazzled in a sort of brilliant fashion, which at first almost bewildered her, after her dark little room at home: the very air was crisp and delicious, though it was so far on in the autumn. Presently the moon began to rise, though it was still day: it was nearly full, and a long stream of silver light stretched far away over the sea; and as she watched the brilliant pathway of moonbeams she longed to pass across it " to some quiet place where nobody loved nobody," as she said to herself. " All the threads seems to get tangled the wrong way here," she sighed, as she sat thoughtfully and sadly on the beach with her head on her hands.

Presently she heard a tread on the shingle, and, turning, found Caleb close to her; the noise of the waves had prevented her perceiving him till he was quite near.

" I thought you was gone off to sea," said she, springing up with a blush.

" Did ye think ye was rid o' me so? " answered he, bitterly. " I couldn't go till I'd a seen ye again, ye might be sure o' that, Lettie," said the poor fellow, turning his white face

away as he saw the expression in hers. “ What for do ye get away from me now like this? Why won't ye scarce speak to me? What have I done as should make ye so strange? Don't ye know as I'd cut myself to pieces if ye was to want me to? ”

“ But I don't wish it,” said Lettice, her eyes filling with tears as she walked away,— ” on'y don't ye talk to me like that.”

[175]

“ No,” answered he, stopping her, “ ye must hear me. I love ye so as I don't know scarce what I do. Tell me how I may win ye? I'm right down beat, I'm as helpless as a child. Why do ye settle off-hand like that as ye won't have me without so much as giving me a chance?” said he, as the girl wrung her hands and turned away.

“ Don't ye say so,” replied she, weeping. “ 'Twould be o' no use thinking; I care for summun else, I do.”

“ But he can't care for ye not as I feel, and has never been high ye this ever so long as you've a been here, and he might ha' found out,” he went on, seizing hold of her two hands.

“ Let me go, Caleb! what good were it stopping? If you'd as many words as there's drops in the sea, don't ye see that it wouldn't sinnify now? it's too late.”

“ But ye might try and see whether ye couldn't fancy me if he don't come back again. Who is he, and what is he, and what is he like? ”

“ 'Twouldn't make no odds whether he comes or no, I should go on caring just the same, and love don't come by wishing or not wishing it,” said she, sorrowfully.

He sat down on the shingle looking so miserable that Lettice's tender heart would not let her leave him.

“ It's on'y just now,” pleaded she— ” it won't be bad long: ye know ye never thought much not of womenfolk; it can't have been but like yesterday as ye could ha' thowt on me.”

[176]

He shook his head ruefully.

“ I believe 'twere from the first day as ever I set eyes upon ye, and carried ye across the water, though maybe I didn't know it; and a light heft ye was in my arms, Lettie, that day, for all ye're such a heavy one to my heart now.”

“ I'm so sorry, but ye'll think no more on it after a bit, Caleb,” said she; “ there's no end o' young maids as is better nor me all to nothing.”

“ What's other young maids to me?” answered he, bitterly: “ it's you as I want? My love's like the great sea washing over me, it's so strong. I niver thought as man could feel so,” he went on, without attending to her as she tried to soothe him. “ Seems as if I'd took the disease worse because I'm older,” he said, with a bitter laugh. “ Come to me, Lettie, try and think o' it again, Lettie. You say you're sorry; why will ye answer off like that short, without a thought like? ” cried the poor fellow, springing up as he saw that she still lingered by him, and stretching out his arms towards her.

She turned hastily and ran. It could hardly be called a path which led up to the Puckspiece— only a rent in the cliffs where they were a little less steep. In general she was somewhat afraid of climbing them, but now she went up almost as if she had had wings; and Caleb, after standing and watching her until she reached the top and disappeared, turned slowly back home along the shore, his head bent down, and his hands clasped

[177]

behind him, chewing the cud of his bitter thoughts. He walked sadly up at last into the pilot's cottage: there was nobody there but Mary, and he sat down, laid his arms on the table and his head upon them, and did not speak.

“ She won't have me, Mary,” he said at last, without looking up; “ she've a got to care for summun else.”

“ Yes; I knowed that,” answered she, sadly.

“ What for didn't ye tell me then? ” said he, starting up.

“ I thowt yer might vex her like with laughing at her, and I niver give it a thought as it were anything but joke betwixt you and her till Tuesday evenin' as you was a-winding o' her skein.”

“ And what a fool I were,” cried Caleb, rising and stamping with his feet, “ a-winding in my heart with that thread of hern! ”

“ I'm sure I should be glad enow to have her be one of us,” said Mary. “ She's a dainty little slip of a girl, that she is, and looks up so innocent out of her big eyes, and as fresh as a daisy, and ever had a ha'porth of love for them that wanted it, and she's so clean and clever wi' her fingers, for all ye laughed at her so about the buttons. Ye was allays fightin' of her and stirring of her up; how should I understand, and you so much older nor she? Well-a-day, she cares for summun else, 'tis no use yer thinkin' o' her.”

“ No use,” cried he, angrily, “ and how am I to help thinkin' of her? And as for that'n other man

[178]

she've a took to, I don't mind: he can't care for her not as I do, or he'd have come after her long fur time afore this. I'm that mad in love with her,” said he, with his teeth set, “ as it seems nothing worth living if I don't get her, and she's so soft and gentle I'll *make* her turn to me.”

“ Don't ye be too sure, Caleb,” said Mrs. Jesse, sadly. “ Do ye mind what she said one time about women? Them soft clinging things sometimes takes such hold, like the ivy, as ye can tear 'um to bits afore ye looses them. Ye dunnot know what's women—nayther their strength nor their weakness.”

“ I never set my mind to a thing but I won it yet,” said Caleb, darkening.

“ Ye musn't talk like that, Caleb: pride goes afore a fall. Don't ye set yer mind on what ye can't mend nor make: things may be soft and have a will o' their own; just look at the water, and yet ye couldn't turn the tide not an inch.”

“ I shall be off wi' the fair-traders to-night, and I don't care how soon I get knocked o' the head by them gaugers,” replied he, sadly.

“ Don't ye go to break our hearts like that, Caleb,” said Mrs. Jesse, with the tears in her eyes. “ Ye know ye telled Jesse before as ye'd think better on it, and give o'er wi' they violent men— 'tis no good strivin' agin what can't be. Little things and big 'uns comes from the Lord; 'twould be easier to thee once thou could'st think this, too, come from His hand. Think better of

[179]

going now, my lad. 'Twill on'y mar and not mend thy matter,” she entreated.

He strode out of the house without answering, and down to his brother's fishing-boat which was waiting for him. Mary stood and watched him anxiously from the little terrace. His heart seemed to misgive him for leaving her without a word, and he turned and waved his hand to her, but he went on all the same. The wind was fair, and the fishing-boat was hoisting its little brown sails, like a bird spreading its wings as it went merrily out to sea.

[180]

CHAPTER XVII.

A FIGHT WITH THE “FAIR-TRADERS.”

“ .....Light answering light,
Kindling into a blaze the old dry heath;
The long-waving bearded flame from off the cliffs
That overlook the deep Saxonian gulf,
As from a mirror streamed.”
—DEAN MILMAN'S *Agamemnon*.

IT is a very painful moment to a girl, all whose actions have been hitherto under the control of others, when she suddenly finds that the responsibility of decision really rests

upon her, and that no one else can share with her the bitter burden of inflicting pain—that it is her own will which has done the deed, her own words which have given the wound, and that she can shelter herself behind no one else even in her thoughts for the act. Lettice passed a miserable night and morning; she had no one to speak to, no one who could give her a word of comfort or advice. She dared not go down to “ The Chine,” for she knew how tenderly Mary felt towards her brother-in-law and did not feel sure how she would take her refusal.

There was a good deal of coming and going at the Puckspiece, but “ you'd best know nothin' of it, if so be

[181]

you should be asked,” said Mrs. Edney, when she inquired what was in the air.

Late in the afternoon, however, David appeared with the important air of a messenger of state.

“ Aunt Mary sends word as how you're to go down to her without fail, as soon as may be, and she was all alone she bid me say, and wanted ye sorely, and I'm in a great hurry,” he called out when she tried to stop him, and ran off.

She hurried down to the pilot's cottage as soon as she possibly could.

“ Oh, Lettie! ” said Mary, eagerly, as the girl came panting into the house; and then she paused as if she hardly knew how to go on. “ Set ye down, chile; why, you're all in a trimble with coming so fast. What were that imp Davy about to hurry ye so? ” said she, as if to gain time. “ I wanted to see ye, Lettie, sorely: there's such a deal going on, and folk setting theirselves to their ruin, and no one to speak a word like, and I scarce know where to turn,” said the poor woman, strangely moved from her usual calm condition. “ There's summat doing more nor or'nary— a great landin' o' goods somewhere or 'nother: that imp David telled me a bit, and I wormed the rest out o' Edwin's wife. Ye didn't know (how should ye?) how Jesse's been strivin' these months past to persuade Caleb to give o'er wi' fair-trading and bide along o' he. ‘Tain't so much as he thinks a keg or two o' sperits nor a bit o’ sugar 'll do any one's soul hurt; but there's been

[182]

summun killed down coast, where there was a big run last month, and the revenue officers is just raging, and swears summun shall hang for't next time they catches 'um at it; and Jesse he said, says he, when it come to losing life and takin' of it, he did conceit that Caleb hadn't no right to help doing neither the one nor the t'other. And the lad had as good as said he would give o'er wi' 'um and not go nigh 'um no more— " and then Mary hesitated. " And last night when he come home he were like one crazy mad, and said he didn't care what came o' him wi' the gaugers, and then he went off wi' Edwin, as had waited for him with the boat, hopin', after all, as he might think better on it. Yer father's been egging of him on, and persuading him as thisn were to be the biggest ventur' of the season, and 'twould be coward like to leave 'um that time when they was sure to have a fight for't: that's what Edwin's wife telled me, and Caleb went off wi' he yesterday. Eh, if I had but heerd on it! but they never tells me them things, because o' Jesse. And yer father! if he chooses to risk his own neck, he didn't ought to lead they young 'uns into the trouble. He were in for it hisself ten year agone, and left, ye know, to be out o' the way; and when he thinks 'tis blowed over, here he's risking it again. And now he's after my boy, who'd ha' been quiet enow an he'd been just left alone," moaned Mrs. Jesse.

Lettice sat by with her hand over her eyes, but did not speak.

[183]

" I did think maybe Caleb might be up to yer father most like even now. They never knows, not exact, when nor where the run will land, and this time the cutter's out, and the coastguard has warning a' along the line, and that makes our fellows just more mad for to circumvent 'um."

" But what can I do? " said Lettice, the great tears gathering in her eyes.

" They say as they'll land first at the Puckspiece for to git yer father. Couldn't ye send and say wouldn't Caleb come to ye, and then if ye can get the speech o' him, tell 'un it isn't right o' him to be so venturesome, and to risk his life like that— ask him not to fling hisself into the fire, as no good can come of it."

“ But he won't give it o'er for me asking o' him,” replied the girl.

“ He'd do anything you asted o' him,” said Mrs. Jesse, energetically, without looking at her. “ Don't ye know as he'd lay his hand o' the fire if ye wanted it? ” And she wrung her hands as she spoke.

“ I'll try what I can,” said Lettice, slowly; “ but wouldn't he think as I meant more than— ? ”

“ Couldn't ye think o' him, Lettie? ” interrupted Mrs. Jesse. “ There ain't many not like him. He's so tender, and thoughtful, and kind, for all that bantering way with him. I dunnot know what like him may be as you've a set yer mind to, but he must be a terrible good 'un an he's fit to tie his shoestrings to Caleb, as yer father's a lurin' on to destruction.”

[184]

Lettice looked the picture of misery, but she was silent.

“ And a queer thing love is to be sure,” said Mrs. Jesse, almost passionately. “ Here's this 'un ye cares for as ye scarce know, nor has see'd not a score o' times in yer life, maybe; and for to be true to he as don't care so much as to come anigh ye this long fur time” (Lettie winced) “ ye won't hold out yer hand ever such a bit to save life and liberty for one as is being dragged in by yer own father to his ruin, and would lay down his life cheerful for ye any day, as well ye knows it. Save him, child, if ye can, and see after about lovin' of him.”

Poor Lettice was sore beset; she had risen to go, and stood now, the great tears rolling slowly down her cheeks, but very still, with her hands clasped before her so tightly that her own gripe gave her pain, while she was hardly conscious of the reason.

“ I'll do what I can,” said she; “ but 'twouldn't do to ask him to stop for my sake when I haven't got that sort to give 'um as he wants me to, or to hinder of him going with that kind o' words, aunt Mary; 'twould do no good for to act lies no more than to speak 'um. I don't love him. I'll go home directly, happen he may come up to our place though.”

“ I don't want thee to say aught to him as isn't true; but sure, plenty's the words as thou could'st find in thy heart for to say to him an yer would try for 'um, as is true as gospel, and yet would serve to kip him quiet for a while till this bout's over.”

[185]

Mrs. Jesse was more used to give help and advice than to ask for either. She felt as if she had done her hard task ungraciously, and was urging the poor girl more than she would have dared to do in her calmer moments, and she threw her apron over her head and moaned pitifully.

The afternoon was close, almost oppressive, and hardly a breath of air was stirring. Poor Lettice felt as if she were stifling, and drew near the door, too miserable to answer, and not knowing what to do.

“ There's a smartish storm coming up. 'Tis queer weather for so late in the year,” said Mrs. Jesse at last, with a heavy sigh, and looking out at the sea. “ I wonder where 'twill find the boat! and Jesse, too, where's he? Look at them margets!” she interrupted herself as three magpies flew by. “ Two for a wedding, three for a funeral. Whatever will that mean? David shall go with ye,” she added, as she saw Lettice preparing to set out. “ 'Tis trimming likely as there's bad folk abroad to-day, and he can stop at the Puckspiece for when ye want him: ye may chance find as ye can send to our folk somewhere.”

“ She must go by the cliffs then if I'm to go with her,” said that worthy, with great determination: “ there's all sorter things maybe a-doin' out at sea as a man wants to look at.”

They set forth together. The little sheep-path wound in and out, following the line of coast, sometimes so close to the edge that you could pitch a pebble

[186]

on to the shore a couple of hundred feet or more just below; sometimes the little green riband of turf fell back among the tangles of heather and furze. The boy was so intent upon watching the sea that she could hardly drag him along at all.

“ I must get on, David,” said she, at last. “ Look! what's that? ” and she laid her hand on him as she pointed to a trim vessel behind him, with all its sails set, which came creeping round the projecting horn of the bay in the windless calm.

“ Eh, yer beast! ” answered he, shaking his small fist at it. “ Bad luck to it. It's the revenue-cutter, a villain, hovering round the coast after mischief. And look,” he added, “ yonder, far out at sea, there's them other sails. I wonder which on 'em is ourn? Wouldn't they give summut to be up here, both on 'um, where they can see out no end of way off? ”

On the dark line of the sea, where it met the horizon, a score of little ships, with all sails spread, trying to catch a breeze, were attempting to get up the Channel; but were almost as stationary as “ painted ships upon a painted ocean,” each looking like a white butterfly.

There was evidently a storm rising. The deep voice of the sea sounded like the angry growl of a wild beast before it springs: the note was low, but threatening, though all was so still; two or three large drops fell out of the sultry copper-coloured sky.

“ 'Twill be a wonderful night,” said the boy. “ Lots o' folk will be about soon as 'tis dark.” And he

[187]

turned to the west, where the sun was setting in a pomp of lurid orange and red.

“ They doesn't talk much afore thee, fear thou'lt let out summat; but la! thou'st not sharp enow for that! What hurt could such a little 'un as thee do? Why, I could knock thee down wi' my fut,” said the imp, from the height of his magnificent three feet six. “ There'll be fine doings p'r'aps, who knows, to-night? Since that run at Roxton Creek a month back, the gaugers, they says, is that mad angry, for not a soul would tell, and the kegs o' speerit worth three guineas each and more; they swore the next shouldn't pass like that.”

As they reached the little hill behind the Puckspiece came the first thunder-clap, sudden and sharp.

The girl sank into the heather, and hid her face.

“ Run, Lettie, yer silly! ” cried the little lad, shaking her. “ Theest'll be soaked like a herring! ” And he dragged her in as the rain came down like a waterspout, almost before they had gained their shelter.

“ You'd best stay to-night,” said Mrs. Tony, as David stood before the fire with much majesty; “ yer aunt won't look for ye.”

“ Do ye know what's come o' the lugger? When did she get off? ” said Lettice, anxiously.

At that moment, Tony came into the kitchen with a wonderfully busy manner about him.

“ I shall want ye, ye little chap—ye'd best stay; the speerits is out to-night rumbling and rampaging like anything,” he said, half laughing as he looked at Lettice.

[188]

David cast a knowing wink at her. “ I'll stay,” said he, with great condescension.

The rain came down with a will, the thunder-claps succeeded each other like salvoes of artillery, but they did not last: the clouds passed over their heads after a time, and the storm sank away.

The night was very dark, the thunder had not cleared the air, the wind uncertain and in puffs.

“ David, come out wi' ye,” said Tony, who had again left the house, and now looked in with a great armful of sticks. “ The bavins is dry in the sheds: you go and fetch 'em out as quick as you can.”

“ A beacon! ” cried the boy in great delight, turning head over heels as he spoke.

“ You hold your tongue! ” said Tony.

“ They ain't a-goin' to land here? ” inquired his wife, with some anxiety.

“ There ain't no choice but here. There's too many to fight to-night. The coastguard's gone to ‘ Froyle Creek,’ and the cutter's off the Dutchman's Wrook. Norton's got summun to peach as we was going to land there, and the man were to git I dunno what for his pains,” said Tony, with a grin. “The coastguard's gone there these two hours back to be ready. Russell see'd 'em pass all right.”

As the night fell a great waggon and two carts came up the steep sandy road, and took their station close to the little wood.

The beacon was lit on a bare heathery space, just at

[189]

the very edge of the cliff, and close to where the steep cleft of the bunny opened up from the shore. In spite of the rain the sandy soil was almost dry already, and, with the dry bavins, nominally collected for the brickkiln, they were able to keep up a great light, which flared high in the air, leaping up in great forked flames from time to time, as armfuls of heath-gorse and pine-branches were heaped upon it, and then sinking again low and red.

There was a pause: the men fed the fire steadily, and their black forms could be seen against the light as they went to and fro with the fuel.

“ What ever have they done with the other beacon at the Monk's Head? ” said one of them, looking along the coast line. “ There did ought to have been one there for to mislead the cutter; but it must ha' gone out. P'ra'ps their wood ain't so dry as ourn,” he added, peering into the darkness; “ it's lucky that 'un at Froyle Creek is all right, flaring like anything.”

The stamping of the horses was heard on the other side of the little wood; else out of the sound of the waves all was still, and the darkness lessening as the moon was rising and the heavy clouds clearing away.

In a few minutes the brown sail of the lugger came in sight for a moment within the circle of light cast by the beacon upon the sea, and then passed on into more convenient obscurity. The boats came off with muffled oars, and there was some bustle and confusion on the shore of the little cove, where they were landing the cargo.

[190]

Presently a line of heads began to appear above the cliff as man after man came up, each with a keg slung before and two behind. There were few words spoken— but little laughter; they were in too great a hurry for anything but their work.

“ Hand 'um up one from t'other, 'twould be far quicker,” said Norton Lisle's voice.

The busy line of men stretched from nearly the bottom of the cliff, where the kegs were being hoisted out of the boats, to the top of the bunny, and down the shelving path— slippery with the fir-pins— which led through the wood to the spot where the carts were ready in waiting for their cargo.

The last of the kegs was landed and the vessel was just clearing off, when a loud cry arose on land, where the men were loading the goods, as the coastguard came upon them, while at sea the dreaded cutter came standing in with all her sails set. She had found out the mistake in her intelligence as soon as the party on shore; but though nearer in distance from “ The Bunny,” the wind had obliged her to tack out to sea without even the beacon to guide her the chief part of the way— for the light had been put out as soon as possible after the lugger was safely in, and she had been beating up and down for the point in the dark pretty much at hazard.

“ Now for it, lads! ” cried Norton, as the “ swingels ” began to play— the same cudgels with which their ancestors, the West Saxons, had done good service

[191]

under their king Alfred; and again later on, it is said, at the battle of Sedgemoor.

To maim an officer in discharge of his duty was “ felony without benefit of clergy,” as they knew well, but cudgel-blows were supposed to be all fair play: they were nearly two to one, but the coastguard and the crew of the cutter were both well armed, and the fight was therefore not unequal. In the dark wood many a Homeric combat went on unsung, “ and one seized his foeman by the midst, another smiting him on the head, dragged him gasping.” There is nothing like the use of blunt weapons for developing individual prowess: to give and take for half an hour, without serious harm, enables a degree of skill and courage to be shown which is sadly cut short by “ villanous

saltpetre ” taking effect at five hundred yards' distance; while it must have required “ a good deal of killing ” before Ajax's brazen sword took effect on his foes.

The “ swingels ” were going merrily, but the blood of the revenue officers began to rise: it was difficult to stand the smart blows of nearly invisible cudgels without returning something in another kind.

“ Drive on! ” shouted Norton to the carters.

“ At your peril! ” cried the chief gauger. “ If the waggons stir, I'll shoot the leader.”

The carters, without attending to him, urged on the team; he fired: the poor horse, maddened with pain, turned short round and the man fell under his feet. David was close at hand, nearly under the wheels, but

[192]

he had as many lives as a cat, and scrambled out on the other side, and the next moment was hammering and shaking the closed door of the house.

“ Let me in, let me in, aunt Ursley; I must come in.”

Mrs. Tony cautiously undid the bolts.

“ Give me uncle Tony's pistols—he wants 'um,” said he, breathlessly, as she locked the door again.

“ And that's what you shan't have,” said she, very determinedly.

“ I must, I tell'ee! The coastguard's beginning to fire, and the cutter's men has their cutlasses, and don't ye hear Norton screeching like mad to the carters to drive off, and the other t'other gauger shouting to 'am to stop? And they say as that young Wynyate as is so hot agin' the fair-trading has just a drove up in a gig wi' another young chap.”

“ Wynyate? ” cried Lettice. “ Uncle Ned! ”

It was what she had always dreaded; her ideas as to his duties were very vague and uncertain, but she knew that very probably this part of the coast might be within reach of his division. She rushed to the window.

“ Uncle Ted,” she screamed, “ don't kill him! It's my father,” she cried in an agony.

“ What's the use o' that? ” said Mrs. Tony, philosophically. “ D'ye think they'd give o'er for a girl screeching and squealing like that? ”

But Lettice was deaf to such considerations, and while his aunt's attention was directed to her the boy

[193]

suddenly undid the bolts, and with a burning stick in his hand, rushed out again into the *mêlée*, which was surging fiercely up now round the carts.

“ 'Tis the first reel fight as they've had this season,” said Mrs. Tony, composedly; “ but I wish Tony'd come back; he'll get into mischief surely.”

As she was shutting the door again, however, her husband forced his way in.

“ I must have the pistols! why didn't you send 'um? ” he whispered angrily, as he entered the inner room.

“ How can ye! ” said his wife, in a low eager voice, as she followed him in. “ 'Tis felony without yer clergy ” (she had got up the phrase most patly) “ to resist the officers, as you've telled me score and scores of times.”

Tony made no answer, but went on fumbling under the bed where they were hidden underground.

“ And ye'r so lame as ye can't help 'um anything to matter,” lamented his wife; “ 'twould be different if ye was one-and-twenty and had yer legs.”

“ We might save the run yet,” he answered, as he knelt down opening a hole in the floor.

A flash passed over his wife's stolid face: she turned suddenly out of the room and locked the door behind her; the window was grated and there was no other means of exit for the lame man. She found the kitchen empty and Lettice gone.

“ To be sure! ” said she, as she saw that two of her three prisoners had escaped. “ Well, if they likes to

[194]

get their heads broke, 'tis their own look-out: I've got the one as sinnifies safe,” she ended to herself, with much satisfaction.

There had been no shooting hitherto, but of the horse— only fair hand-to-hand fighting; but as Lettice came out the report of one pistol was heard and then another. She had lost sight of David— who had dashed forwards— and drew back terrified under the shelter of the house. In a few minutes some one came up dragging a wounded man towards the lighted window.

“ I shall be back directly, Dixon,” said Ned. “ I must just see that the men squander themselves outside by the carts.”

And he was off again before she recognized him in the dark, for there was a cry from the wood for help.

She crouched over the wounded gauger trying to do what she could for him in the midst of her terror.

“ Are you much hurt? ” said she.

“ I ain't much the better of it,” answered he; “ I'm afraid they've pretty well done for me. I hope they'll catch him that fired,” he went on, looking eagerly into the darkness. “ It were in revenge for my killing the horse I do believe.”

At that moment a tremendous flare of fire lit up the whole space round: it gleamed on the pine-trunks among which the men were dodging; it showed the carters hurriedly unlading the useless waggon, and

[195]

helped them to drive off the smaller carts; and it settled a disputed point in one kicking, struggling mass of legs and arms. Two of the coastguard succeeded in securing a man who certainly without the light would have made his escape, while another of the smugglers threw his opponent in a wrestling-match and got away.

A whole group of men now came up towards the house, gesticulating, talking, and explaining, and Lettice could distinguish Everhard's voice.

“ It i was that man who fired the pistol— I could swear to it— who's got away,” said he.

She was hardly surprised: the faculty of wonder seemed dead in her. She felt as in a dream, when nothing seems improbable, and every one turns up everywhere, and the unexpected is what is likeliest to occur.

“ What, Lettie! ” cried he, in extreme wonder, when he reached the lighted space, before the house. He took hold of her anxiously, but was too much interested in what had happened not to go on with his story. “ Ned and I had got hold of one of 'um— I believe it were Red Jack: he was the head one for certain, egging on the rest, and I think it was he fired at Dixon. We should have kept him too, but for that fellow who set upon Ned,” said he, turning back towards the prisoner. “ And eh! I was like nothing by myself in the big man's hands; he threw me like a child; I never felt such fists. But, I warrant,

[196]

I could swear to them, and that shock of red hair, anywhere, though his face was blackened.”

To his surprise he felt Lettice shiver in his clasp. He left hold of her suddenly. What could this fellow be to her?

In another moment the prisoners came up heavily ironed, and escorted on both sides. Lettice knew that the first of them was Caleb by a sort of instinct, even before she looked at him.

“ I did my best, Lettie,” said he, slowly and sadly. “ *He's* safe off, and I should have got away myself if it hadn't been for that beastly light. I wonder who started it? ”

The boy put up his face from between the men's legs.

“ Oh, Caleb! I's so sorry! I couldn't see, and I did want so bad to see! And the men at the carts was swearin' at the dark, and I thought 'twould help 'um load the kegs, and I set fire to just a very little 'un as had rolled away. I'd allays heerd say the light of the speerits were so fine, and I'd no more thought o' harming ye nor anything! ”

The coastguard laughed jeeringly at the boy. “ Well, you've done our business, young 'un, as well as though you'd a been paid for it.”

“ You've a scuttled my boat pretty fair for me anyhow, Davy,” muttered poor Caleb, with a sigh.

It was but half a victory after all for the revenue officers: their chief was wounded, a great part of the

[197]

cargo had been carried off; on the other hand, they had secured two prisoners.

“ You must manage now for the best yourselves,” said Dixon to one of his men, when they had carried him into the house. “ I don't think I shall ever be much good now. Why, what's this? ” he added, as Tony came out of the inner room when the door was undone, crestfallen, but on the whole not sorry to be safe when he saw how matters had fallen out.

“ I locked it,” said his wife. “ He's lame; what for should he get into mischief? ”

Dixon laughed rather grimly. “ I advise yer, sirrah, to help go after the doctor as fast as ye can, if ye wish to keep out o' mischief with us.”

“ Lettie, what on earth are you doing here? ” said Everhard, gravely, as soon as he had helped to deposit the wounded man on the truckle-bed, and had time to look round.

The girl did not answer.

“ Who is Red Jack, and what is he to you, that you should care so for him? I don't understand,” went on Everhard, utterly puzzled, and looking jealously about him.

“ How was it you was trying to take him? ” said Lettice, looking tearfully up into his face. “ It was my father, and one of the men says he's wounded too.”

“ Your father! ” replied he, with a great start, drawing back.

[198]

“ Ah,” thought she, “ he'll not care for me any longer, now he knows that.”

“ We've no time to lose, observed poor Dixon: there must be men left here to guard what's left of the spirits, and I'm too bad to move.” “ The prisoners must be got off to the cutter. Where on earth can that fellow Wynyate be got to? ” he went on angrily. “ He’s allays for putting himself forward when there's no call for him, and now, when he could do some good, nobody can set sight upon him.”

“ He took hisself off with the gig when the cry was as Red Jack had got away,” said one of the men— “ driving, as it were more convenient so to get to the next coastguard station, he said. He'd rouse the country that side, I take it.”

“ And that's uncommon cool, I will say,” cried Everhard, much annoyed. “ What a shame! it's my mare, and she's come seventeen miles this very evening, and not a minute's rest. He'll founder her as sure as fate, and then whatever 'll my father say? What a fool I was to let him bring me here! ” he muttered to himself. “ And how am I to get home without the trap, I wonder? ”

“ You must go back in the cutter,” said Dixon, wearily, “ if that's all. Besides, you'll be wanted as a witness for who shot at me, and I don't choose you should be out of our sights. More by token that you'd scarce be safe going off home by land alone this dark night, after you've been helping to lay hands on some

[199]

of them fair-traders; and there's scarce enow of us for to do the work.”

“ If Norton Lisle's afoot again, there'll chance be a rescue an we don't make haste,” said one of the older men.

“ There, do you hear,” said Dixon, “ you go along with the rest? ”

As he spoke, Everhard had gone once more to Lettice's side; but she drew back from him, for in the circle of light outside thrown through the door she saw Caleb's face sad and lowering, with such an expression of pain in it that she could not bear to do anything to increase it. He knew now only too clearly who it was that stood in his way, and he bit his lip till the blood almost came, as he stood there heavily ironed, utterly helpless, hardly able to move hand or foot.

“ Oh, if only we could ha' settled it in fair fight, him and me— fists or cudgels either— we should ha' seen which were the best man of us two fast enough,” he muttered between his teeth.

“ There's no time to waste, lads,” said Dixon, lying back. “ Lead off them two towards the cutter. 'Twill be safer that way than by land.”

Lettice turned away from Everhard, and went out and up to Caleb's side as they were moving off. She laid her hand upon his bound wrists, but he winced as if the touch had been hot iron, for he read her feeling as plainly as if she had spoken it. He saw it was no love that prompted the act, and he hated the mere compassion, and perhaps undervalued its tenderness.

[200]

“ Oh, Caleb,” said she, choked with her tears, “ how can I thank ye enow for getting of him off safe; but what will aunt Mary say when she hears you're took? ” she sobbed.

He looked at her darkly for a minute, but did not answer, and they walked him away.

Everhard stood by, watching her angrily. She turned coldly from him— she felt almost as if he had her father's blood on his hands. Why had he thrust himself forward thus to help in taking him? it wasn't his business. Mary's inuendoes, too, came back again to her: he might have found out where she was if he had tried before this. Why had he kept away from her all this time?

“ So she's took on with that fellow,” said Everhard, jealously, to himself. “ Well, let her, then! ” and he did not seek to come near her again before he followed the rest down to the shore.

The Puckspiece seemed to sink again into more than its usual silence after their departure. David had run off in one direction; Tony was gone for the doctor with one of the men.

The coastguard were busy collecting the scattered kegs. Mrs. Edney was occupied with the wounded man, and Lettice had enough to do in assisting her. There was some commotion and noise at first as other smuggled goods were discovered, but at length they left further examination till daylight, and all was still but the tread of the night-watchers. Mrs. Tony was

[201]

busy up and down, providing for her unwelcome guests. The sick man had dozed off uneasily. The wind was rising, and sighing sadly in the little pine-wood, as Lettice sat

by him, vainly trying to bring her thoughts into order. What would become of her father, and what were the other two out at sea in this stormy night doing and thinking of? Her anger against Everhard sank when she was alone— she discovered all sorts of excellent reasons for his not coming near her— and then she began to take herself to task about Caleb. But her conscience acquitted her in that direction: she had never encouraged him, or even suspected the young man's love until it was too late.

“ What'll they do with that young 'un they've a took? ” she heard one coastguard say to the other, as they sat smoking over the fire.

“ Hang him,” replied an older one, laconically. “ Them Edneys is always in mischief.”

“ Nay, they'll scarce do that, an he weren't armed,” said the first; “ they'll transport him most like.”

So that was what he had risked in trying to save her father.

“ Who was that other t'other young chap as drove up wi' Wynyate? ” went on the coastguard again.

“ 'Twere the son of the old feller as lends money, and is no end of rich, they says, down at Mapleford, as is in the ships' office at Seaford; but he'd no call down here with our folk. I can't think what he was after, on'y he's very thick wi' Wynyate.”

[202]

“ Well, that there's the right stuff, though,” observed the younger man: “ I likes to see a young fellow ready for to hit out agin’ anybody and everything I wonder is he gone off with the rest in the boat now? ”

Tony had returned by this time, bringing with him the doctor: the Puckspiece had not a good name in the neighbourhood; but a surgeon carries a white flag of truce and is welcome and safe everywhere. He did what was necessary for Dixon's wounds, but the man lay in a very precarious state, and the room was so small that Lettice was not wanted any longer: there was more than help enough. “ You'd best go to bed, child,” said Mrs. Tony, meaning to be kind.

And she retreated to her own little cell. “ Nobody wants me,” she said, drearily, to herself.

She felt utterly desolate and forsaken: the waters seemed to go over her. There was no one now to whom she could appeal for sympathy: her uncle Amyas could not endure Everhard; even Mary would always feel that she was, however involuntarily, the cause of Caleb's misfortune. Her poor little conscience was tormenting itself with all sorts of doubts: had she done rightly by them all? She seemed to herself like a leaf driven to and fro among these vehement men, with no free will or action left her but the power of giving pain.

The bitter feeling arose within her that by no turn of fate could she now be simply happy at no one's expense, that anyhow she must be the cause of sorrow

[203]

— until at last she could have moaned aloud as she rocked herself to and fro in her miserable loneliness.

And the stormy wind rose among the pines, and sang its great music among their branches as on a majestic organ, with a solemn sound which made itself heard even amidst the storm of her own feelings, and she turned to listen.

In her Puritan education, her thoughts often came to her, not in her own words, but in those of the grand old “ hymns and psalms and spiritual songs ” of past great men.

“ O God, oar help in ages past,
Our hope in years to come,”

it seemed to say to her,

“ Our shelter in the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.”

“ Our shelter!” “ home! ” repeated the poor child, as the words sank into her heart and stilled her throbbing pulses. And her whole soul went up in a kind of voiceless prayer. “And then she lay and spoke not, but He heard in heaven.” And soothed and quieted, she fell asleep at last as the dawn was beginning to break.

[204]

CHAPTER XVIII.

HALF A GALE IN THE CHANNEL.

" There's tempest in yon hornéd moon,
And lightning in yon cloud;
And hark the music, mariners,
The wind is piping loud.
The wind is piping loud, my boys,
The lightning flashes free,
The world of waters is our home,
Our heritage the sea."

EVERHARD had turned away and followed the prisoners and their guard. The dim night made the footing difficult and dangerous through the wood and down the front of the sand-cliffs by which they were to reach the shore. There was no time to be lost; the storm was beginning to rise. " Twill be a wild night," said one of the men.

The brilliant lights, where the moon touched the top of a wave, or a shining wet stone, made the black shadows still deeper; and the outlines of the dark figures of the men came out with curious distinctness against the bright light in the sky. By day the features and details are what occupy one's attention; but in twilight it is the outline which principally strikes the eye.

He crawled down the steep chine as best he could, no one taking any notice of him, or caring what became

[205]

of him. He was in an exceedingly discontented frame of mind upon all subjects. It is not an agreeable sensation to discover that the father of your intended is a smuggler in

danger of his life; or, secondly, that you have yourself been actively engaged, without the smallest necessity— as a labour, in fact, of love— in trying to capture him. He was very anxious about Lettice herself; and, finally, he had been left in the lurch, deserted by his friend, stranded, after having been dragged into the pursuit of the smugglers, against his will, as he repeated to himself several times in exculpation of his doings— in short, made use of in a way by no means pleasant to his self-love.

The authority over the party was gone after poor Dixon's loss, and the next in command was only anxious to get off his men, and entirely careless about Everhard's comfort or dignity.

“ You can go home in the lugger, if you please: the cutter's full,” he said, somewhat cavalierly, when appealed to.

Everhard's sympathies went over to the enemy. What call had he to help against the smugglers? They had done him no harm: in fact, at that very moment, there was a cigar of very doubtful extraction in his own pocket; and as he scrambled on after the rest, there was great revulsion in his feelings towards them. He was angry with Lettice, with himself, with everybody except Caleb, who was sitting before him on a stone, with his head on his knees, looking the

[206]

picture of misery. His captors had left him for a moment, for he was fastened now hand and foot, and there was a good deal of delay and difficulty in getting the men and goods on board: while the wind was rising fast, and the tide too.

Everhard stood a little way off and looked intently at him. The motives for most actions are mixed. He is a bold man who flatters himself that he can understand even his own, or unravel their cloudy texture: the strand is far too much twisted in most cases. His pride had been hurt; he had been made nothing of; he was taken honestly with a sudden compassion for the young fellow whose career he had thus helped to cut short. It is unpleasant, until you are used to it, to assist in shutting up a man for seven years or more, with a chance of hanging, for the sake of a law so purely human and conventional as smuggling. A touch of a mock-heroic impulse of magnanimity came over him. “ It

was an ugly trick in me," said he to himself. " Can you swim? " he muttered in a low voice as he passed him.

Caleb did not answer. He had vowed a deadly hatred in his heart against his prosperous young rival.

" Who's got the key of the handcuffs? " went on Everhard in the same tone. It was like putting an electric spark into a man, to hear a friendly voice at that moment, but there was no time for more.

" Come up," shouted the officer to him through the noise of the surf; " you're to go in this boat." It was

[207]

putting off to the cutter heavily laden, amidst a great deal of noise and confusion, nobody seeming exactly responsible for anything. The first prisoner had got in, and they were only waiting for Caleb, who had slipped on the sand, and could not rise, manacled as he was.

" He can't get into the boat with those things round his ankles," said Everhard, helping him up somewhat deliberately. They were off a lee shore with a storm coming on,—there was no time to be lost.

" Take him on board the lugger in the other boat, and mind you're careful to put on the handcuffs again as soon as you're in," screamed the officer, as he put off to the cutter, much troubled at his divided responsibility, and at not being able to be in two places at once, in his attempt to bring off both vessels in safety.

The men who were left proceeded to get Caleb into the other boat, and thence into the lugger, Everhard keeping close to him. In a few minutes more they had raised her anchor, and were going before the wind much faster than was pleasant on a dark night so near the shore.

Two sailors from the cutter had been sent to take possession of the little vessel, which was prize, and therefore precious to them all, but the rest of the men on board were all landsmen.

“ Help me on with those handcuffs,” said the revenue officer, holding tight on to Caleb, though the vessel gave such a tremendous lurch that he could only keep his footing by clinging fast to his prisoner.

[208]

Caleb smiled a little grimly as he set him straight again.

“ You'll want all the help you can get, in such weather, surely,” cried Everhard, anxiously. “ The lugger belonged to the man: he can steer her a deal better than any of you will; he can't get away in a sea like this any way, and I wouldn't risk all our lives, if I were you, with tying up the only man on board as knows anything about the boat. Can't ye leave him till morning, and we get near to the shore again? ”

The “ gauger ” was new to the men and not used to the sea, and much taken aback at finding himself in a place of such responsibility, with no one to command him or to be answerable for mistakes; and Caleb was left at liberty. He had not hitherto uttered a word; but, as the boat went plunging over the heavy dark waves, shivering all over, he seized the tiller-ropes out of the hands of the incapable who had hold of them, and shouted his orders to the other men.

“ The boat will behave wonderful. She can swim like a duck wi’ a man who knows how to handle her,” muttered he, with the sort of stern pleasure in danger which a man often feels who is a real master of his work, and quite over and above the hope of escaping from the horror of being shut up within prison walls.

“ Keep her head towards Seaford,” screamed the officer.

“ You'll not see Seaford to-night,” said Caleb,

[209]

“ with the wind dead agin’ us, and half a gale in the Channel.”

But the noise was much too great for any one to be heard.

He had said truly: the little vessel seemed to obey his “ handling.” She shipped no seas under his skilful steering, though the showers of salt spray came rushing over her as she ploughed her way over the enormous rollers of an inky blackness which came in, on her

straight from the Atlantic, “ without a stick between her and America,” and threatening to sink her before morning light.

[210]

CHAPTER XIX.

WAIFS AFTER A STORM.

“ In the stormy east wind straining,
The pale yellow woods were waning,
The broad sea on his shores complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining.”—TENNYSON.

THE grey morning was only just beginning to appear, when Lettice was roused from her uneasy sleep by a shower of gravel thrown at the window, repeated again and again. She sprang up, and opening the casement cautiously, saw a little grey thing with a very uncertain outline moving about outside, extremely like the pucks and pixies to whom the place rightfully belonged. It was making signs to her, and for a moment she drew back startled. “ Lettice,” said David's voice, “ yer father sends ye word as ye was to git him a little bag o' money o' hisn as is hid— ” and here his eager whisper became inaudible.

“ Where, David? I can't hear,” said the girl, anxiously leaning out of the window.

“ 'Tis in the old chimley in the room where he bided, eleven bricks from the bottom, five bricks from the side. Yer was to git it out wi' this old knife I've a brought ye. And I wish 'twere me as 'twere to do it— 'twould

[211]

be rare fun. But I haven't a care to let them gauger bodies git hold of me,” said he, with much importance.

“ Wouldn't they be glad, not they! Norton'll want his money and things for to git clear out o' the countryside: and don't ye trust Tony not anyways, I was to say. See, yer father fastened this bush to me, and nobody can't tell whether I bean't a bush mysen! ” The imp had got a couple of boughs tied to him before and behind, which “puzzled the sight ” of him as it were, and he vanished in the gloaming as he came.

The morning rose dark and dismal: the storms of autumn rain, which had now fairly begun, poured down during the whole day without intermission. The revenue officers tore up every plank about the house, and broke into every place they could think of after concealed goods: the burrow in the hill was discovered behind the stables, and kegs were found in the dreaded well.

The whole place was utterly wretched and miserable, there was not a hole or corner where Lettice could take refuge except in the sick man's room, while the splash of the rain went on uninterruptedly hour after hour.

She went round and round, watching anxiously for an opportunity to get alone into her father's room; but there seemed never a chance. “ I'll lay me down there and rest a bit,” she had heard one of the men who had been up all night say the first thing after she rose.

At last there was a cry that a fresh hole had been found in the hill: for Tony having discovered that he was likely to get into trouble with the “ Board,” was at

[212]

last giving his valuable assistance. The men's attention was all turned to the spot—even poor Dixon raised his head: and Lettice hurried into the dilapidated room. The floor had all been torn up, the rain was dripping through the broken roof: the chimney even had been examined, but without success.

She counted her bricks; but David had not told her on which side she was to search, and the first corner which she tried showed no signs that the blackened mortar had ever been disturbed; she was turning her attentions to the other end, when she started at Tony's voice outside,— “ Why, what on airth,” he was saying, “ can't ye make a fire in that chimbley where Norton used to bide, if you're so wet as all that? ” And she was obliged to retreat in haste. At last, while the men were occupied in dragging in wood and turf,

she took her chance in despair, dug desperately again among the bricks, came at length upon the right one, and drew out from behind it a little dirty bag from its concealment, which she had only just time to hide when she was called on imperiously to “ get them a light” by the men, and she replaced the brick only just as they came in.

“ Bless us, child, why, what's come over ye? What's the matter now ye looks so flustered? Has any o' them men been a-speakin' to ye? I'll tell ye what: ye must just be making out going home to yer friends,” said Mrs. Tony, as Lettice in a breathless state came back into the kitchen. “ Ye must send word as they're to fetch ye. This isn't the place for ye.”

[213]

“ But what if father should come back and want me? ” replied Lettice, anxiously, thinking of the bag.

“ Lawk-a-daisy, child, how should he come back, I wonder? Why, they'd up and take him like nothing. *He'll* never not come nigh the place. And ye see there isn't vittle for ye here, nor nothing; and you'd be much best out of the way, wi' all these men about. Tony shall drive ye 'cross country: he can borrow his brother's cart, and yer uncle can meet ye at ‘The Bugle,’ if you write to 'um.”

“ He'll scarce get it in time,” said Lettice. “ The letters don't come most whiles but when they're fetched.”

“ If he ain't there, Tony must just go on wi' ye home.”

“ Don't ye think aunt Mary'd take me in till I see a bit about father? ” insisted the girl.

“ She might or she mightn't— I can't say; but ye didn't ought to ask her. You're yer father's child, and all folk knows it now. What a detriment that 'ud be to Jesse pilot, as has allays took such pains for to kip his hands clean o' such-like. And who'll ever be our mainstay now but on'y he? If I might be so bold, sir,” said she, turning to the doctor, who had just come in, “as to ask you write for us, as we are in a strait along o' the child, as ought by rights to be sent home away from here. She's ‘ Red Jack's ’ girl, she is.”

There is no class out of whom so much work, unpaid and unthanked, is got by the community as a country doctor. His time, himself, and all that is his, is sup

[214]

posed to be the property of the public; and it is wonderful how ungrudgingly it is given. The surgeon looked up, under his grizzled eyebrows, at the girl's face as she stood beside him. " So that's Red Jack's daughter, is she? I shouldn't have thought it. Well, she'll be better at home— if she's got one, than knocking about here, that's very certain, now her father's gone: so I don't care if I do." And Lettice's fate was sealed.

Towards evening the rain and wind lulled, and Mary appeared at the door of the house.

" There's nobody strange mustn't come in here," cried one of the men rudely.

" It's the pilot Edney's wife," said the other, a coastguard who was of the countryside. " She's a rare 'un to nuss she is, and she've the beautifullest patience ever I see with the sick 'uns; there was a little lad o' ourn as would niver ha' got through the measles if it hadn't been along o' she."

And upon these testimonials Mary was allowed to come in. She busied herself at first about poor Dixon, and her very touch and manner seemed to set Ursley's clumsy contrivances right; so that he looked up relieved. " My head did drub finely afore yer came in; and she clums so, as she gallies me to come nigh the wound," said he, with a sigh.

At last Mary was able to get a word with the girl alone, in the little room behind.

" I didn't ought to ha' urged thee so, dearie, t'other

[215]

day," were her first words as she sat down on the little truckle-bed which nearly filled the room, while Lettice took the place of a pan of water which stood upon her box, and was pretty nearly the only other furniture. " Sure, yer couldn't help it all anyhow; but I were just mad to think as yon poor lad were flinging his life away like that, and I catched like at the first twig I thought on."

Lettice kissed her gratefully, but was silent.

" So you're going back agin to yer own people? " said Mary, thoughtfully. " Well, 'tis clear as day that's the on'y place for ye now, an ye have the leuth (shelter) of a home for

to go to. It wouldn't do not for you to stop here any longer. But you'll be a sore miss for me, with yer little ways and yer little face, and who knows when ever we shall meet again? And me as thought maybe Caleb might ha' won upon ye to stop with us for good and all; but it weren't to be, ye see, and we can't go agin what's set down up there, ye know; that's what Jesse says. But what wi' prevenent grace and pedestrination, and all them things, why, I'm quite muzzed by times, I am," she said, a little irritably. " But there I knows 'tis all right," added she, taking fast hold of Lettice as if she could not bear to part with her, in spite of this decree of the destinies and Jesse.

" I wonder when we shall hear o' thy father and them all? There, Jesse he couldn't kip away yesterday, but come home to know how it had all gone with

[216]

Caleb. He were a-wrestling in prayer for him pretty nigh the best part all last night after we heerd he was took, that it might be made a blessing to his soul. But I could ha' wished as it had been God A'mighty's pleasure he should save his soul, like outside in the world as 'twere," she said, with a sort of impatient sadness. " He were ever so litsome (cheerful) in his mind, and so lissom in his body, as 'twill be hard lines for a free 'un like he to be scrowdged up inside walls wi' a lot o' mean men as has done wrong. Jesse used to laugh and say Caleb in the Scripture were a stout young fellow, and a true and brave 'un, too; and so were this 'un, likewise."

" I've got a little bag o' money o' my father's," said Lettice, writhing under these painful reminiscences, partly to turn the subject, and partly because Mary was a strong box to whom anything confided was sacred and secure. " Whatever shall I do wi' it? Shall I gi'e it to ye to take care on? Won't he most like have to come down to the Chine some time afore long? "

" I'll take it and welcome, child; but I don't know whether he ain't more likelier to ha' dealings now t'other side country: he'll think as ye have it wi' you, and order hisself to get it accordingly." And so the little bag remained with her.

" They say that Caleb went off in the lugger after all. I wonder where they are by now? " continued Mary, with a sigh, as they came out together at an outcry from Ursley.

[217]

“ I wish you'd come here a bit, Mary,” complained she. “ He's hollerin' after ye like anything is that Dixon. I can't do aught to pleasure him, he's so fractious; and he's that contrary wi' his physic as he's like them razor-fish, which the more you pulls 'um the more they sticks tight.”

“ Hasn't there nought been heard o' Red Jack yet? ” asked Dixon, as they came in; and Mary once more “ soothed and smoothed ” the sick man.

“ No, and I wonder, too,” answered one of the men, who was drying his clothes by the fire. “ I thought as that Ned Wynyate would ha' cotch hold on him afore now. He's like a bulldog he is: once he gets a thing in his eye, he do hold on he do.”

[218]

CHAPTER XX.

A MOONLIGHT DRIVE.

“And night came down, and silence, and the twain
Mingled beneath the starlight.”

THE next day the storms had all cleared away, and the morning rose looking perfectly mild and innocent, as if it had never known bad weather or ill-temper, and was certainly not in the least repentant. Nature is credited with many of the feelings of man, but no one ever suggested remorse as one of them, the most purely human of all passions.

Tony had not been in so great a hurry to dispose of Lettice as his wife, who had taken it into her head that to get rid of the girl was to dispose of the proofs against them of smuggling; but he fetched the little cart in which they were to go, and was ready to start early: the spoils of war were, however, being carried off by the coastguard, and he was kept in attendance on them till long past mid-day, on this to him most distasteful work.

“ They kips me like that to vex me, I really do believe,” said he, chafing angrily, with a cut at the shaggy Forest pony when at last he got away, with Lettice sitting by his side, as much oppressed by the

[219]

responsibility of her father's little bag as if it had been the whole regalia of England.

She looked round for the last time on the desolate little settlement as they turned off across the moor, and thought how changed it all was to her since the day when first she came there. The same objects look so strangely different when every hill and bit of coast has a recollection attached to it, and a sort of personal friendship exists with every little bay, and every bush and tree has, as it were, a memory hung round its neck, or an association which makes it interesting.

It was a mild November day, and as they reached the forest country the autumn tints of the trees— which stretched far and wide— looked gorgeous under the long level rays of the sun, softened by a delicate blue haze. It was the more striking coming from the bare headlands and the evergreen pinewoods among which she had been living: the change of the seasons produces scarcely any change on the sea and the shore, or the sand-cliffs and the firs. It had been a very dry season, and the leaves had only just begun to fall, except where the yesterday's storm had brought down a bright carpet of them here and there: the golden yellow of the maple and the elm, the more sober russet of the oak, and the rich fiery tawny reds and browns of the beech, all flamed out in the beautiful sunshine; while the deep green of the hollies and yew with which the Forest is studded, made the colour still more striking. Some trees seem to lose their lives so gaily, putting on their

[220]

greatest pomp of beauty before they die, like the beech, while others part with their leaves one by one, greyly and sadly, like the ash. And yet there is a melancholy in all this brilliancy, in the perishable beauty which every breath of wind helps to destroy; even the most cheerful sunshine in November has a certain sad look of a dying year.

“ The autumn’s pretty nigh at an end,” said Tony at last; “ for all that flare and glare o' them trees, they'll be stripped naked afore many days now. We was out o' luck to be sure this time! and poor Caleb took like that when he might have cut away 'asy, if it hadn't been along o' yer father.” Tony was not troubled with fine feelings himself, and had no notion of giving poor Lettice pain, while she was wincing under the thought so that she could hardly sit still.

“ I did feel queesy and queery I did,” went on the imperturbable Tony, “ when Ursley locked me in o' that fashion, and the coastguard fund me like a bird in a cage; but 'twere all for the best ye see.— And maybe Caleb 'll get off even now,” continued his affectionate brother with much calmness. “ He's so lusty* and so spry he may give 'em all the slip still, who knows? How they have a-kep' us so late now as 'till be very ill convenient for me to get home again.”

Lettice did not answer, and they drove on across the wide heaths and forest-glades, by cross-cuts and by-ways apparently exceedingly well known to her conductor.

*** Healthy, cheerful; *lustig*, German.**

[221]

They passed by troops of deer and droves of brown wild pigs, which were feasting up and down on the harvest of beech-mast and acorns, followed by a guardian:

“ Gurth the swineherd ” is not extinct in the Forest. Tony looked enviously from one to the other. “ I'm sure I don't know how I shall get me a livin'; the deer and the little porkers won't serve, for I never could larn Ursley to do for 'um, not as she should: the fair-trade won't do now; and there I'm just left stranded like seaweed o' last spring-tide.”

They had reached a bare, rushy, boggy bit of ground, covered with furze and heath, broken by a number of old neglected gravel-pits with a good deal of water now lying at the bottom, where the hill fell away. The sun was just going down when they passed a little upland pool, with the wind chasing the tiny waves across it. It looked very wild and lonely: a plover flew by them with a faint “peewit;” two or three lean mouse-coloured cows with deer-like heads, and almost as active as the deer themselves, galloped out of the way. Lettice was struck with the solitary look of the place. Great

bars of black cloud were coming up *against* the wind, as sometimes happens, urged on by a strong contrary current in the upper air, which has always a very striking effect; for whereas there was a brisk breeze and a rustling of leaves in the opposite direction, the long dark bands came solemnly up as if moved by a determined conscious will, apparently in the very teeth of the wind. They spread gradually over the

[222]

upper sky; a pale orange light streamed out between them, while the moon was rising, and shone brightly on the little tarn.

Suddenly, the black figure of a man, running at his utmost speed out of a little wood beyond, came out distinctly against the moonlit water, followed in a minute or two by another in hot pursuit. The distance grew less and less between them as they rushed on, stumbling among the hollows and " tumps " of the broken ground.

" Look— oh, look! " cried Lettice. " What's the matter about that poor man? "

" There, he's down again, and he'll be cotch: the more's the pity," answered Tony, whose sympathies were all against the side of justice, as a matter of principle; and he drew up for a minute, and watched anxiously for the result. " The other t'other's the more nimbler o' the two, I'm afraid, and first 'un ha'n't got start enow. Nay, there, he's up again, I do declare. Hoora! He'll win away yet."

There was an imperious cry for assistance from the pursuer, who was near enough to catch sight of the cart; but Tony did not stir.

" Nay, thou'lt get nought out o' me," muttered he to himself. " I'll crawl into no thorns for thee. I don't know, and I don't ho anything about the matter! " And he turned towards the road, where the line of deep gravel-pits, edged with a fringe of red and orange beech brushwood, dipped down over the hill; and into which

[223]

the two figures now suddenly disappeared one after the other.

" Oh, Tony, see you? " cried Lettice, eagerly. " Where are they gone to, so sudden? They've fallen over the pits. Can't ye help 'um? Ain't he one of our people, p'r'aps? Oh,

go and see." And she laid both hands earnestly on the reins and attempted to get out of the cart.

" I've got into trouble once this month, and I won't again not for nobody," said Tony with an oath, pushing her hands away, and driving on most determinedly. There were angry cries for help in the distance, and a shrill whistle or two, but he turned a deaf ear to everything, and jolted on to the hard road.

" Don't ye see there's a waggon coming up as they can stop if they like? And it's no business o' mine, and I won't go near 'um; so there's an end on't," he replied, doggedly, in answer to all Lettice's entreaties, as he urged on the tired horse faster than before in the fast gathering twilight.

Amyas was standing at the door of " The Bugle," looking anxiously out as the little cart drove up. " Why, how late ye are! I was a'most afraid ye wouldn't come to-night," said he, going to fetch his horse out of the stable.

Mr. Saul Saull received Tony and the girl with rather a glum countenance. " We haven't a heerd nought o' yer father? no, certainly. How should we hear? " he said, very shortly, in answer to Lettice's

[224]

inquiries. " A chap running away, was there? We don't know nought o' fellers running' away here." And he looked askance at a man— like a gauger in disguise— who came out of the house as they spoke, and turned up the road by which they had come, on hearing the whistle dimly in the distance.

" We'd best be off, Lettice," said her uncle, coming back hurriedly: 'tain't well to be out so very late in these parts. Get in quick; you can't do aught with such like things as these. You don't know who it is you've seen that you should go for to make or to mar."

She was transferred to the other cart, and they drove on again.

The clouds were beginning to disappear, and the moon was reigning triumphantly with a single star at her side, as they drove silently on along the bylanes and the cross-country tracks; sometimes shining behind a group of great trees on a knoll whose boughs and trunks stood out dark against the sky, and threw long shadows far down the

hillside; sometimes the light lying cold and still on the flat grass of the moonlit glades which opened before them, with a tracery of the lines of the branches across it.

“ Why, child, what a time it is since I saw thee; seems as 'twere an age like,” said Amyas, affectionately, when they had reached the high-road: and she had inquired after every one at home.

“ Have ye seen young Wallcott sin' you have been away? ” added he, after a pause.

[225]

“ On'y once, the day but one back,” answered Lettice shyly, “ as he came up with uncle Ned to the Puckspiece when the cutter and the coastguard was after our people as had got in a cargo o' run goods.”

“ Well,” answered her uncle inquiringly, when she paused, “ and then? ”

“ I scarce spoke to him. Not that he knew it were father, but he were trying to lay hold of him, and were like to have done it too; but Caleb got him off safe from 'um all; and after that, when he came up to me, why Caleb were by, and I couldn't not before him—”

“ And who's Caleb? ” asked Amyas, who could hardly help smiling at this very lucid statement of the matter.

“ He were youngest brother to Tony, what yer saw brought me to 'The Bugle,' and to Master Jesse Pilot and aunt Mary.”

“ Yes, but what were he to my little Lettie? that's what I wanted to know,” said her uncle, tenderly.

But Lettice did not answer, and they drove on: the great silent shadows of the trees crossing the road and the broad open spaces, and their own shadow moving along, now beside them, now in front, as the road turned and wound about, with a curious sort of living motion almost uncanny in its pertinacity.

“ Oh, uncle Amyas,” she burst out presently, sobbing as she spoke, “ why is it things allays goes so contrary like, when one can't like summun again, and it's all so cross, and don't fit, as 'twere ? There— there's

[226]

that there moon and star: a week ago and they seemed a-coming together so nice, hurrying up so fast for to meet, and now to-night there he's* hurrying away just as much the t'other side."

They had left the woodland and had reached a wide, open common, over which shone the great broad moon: it glinted on the wet heath pools and the puddles left by the yesterday's rain, and traced out the line of road, which stretched distinctly before them, white against the dark heath, winding up and down.

" Look, Lettie," said Amyas, pointing to it with his whip; " it goes in and out, and there's toilsome hills, and lower down comes the ford, what's sometimes very deep waters; and we only see a bit o' it at a time, and must just only travel on upo' that, ruts and all, as we have before us; but it goes on home all the same, we know."

" Yes, uncle Amyas," answered she, meekly, but with a dissatisfied sadness in her tone.

He looked down at her, for his quick ear caught her expression of doubt, and even in the moonlight he could see her troubled little face. " But you think as I can't understand what it is as you're feeling now? " he said.

" Why, you're old, uncle Amyas," answered she, gently, " and never knowed, most like, what 'twere about loving folk, ye know."

He smiled a little bitterly at the hoar antiquity implied

*** The moon is " he," as in German, " *der Mond*."**

[227]

in this estimate of his forty-four years. " No, I'm not old," he said, slowly, " though I seem so to thee; and if I were, I have been young and had the heartache. 'Tis queer, too, how the young ones thinks theirn's a quite new smart, as no one in this weary world has ever a had before. I've a been through that bitter river," he went on musing. " To me it seems like yesterday, and I know what 'tis. I half broke my heart for one as threw me off, and took to another man as were a better one, she thought. And I've a lived to be glad, Lettie— and that's worse nor being sorry— not only to have lost her, ye see, but I know now as she I fancied never was at all, but only just as 'twere in my own thought.

So you see we've had neighbour's fare, you and me," he ended with a sad smile, " and I can feel for ye too, little one."

The girl looked up anxiously into his face, worn and sad, with the fixed lost look of one gazing into the past. With his extreme reserve, she knew the effort which such a confidence must have cost him, and she was very grateful, though her heart went on saying, " But it wasn't like that it happened a bit with me, like what he says." She pressed affectionately up to his side, but they neither of them spoke again. The lights in the distant cottages shone out like stars far over the wild heaths, and they looked in at the unshuttered casements as they passed one quiet little home after another, and could see the firelight shimmering and glimmering fitfully on the whitewashed ceiling, or the one candle shining here on

[228]

a young mother's face as she held her baby closely to her and rocked it to sleep; or on an old, worn, bent figure stooping over the low fire, full of years and rheumatism,— and there seemed as if whole stories of lives were told by that single glimpse as the cart drove on,— so much in such a little space.

At length, having crossed the ford and passed the "dark lane" and the avenue, they reached their own door at the Woodhouse, where Mrs. Wynyate appeared with a light in her hand, shading her eyes as she looked out from the porch, while Job stood at the wicket with a halter over his shoulders, as if he were taking himself up from grass.

" Whatever have a kep' ye this long fur while? " said Mrs. Wynyate.

" And how about Norton? " asked Job. "We couldn't make out naught from the doctor's letter. Have he got away from them revenue folks? and where were it you've a been? and who's took? "

" Take the girl in and warm her, and give her summat t'eat, mother, first," observed Amyas, as he looked at Lettice's white face, " afore ye ask her all them questions. What, ain't there a spunk of fire? " he added, as they came into the cold, comfortless, dark " hall-place."

“ I never lights the grate till mid November, as well you knows, Amyas; and this ain't but the first days,” said his mother, with great decision. She regulated her fires by the almanac, not by the cold or the feelings

[229]

of her friends. “ But there's a hit in the kitchen anyhow.” And she led the way in.

The girl was looking curiously round at her old haunts, when Job returned from taking the horse to the stable.

“ Weren't there a letter for Lettie came one day after she were gone? ” said he. She turned eagerly to search for it when she heard what he said; but no letter could be found.

“ I saw a wisp o' summat, hitched up on the mantle 'twere,” said Nancy, the “ dunch,” when she was appealed to; “ and we was short one day o' paper for to light the fire. No; I nivir give a thought as 'twere aught as sinnified when I took he.”

“ 'Twere on'y from Ned,” said Job, in a consoling tone, as the poor girl's face fell and she looked as if she were going to burst out crying.

“ But, uncle Job, he might ha' writ about something, ye know. Oh, whatever could it have been? ” she repeated to herself; “what were in it I wonder? how can I find what it were 'he' meant to say? ”

But the “ he ” did not mean Ned Wynyate.

[230]

CHAPTER XXI.

“SINGLE MISFORTUNES NEVER COME ALONE.”

“ Be still, sad heart, and cease repining:
Behind the clouds is the sun still shining.
Thy fate is the common lot of all:
Into each life some rain must fall,

Some days must be dark and dreary."—LONGFELLOW.

ALL things seemed to fall again for Lettice into the old ruts, and all was so strangely the same, and yet her feeling so different, that she sometimes pinched herself to know if she were indeed herself. In one sense her grandmother's incessant complaints and lectures seemed to fall unnoticed on her preoccupied mind, in which she almost unconsciously went on living over again the existence of the last few months; but, on the other hand, she missed the pleasant solitude of the past when she could think out her own thoughts uninterruptedly.

The weather had entirely broken up, and the wind went whirling about the house, tearing the leaves from the great trees and bringing them down in showers, sobbing and moaning ceaselessly with gusts of rain, and beating against the window-panes. The world looked very sad and dreary. She seemed to herself to have

[231]

left her girlhood somewhere behind her, and to have subsided into a grey middle age, wherein she walked up and down and wondered at her own deadness.

While Job wondered what had become of Norton, and "what about Ned," with praiseworthy perseverance every morning regularly at the same hour and in the same words, she added a sort of postscript in her own mind in favour of Everhard and Caleb, and the whole tribe of Edneys. But neither of them got any answer to their inquiries.

" I hold as Norton 'ud get away: he were ever a wisome chap, even from a little lad, he were," her uncle generally ended.

News was long in reaching the secluded Woodhouse, but at length Job came in one day as much excited as was possible to his philosophic tone of mind.

" What d'ye think's up now? they've a took up Norton Lisle at last! and who d'ye think's done it? Why, our Ned! Seems he was following arter him day and night after that time at the Puckspiece Lettie were telling on, and never so much as knew who 'twas he were after, for all them stories along o' Red Jack had pretty nigh died out this long fur time for they young things not to know. And so it came to pass as Ned got upon his track not

far from the old 'Bugle.' I dessay he were biding along o' that Saul Saull; he were ever a rare 'un for hiding and helping them o' the fair-trade. And Norton ran, and Ned ran, ever so fur, and Ned were fleeter o' foot nor the t'other. It

[232]

wouldn't ha' been so ten year back, I know that: Norton were a trimming smart young fella; but we don't grow no younger,— not most of us," said Job, plaintively, but prudently qualifying this general admission.

" Oh, uncle Amyas," cried Lettice, breathlessly, " sure it were them two as we saw running near the King's Bottom pool. We telled ye, you know, when we got up to ' The Bugle.' "

" But what about the catching, Job? " said Mrs. Wynyate, coming up behind.

" Why, Ned had his hand just upo' the other's collar, as one may say; when Norton, not for to be took, he turned short off, and le'p straight into the gravel-pits as was nigh, thinking to save hisself by the water, and he'd chance it anyways. And Ned wouldn't be baulked like that, and jumped too; and there he come right atop o' the other, and broke his leg wi' the shock, the water being so shalla'; and Ned hadn't not a stroke o' harm. 'I've a had ye in my grip before, my man; but I've got ye fast now,' says he, quite satisfied. And the other looks up and says, so bitter, 'Ye've a done a shrewd turn to yer sister's husband and yer niece's father, Ned Wynyate; that's what ye have. My blood be upo' yer head now that I'm took; and ye shall rue it to yer dying day.' For the other gauger come up just then, and he says Ned did look uncommon took aback when he found out who 'twere, and so red i' the face and so crass as nobody

[233]

mightn't speak to him scarce, after they got away Norton out o' the pit."

" And what will they have done with poor father after that? " said Lettice, with much anxiety. " They can't take him to gaol, and him with his leg broke like that, surely? "

" They'll put him away into the prison hospital for to get well afore they tries him, they says; but that'll be all."

“ 'Twere an ugly trick by one's own kinsman. I could wish as Ned hadn't a done it,” said Mrs. Wynyate, in her outspoken way about friend and foe.

“ Poor Ned! I'm sure he must be sorry enough by now,” sighed Amyas.

“ He were ever so anxious for to get forrard i' the world,” moralized Job; “and he says, says he, 'I wants to do summat altogether out o' the common way like;' and there now he have been and gone and took and done it. Them as is quiet, and bides at home, don't get into such scrapes,” he concluded, with much dignity.

“ Uncle Amyas, won't you take me to Mapleford to see father? ” cried Lettice, tearfully.

“ Yes, child, and welcome,” answered he. “ They'll not let thee bide wi' him; but sure 'twill be a comfort to him to see thy face in that sad place. And cousin Susan maybe 'll take us in for a bit. 'Tis a sore time sin' I've been near the old place, and I don't say I shall be glad to see it again,” he muttered to himself.

[234]

They saw and heard nothing of Ned, although the whole Forest rang with his successful capture of the redoubted Red Jack. He was by no means thin-skinned; but it galled him to be everywhere congratulated on his “ unflinching sense of duty,” and the ironical compliments of the very revenue officers themselves upon his “ public-spirited conduct” towards a man belonging to his own family were not exactly the sort of renown which he desired.

“ How were I to know the man as I hadn't seen since I were a child? ” he repeated, passionately. “ And as if I were to blame, him coming across my duty like that.”

And now the crisis of poor Amyas's bad fortunes seemed at last to have been reached.

“ There's a letter from them lawyers saying Wallcott's a-going to foreclose and take possession; that he won't give a day's more time,” said he, moodily to the rest, one morning a little time after.

“ Well, I'm sure I thought yon young chap would ha' seen to it, and kep' off his father; he promised so fair,” broke out Job, earnestly, “and now nobody hears a word on him.”

“ There ain't any rest to be found for them as puts their trust in man,” observed Mrs. Wynyate severely. “ I never thought much o' that young Wallcott, or what ye could any

way find to see in him, with his hair like a wisp o' hay for colour, and so wishy-washy too after pleasuring and pastimes as a man

[235]

ought to be ashamed o' wasting his time So," she added, indignantly, looking with a frown at Lettice, who turned away with a flush upon her face.

" Why don't I hear from him? Why don't he send a word or a sign? " moaned the poor girl to herself, as she went out into the wood-yard, nominally to search for the produce of a wandering laying hen. " I couldn't do other than I did that time at the Puckspiece, sure he must know that, and he all one as if he had my father's blood upon his hands as it were— he must know that," she repeated to herself again and again, as she went up and down in the bitter wind.

The gusts were bringing down the leaves by thousands, and blowing them before her in a wild dance, and all the gorgeous colouring which had so lighted up the world a few days before had now been swept away by the ruthless weather. " He should write," she went on, " if it were only to say as there's an end o' it all with me; 'twould be no wonder wi' this hanging over father's head I'm sure, on'y what must most like be; but he should make Ned write or something. How shall I iver live on like this, wi'out knowing a bit what he's thinking of or doing; and he can't but tell now what's going on with us here, and his own father putting in for taking up the mortgage? "

As she came back into the house she met Amyas and Job in consultation.

" We'll just have to go over to Mapleford to-morrow, Lettie," said her uncle. " I must see the lawyers along

[236]

o' all this mess, and we ought to look us out a counsellor for to defend yer father upo' his trial when it comes."

" What I want to know is this here," observed Job, with his most solemn nod of the head. " If we hires a lawyer to defend we, who bees to pay he? that's what I'm axing Amyas, I am."

“ I'm not going to throw good money after bad, fighting the mortgage, if ye mean that,” replied his brother; “ but Norton mustn't be left without help like; we'd cut some trees, only I don't know what's ourn and what ain't now. But we'll sell a cow, or make any shift sooner nor that.”

“ Father's got some money— enough for that anyhow, wi'out robbing you, uncle Amyas,” cried Lettice eagerly with a blush, feeling secretly for the little bag, from which she never parted company.

[237]

CHAPTER XXII.

IN THE AISLE OF MAPLEFORD MINSTER.

“ There let the pealing organ blow,
To the full-voiced quire below,
In service high, and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into ectasies.”—*Penseroso*.

“ So you're pegging away again,” said the old blind man as he assisted at the departure. “ 'Tis a terrible big traveller as you've a got to be, Lettice; better nor fifty mile they says you've a bin already, and here ye are gadding off again! ”

“ It ain't gadding, Dannel,” replied she sadly— “ on'y to see poor father in prison.”

“ And out o' sight the best place he could be in too,” muttered he, “ where he can't a do hurt to nobody; that's my way o' thinking.”

“ You'll have a jobbet to get in dry to Mapleford to-day,” observed Job, dismally. “ 'Twill be shower off, shower on, till night, I take it.”

“ We shan't mind— shall us, Lettice? It won't hurt if the weather is a little lippy,” said Amyas with a smile, wrapping a horse-cloth round her as they drove away.

“ I mustn't lose time seeking for some place for us all

[238]

to bide in, and I'm in hopes something might turn up where we're going, though cousin Susan's a give up the tanyard.”

He spoke so much more cheerfully than usual, that Lettice looked round surprised. In truth, the pain of suspense had been more difficult for him to bear than even the misfortune of leaving the home to which he once clung so fondly; to sit and wait for the knife to fall, without any power of averting it, had taken the pleasure out of every act and every feeling of possession for so many years, that when the blow fell at last he felt it almost as a relief from a burden more than a cutting off of that which was his own.

A shining island of light, where the sun broke through the clouds, lit up the high “ lawns ” (a “ lawn ” is only unploughed pasture-land) and the steep chalk landslips showed white against the round grassy downs, sloping steeply down on Mapleford, as they came in sight of the town sitting in its low valley. The flat water meadows which followed the line of the river, were of a brilliant green even so late in the year, and here and there a tall poplar stood out like a spire among the great round-headed elms scattered in the hedgerows: grey blues, blue-greens, the harmony of the colouring was extreme. And in the midst stood the stately old Minster, every part of it, from its grey stone tower to its round-headed windows, with their toothed mouldings and mighty buttresses, giving a feeling of its hoar antiquity.

[239]

Not far from the Cathedral, on the hillside, stood five little square red boxes, slated to a point, exactly alike.

“ There, them's what my uncle built just afore he died; and Susan gets a good rent for 'um too,” said Amyas, pointing to them with some pride.

There are many ways in which Mr. Darwin's “ struggle for life ” is carried on; and in many things the meanest, shabbiest, and cheapest win the day. In architecture they are, certainly at present, the most successful. Given the smallest quantity of material to

cover the largest possible space— result, red boxes. One has a very keen sense that civilization is by no means all gain, when looking at the productions of the ages of " barbarism," and comparing them with those of our own " enlightened time."

They crossed the river by a high stone bridge almost as ancient as the Minster; but Mapleford was older than its bridge, as was marked by its name. The town brought together on the " ford " of the " Ox " must have existed before that on the " bridge " of the " Cam."

As they drove up the narrow, steep street, Lettice, who had never seen anything more gorgeous than the village shop, was amazed at the magnificence before her.

" Look, uncle, at all them beautiful things hanging up there! Why, what will they do wi' all those yards upo' yards? "

[240]

" Well, it do look as if there was napery and drapery enough for to last the county till doomsday," answered he, smiling.

" And the picturs! Isn't it wonderful to see the folk all pass by and niver so much as stop to look in; surely, surely! But I shouldn't love to be shut in with walls o' this fashion, and nought but a tiddy bit o' blue sky right atop o' one's head. I hope uncle Amyas won't want to live here," she said sorrowfully to herself as they drove up to their cousin's house.

Mrs. Susan's abode was in a sad-looking grey bystreet, which seemed oppressed by a sense of its responsibilities and respectabilities as belonging to a cathedral town. Amyas got down and stretched across to the bell, humbly avoiding the fine brass knocker, for the steps up to the door were of that exasperating whiteness which says plainly that neither they nor their owner are to be trifled with. There was no answer, and after a little time he rang again, when, almost before he could take his hand off the bell-pull, the door opened sharply, as if its mistress had been close behind in ambush reconnoitring, and Mrs. Smart appeared with by no means a cheering aspect.

" What a noise," said she. " Whatever is you in such a hurry about? Eh, what, Amyas, who'd ever have thowt o' seeing you here! " The welcome was somewhat chilling. " Put

you and Lettie up for a night or two? Well, I dessay I can at a pinch, while you're looking out," she went on in answer to his request; " but

[241]

it's a very trouble thing for one's belongings to be took up like that Norton; so ill-convenient, as one may say, for to have one's first-cousin's husband may be hanged or transported. One has no credit o' one's kindred so."

Poor Lettice winced, coloured, grew pale, and turned away with the tears in her eyes.

" Nay, cousin," said Amyas, in a vexed tone, " it won't come to so bad as that. And you needn't fear for your good name; you that has married out on it all, and don't belong, nor nothing. Ye'll try sure and have respect before her father's child," he whispered anxiously.

" Law," said that lady, " if I didn't clean forget all about her! 'Tis so long sin' I've a seen any o' ye, that it stands to reason I can't mind how one and another is jined together."

" Well, I must go and see about the lawyer for Norton, and the permit for the girl to see him, and a deal more, let alone my own business, and to find a place to put the nag," said Amyas, climbing back into the cart and in a hurry to get away.

" Can't I go with ye, uncle, till ye come back? " cried Lettice, anxiously catching at any opening which might save her from being left with her dreaded cousin.

"She could just go for to see the Minster, which it's fit and proper all folk should, to be sure," said Mrs. Smart. " 'Twill give me time for to look about me a bit; and 'tis just nigh the hour for arternoon service, for them that like such papish ways," she ended, with

[242]

a touch of scorn, as they drove away, as became the daughter of her father the preacher.

" I mind how often I used to get into trouble with my uncle in the old days, looking in for to hear the music, and Susan weren't so strong agin it then neither," said Amyas with a smile. " Ye can find yer own way home by yourself, I'll be bound: I shan't be back this ever so long."

And he left her in the Close. All was so silent there that when the shouts of two passing boys were echoed back from the walls of the Cathedral, Lettice could not help wondering at their wickedness: the only sound came from the jackdaws wheeling round the tower, and the rooks cawing in the lofty elms, which yet looked dwarfed by the side of the enormous pile.

She opened the little wicket in the south door, and entered under the mighty old round grey arches. Many a king and bishop and great chief slept under their quiet aisles; and though Lettice was unconscious even that they ever had existed, there was a sort of solemn rest in the place which soothed and quieted her. The organ was pealing under the majestic vault, poised as it were in the air, arch upon arch rising high up into the heavens. It seemed a strange creation to have been reared by petty creatures like herself— men who " looked no bigger nor flies," she said to herself, gazing aloft and seeing a man doing a little bit of repair somewhere up in the skies.

The disproportion between the work and the worker

[243]

is nowhere so great. In all buildings raised by man for his own use there is a plain serving of a visible end; but the purely impersonal character of the thought of these nameless architects who built for the glory of God alone, the lavish pouring out of all man's best gifts for what was thought to be His service, is a very grand and touching testimony to the intenseness of the belief in the unseen in those days, which we have not gained by losing.

Two old deaf women and a blind man were the paid audience and spectators of the grand choral service sounding to those otherwise empty walls; the sole enjoyers of that great poem written in stone.

She sat down on a bench in a quiet corner, while the music seemed to wrap and whirl her up into a new heaven of sound. It is like a sixth sense, that understanding of what music has to tell,— to perceive the whole world of images and sensations into which it alone opens the door. " *Le règne du son commence où celui de la parole finit*" says Lamartine. Presently came the prayers in what the intoning made appear to her a strange

language; but the intention comforted her even when she could not follow the words, and the closing " Amens " seemed to her like voices from heaven answering. A long ray of light came through a western window. " Seems as if the angels must come up and down that way into the church," thought she to herself. She could see, where she sat, into one of the transepts, full of monuments, statues, and busts.

[244]

which looked strangely eerie as the evening light faded gradually away. All sorts of curious fancies passed through her head, born of the music. " I wonder whether them dead people steps down at night off of their tombstones into the church, and meets together to speak, p'r'aps, o' what they done aforetime in their lives? " thought she.

It was a stranger company if they did than she could understand— kings and pious men, light ladies and bishops, holy nuns, soldiers, abbesses, and statesmen mingled together in wonderful confusion in the minster of the capital city of the West Saxons.

There was one bust which she fixed upon as like the idea of her dead mother, whose presence seemed almost to hover over her. It is strange how there is something so sacred in the very name of a mother that, even where the person has been very indifferent and careless, or even harsh, the relation still remains as a holy memory, as in Lettice's case, if the loss has been in infancy, so as to throw the halo of time and mystery over it: the child worships the idea as a sort of guardian angel, to the wronging often of those living and loving far more.

She was sitting at the foot of one of the enormous stone masses of clustered columns, which looked almost as large as a house in itself, and she gazed up into the mighty labyrinth of arches and roofs above her head. Each part in a Gothic structure seems to grow out of each by a natural and ever-varying sequence— there is

[245]

something so living in it; while a Palladian or Italian building obtains height by simply piling a repetition of column and architrave and niche one upon the other again and again,— a far more awkward and artificial manner of accomplishing it. When the storm

of solemn sound thrilling through the aisles came to a stop, the dead stillness seemed to have a charm for her which was almost a music in itself. She woke up from the sort of trance into which it had thrown her, and, as she got up timidly to go out after the choristers, she saw Everhard standing watching her a little way off from behind a grim grating. She was not surprised; somehow, she felt as if all good and true things must be born of that glorious gift of sound.

“ Lettice,” said he, impatiently, seizing hold of her hand as she came into the nave, “ I saw you passing with your uncle towards the Close, a long way off, and followed after, but the choir door was shut in my face before I could get in; and there I have been trying all this while to make you turn, and you never so much as stirred, sitting there looking so calm and quiet, and I chafing outside. What are you doing here at Mapleford? ” he went on, in an aggrieved tone.

“ We came part for to see my father, if so be I could, ” said she, sadly. “ 'He's been took, ye know, and has broke his leg, and— ”

“ Yes, I know,” he answered, hurriedly; and then, anxious to get her off the line of thought which the subject led to, “ A wonderful bad time we

[246]

had in the Channel t'other night, you may depend on’t.

“ You all got safe back? ” said she, with a little emphasis on the “ all,” which he understood; he looked at her suspiciously, not liking the Caleb topic much better than the last, and made a third attempt.

“ Your uncle's come about the mortgage, I suppose? I wrote you word, through Ned, how that I thought to have stopped all about it with my father, and that he'd promised the matter should lay by,” he went on, drawing her arm within his, and hurrying on with her, he did not care where, up into the transept.

“ Oh, that was the letter as was lost,” she thought to herself, but she did not speak.

“ I only heard about what he'd done yesterday, and came up home directly, and flung it at him that he'd broke his word with me; and I'm not bound any longer to wait, as I promised. Come off with me somewhere, and let us be married quick. Why should we

wait any longer like this? Once it were done, they'd all be quiet enough, and satisfied, you'd soon see."

There are no such decided measures as those taken by a somewhat undecided man—partly perhaps because he is governed by impulse, and partly because he is much afraid of being governed by any one else.

" You don't mean as you want me to leave 'um all in that way? and yer father's quite right, maybe, not to let ye take up with my father's child," said the

[247]

poor girl, looking up painfully at him through her gathering tears. " We mustn't go agin him as is, after all, thinking for your good: and, maybe, if we wait patient he may come round after a bit, as ye said; but the other thing we never can undo."

" You don't care for me, Lettie," he said, flinging away her hand, but taking it again directly: " you care for some one else; you throw me over when ye are out of sight. Why did ye never answer my letter which I wrote to the Woodhouse so long ago? " he went on, vehemently. " I've been true to you; I've quarrelled with my father about it all, so that I've scarce been near home all these months, and there you've been forgetting me with strange new people and things. What was that Caleb to you, or you to him, when you were troth-plighted to me? " he said, working himself up into a state of wrathful indignation. He had a sort of dim sense that to declare himself wronged, although he could not exactly tell how, gave him a kind of power over her, and kept off the thought of the way in which they had last met, and the reason she had to complain of his attack upon her father.

" Nothing, nothing; he weren't nothing to me, and never were; how could I ever think o' he? if he cared for me I couldn't help it," cried Lettice, timidly.

" Well, then, what reason can there be why you shouldn't give consent to marry? "

" I couldn't ever leave uncle Amyas, as has been so good to me, now in his trouble," said the poor girl.

[248]

“ And you know we mustn't do what can't he done openly before God and man.”

“ You'd be doing him most good by marrying me, Lettice; you must see that. 'Twould settle a heap o' things, about money and mortgages and all.”

“ And then my father? I must see my father; and till it's all settled what's to happen about him, how can I think o' marrying, or giving in marriage? ” said she, with a shiver. “ You know there's things hanging over us there that you mayn't maybe wish it yerself then.”

Everhard winced, but he recovered himself. By this time he was hotly in earnest, on horseback on his new thought. The very strength of the passion into which he had worked himself, and the opposition, which he had not expected from her, goaded him on, perhaps farther than he would have gone in cold blood.

“ I don't care about your father; it isn't him I want to marry; it's you, and you know it. And, Lettice, just see here: it's me as wants now to make all straight for yer uncle, and planning all sorts of sacrifices for you, and you won't move an inch for me. Let us alone,” he said, turning angrily to the beadle— who, regardless of delicate perplexities, was driving them remorselessly before him out at the door. “ There's a shilling for you to leave us quiet,” he went on, remembering there was no other form of words understood by that functionary.

“ Oh, mother! ” cried poor Lettice, as they passed and repassed under the marble bust round which she had

[249]

chosen to hang her longing desire for a mother, “ whatever shall I do? won't you help me and tell him it ain't right, and we mustn't do it? ”

“ You must turn out if ye don't want to see the moniments,” pursued the inexorable beadle, returning upon them. “ There's Alfred, King of the West Saxons, or St. Swithin, what brings the rain, or, maybe, you'd like the bit o' a skull and the plait o' red hair o' a Saxon lady as were found in an oak coffin three feet six inches below the stone floor

when— It's tea-time," he explained, as they turned a deaf ear to this delightful offer. " I can't wait no longer, unless so be it were to—"

Everhard would have compounded for the sight of any amount of scalps of any colour, but Lettice walked rapidly away down the nave, and in a few minutes they were once more in the open air.

He did not cease his urging, as he kept close by her side; but her gentleness had no touch of weakness in it; she had by this time made up her mind what was right, and as Mary had once said of her, nothing then would turn her—she " was like a little rock." As they crossed by the corner of the Close they came upon Amyas, who was coming back to fetch her.

" Leave her alone, young man," said he, gravely. " What is it you want her to do, as you should urge a lone girl like that? " and he took his niece's arm within his own almost angrily.

" He's been doing all he could wi' his father for us,

[250]

uncle Amyas," whispered Lettice, anxiously, as Everhard still kept close alongside them.

" He've no business with it, any way: let him go his way, and leave us to follow ourn. It ain't real love of you, but love of hisself, if he drives and strives wi' a woman like that. What is it, Lettice, as he wants you to do so sorely?"

But neither of them gave any answer. " You'd speak fast enough both on you if 'twere anything to be proud on," said Amyas bitterly.

" You always turn it against me, whatever it is I do," answered Everhard indignantly. " I'm not ashamed one bit of what I wanted: I asked her to marry me out o' hand, and have done with it. You'd soon all be content enough once it were finished and settled."

" Has yer father took back his word any more since that day I heard him swear he'd see you ruined first? "

Everhard was silent.

“ Have ye even got a blessed sixpence you can call yer own for to nourish her, or a home to shelter her in, as isn't hisn? ”

“ Russell's very angry at me being out so much; he's just said I sha'n't stop in the office any longer,” blurted out Everhard incautiously; “ but I'll find something else to do.”

“ There! ” said Amyas, walking on faster as he spoke, and drawing Lettice with him. In his dislike for the young man, he was as unjust to the love which was, after

[251]

all, making him risk everything for her, as Everhard was to him. “ You and yours has got the Woodhouse, and a'most everything belonging to us. If ye want my ewe lamb, as is pretty nigh all as is left me, you come wi' yer father's consent i' yer hand like a man, fair and open afore the world— that's what I have to say to ye, Everhard Wallcott, and then we'll see! ” They had reached the busy street; the young man caught one glimpse of the little gentle face looking sadly and regretfully back, and then they parted.

[252]

CHAPTER XXIII.

NIGHT-WATCHING AT THE PILOT'S.

“ We look before and after, and pine for what is not”—SHELLEY.

ON that same November evening, as Lettice and her uncle were driving across the Forest, Mary sat over the smouldering peat fire in the cottage at Edney's Creek, doing nothing, for a wonder. “ I can do that as well by the light o' the moon, and save candle,” said she to herself, with a sigh, as she thought over the many sorrows and perplexities of her friends; when the door, which was always on the latch, opened suddenly, and a shapeless mass crawled in. She uttered a cry, and Caleb laughed at her, as he raised himself and stood upright.

“ I came in under the shadder o' the hill,” said he, “ in the dusk of the evening, till just the steps, and then I crope, for I thowt bad folk might be abroad, and I'd best not be seen coming in, with the moon getting up.”

“ How can ye go for to be so venturesome, lad,” whispered Mary, anxiously, “ to come like that right into the mouth of the mischief?”

“ Well, they're as little like to nose me here as anywhere,”

[258]

replied he, with a smile. “ They'll think I should be afraid to come home.”

“ Ye must be nigh famished, and afrore (*frozen*) too,” said she, heaping on fuel, and preparing some food. “ And how ever did ye slip off like a bird from the fowlers? They said ye was handcuffed.”

“ 'Twere mainly along o' that young Wallcott. He ain't a bad chap, though I don't love him. Where's Lettie? ” he went on, his tone changing.

“ Gone off to-day, along wi' Tony, as is driving her toward home.”

“ Gone! ” repeated he, with a strong emphasis, thrusting his hands deep into his pockets, as he looked out grimly towards the coast-line which led to the Puckspiece.

“ Yes. What for should she stop here, wi' nobody to look after her, and her father as can't come back (though he weren't much good, to be sure), and the home all broke up like? ”

“ I should like just to ha' see'd her again,” he answered, moodily. “ Who knows how— ? ”

“ What for, lad? ” said Mary, turning affectionately round to him, as she stooped over the fire, which she was trying to pet into a blaze. “ What good is it searching after spilt milk? She can't have ye if she would, and she wouldn't have ye if she could. What can a man have more? ”

Caleb did not answer. He moved restlessly about the room, opened the door, and looked out into the night.

[254]

“ Sure you'd best not stand there in the open, Caleb,” said she, at last. “ How can ye tell who's about in the night? ”

He came back, and set himself on the low settle in the great chimney-corner, while she hung a cloth over the window.

“ You'll forget it after a bit,” said she.

There was a much-mended garment of David's hanging up to dry, which he lifted out of his way.

“ Look'ee, Mary,” said he, “ there's some rents you can patch in so neat as you can scarce tell that aught's amiss underside, and there's other some as rags out all round, and you're not a bit forrarder wi' yer work. 'Tis all how the stuff's made, and I ain't one as can take up wi' folk, and set 'um down again so easy.”

At that moment David's face peered down from the steep staircase which led from the bed-room; the boy's face looked smaller and whiter, and his eyes bigger and blacker than ever with the excitement of the past days.

“ Now, David,” whispered Mary, “ you be still, and don't you be tittering nor talking. 'Tis as much as his life is worth.”

“ As if I'd be such a nena,” answered he, scornfully. “ I ain't a woman to want to go prating, as Caleb says they does. How ever did ye get off, Caleb? Tell me quick? ” And the boy ran down and capered round him like an imp in the firelight.

“ There, you go and get on your boots, and help

[255]

watch outside for me,” said Caleb. “ I know you'll be safe enow not to let it out I'm here.”

“ Not till you've telled me about how you giv' 'um all the slip,” replied the boy, settling himself obstinately on Caleb's knees.

“ Well, we'd drifted ever so fur off out, and 'twere no end o' lucky for me as we hadn't got the real thing aboard, only a Custom-house fellow as knowed scarce anything; and when morning came there was the headlands off Lady Cross looking like ghostes in the twilight, sea and sky as thick as pea-soup, but the wind going a bit with the rain. 'Can't

ye put into the Bareham harbour? ” says young Wallcott; 'we shan't get back this month, beating up and down against the wind, this fashion.’ ‘Hold your tongue!’ hollers the other; 'I know my duty, and my orders was to follow the cutter.' 'But if ye can't?' says Wallcott, 'and there ain't neither food nor drink for so many aboard; and we're cold, and wet, and hungry.' 'And cross too,' mutters the Custom-house one. And so at last he gives consent, and 'twere a long time afore we could bring her in anyhow. So then, when we got a bit under shelter, where the sea weren't so rampageous, the officer he stands up wi' the handcuffs in his hand. 'I say, you take the helm now,' says he to one of the men. 'I won't have no skulking off here.' And just then he trod on a coil of rope, and summun (I'm thinking 'twere young Wallcott) twitched it up from under his feet, and down he came flat upo' his face.”

[256]

The boy clapped his hands.

“ I owe him a good turn for it, I do; and so then I jumped overboard, and swum for it. I wouldn't be took anyhow again; and a hard matter I had for to get ashore, and were as well nigh drownded as could be, I know that, the sea were so strong. They put off the boat after me; but I were right up the hill and far away in no time, and the sea-fog coming up so as they couldn't see fur.”

“ And then you hid? ” said David, eagerly— who, as he sat astride on Caleb's knees, administered a severe kick whenever the narrator paused for a moment. “ What, you knowed the folk down there, did ye? and they took ye in these two days and a night? ”

“ Well, we come across a pretty deal o' folk up and down wi' the fair-trading, and can do 'um good and harm, too, by times, they knows,” answered Caleb, with a tired yawn.

“ David, you go off to bed. Folks 'll think summat's wrong if they see thee about. I'll kip watch: nobody 'll wonder if I'm afoot late or early; and we can't never be still wi' thy little tongue clacking. Who knows what mayn't be nigh outside hearkening? ”

“ But I'm to stop and help take care of Caleb,” answered he, half-crying.

“ You go off now, and I'll wake ye to take care of me presently,” said the sailor, good-naturedly; and with much difficulty the boy was at last got rid of.

[257]

“ What do ye think for to do now, Caleb? ” said Mary, sadly. “ Ye can't stop in these parts, poor lad. You'd be safest out at sea. Ye shouldn't ha' come home, though it's summer light to my eyes to see ye back again; but 'tis a sore let and hindrance to yer getting off clear.”

“ Ye don't know when Jesse 'll be home? I thought maybe he'd be on the watch to help me off. I can't go nigh Edwin: *he* won't do nothing: he's so chicken-hearted, he's afraid o' his own shadder; and the others is at sea. I shall ha' to go farther down coast again, I do believe; but 'twere as if somethin' drawed me back home, and I couldn't keep away.”

“ Ye didden' think ye might find *her* here? ” sighed Mary; but he did not answer.

“ Won't ye rest ye a bit then now? You're just fagged and wearied out,” she went on presently, as he finished the warm mess she had got ready.

“ I'll not risk going upstairs then— the winder's too small. I'll just lay me down wi' a blanket in the corner, or maybe in the skillen, and be off when the moon goes down afore morning light, for there ain't harbour about here for a man to be safe.”

But instead of going he sat on over the fire, which had sunk away again, idly drawing figures in the peatdust, unearthing sparks from amongst the ashes, which grew redder as they met the air, and then went out altogether.

“ ’Parsons and clerks,' do ye mind we used to call

[258]

'um, Mary, and see which on 'um 'ud hold out longest? There's mine dead, anyhow,” said he, rather gravely, as one particular brand he was watching sank away. “ What did ye see or hear of her afore she went away? and what did she say? ” he went on, at last rising.

“ She didn't a say much— she ain't a girl, ye know, for much discourse; but it did seem to go right through her, it did, when she said you'd been took helping off that ne'er-do-well, her father, and how ever could she be thankful enow.”

" I don't want her to be thankful nor nothing," said he, angrily, kicking over the " andiron "* of the fire, "if that's all she have to give me. I ain't a cow-beaby to ask her alms, or to blare like a silly child if she don't give me what I want. But that she should ha' took up wi' one of them gauger folk goes agin me."

" He isn't a gauger, I don't believe," said Mary, gently, " if that 'll do any good."

" Then he consorts with them as is, and that's pretty nigh as bad. I'd like to hike out the whole boilin' o' um," he muttered violently.

Mary was silent. " 'Tis strange, too, how it's a took hold on ye, and ye ha' knowed her so short a time," she went on presently.

" I don't think that odds it," he answered, with a sigh. " There's a blind lad at Seaford what never saw the light: he don't mind; but if so be he'd set eyes on

*** " Her andirons were two winking cupids,**
Nicely depending on their brands."—*Cymbeline*.

[259]

it for ever such a little, I'll warrant he'd pine for it all the days of his life. And so now I'll be going. Hang that moon," he said, looking out, " she's enow to ruin a man to be so bright to-night o' all the nights of the year. There was clouds rising as I come along, and I hoped we might ha' had cazelty weather this evening at least."

There was a broad sweep of most aggravating moonlight on the sea, inconceivably beautiful, as every little wave caught the beams and was tipped with silver, but there was no one to enjoy it. A small black vessel sailed slowly across, suspiciously near the shore. They watched it together anxiously, but it passed on.

" Good-night, lad," said Mary, tenderly. " 'Tis well to breeze up again' bad luck; but 'tis said, 'In quietness shall be yer strength.' Dunnot ye fight too strong wi' fate."

Caleb was silent. " You've been a good sister to me, anyhow, Mary," he said at last, abruptly, shutting the door and going off to his hole.

" He's too masterful wi' life, poor lad," said Mary to herself, as she began to put up a bundle of things for him which she thought might be useful; " and it falls a deal heavier wi' them as can only break afore the storm, nor wi' them as can bend a bit. God help him, 'tis a poor look-out to have all and everything break up like this under him. I wish

Jesse'd come home, as has the helping hand for all, and the word in season: he'd know how to manage get him off and say what would

[260]

quiet his mind a bit. Who knows, too, when he'll ever set eyes again on the lad as he thinks so much on? 'Twill be next never's-tide afore ever we have him home again," she ended sadly.

She went out again and again in the shadow of the cottage to look up and down and all around. The house was most inconveniently visible on its little knoll, and the short scrub behind was hardly high enough to conceal an escaping man. She listened intently, with all her compassion and all her affection as it were concentrated in her eyes and ears, till the tension grew so great that it seemed to her that she heard footsteps or saw something move in every direction, and she kept on turning from side to side in terror lest she should fail in the look-out on her lonely watch.

But the night wore on without any disturbance.

[261]

CHAPTER XXIV.

AN OPENING FOR A MIDDLE-AGED MAN.

" Sir, here's a dish I love not; I cannot endure my lady Tongue." .

—BENEDICK.

LETTICE and her uncle walked on together in silence, and their thoughts were not so far apart as they fancied. Everhard could not have done a better stroke of business for himself in Amyas's eyes than his last boyish, incautious speech. It was impossible to suspect a young fellow of any sinister designs who evidently let out whatever was uppermost in his mind.

Lettice's heart was greatly comforted, on the other hand. “ I don't care what happens now,” thought she to herself, “ so long as he haven't been and forgot me.” A young girl's love is satisfied with very airy diet. So long as her feelings can find rest in a complete trust, she can wait any indefinite time without even much distress as to the loss of the outward presence of what she cares for. Her imagination is so active that she lives a second life with his. It was enough to brighten even the dark and dirty street at Mapleford.

When they returned again to Mrs. Smart's house she had recovered her temper. It is a brittle article,

[262]

it is well known, with some people, and even the very best will give way, under certain provocations; Jane, her little maid, had been detected that morning going out with “ an artificial ” in her bonnet, and there had been a scene in consequence: besides which there had been no time to put up the curtains of her best bed, which had been taken down to be made into new ones.

“ And 'tis so aggravating,” she muttered to herself, “ when one's got nice things, and they're out o’ the way just when they're wanted. And why Amyas couldn't just give me notice they was coming to stop here? But 'tis just like men. And when one's slaved and glared, they takes a chop for dinner, or a bit o' pie or so, just as a matter of course, which it's my belief they thinks things grow so, I re'ly do declare.”

She now, however, received them with a mitigated countenance, and even went so far in honouring her guests as to usher them into the best parlour,— which was a most doubtful delight.

“ You take care as your boots is wiped,” said she, anxiously, as they entered, scrubbing her own feet carefully as she spoke, which were already spotlessly clean.

The parlour was a mirror of gentility and a miracle of ugliness; nothing in it was ever used, or ever intended to be used. The fireplace was full of cut paper, to prevent any weak notion that a fire could be lighted there; the carpet, of a design large enough to fit

the town-hall, was druggeted carefully; two patterns and a half of the wall-paper reached across one side of the room, and every

[263]

colour in the rainbow had been pressed into the service: pink and red, and yellow and blue and green, struggled for the mastery in every direction. The mantelpiece and the sideboard were loaded with frightful ornaments, and everything was so precious that it was covered up and shaded and oil-clothed and druggeted in the most aggravating way. It was oppressively close: the window had never been opened since the room was made, and the blinds were of course down. There is a curious want of any sense of proportion, or harmony of colour, or beauty of form in an ordinary middle-class house; taste seems a matter entirely of cultivation in England.

“ Sit ye down in that cheer on the oil-cloth,” said Mrs. Smart.

Lettice felt as depressed when established in this hall of ceremony as if it had been a dentist's room. Amyas muttered something about his horse, and escaped in spite of his hostess's efforts.

“ So it's all up wi' the Woodhouse, I hear tell,” said she to Lettice, looking after him rather discontentedly. “ And what may be the sum as Amyas has been and mortgaged it for, I wonder? ”

“ I'm sure I don't know, cousin Smart; but uncle Job says it ain't half the value o' the property, and as him as lends on it” (she could not bear to use the word Wallcott in such a connection: it seemed to her a sort of profanation) “would have an out-and-out bargain for his money.”

“ Is it a' so set and settled as the money couldn't be

[264]

paid off even now, and the place saved as has been so many years in the family? ” said Mrs. Smart, sharply. Her words always came out as if they had an edge to them. Except in the shape of the mouth and chin, her countenance, however, was even curiously unlike herself; the features were small and delicate: she had been a very pretty woman,

and, indeed, was so still, though the bloom had passed out of her face. “ But you don't know nothing about it,” added she, impatiently.

“ What, you weren't thinking as it were possible you could— ? ” cried Lettice, jumping at the idea of rescue, and preparing to be grateful, though Mrs. Smart's keen steel-blue eye did not give promise of much romantic generosity.

“ No, I wasn't a-thinkin' o' nothing at all,” replied she sharply. “ And now, as Amyas 's a-gone no one knows where, (as if his horse couldn't eat his vittle wi'out his stuffing of it down his throat,) we may as lief go into the kitchen,— and he been so long away he might stop and have a bit o' chat,” she went on in an annoyed tone. “ I suppose I must get ye summut for yer suppers now— coming down on one this way, wi' full hearts and empty stomachs, as one may say, which it's a poor look-out. And why Amyas couldn't bide quiet and talk, I can't think I'm sure,” she could not help adding, half to herself, as the grievance of his departure once more recurred to her.

The kitchen was so exquisitely clean, so rubbed and scrubbed, and polished and whitened, that it was clear

[265]

Mrs. Smart's one little maid had no sinecure. It was a good while before Amyas came back; and Lettice had been subjected to such a fire of questions upon all subjects during the interval, that she felt “ as if 'twere one of them little birds me and Ned used to roast wi' a string, turning and twistin' on a' sides afore the flame,” as she said to herself.

“ How many cows were there in milk? and what butter did they give? and how much arable land was there at the Woodhouse? What! ye don't know? How many ricks o' corn then was there in the yard this season? What, ye never counted! ” And so on for nearly an hour.

“ I haven't been there myself since I were a young girl; but I knows a'most as much about it as you, I do believe,” she said at last.

Lettice grew more and more distressed at her own hopeless dulness. Mrs. Smart was a mistress of the art by which you mix in a number of questions on points which your patient is hardly likely to know, and then testify the greatest surprise at his sad

ignorance. By this system, properly administered, the victim can be reduced to a state of abject despair at his own pitiable stupidity, and of consequent awe at your powers.

“ But I shan't say nothing to nobody, you may be very sure, about the debts. 'Tis an ugly bird that fou's its own nest,” she ended.

There was ample space for Mrs. Smart's culinary operations— on which she prided herself— before Amyas.

[NP]

* *Illustration*

[267]

means of his own. “ 'I dunnot know,' I mind, he'd say,” his widow proceeded, “ 'how a lone woman's to go on in these days.'“

“ Well, I've allays heard as you managed as nice and kep' all things as straight as anybody could wish to see. I mind you could allays do anything you set your mind to in old days,” said Amyas, with a smile, consolingly.

Mrs. Smart indeed did herself the greatest injustice: she was as well able to grasp a piece of business keenly, and carry it through successfully, as any man in England.

“ He'd a long illness, hadn't he, poor Smart? I heard he were ailing this ever so long,” went on Amyas kindly.

“ Ill? He were ill better nor two years; and a very deal o' trouble he were, you may depend on't: wanting this and wanting that, and allays complaining. You're looking a deal older, Amyas, since you and me met,” said Mrs. Smart, looking across the table with a very cousinly smile, which did not quite say the same as her words, “ and yet you and me's pretty much of an age.”

“ I've had a deal o' trouble, and that ages a man more than years,” he answered with a sigh. He might have said, with truth, how little she herself was changed; but Amyas did not deal in even true compliments.

He looked very pleasant as he sat opposite her.

[268]

The return to old associations and haunts, the very excitement of the day's work, had roused him out of his habitual depression, and the mild, serious, thoughtful expression of his handsome features made him by no means an uninteresting cousin; the worn, sad look of his face, with its high bare forehead, had for the moment passed away, and he looked ten years younger than usual.

Lettice gazed at him in surprise: he had always to her been her " old uncle," and now, seeing him through the eyes of a contemporary, who evidently did not look upon him in the least in that light, " I didn't know as uncle Amyas was like that," she thought to herself.

At length, when the meal was over and disposed of, " I want to speak to you, Amyas, if you be so pleased, Lettice, you go upstairs and help Jane make the beds, or anyways you can.— 'Tis about an opening you was speaking of? " the girl heard Mrs. Smart begin as she closed the door after her.

" 'Tis a long while since we were together like this, Amyas," said Mrs. Susan gently, clearing her throat, and smoothing her apron as she spoke. " It minds me a deal o' old times, and my father and all."

" Yes, it is a long time indeed," answered the unconscious Amyas, sadly, but not in the least perceiving the line of thought along which his cousin desired him to follow.

" 'Twould ha' been a fine thing for me if things had

[269]

took another turn than they has," went on Mrs. Smart, with a discreet cough; " and perhaps for you too."

Amyas looked up, greatly perplexed.

" I mean," said his cousin, turning bashfully away and snuffing the cauliflower-head of the tallow-candle, " pour se donner une contenance," " as your property and mine together would ha' saved the Woodhouse, and kep' out them nasty money-lenders. You behaved very handsome, I will say that, Amyas, about when my father died, and I haven't forgot it to you."

“ Well, that's all over and done for,” said he, rising a little impatiently. “ You was welcome enow, and 'twas your own right, and you married Smart; and a quiet man and a good husband he made, I heerd tell.”

“ Yes, Amyas,” said his affectionate relict, finding it necessary to be more explicit: “ but he's dead and gone now, poor man. I was a-saying just now, 'twere a pity as my father didn't manage different in the old time. I were headstrong, and wanted my own way, I know; but he should just ha' seen to me as had no mother. Young girls wants guiding to their own good. And what wi' them as wants to marry her and them as she wants to marry, 'tis a hard matter to choose right for she as has a bit o' property; and I chose wrong, I did,” said the lady, with much candour; “though I 'won't say but he were a good man were poor Smart, but that's all done for,” she ended with a sigh, and brushing her hand across her eyes. “ My property it's

[270]

worth a pretty penny per year; and we could get the Woodhouse out o' pawn, if we did it together.”

She was going on;— but by this time Amyas had caught her meaning, and had risen in the utmost terror. He had the greatest respect for his cousin's powers of managing and of getting what she “ set her mind to,” and did not feel sure that he should not be compelled to marry her, whether he would or no.

“ Well, cousin, bygones should be bygones, they say, you know; and past's past, and old times can't be got back again. When a tree's dead, you can't make it live again, not wi' a' the digging and dunging and watering in Christendom; and so, you see, we won't talk any more about such things, nor nothing.”

Then as a sense of absurdity in the whole matter came over him, with his tender regard for the feelings of others, he returned from the door, to which he was making with all his might, and shook hands, with a smile.

“ We can be friends and all that, yer know, cousin Susan, and thank ye kindly for thinking of me this way; but it can't be, and so there's an end of it,” he ended, with unwonted decision, roused by the magnitude of the peril before him.

Meanwhile the girl had gone upstairs, as she was desired. “ Jane ” was far too active a person to require any help— and had indeed slipped out “ unbeknownst ” to her mistress. Lettice sat on alone in the dark little room; but she was weaving her own fancies so busily

[271]

that she scarcely found it out. She could hear the deep chime of the great clock of the Minster in the quiet of the night; and the remembrance of the organ and the singing which she had heard there that day seemed mixed up inextricably with Everhard in her mind, and all that he had said and done; and these altogether were such good company that she was sorry when Mrs. Smart's voice, less harsh than usual, with a more feminine fall in it than any one had ever heard there before, summoned her downstairs again. “ I wonder what they've been doing of? ” thought Lettice to herself, as she watched her cousin's strangely thoughtful manner. There had been a real honest feeling for Amyas mixed with Mrs. Smart's desire after a good stroke of business, and she was touched and quiet for the rest of the short evening.

[272]

CHAPTER XXV.

MAPLEFORD GAOL.

“ Careless art thou of thy merit,
Kindly, unassuming spirit;
Thou dost show thy pleasant face
In moor and lane: there's not a place,
Howsoever mean it be,
But 'tis brightened up by thee.”
— *To the Small Celandine*.

“ THE order's for ye to be at the prison-door at eight, Lettice,” said her uncle next morning. “ And I'll be off to the lawyer as soon as may be, and settle for your father.” Lettice put the little bag into his hand.

“ I'd rather not,” said he, reluctantly; but he could not stand her look of entreaty, and took it sorely against the grain.

“ You take yer Bible in yer pocket,” observed Mrs. Smart, who had recovered her spirits, and indeed felt by this time that all had, maybe, been for the best, and that she and her money had perhaps, on the whole, had an escape. “ 'Twill be a mercy anyhow, for I'm sure he wants doing good to, does yer father. And here's a couple o' apples, and the ‘dog in a blanket’ as were left yesterday, as he might fancy perhaps.”

[273]

Then following them, as they had nearly left the house—

“ Here's a trac',” she cried: “ 'Buttons for the Breeches of Salvation,' as was left here t' other day— 'tis a pity it should be wasted. 'Twould be a fine thing for the soul of him if he'd read it. You might happen drop it and leave it there when you come away, who knows? ”

And with this mixture of spiritual and carnal comforts they at last were allowed to go.

They walked on together in silence.

“ I think we'll be off home this afternoon, Lettie,” said her uncle, sadly. “ I don't fancy the town now; and there isn't nothing to be had here to my mind. Leastways,” he went on, with a sort of dreary laugh, “them as I suit don't suit me anyhow; and so we won't stop any longer. You and me's country-bred, Lettie, and we likes those ways best.” There was an odd consciousness in his tone which, in spite of her own preoccupation, made Lettie suddenly look up into his face, and her shy uncle almost blushed when he felt her eyes fixed upon him. It flashed upon her directly what must have taken place the night before, and its connexion with Amyas' sad confidences on their moonlight drive home through the forest.

“ What, you and cousin Smart was a deal together in them old times, uncle Amyas? ” observed she gently.

“ It were a very long while ago, that,” he said, almost to himself, slowly and dreamily; and then, only

[274]

too glad to get rid of the past and its painful remembrances, he turned away to finish his own business as they reached the awful door of the gaol, where he left her. With extreme trepidation the girl showed her order at the grim-looking gate. She had the proper horror of a prison, and entered with an awe-struck terror which would have been most wholesome for the offenders within, if she could have communicated it to them.

She passed through an inner court, where a great uproar was going on among the prisoners: some of whom were playing at fives, with much confusion.

“ You dreve less noise there,” shouted the jailor as they went through, but without the smallest effect, one man even making a face at the authority as he passed. Prison discipline was a nearly unknown art in those times. Lettice, a good deal frightened, followed her conductor at a run, and when they reached the cold stone passage, it seemed almost a haven of safety.

“ Here's your daughter come to see you,” said the jailor, opening the door of the infirmary cell— where Norton Lisle was lying on a narrow bed, with his broken leg in a good deal of pain— and leaving them alone.

“ What, Let, are you there? ” said he, surlily. “ Have ye got the bag? and has Amyas been after the counsellor for me? ” And then, almost without waiting for the answer, “ What did that fellow Ned mean by aftering me like that? I weren't on his beat, and he'd no call after me any way.” And his abuse became so

[275]

frightful that at last Lettice, in utter dismay, leant back so that he could not see her— bound down as he was in the bed—and stuffed her fingers into her ears.

His moods, however, never lasted long. In a little time another of the prisoners, a strong-made, lazy- looking fellow in a velveteen jacket, who had been set to wait upon the sick man, opened the door and lounged in. The prisoners were all huddled together, old and young, poachers, pickpockets, and felons, without much idea either of reformation or punishment, only of shutting them up out of the way.

“ 'Tis Jem Grove, old Gabriel's son: you knows he, Lettie,” explained Norton, almost cheerfully.

“ Well, and how's the old man? I haven't seen he I don't know when. There I were out o' luck to-year! ” grumbled Jem: “ I hadn't a had but one month o' the pheasant-shootin', and there I were took quite uncommon soon. Most times I've a kep' out this ever so much longer, and come in pretty much when 'twere convenient, and got my board and lodging at the dead time o' the year out o' the county, free like, till it were pretty nigh time to begin again ' of a shiny night, in the season o' the year,“ said he, laughing. “I don't say as we hasn't a jolly time o' it here, and 'tis cold lodging out. Nineteen times I've a been here now, and a goodish lot too, and should know; but I'd reither ha' bided out a bit longer too, you tell father.”

“ Jest you look at me,” sighed Norton, “ tied like this, and don't you complain as have got yer legs.”

[276]

“ What's the use o' legs if ye can't use them? ” yawned Jem.

“ Where is it I'm to tell Gabriel you were took, and how were it? ” said Lettice, conscientiously anxious to take her message correctly.

“ Why, there, I were night-poaching, and caught wi' the pheasant on me, and kipper brought me up to the Hall; and 'twere so late, ‘ 'Twon't do to rouse Squire,' says he. So him and me and the watcher, and the groom and one or two more, sot over the fire in the saddle-room till dawn, and had some beer and a smoke. And when 'twere morning Squire says he wouldn't commit me not hisself; and, there, didn't I drive down to the lock-up in the pheeaton as pleasant as could be, a-takin' of the air? And one of the young leddies was a-walking in the park; and I took off my hat grand to she, and she

lowted (*bowed*) to me, and I a long way off like, for she conceited I were a gentleman.* Didn't we laugh like anything? ”

“ Can't ye get me a drink o' water? I'm so drouthy, and that critch** is empty,” interrupted Norton, impatiently; “ or else didn't ye say you'd an apple about ye? Give me one o' he, Lettie.”

“ Has she brought word if that fellow Dixon's a-getting on to well, that you shot? If he dies, there won't be much chance for you, I'm thinking,” said his Job's comforter.

*** Him and his work you have right well conceited.— *Julius Caesar*.**

**** Fr. *cruche*.**

[277]

“ These girls never know nothing; but I'll swear I never fired the shot,” replied Norton, angrily. “ Why didden you stop down there for to nuss him, if ye couldn't do aught else? ” he went on, turning to his daughter. “ His life's worth a very deal to me now, which it weren't my way of thinking a little time back.”

“ No, that I'll be bound for it,” replied Jem, laughing, as he fetched the jug; and then, too glad to be rid of his charge, went out again and locked the door.

“ So Caleb got away after all? ” said Norton, presently; it is wonderful how, when there is any sort of confederation or freemasonry among men, like that of smuggling, news will penetrate into the most unlikely places, though it had not yet reached the Wynyates in the open world.

Lettice, who had not heard it, gave a start, and turned away towards the wall, much afraid of her father's observation on her tell-tale face; but he had other things to think of, and took no notice. “ How did it come? ” said she.

“ They say 'twere along o' that lathy young chap Wallcott, what thought he were a match wrestling wi' Norton Lisle,” observed her father with a sort of grin, “ and a pretty fall he got trying to take me up, he did.” The remembrance seemed to put him in good humour, and he grew more communicative. “ I haven't heard not exact how 'twere, but somehow the officer was for putting on the handcuffs aboard ship, after Caleb had

[278]

been steering 'um all night too— and I will say that for the lad, there isn't a steadier hand at the tiller up nor down the Channel. They'd just got under the lee of the land, and Wallcott tripped him up (that's that rascally gauger) wi' hagging at a rope, and the men was just about merry when they see him fall, and that made him mad angry they say, for Caleb cut over the side and swum off like a fish, betwixt and between."

Lettice blushed all over with delight. The thought of Caleb had been like a remorse to her, and that he should be safe, and through Everhard's intervention, made her eyes sparkle and her face aglow.

" Caleb were took like in your stead," she ventured at last to say, as her father seemed to have altogether forgotten this point.

" I believe he were, and he did come in with a whoppen knock or two in the tussle, when he set to with the coastguard; 'twere uncommon well thought on to put in as he did,— but there, ye see I were took after all, so it didn't so much mind," said Norton, like many other folk, only grateful for value received. " Why didn't ye bring word about that Dixon, for to tell me summat as I wants to know? " he said, tumbling about as far as the broken leg tightly strapped on the cradle allowed him. The misery of constraint and quiet to such an active man was pitiable to see.

" Mayn't I turn that pillow, father; and strive set the sheets more comf'able? " she began, compassionately.

[279]

" You let me alone," replied he; but somehow she had her pleasure with him, and she went on straightening and smoothing and setting to rights, by a sort of instinct, till she had so changed the look of the wretched, untidy, melancholy infirmary cell, that it seemed a different place.

The relief, however, did not last long. " I couldn't make out about what come o' Caleb after all; and as for that Ned— "

" Shouldn't I maybe read a bit, father? " interrupted Lettice, dreading another outbreak, and at her wit's end how to soothe him. " There were somethin' I mind in the Book

about another Caleb as Master Jesse used to read," she said, catching at the word as a sort of diversion to his wrath.

" Well, I don't mind so much. Read away. P'r'aps I might get a nice sleep with it," said her hopeful patient, tossing his arms testily.

Lettice had been brought up to think one chapter in the Bible quite as useful as another: in short, as a sort of charm; and too glad to have found any kind of opening, she turned up and down in much trepidation, looking vainly for the passage containing the account of Caleb.

" Well, cut away," said her father impatiently. " What are ye waitin' for? " And, in a fright, she fell pretty much at random on a chapter. The lulling sound of the reading told upon him before long.

" That's a pretty tale enow," he said, not attending, and half asleep. " I likes to hear o' all that fighting.

[280]

I wonder what come of it all, and what all them killings and murderings was about? " he muttered, drowsily.

" But, father," said Lettice, much horrified, and beginning to explain and remonstrate, even at the risk of an outbreak, when the door was unlocked—

" Time's up! " cried the jailor, putting in his head authoritatively; and she was obliged to go.

" She's a middlin' good little maid she is," muttered her father, drowsily, to himself when she was gone. " I don't mind if she do come again, it makes time pass."

But Lettice did not hear this magnificent tribute to her merits.

" 'Tis very hard when one can't do nothing at all for a body, and is so helpless and stupid like," sighed she to her little self as she came sadly away, quite unconscious that she had been "making sunshine in a very shady place." " I wonder whether they'll let me see him again, and I'm afraird that I read it all wrong, as he didn't seem to care."

[281]

CHAPTER XXVI.

EVERHARD AND HIS MOTHER.

" But, oh, mankind are unco weak,
An' rarely to be trusted:
If self the wavering balance shake,
It's seldom right adjusted."— BURNS.

EVERHARD, extremely indignant at his treatment, and nursing his wrath to keep it warm, after parting from Lettice and her uncle, had gone home to his father's house to fetch his horse and ride back to Seaford. It was a solid, red-brick, substantial-looking place, just out of the town, with a great walled kitchen-garden behind, and a little paved path from the green wicket to the front door, before which stood sentinel a couple of yewtrees artistically carved into a pair of green dumbwaiters. It had once been a sort of dower-house for some dowager of a small county family, in the times when Mapleford was a little capital for the winter gaieties of the neighbourhood, before London had swallowed up all such local centres of " good " society; but it had now fallen very much out of repair, and Wallcott had had it " a great bargain."

Everhard came round by the stable-yard behind the

[282]

house, and found his mother alone in the kitchen. She had made an effort, when first they came into the " grand house," to live a little more " according," as her son was always striving to persuade her to do; but gentility was a burden and sorrow to her, and she always escaped from the bore of the parlour to the more congenial saucepans. Dressed, as she was at that moment, in a plaid stuff of some abominable mixture of red and yellow in great black squares, and a black net cap with purple bows— which looked as if it had been sat upon— she certainly did not appear much like the owner of the

house, or the rightful successor of the stiff old strait-laced lady who had lived there before her.

“ What! you're not off yet? I thought you was gone,” said she, as he came in, with a look of extreme pleasure at the sight of her boy again— the very apple of her eye— even though it might be only for a moment. “ Anne's gone out, and I were just doing her work— lest yer father come home, so I'm all in my dishabilles, as they say,” she went on apologetically.

“ I went down town first, I'd business there,” said he, moodily, without at all entering into what he had been about.

“ And now can't ye stay till to-morrow, Everhard? 'tis too late for ye to ride all that way to Seaford these short days.”

“ How can you talk like that, mother? ” he answered, irritably. “ I told you before, Russell would

[283]

turn me off, as sure as fate, if I didn't get back to-night— he as good as said so that day I'd been out so long in the lugger. He's right down angry this time, and says he might as well have no clerk at all in the office; and cousin or no cousin, he won't stand it.”

“ Will you just stop then while I get ye a bit to eat in no time? ” said his mother, bustling eagerly about.

“ Make haste then— I can't wait a minute,” muttered Everhard, his stoicism giving way: for the smell out of the saucepan was good, and he relented in his own favour. “A pretty way I should be in,” he went on, stretching himself, with a sort of dismal laugh, “ if I'm turned off there, and can't live here, me and father scarce speaking as now we do.”

“ Don't ye think you could manage not to go agin' him so much, my boy? ” said Mrs. Wallcott— good, fat, comfortable, red-faced woman as she was, who bore no grudges to any one, and could not conceive how anybody should not give up anything for love and peace at home. “ I'm sure I can't think what made you take up with that young girl out of all the girls that's in the world, as yer father says, just as 'twere to vex him.”

“ What's the use of your speaking that way, mother, when you know she's the only one I ever could or would fancy,” said Everhard, angrily; “ and she's not so easy to get neither, as you think. I've just met her down at the Minster, and she and her uncle

[284]

won't have anything to say to me so to speak, until I've got father's consent, fair and open; so there now you see what's like to come of that, him being what he is that a regiment of horse wouldn't turn him when he's got a fancy.”

Mrs. Wallcott looked exceedingly distressed, and laid her hand on his shoulder as he sat and eat. He moved a little aside, as if to reach something, so as to shake it off, not roughly, but very completely. His mother gave an inaudible sigh, and turned away to add another to the quantity of useless things which she had crowded on the little table for him: she would not see that he was bored by her caress.

“ Don't, mother; there's more than plenty,” said he, in a vexed tone. “ I wish you'd just sit down now and be quiet.”

Everhard was ashamed of his mother and ashamed of his shame. Her vulgarities, and her manners, and her dress all galled and irritated him, and he was not so grateful for her unvarying, unwearying affection as he knew he ought to be. He never appeared to less advantage than at home, where he was always saying little unkind, impatient things, which he repented of the moment they were out of his mouth, and doing small ungracious acts, which he would sometimes have given much afterwards to recall, though still not sufficiently so to prevent his acting in exactly the same way a few minutes after. The tone of her voice, the fat way in which she swung into the room, the very sound of her

[285]

creaking boots, annoyed him beyond measure. He was very sensitive to beauty and grace, and still more to their absence, and as there was not much chance of Mrs.

Wallcott's learning to be either slim, or graceful, or educated, or quick of apprehension and tact, although she would have been cut to pieces for his sake without any hesitation, he went on being vexed and repenting of his vexation, in a way which spoilt all his own comfort at home.

Perhaps the thick layers of fat with which nature had endowed Mrs. Wallcott prevented her feeling a good deal of the pain which he inflicted, and her profound sense of his superiority, and virtues, and graces, made her always convinced in the end that he—her last remaining child, her beloved Benjamin— must always be right, whatsoever he might say or do. There was a power of self-sacrifice and self-abnegation in her which took out the sting, as it were, from any unkind or neglectful thing done to her: humility is the cure for many a heartache.

His dog at this moment jumped upon Everhard's knees. " Down, Teazer," said he in an annoyed tone. "Mother, you 'must shut him up till I'm gone, or he'll be after me— here's the chain— and I can't keep him at Seaford any longer. Mrs. Russell's so cross now: she says he brings mud into the house, and she won't stand him no more. She'll be turning all my 'museum' out of doors soon, I do believe, even if they let me stop," he added, dismally. He had fallen on the north side of

[286]

favour at the ship-owner's, from his repeated absences, and had been made to feel it bitterly.

He rose as he spoke, and shook off his dog's caresses as he had done his mother's: he was very unhappy was poor Everhard, and he shewed it, as some people do, in being altogether put out and cross with everything and everybody.

Still, however, when at last he had mounted his horse and was riding away in rather doleful guise, he turned back to look at his mother, who was struggling violently to put up the dog. Teazer had been moved out of his usual calm business-like manners by seeing his master go off alone, and was now leaping wildly in the air, dragging at his chain, and howling and whining pitifully in his vain attempts to follow; and Everhard,

as he rode out of the stable-yard into the road, called out, in a much more tender tone to both, “ Good-by, Teazer, poor old dog— good-by, mother! ”

“ There ain't a many like my boy,” said Mrs. Wallcott enthusiastically, though much out of breath, as she tried to pacify the unhappy Teazer, and watched her son disappear. There was a passionate poetry of affection in her fat old body which would have done credit to the youngest and handsomest of her race, and furnished a whole regiment of poets with materials for no end of odes and songs and sonnets; but she was a “ dumb dog,” and had neither voice nor manners with which to express what was in her. No one could see the light, or hear the music of the feelings going on inside her; and,

[287]

indeed, a heavy old red-faced vulgar woman like Mrs. Wallcott had hardly any right to anything so beautiful as feelings in most people's eyes.

Everhard had ridden off in an extremely discontented condition. He considered himself a model of chivalry, constancy, and all the cardinal virtues, and with some reason. He had made his home too hot to hold him; and whether he had failed in duty to his father or not, he had certainly not done so to Lettice. True, he had been amusing himself very tolerably up and down the world for the last six months, but it had been all on the highest principles of self-sacrifice; and accordingly on the evening after he returned from Maple- ford, he sat over the fire in the ship's office after work with a pair of tongs in his hands, exceedingly aggrieved, and looking very deplorable as he recounted his wrongs to Ned.

“ And then for 'um to treat me in that fashion; and why she wouldn't marry me and have done with it, I can't think. Wrong! It weren't a bit wrong, when my father's broke his word like that, and I could manage my mother easy enough. I believe after all that she cares for that Caleb more than she does for me, and so I didn't let out to her as he'd got away, I that have got into all sorts of scrapes for her sake! ”

Ned had by this time recovered his spirits, and that desire of advising everybody about everything which a man always feels in double force when he has himself been guilty of an action of doubtful expediency. All

[288]

the time Everhard was talking he had been running over some lists and papers which he had to give in, adding up, comparing, subtracting, and lending only half an ear to the complaints and surmises with which his friend disconsolately solaced himself.

“ Look, Wallcott,” said he at last, putting the finished return in his pocket, “ you're a silly fella. First head ”— and he counted on his fingers— “ here's a poor girl sees one man doing his out and out best for to save her father, while you're doing yourn to take him up. She mayn't be so fond o' such a one as Norton Lisle, but you can't expect she'd be so over and above grateful to you for what you've a done. Second head, you ask her to run away from Amyas, and them as has been good to her and done for her all the days of her life, when they're in the thickest o' their trouble, and she may be a help to 'un, and ought to. I like her all the better for doing of it, I do. And as for yer father and Russell, they'll all come right in time, but you're so tail-on-end (*eager*). So there you has my 'report,' swallow it how you like,” he ended, in his dogged, literal, matter-of-fact way, leaning his back against the mantelpiece and lifting up his coat-tails.

“ And you think she may care for me just the same as before? After all, I know so little of her,” said Everhard, analysing and doubting, as was his manner, and occupied with his own side of the question, as usual, almost exclusively.

“ That's yer own fault. I can't answer as to that.

[289]

Why did ye ask her to marry you before you know'd her then? But I do: she's gentle and she's coy, but she's as true as steel.”

“ I know that, or I shouldn't have cared for her so,” cried Everhard, with angry inconsistency.

“ Then she's not like to throw herself at any other young fellow's head, as you seem to think's her way,— and a pretty way too to believe of one's true love,” he ended tauntingly.

“ There's that mare never will be good for anything since you drove her to death the night we were up at the Puckspiece,” said Everhard, not very relevantly, but catching at the first weapon of offence he could think of. “ I was better than four hours getting home last night with her from Mapleford; she'd hardly go at all, and all in the dark too; and if I'm turned out of the office here— as Russell says he'll hardly keep me for twenty pounds— you won't find another will be so patient with your tantrums, Ned Wynyate,” said he at last, standing up, and goaded into a sort of rebel lion against his oppressive friend. “ You get into scrapes, too; only, somehow, you make believe so hard you're all right, that one gets to think so too! ”

Ned knew how true this was, and prudently held his tongue further on the matter. “ We'll go out and see what the cutter's been about,” he said, consolingly, to change the conversation.

[290]

CHAPTER XXVII.

SUSPENSE.

“ Anon at the dawn all that sorrow had vanished from earth,
Not so much but I saw it die oat in the day's tender birth:
He that did most shall fear most, the strongest shall bear with the weakest.”—BROWNING.

“ I'VE a heard as that there Dixon's a very deal worse,” said Job a few days after (he was always the person to hear the news). “ They says he were that worrity as they was obliged to carry him from the place where Lettie were, handy the sea, to his own home, and that the wound took cold or summat, and they didn't know how 'twould turn. 'Twill go hard wi' Norton Lisle if aught bad happens to he, I take it.”

“ That's what comes o' them as will foller their own way, like Absolum, as were caught by the hair o' his head, and King Nebuchadnezzar, as ate grass like an ox,” said Mrs. Wynyate, improving the occasion, if not the tempers of her listeners.

“ But Norton haven't a been caught by the hair o’ his head, nor ate grass, nor nothing,” said the impervious Job, insensible to types and emblems; “ and till so be as he's a-going to be hung, we lives in hopes as

[291]

he'll get off safe. They say as that young Wallcott's summonsed for to hear witness agin him, which ain't just pleasant, as one may say, for nobody,” he ended, looking at Lettice.

Poor Lettice spent the days in misery. She had a feeling as if her own fate depended, more or less, on the trial, as well as her father's: as if old Wallcott's opposition would never be overcome “if anything happened” to Norton, as she euphuistically called it in her own mind; and yet as if it were very wicked to be thinking of herself when such matters of life and death were on hand.

Norton had recovered so fast that his trial was to come off at the winter assizes.

“ Summun must go and see which way it all turns out,” said Job, when the time came.

“ Tell'ee what, I think't had best be me: Amyas hates a throng he does, and Lettie won't so much care see her father come to grief if he's to be hung, or sich like; so I'll just make the best o' my way over to Mapleford; and if cousin Smart 'll take me in, well and good; and if she won't, why there it is.”

“ Nay, I can't leave Norton without some one to send to if anything happens,” said Amyas kindly; “ so we'll e'en both go together.”

Mrs. Wynyate was more unhappy than she chose to allow. With some very worthy people it is a sort of religion in such cases to make your neighbours and friends unhappy too. As they sat at supper that

[292]

evening, there was no rest for anybody in the room— “ Why had Lettice left the dairy-pans so dim? and why hadn't Amyas been after Norton a bit to see after his soul, what were in such a poor way? And the girl they'd got to help, when Lettice went away to her father, was so light o' head and so slow o' heels, there was no bearing her; and the flour hadn't come, and why was Job always so forgetful? ”— till at last Job— who had not yet finished his bread and cheese, and the only one, as he declared, who “stood up to her,”— undertook his own defence at much length, and in a voice that overpowered even his mother's, and Amyas got up in silence and left the room.

Job went on tranquilly with his work, i.e. his supper, till at last Mrs. Wynyate, hearing some laughing in the kitchen, charged in to bring the offenders to punishment, carrying with her the only candle.

Lettice dropped down on a little stool before the dim fire, wearied out heart and soul; Job got up, with his mouth full, and leant against the mantelpiece. Neither spoke: the mere fact of silence seemed a relief not rashly to be broken.

“ 'Tis well,” he said at last, “ as there's a place where what's wrong here 'll be righted there.” Did he mean that he was in hopes he should be able to make his mother as uncomfortable elsewhere as she did him at present? “ I wonder,” he went on, consideringly, “ whether it ain't as bad to have a tongue to nagg folk's lives out all round all their days, as for a man to bring up a lot o’

[293]

silly little dabs o' kegs of stuff, to do folk good, into the land? and yet there ye see there's one on 'um's fit to lose his neck for't, and t'other's a wery pious female, as one might say— ”

“ Oh, don't, uncle Job, please; how can ye! ” cried Lettice, horrified.

“ — And an 'ornament to her sec,' as the preacher said on collection day, when she put money in the plate,” went on Job, without minding her.

“ You know it says in the Book, ' Judge not,'“ interrupted the girl, feverishly; “ and I'm sure I've got enow in my evil heart to look to, and try not to repine, and 'tis all for our good, and we deserve it all, and a deal more too, for our sins.”

“ As for yer sins, Lettice, well, ye see I don't know so much neither. And who's strove and drove more than Amyas, I'd like to know? and done his duty both by man and beast 'in that situation whereunto he were called?' As far as I can see, 'tis them as is done wrong to as is so sorry and penitent and all that, and them as wrongs is as comfor'ble as ever they can stick. What do you say, Amyas?” he ended meditatively: for as he spoke, his brother had come back in the darkness, and seeing that all was quiet, pulled up his chair to the fire and sat down in silence; but Amyas made no answer. Presently, in the quiet night, there rose the Christmas hymn,— the “ waits.”

“ But it ain't the right day; they suits their own convenience as to their rounds and is noways petticklar

[294]

when they comes to be sure,” said Job, going out to have a bit of chat with them.

There was a plaintive fall in the rude music, softened by distance and night. “ Methinks it sounds much sweeter than by day,” as Portia says; and they sat on listening, without speaking or stirring. The singers had ended their carol, and, quite unconscious of their heresy, were singing a hymn to the Virgin— which, with the tenacity of village customs, had lasted on nearly three hundred years after the time when the meaning had died out of the words.

“ What does it all signify in the world, uncle Amyas? ” said Lettice, when the music stopped, bringing up her stool to his side, and leaning her head against him as she had not done since her “ troubles.” “How is it with life and all things? While the music was talking, as 'twere, it seemed to me as if I could see it all plain, but now 'tis got all dark again.”

“ I'm sure I can't say,” replied Amyas, sighing, with that unwillingness to bring up his faculties to tackle a hard subject which is found in many men of more education than Amyas.

The small white cat came purring up to her. It had grown quite wild and shy during the long months she had been away, and would not come near her on her return. Its

strangeness had vexed her, for she valued its little friendship as a reminder of her happy days with Everhard. Now, when she took no notice, it jumped into her lap.

[295]

Presently, as Amyas pushed in the half-burned brands to the fire, and a flame shot up, he saw her disappointed face.

“ Look, dear child,” said he, with an effort: “ yer might talk yerself hoarse, splaining things to that little kit; 'twouldn't understand any bit the more all yer strove. Same with you, when yer was a baby, what good were it telling of ye the how and the why? ‘See in part— through a glass darkly,'“ he half muttered to himself presently. “ I'm thinking it must be the same with us. Every now and then we seems to catch a light, and then it's sunk again, like that blaze, and we couldn't put it into words neither; but there'll come a time, please God, when we shall know even as He knows us. ‘ Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief,'“ he ended, rising with a sigh, as Mrs. Wynyate came back into the room with the light.— “ Now it's time for us all to go to bed, ain't it, mother? ”

The next day seemed to Lettice interminable. Her uncles left home early. It was a stormy, melancholy day: the heavy grey sky seemed to come down almost to the level of the great elms, while the clouds drifted fitfully past before the wind, and fell in cold rain, which was the only way in which the winter showed itself. " It never snew* once last winter, and I don't think as it will no more this 'un,” observed Job, as they drove away. The

*** To *snow*, *snew* as to *know*, *knew*; one of the many verbs which in ordinary speech have dropped their declension, without any apparent reason, and substituted the awkward affix *ed*.**

[296]

draggletailed fowls and peacocks, the dismal-looking cows and horses, took shelter as they could: everything looked miserable, and drenched, and dreary, and uncomfortable without, while within the house Mrs. Wynyate's ceaseless complaints of the dirt brought in by each successive entrance had gone on since the morning. Lettice, in silence, had brushed and tidied and straightened in vain; and she sat, when evening came, depressed and wretched, in a sort of comfortless despair, trying to realize to herself what was

going on at Mapleford, and the share which Everhard would be forced to take in the trial. Even after their dismal little meal Mrs. Wynyate could not rest, but wandered round and round the house, almost as restless as the wind itself, which still went on howling mournfully outside. At length, however, she came back into the " hall-place," and Lettice rose, fearing she scarcely knew what; her grandmother, however, sat down quietly by her side and uttered not a word.

" You'd best not sit up any longer, Lettice; 'tis no use, they'll not come home to-night, and it's getting late," said she at last. Then, seizing the girl's hand, as she passed her chair, with unwonted feeling, though in an iron grasp, the old woman went on in a broken, rugged voice, with her vehement energy: " Pray, child, pray, that it mayn't be barren sorrow to us all, but that it may bear fruit to life eternal; it's yer mother's husband! " and, to Lettice's surprise, she saw a great tear in each dim eye, though they did not fall. She

[297]

stooped down with a sudden impulse and kissed the stern old face for the first time in her life with a feeling of affection.

" Good-night, granny— thank you, dear granny! " she cried, running out of the room to hide her own tears, for she knew Mrs. Wynyate's horror of emotions, and going off to bed, though she lay awake listening half the night.

The next morning she was crossing the upper end of the farmyard, when, to her surprise, she came upon Job.

" Well, so ye see I'm come back; I were just coming in to tell ye. The trial came on so late as I couldn't make it out to get home last night," he said, tranquilly; " so I set off ere 'twere light this marnin' wi' the butcher's cart. Amyas will be here afore long."

" But what came of the trial? how were it all? " cried the poor girl breathlessly.

" Why, ye see, there were a big 'un in a wig went on a-pokin' and a-pounding at yer father, ever so long, up and down; and hadn't he done thisn and hadn't he a-done thatn all the days o' his life?— till at last grandfa judge he comes down o' him and says, 'That there ain't fair: you ha'n't a got nothin' to do with all that, only just did he kill Dixon?' "

“ What! 's Dixon dead? ” cried Lettice.

“ Nay, he's none dead, but was going on for better last I heerd.”

The poor girl wrung her hands, past her patience at the impossibility of getting on.

[298]

“ But how were it settled at the end? ” said Mrs. Wynyate, coming up to the rescue.

“ Some on 'um said one thing and some said t'other way. I'm a' muzzed and can't tell rightly how 'twere. ‘There were a little chap, sharp as a needle, what fired the pistol,' says one; and next one pruv he weren't there a bit, his face being blacked so as they couldn't know him.”

“ Whose face? ” said Lettice.

“ 'Twere as if they set up the things for to bowl 'um down again, as we does skittles, up them, down t'others; to it agin, my masters.”

“ But the end, what was the end? what's his sentence,— Norton's sentence? ” said Mrs. Wynyate, exasperated to a degree, and shaking him violently by the coat, as if by that means she could shake the words out of the interminable Job.

“ Well, he were transported for life, or twenty-five years was it? I ain't quite clear I ain't,” blurted out Job, angrily. “ So there, now, ye has it yer own way, and a great hurry you're in to be sure for such fine news,” he went on, in high dudgeon at not being allowed to tell his story as he pleased.

Lettice breathed a little more freely at last.

“ There they was bothering and boring Everhard about his helping off one Caleb at sea. I can't think, not rightly speaking, who he were, nor what ever he done it for,” wondered Job.

“ Why, it was he got off father in the first place, when he was took,” said Lettice, indignantly.

[299]

“ Well, which on 'um done right and which on 'um done wrong, I'm not sure; I don't know justly how 'twere. ‘ Dixon had a wounded hisself, and 'tweren't nobody's fault but

his own,' says another on 'um," he went on, consideringly. " But, to be sure, them counsellors they tangles things, and twistes of 'um, and tosses 'um up like a bull does a red handkercher, till there ain't nothin' left o' a plain man's tale, there ain't."

When Amyas returned there was not much additional information about the trial to be gained even from him; he had that disinclination to gather up his recollections, as it were, into concrete description, which is so often the case among men. One thing, however, Lettice did pick up. Addressing no person in particular, he said,—

" That young Wallcott came out of it uncommon well, I will say that for him; he didn't say too much nor too little, but there he held on to a plain tale and stuck to it. 'Twere dark and he didn't know the man, and his face were blacked, and he saw no pistol fired, and Dixon weren't dead nor nigh to it, he said."

" And Norton? " said his mother, impatiently. " Did ye see him after all were over? and did he take on about it? and what did he say about going away so far?"

" He didn't seem to think scarce anything much anyways. There's a ship going right off to Australia, they tells him, and he says, 'I'm a very handy chap, and shan't be long a-making my way out there, I take it.' He weren't down a bit, not he."

[300]

In a very short time after the trial, to the great comfort and relief of his best friends and well-wishers, Norton Lisle took his departure in the convict ship for Australia, where, as he expected, he did very well before long— earned his ticket-of-leave, and " founded a family." Antecedents were leniently regarded in those parts at that period; besides, there were many worse men in his Majesty's dominions than Norton Lisle, who yet had never been boarded and lodged at the public expense; there are no holes, however, for pegs of his peculiar construction in an old civilization, unless indeed he had 5,000£. a year, when he could have indulged his sporting instincts without any one finding much fault either with him or them.

[301]

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WHAT CAME OF IT.

" This stem necessity of things
On every side our being rings;
Our eager aims still questing round,
Find exit none from that grim bound.
'Tis common sense— and human wit
Can find no higher sense than it—
Submit— submit! "— A. H. CLOUGH.

EVERHARD had been a good deal badgered and browbeaten at the trial, and when it was over he went moodily up once more to his father's house, where luckily he found Mrs. Wallcott alone.

" At all events, I haven't done any hurt to Lettie's father, I don't believe; but it's been a bad time, mother," said he, sitting down gloomily in the kitchen. " And then my father came up to me in court, and said out loud, 'There; ye must be main glad to be well out o' that mess o' marrying a felon's girl!' Does he think I'm a-going to leave hold o' her hand because she wants helping more, I'd like to know? " he went on, marching up and down the kitchen. " I'll soon let him hear a bit o' my mind when he comes in, I will."

" Now you see here, my dear boy," she began, with great earnestness. " Don't'ee begin wi' a set-to wi' yer

[302]

father: it just breaks my heart and don't do a bit a good, but just makes him ten times worse, knockin' o' yer heads together, hitting just where 'twould be better missed. You just leave all quiet, and let me try and make it straight. There's times and there's times, and a continual drip, they says, 'll wear away the hardest stone."

“ But then, where shall we be, mother, Lettice and me, before you've got through the rock? why, we shall be dead and buried, and much good it will do us then to win with him,” said Everhard, half laughing at his own lugubrious images.

“ Well, ye see, if Norton had a been hung, maybe it mightn't have been so well,” replied Mrs. Wallcott, meditatively; “ but now as he'll just be settled right away, outside nowhere, as one may say, and beyond reach o' mischief, 'tis next best to being dead, and summat like it: so yer father may come round and think better on it now, nor beforetime, who knows? ”

Everhard accordingly held his tongue during the remainder of the evening, till he went back to Seaford; and his father seemed to be only too glad to take it for granted that all was as he desired, to tide over the difficulty by leaving things alone under cover of a truce, and to consider that his son would forget all about Lettice in time.

“ Give him the rein enow, and he'll tire of all this stuff and nonsense, and think better of it hisself, that's what I say,” said he, with a sigh of relief when Everhard had left the house, “ and so there's an end o' that matter, I hope.”

[303]

His rejoicings, however, were a little premature. Mrs. Wallcott generally propounded her son's case diligently at least twice every day. “ I don't see whatever you're to do if he's so bent upon it,” said she philosophically, one afternoon, as she stood with the top of a saucepan in her hand, after listening for some time in silence to her husband's fulminations against Everhard for his sins.

“ Anne's been and burnt the bacon again,” she said, parenthetically, as she looked into it. “That girl's enough to sour cider, she's so careless, that she is.” Then resuming the thread of her discourse— “ if thread it could be called where thread was none,”— “ It ain't as if you'd a got heaps o' boys and girls o' yer own, Mr. Wallcott, for to leave yer goods to. You've got but one on 'um, and I can't see as there ain't any harm in the girl. I seen her out o' winder t'other day along wi' her uncle what were a-coming out o' that Susan Smart's, which it's wonderful what a temper she have a got to be sure, and so uppish no one can't stand her; and Lettice— if that's her name— I don't see as she won't

do as well as another on 'um. Girls is poor flimsy thing nowadays, not a bit like when I were young; but there, I don't know who'd be good enow for my boy, that I don't. You may go farther and fare worse, I says, Mr. Wallcott." Mrs. Wallcott was a mistress of that style called the roundabout; and how she ever reached her conclusions was a mystery known only to herself.

" Yes, and a nice match for me, when I've just made

[304]

it all good about the Woodhouse, as good a job as ever I done, which it's all safe in my hands: the papers are to be finished to-day. And I'm just a-going to sign the last on 'um this afternoon, as they sends me word is ready. The girl's uncle's ruined right off, and her father a smuggler and in danger o' hanging. A pretty man for Everhard to consort wi', as I've saved and slaved for all my life!" shouted Wallcott, angrily.

" We didn't use to be so petticklar," answered his wife, in a low voice. " 'What for are ye collying* o' me?' says the pot to the kettle."

It was too true to be pleasant.

" I tell ye, I'd rather leave my money to the pigs," cried Wallcott, his face purple with passion and the veins on his forehead swollen with the violence of his rage. Mrs. Wallcott drew back; she well knew it would do no good to cross him in such a mood. He turned out of the house towards the stable, muttering angrily. " Bring out the new bay," he called out roughly. It was an ill-tempered beast, like himself, which he had just bought at a good deal under its value for that very reason: one of those " bargains " which are so very dear at the money.

The horse fidgeted and moved excitedly, first to one side and then the other, so that its master was a long time without being able to mount. " Quiet, ye brute! " he went on calling furiously. At last, with much difficulty, he managed to scramble on its back;

*** " Brief as the lightning in the colly'd night " — *Midsummer Night's Dream*.**

[305]

but even before he was well in the saddle he struck it repeatedly and angrily with his stick. The horse resented the blows, started violently, as he swerved past the great brick piers which led into the road, threw up his heels, reared, and Wallcott was unseated, though he slipt off rather than fell.

“ I'm not hurt a bit,” cried he, trying to get up; but he was a large man, and evidently a good deal shaken; and as the bystanders helped him off the ground, they found he could hardly stand upright: his arm fell powerless, and they carried him towards the house.

“ Oughtn't the doctor to be fotch? it looks uncommon like a stroke, and he that helpless,” said one of the men who had come up to his assistance.

“ They doctors telled him to kip hisself quiet, or he'd be sure to have one afore long, and here ye see 'tis,” said his wife, placidly, as they brought him in. “ I've begged him scores and scores o' times not to ride that there horse; find he always said he were only playsome, and that 'tweren't vice. However we're to look after all that business o' hisn, I can't think nohow! I must just send for Everhard back again, for I'm a needsome woman now, without e'er a one o' 'um.”

There was scarcely anything to be done for the old man, who went on from week to week in a helpless, state, which only grew worse and worse. Everhard found himself with a number of most intricate and disagreeable little pieces of business on his hands, for which he always had the greatest disrelish, most of

[306]

which he could not in the least understand, and did very badly; it was a difficult position, for his father, in his lucid intervals, insisted on trying to keep everything still in his own power, and only became more and more violent as he was less able to make himself understood— at last, as one stroke succeeded another, he sank gradually into a kind of dotage. Dreams of money or its absence—the ruling passion strong in death— hung about him; he was beset with the idea that he was ruined and penniless, and should have to go to the workhouse; and the only way in which he could be kept quiet was to pay so many shillings a week into his own hands, when, as long as the feeling of the money remained with him, he was more content.

The final steps as to the mortgage had not been taken in consequence of his illness; but, in spite of this delay, Amyas was preparing as before for the order to move.

" Sure you might just be quiet and see what'll come of it; it don't do a mossel o' good worriting yerself and us too like this; what for should us go and meet trouble half-way? " said Job, plaintively. They had received a message from Everhard, through Ned, begging that no changes should be made at present at the Woodhouse, but Amyas could not divest himself of the idea that the young man, when he had the power, might be wanting in the will, and went on trying to make his arrangements. It was a most painful tenure, indeed, to him to be thus hung up between earth and heaven, dependent on the good pleasure of he scarcely knew whom.

[307]

CHAPTER XXIX.

SPRINGTIDE.

" Oh, it came o'er my ear like the sweet south
That breathes upon a bank of violets,
Stealing and giving odours."— *Measure for Measure*.

IT was the first real spring day, fresh and bright.

" Lettice, you go and see after Gabriel, as sends word he's sick and can't come," said her grandmother, in the afternoon: and the girl set off across the meadows, where everything was beginning to bud as early as was possible in the year; for there had been scarcely any winter, as sometimes happens in that favoured climate.

The cottage and garden were shut in by a laurel hedge, on a bit of heathery ferny common at the top of the hill: it looked like " a little island in the wintry waste," when the apples and merries in its orchard were in bloom. A great oak and a very ancient yew overshadowed the roof, and the whole seemed as if it had probably been enclosed in the days of the Norman kings from the wild forest hunting-grounds which lie all round.

The walls were clay, the warmest and the coolest kind of construction, and the floor was clay, on which the old “dark” man sat, rocking himself by the great open fire.

[308]

“ Well, Lettie,” said he, recognizing her step as she came into the cottage, “ I'm terrible bad, I be, ye may depend on't; my cough he's a deal worse: there's summat tarblish wrong a-goin' on in my inside, and if ye don't tackle he, 'twill be a hard matter for me to climb May-hill. They says, ye know,

‘ March will search, April will try,
May 'll show if ye live or die.’

Well, I've a don my dooty, and I'm ready to goo: and there I shall sit on the right hand o' God A'mighty, upo' his golden throne, I shall,” said he, his curious self-conceit and profound sense of his own merits holding good for earth and heaven alike: then coming down rapidly from this seraphic state of mind to more pressing interests: “ Do ye tell Madam to send me a sup o' broth, or summat, I feel so leer* “ (*hungry*) he went on in his usual peremptory fashion. “ There, if I could but twiddle down to the Woodhouse and tumble the butter, 'twould fresh me up a bit, it would! ”

“ We're in hopes you'll git down after a bit now— 'tis so fine, too,” said Lettice.

“ And how can that be, if I can't neither eat nor sleep? ” said the old man, crossly: “there's my missis gotten** so stiff that it terrifies her for to make the bed, to shake it and bump it as I wants; she can't so much as strip the jacket off of a rabbit now, and they tells me it's

*** “ Leer,” German, *empty*.**

**** “ Hath he gotten himself the victory.”—*Psalm* xcviii.**

[309]

all up wi' yer uncle, as he can't by no means stop on at the Woodhouse because of the mortgage, and then where shall I be?— And what's come o' that young Wallcott, I'd like to know, as used to be here so much? ” he went on presently. “ 'Tis a greatish while sin'

I heard talk o' he: he were a nice tidy chap, enow— and he's tookt hisself off for good and all, they says. That'll be along o' Madam Wynyate's doings, I'm thinking. Well, ye know they young men there's no dependence on 'em; they comes and they goes when they pleases, and as they pleases; and they won't ha' none to gainsay 'urn. 'Tis a pity, too, as he'll never come back no more, for he was a trimming smart young fellow he was," he ended these consolatory remarks.

It is not pleasant to hear such things concerning the tenderest part of one's future, even from a person who knows nothing whatever about the matter. Lettice sighed as she came out of the little dark cottage.

There was a " tender grace " about the exquisite evening, like the first opening of a rosebud: the world seemed full of sweet scents and sweet sounds, as if the whole earth was bursting into bloom, as she walked slowly home. Everywhere the flowers were opening, the pale green corn springing, a fringe of fern followed the line of the deep lane, the hedgerows were set with daffodils and primroses: the children all had "posies" of them in their hands: the earth was a perfect garden. There was a fresh springing feeling in the air: the birds twittering, the axes of the woodcutters ringing through

[310]

the wood, and the laughing of the " yaffingale," the great red and green woodpecker which glanced across the glades like a tropical bird, in a coat of quite another colouring from the sober browns our birds generally affect in the north; but poor Lettice was too sad at heart to enjoy either the sights or sounds. She sat down at last near the little pool— the scene of her childish misdeeds. The water was clear, the pale blue sky was clear; the trunks of the great oaks on the top of a green mossy bank, overrun with a perfect garden of daffodils, which seemed to be overflowing down its edge to see themselves in the water, were all reflected below. She sat and watched them absently: the scene had been too lovely to pass by, but she had forgotten at what she was looking, as she rested her head upon her hands. She had not seen or heard anything yet of Everhard, and in spite of the size and strength of her belief in him— " which it's as big and strong as the minster at Mapleford," said she to herself— she was beginning to find

the time long, and to sigh for some tidings of him. He had taken Amyas's prohibition to come near them till all was clear, far too literally for her comfort.

Something stirred, as it seemed to her, in the water below, and she raised her graceful little head to see down into it— when she met Everhard's eyes looking up at her, as it were, out of the water itself: he was so continually in her thoughts and so mixed up and connected with everything in her mind, that if he had come

[311]

up bodily out of the pool itself, she would hardly have been startled or have considered it otherwise than quite natural.

" You never heard me, Lettice! what were you thinking about so hard? " said he, smiling, as he sat down beside her, and took her in his arms.

" But are you sure that it's all quite right that you should come? " whispered she, nestling up to him, however; " and that they won't mind it at Mapleford, and that uncle Amyas will be content? "

" You're like a bit of conscience set on end in a little red hood, I do believe," answered he, laughing; "it's very right indeed; how can it be wrong when you and me come together? "

But in spite of this very convincing argument, the uneasy look did not pass out of her anxious face till he had told her all that had happened.

" My mother's been as kind as kind; you must go and see her soon, Lettie; I think that'll thank her best to see your little face. You see it's her money is set upon the Woodhouse after all: so she's a right, if any has, to say yes or no, and she gives it up to us, you and me, that's her rights. I never saw such a place for wild daffodils as this is."

" And you mean we can live here along wi' uncle Amyas, in the dear old place all together all our lives? " replied Lettice, with her eyes sparkling. " And that's the kind thing you've been doing of all this weary while? You're a very good man," she

[312]

added, earnestly, her face perfectly radiant with the excess of her admiration and respect.

“ And what have you been doing all the time? ” said he presently, looking down into her eyes with a smile.

“ It's very dreary waiting,” answered she, hiding her face on his shoulder. “ I don't think you can tell how long the days seem.”

“ Why can't I tell? ” laughed he.

“ Because you're a man, you know, and can move about and be angry, and all sorts o' such like things that serves to pass the time.”

“ What! do ye think that's such a pretty pastime? ” answered he.

“ Them as tries it seems always to take great delight in it,” said she, with a smile and a blush.

To which he replied by proving convincingly, over and over again, to his own and her entire satisfaction, that he had done well to be angry, and, indeed, that everything he had ever done or said had always been the very best possible under the circumstances.

“ Why, that moss is just like green velvet where you're sitting, Lettice, with the winter being so mild. It's a very pleasant place this, to be sure. I don't wonder at folk being sorry to part with it,” he went on presently.

“ But you mean uncle Amyas to stop, you said? How did he take it when you spoke and told him? ” said she, anxiously, beginning to see that all was not quite so simple as she had fancied.

[313]

“ Well, I suppose he's to stop, but be ain't so over and above fond o' me, and so he wasn't that overjoyed, you know, at having to be as it were obligated, anyhow to me, for the place.”

“ But he'll be fond enow of you, Everhard, come he knows you better,” cried she— the colour rising in her cheeks— in her uncle's defence. “ Ye can't think what a man he is! There ain't a mossel not so big as a pennypiece in his heart o' what's low, nor selfish, nor

mean; and now oughtn't we to go home and see after him a bit? ” she added, as he would have detained her; and they sauntered slowly back together as the shadows fell.

“ Sunny, fresh, bright evening, how pleasant the world looks,” said Everhard; “ and coming out of the town too. Hark how the lambs are bleating, and see that pair o' cutty wrens beginning a nest just like you and me. It's quite a shame to go in before sundown.”

But still she drew him gently on, for, in the midst of her own happiness, she began to realize that there might be sore hearts not very far away. Amyas was standing rather moodily in the porch as they came up; but his cloudy brow cleared when he saw the light in Lettice's little face.

“ Why, you look as if you'd grow'd a pair o' wings, child, sin' morning.” Then, turning to Everhard, “ You'll mind and be good to her all yer days? ” he went on somewhat seriously.

“ I should like to see the thing that wouldn't be good to Lettie,” replied the young man, with some

[314]

grandeur. He was somewhat annoyed that his virtuous acts were not done greater homage to, and did not in the least understand the bitter pang with which Amyas felt himself now a dependant in the house which had so long been his own.

“ Uncle Amyas, he's your nephew too now, you know. You'll care about him, won't you, dear uncle? ” whispered Lettice, anxiously, dropping behind, and taking hold of his hand in both hers, as they followed Everhard into the house. “ I never can be right down happy in my heart if you're not a little glad about it too,” she went on, stroking the hand she held, and with a whole world of tenderness in her voice and manner.

And with the link between them of that pleading face, Amyas shook hands, at last, much more cordially with the young man, in a sort of silent welcome, as they entered the old hall together.

“ I believe you've strove to do all that was kind by me and mine, Everhard Wallcott; and I thank ye for't, though I haven't many words to give to-day,” he said, presently, with a sort of simple dignity.

“ You'll let me stop here to-night, Mrs. Wynyate? ” said Everhard, in a little while, smiling a trifle perhaps too affably for the situation, as he came up to shake hands with the old woman.

“ I'm sure I don't know where to put him, Amyas,” muttered his mother, a little too audibly.

Lettice threw herself desperately into the breach. “ Granny,” she whispered, drawing the old woman

[315]

to the stairs, “ you'll let me come in to you, won't you? or I could go to the garret where uncle had used to sleep, and then there's that room where I bide all ready.”

It was not a promising beginning, and Lettice's heart sank within her; but the evening went off better than could be expected. Amyas made a great struggle to be cheerful; but their chief comfort was Job. He was greatly pleased with himself for his own wisdom and perspicacity, considered the marriage as mainly his own doing, and admired it accordingly.

“ Well, you're not for letting the grass grow under your feet,” observed he, in the course of the evening, rubbing his hands, as they sat over the fire and listened to the plans which Everhard was propounding. “ You'll be beforehand now wi' the cuckoo, 'what orders his coat at Beaulieu Fair and puts it on at Downton.' I axed him to-day* how soon you was like to be married, and he were so busy answering of me, that I take it he'll not have time enow to-year neither for to build his own nest! ” he went on smiling.

“ Well, and this is the time for everybody to make their nests in, isn't it? ” said Everhard with a smile, as he watched Lettice's little figure passing noiselessly and deftly in and out of the deep shadows of the great old panelled hall. She was helping her grandmother

*** The cuckoo is so busy answering questions,— telling the young folk how soon they will be married, and the old ones how soon they will die,— that he has no leisure for his own affairs.**

[316]

to prepare supper, and there was a sort of shy grace in her manner each time she came within the narrow circle of light and felt rather than saw the eyes that were following her, which even Job could not help noticing.

“ She's a pretty 'un, though I say it that shouldn't,” said he in a low voice half to himself.

“ There's cuckoos and cuckoos: t'ain't the on'y thing what gets in other folk's houses,” muttered Mrs. Wynyate in her peregrinations, luckily unheard except by Job, who was bringing in a bit of wood, and began again hurriedly— to prevent any more such uncomfortable “ discourse.” “ And so you're to have the wedding in church, is ye? and I'm glad o' that too, we that pays tithe reg'lar, and Easter dues, and all them things, and don't get no benefice on 'um like. I always thought we should take 'um out in prayers.”

“ I've a made up my mind for to go live at the Dairyhouse, for all sakes' sake,” said Mrs. Wynyate next day suddenly. “ Now, don't ye go and say aught agin it, for 'tis much the best every way,” she went on, in answer to Lettice's rather timid remonstrances. “ Ye see, child, things ain't, nor can't be, as they used to was. The house is to be Everhard's, they tells me, and he don't like 'um done as they ought to; and I ain't used to new ways, and can't change, and I shall be best by myself, as 'twere, and you knows it; and 'tis so much nearer the chapel, too. Besides, I don't think much o' young men nowadays, to be waited on and

[317]

looked after like that,” she ended, with some disgust at having seen Lettice get something hot for supper ready for him the night before. “ So we'd best part while we're friends,” suggested her inexorable common sense.

A few days after the wedding Everhard came up to Lettice with a packet of papers in his hand.

“ My mother's sent these for Wynyate to sign: they're the mortgage papers for the Woodhouse, you know. I think you'd better ask him to do it,” said he, smiling.

“ Don't you think we ought to give them back to uncle Amyas? ” replied she, laying her hand on his arm with a hesitating blush and smile. “ Don't they say the money wasn't

near the value; and we might live here for the interest, mightn't we, Everhard? It would be so nice to give him his own again."

" A good deal more than his own that would be out o' the place, I fancy. I don't see that at all," he answered. " What do you think Lettice says? " and he repeated her words to Amyas, who entered the room at the moment. It must be confessed, to the credit of his perspicuity if not of his munificence, that he did not believe her uncle would accept any such offer.

Lettice was making her escape, not at all approving of this easy mode of generosity, when Amyas took hold of her hand, and drew her fondly to him, with the tears in his eyes.

" No, that would never do at all, dear child," said

[318]

he, taking up the pen to sign the deed: " business is business, and rights is rights, and if I've lost the old place 'twould be a poor job to be hankering after it like that. I'd been thinking o' going away somewhere, as you'd be best by yourselves." She looked horrified. " But your husband says he don't know nothing about farming, and that I'd best stop and look after it. I don't believe I'm fit for much else; but I can make a shift to do that." In spite of his modesty, Amyas was of opinion secretly that he was a very good farmer, as indeed we are generally most proud of that which is our weakest point.

" It's you that have had the helping heart and the helping hand for everybody, as well I've known it, and have riz* such a nice lot of lambs this spring too," put in Lettice, looking anxiously at Everhard for the compliment, which was a little long in coming.

" Yes," said he at last, "I'm sure there's bleating enough, if that 'll do any good, down the field that's blue with harebells, to nigh deafen one; there must be lambs there and to spare for all the butchers in Mapleford."

" After all," Amyas went on ruminating, " if I could ha' had my wish, I believe 'twould ha' been as I should leave the Woodhouse to thee after I go, which I couldn't. Job and John ain't fit for it, and Ned don't want it; so there 'tis just all for the best, you see, as it's fell out

*** The past of to *raise*, used by Drayton and Middleton, &c., between 1600 and 1650.**

[319]

now, and 'tis no great hardship for me to be beholden to the child."

" I'm sure if there's beholdings at all," observed Mrs. Wynyate, who had just dropped in, " it 'll scarce be of your side, Amyas. What ever would them two children do, left to their poor ignorant selves, and crops and stock, and such like to mind? 'Twould be the frightfullest, starvingist place in all the country round, before the year were out; that's what it would."

" I'm sure the garden here is that uproarious," cried Everhard, in an aggrieved tone, at this reflexion on his wisdom, " that I never saw anything like it anywhere! "

" You'll make it look a deal better, and bear a deal more, I'll be bound, in no time," said Amyas kindly, with the soft answer which turned wrath, and made the young man a little ashamed of his petulance.

" You'll not get much lettuce nor rosemary to grow there, I'm thinking, anyhow," observed Job, laughing.

(These only thrive, it is said, where the " Missis is master.")

Matters improved, however, as time went on. And it conduced greatly to the comfort of everybody that Everhard was not by any means rich after all, and that the Woodhouse was the chief part of his inheritance. The old money-lender's gains melted away to very little when the master-hand was gone which knew how to pull the strings necessary to bring in the gold. He lived on

[320]

for many years, and when he and his wife were provided for properly, there was barely enough to enable the others to live in comfort at the farm.

" And a very good thing too," said old Gabriel, who generally enacted the part of chorus in a Greek play, considering it his duty to make the proper moral observations and the right exclamations in the right place for the family, reprobating vice (when it did not

succeed), admiring good fortune, and the like. “All them pounds is more nor one mortial man didn't ought to have. I mind what my old woman said that time when that there sovereign were bewitched away from us, and we'd had such a sight o' merries* as never was: 'It's maybe as well,' says she. 'I was afraird o' that word o' David's, “ The wicked do flourish.” Who knows else how it mightn't ha' been with us in the t'other world?' ”

*** Fr. *mérise*: little black cherries**.

[321]

CHAPTER XXX.

AFTERMATH.

“ Like to the grass that's newly sprung,
Or like a tale that's new begun,
Or like the bird that's here to-day,
Or like the pearled dew of May;
Or like an hour, or like a span,
Or like the singing of a swan,
E'en such is man.....“— WASTED, 1580.

IT is only in three-volume novels and fairy tales that, when the proper distribution of deaths, marriages, and sugar-plums has taken place, it can be said of the actors that they lived “ happy for ever after.” It shows, indeed, a curious state of the public mind that all men should agree in stories to consider the starting-point as the goal, that the interest ceases when the earnest work of life generally begins— in fact, the life itself. It saves a world of trouble, however, to the narrator; the remainder is far more difficult and complex a subject,— many more minor keys to be harmonized, more involved discords to be resolved. It is the difference between a melody and a symphony.

Lettice was a great deal cleverer than her husband. There was more of her, thoughts which he never knew

[322]

of, feelings which he would never share: a wider, larger nature, although neither circumstances nor cultivation ever made much use of it.

Everlhrd was no hero, and his shallow education had not taught him how little he knew. But his wife never found it out. She went through life worshipping his wonderful powers and great acquirements, which, perhaps, on the whole, was for her happiness. Sometimes a dim doubt came over her, when she differed from him, as to whether his right, which was to her right, was so absolutely *the* right; but she put it down as a sort of treason.

They had their ups and downs of joy and grief, they lost their only little girl, and, having several boys, desired ardently what they had not got. In time, however, there came a little Lettice, very like the first to look at, who took possession of Amyas as of her rightful property and estate before she was two years old. She was the joy of his heart, and might be seen trotting after him, at almost all times and seasons, in and out of the house. She was a very much happier little being than her mother had been, tried by no harsh words or actions, above all, troubled by no misgivings, no self-mistrusts or self-torturings; all the difference, in fact, between the last generation and this. There was, perhaps, too, a little less of the shy charm of her mother. The dawn is a very evanescent thing in these times, self- possession and self-consciousness come rather early, perhaps, in the day.

[323]

It was a good many years after their marriage— Lettice considered herself quite a middle-aged woman, and Everhard a “ comfortable man,”— when their little girl, who had been ill for some time, did not recover her strength:

“ Little Lettie ought to go to the sea,” said her mother, anxiously, one day, “ for she don't get up her strength here.”

“ They say there's quite a place grown up at the Chine,” replied Everhard. “ You'd better take the child over there for a while. I shan't be sorry to see the old coast again. Uncle

Amyas says he never knew such an aftermath as this year, and that we shall have a fine time with the beasts, and so we can afford it nicely."

(The aftermath is the second crop of grass after the hay-harvest is in.)

" And daddy Amyas must go to take care of me," said the small patient importantly.

" No, daddy Amyas is going to stay and take care of all and everything at home," answered her father sagely.

" And I hope we shall hear something of the Edneys," thought Lettice to herself.

In the early days of her marriage she had written repeatedly to " aunt Mary," but Mary was no scribe, and the painful epistles from Jesse, few and far between, told her little but the fact that they were still alive, so that at last the unsatisfactory correspondence had died out of itself. In those days of dear postage and difficult

[324]

communication, far nearer connections were often not heard of during half a lifetime.

As they drove over the once silent heath, where the Pucks used in the old times to turn into colts, they came on a row of staring white lodging-houses: a large hotel stood on Jesse's garden, and the little Bethel had been succeeded by an elaborately " high " Church.

As they passed what had once been the " Puckspiece " they saw a great blue placard, intimating that " this commodious and genteel residence, with coachhouse and stables," might be hired by any family of distinction desiring that honour.

Lettice felt as if the Pucks were indeed playing tricks with her senses, as, with the odd feeling of being in a dream out of which she would wake presently, she helped Everhard to choose out the smallest and quietest lodging they could find.

The next morning Everhard declared, " I'm just going over to Seaford to-day, Lettice, to see Ned and the rest, and the old place. There's a coach there now. I shall be back by night, and you'll do best settling of yourselves without me just at first." He was not any more fond of trouble than of old.

In the afternoon, when Lettice had laid in her small stores and made all their little home arrangements, she wandered out with the child, feeling nearly as much puzzled about her own identity within, as by that of the spick and span new watering-place,

[325]

once Edney's Creek, without; at length, however, they found their way down to the shore, where at least the sea and the beach continued unchanged.

There were a number of little people, with spades and smart hats, burrowing in the sand, like the sandhoppers which she remembered of old; with whom, to her astonishment, remembering her own shy days, Lettice the second fraternized without the smallest difficulty.

As they went up and down together she could find no one who had ever even heard of the Edneys. The busy London builders, who had made the place, seemed to have destroyed down to the name of the former owners: they had vanished like the seaweed of last year's tide.

Late in the afternoon, however, as she was straying rather aimlessly backwards and forwards watching Lettie, who, with a wooden spade, was effecting wonders in the fortification line, in company with a fat boy, one of her new allies, an old boatman came up to her.

“ Fine day for a sail, ma'am. I hears you was asking after folk as once lived here long fur time back,” he said.

“ Yes, six brothers,” answered Lettice. “ Pilots and fishers they were.”

“ Well, ye see, one and another come to grief like, and sold their lots o' ground; not for all that, though there's been such sums and sums made since, it isn't they nowise as has got the money. 'Tweren't nothing

[326]

like; they were none the better of it. And at last Jesse pilot were left all to hisself; and he wouldn't stir, he said, from his father's ground; and so he stopped on till he died. I'd a sailed with him many's the time."

" And his wife, that they used to call aunt Mary in those old days? " said Lettice, with a sigh.

" She went off to her own friends when she were left to herself, with that there David they'd a brought up."

" And where may that be? "

" Well, I'm sure I can't say rightly," said he, scratching his head. " I have a heerd tell, I know; but where 'tis I can't mind not anyhow."

" She's a comfort and a blessing, well I know, to them all, wheresoever it may," thought Lettice in her heart fervently. " And there was one of the brothers much younger than the rest," she went on with a little hesitation.

" Ah! Caleb you'll mean. He got into trouble with the revenue folk, and then he run for it and got aboard a whaler or summat; anyhow, the boat were wrecked and almost every man drownded. They say Jesse never were his man after he heerd on it: there were a blue jacket aboard one of the ships he were piloting of as telled him, I heerd say. You'll give me summat for to drink yer health, marm? " ended he, as Lettice turned, dazed, away.

She longed to be alone, to get away from the parasols and the smart hats, and the donkeys, and the telescopes

[327]

with sham sailors at the end of them. She shrank at last behind a shoulder of sand-cliff, out of sight of every one, with nothing but the sea and the sky and the beach before her, " where the voices of the " waves and of the " dead were the living things to her." The past had come back to her so vividly that she could see and hear once again all that went on in the old days at the pilot's: Mary's voice seemed sounding in her ears with its affectionate greetings, and the old pilot's serious " discourse;" she could almost see David's patronizing airs, while her intercourse with poor Caleb, from the day when he

carried her across the river to his pleading on the shore, was as present to her as if it had been yesterday.

It was quite evening, and she was still sitting there, when the little girl came running up to her.

“ Oh, mother, come down to the shore out of this stupid place. I've got such beautiful things! See here's a sea-mouse all over little spikes! ” And she opened her small, hot, sandy hand, in which was wriggling some hideous sea-monster. And at the child's voice, the past shrivelled up once more.

“ Why, it don't look like the same maid,” said her mother, with a smile, putting the little dishevelled locks to rights; “ and here's father coming to meet us. See what a nice colour Lettie's got in her cheeks already,” she went on, going towards him.

“ There's two Letties have got nice colours in their cheeks, I think,” said Everhard, looking at his wife,

[328]

over whose face the youth of the past seemed to be passing. “ 'A sea-mouse? ’ what's that, I wonder, Lettie? Put it in my pocket and well look presently, for I'm as hungry as a hawk, and want to get home.”

The child danced round them, running in after the ebbing waves, and flying from them, as they came back again, like a little elf, and returning to hang on to his hand;— while the sun set behind them, giving a golden glow to the cliffs and the sea, and throwing their three long shadows on the level wet sands before them.

“ See how great and big I am,” sang the little girl in a sort of chant, curtseying up and down to her shade as she ran, and the traces of the old life seemed to be wiped away for her mother as if they had been a dream.

THE END.

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