

ANGELS
AND
DEVILS
AND
MAN

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GRAHAM

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ANGELS, AND DEVILS, AND MAN

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AND DEVILS,
AND MAN

BY

WINIFRED GRAHAM

*Author of "The Zionists,"
"The Star-Child," etc.*

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Dedicated

TO

THE REV. JAMES WELLER.

ANGELS, AND DEVILS, AND MAN.



CHAPTER I.

The wave behind impels the wave before ;
Thus in successive course the minutes run,
And urge their predecessor minutes on,
Still moving, ever new ; for former things
Are laid aside, like abdicated kings ;
And ev'ry moment alters what is done,
And innovates some act, till then unknown:

—*Dryden.*

“ I AM busying myself this afternoon beholding the mote that is in my brother's eye ! ” said Lady Livingstone. “ In fact, my mood is critical.”

She was leaning back in a victoria drawn by a pair of noticeable piebald horses, her eyes leisurely sweeping over the gay crowd thronging Hyde Park.

Her companion, a man, wore an air of

stolid indifference to the world—and Lady Livingstone.

She knew there were many who would gladly drive with her and listen while she talked of men and women, of things great and small, just as the fancy took her. Yet, from sheer wilfulness, she fastened her friendship with a leech-like pertinacity upon Daniel Paley-Hyde.

“He is lugubrious, unsympathetic, and impossible,” she had said of him when the whim first came to her; “but he must have some redeeming point, and I mean to find it out before I die.”

If her motives could have been analysed, the men who cast jealous eyes at Paley-Hyde would hardly have envied him his credentials. The great law of contrast, the invincible fascination of change, played its part and scored a triumph. Paley-Hyde attracted her for the very reason that she was satiated with the sweets of life. The modern charm and glitter of a velvet world made bitterness appear *piquante*, made coldness a luxury.

It amused her to shut the gates of her rose-garden with a sharp little click upon the heels of Cupid, and turn sun-dazzled eyes

to the gloom of a cellar where she suspected the better wine lay hid.

She pictured the germ of genius under his mask-like exterior ; she saw him as the stoic philosopher who discarded all passions, and would not allow a wise man to pity the afflictions of another. His terse remarks, dry from lacking milk of human kindness, made an impression on her mind, much as short speeches or sentences of history rivet the reader more than the most laboured strokes in descriptive modern literature. It was commonly told of Lady Livingstone that she was the incarnation of selfishness. A society widow, long emerged from a brief period of mourning, she proved so pleasantly pleasure-loving, so openly selfish, that her faults were accepted as inseparable from her witty, effervescing personality.

She was known now to hold "anti-matrimonial" views of a most decided nature, though confessedly straying on occasions dangerously near that trap for the simple gratification of sniffing at its bait.

The late Lord Livingstone had been a martinet in his time, and his pretty young wife found that matrimony was practically being buried alive. It seemed to her scarcely

less dismal to be shut up in a vault, to converse with the shades of her ancestors, than to be carried down to an old mansion in the country, and confined to the conversation of a husband.

The Jacobina Livingstone of those early days was a very different personality to the lady now known as " Jack " by her intimates—that sparkling product of modernity, a childless society widow.

A number of curious eyes followed her carriage as she drove with Paley-Hyde. Those who knew her smiled to see a couple so ill-mated, wondering what she found to say to Daniel, and still more what Daniel found to say to her. He bore the air of a man brought forth against his will into the fashionable riff-raff of many cliques and grades. The seductive power of the Goddess of Persuasion worked strange spells. In Jacobina's bearing there was something of triumph, but more of humour; her mobile lips kept their ever-ready smile, but her veiled eyes hid many secrets.

Her attire, not over elaborate, was delicately beautiful, in subtle harmony.

The art of the really good dresser showed itself in every curve and fold, in every wave

of colour and apparently petty detail. Her mirror had been consulted even for her expression, while her speech owed something to art. Through practice she had attained a knack of changing the sound of her voice, not only in every sentence, but in almost every word. No syllable ever fell harshly or unpleasantly, though it held a sword or the sting of an adder. To the ear her words were music, songs in a whisper, echoes from the sea.

Poets wrote of Lady Livingstone's voice, though even a poet's imagination could not always clothe her utterances with "sweet reasonableness."

Daniel Paley-Hyde looked somewhat like the Beast at Beauty's side. His partially bald head made him seem older than his years; his long nose gave his face a marked severity; he had little colour and no smile.

"I grow tired of being critical; it's a strain on the mental faculties," said Jacobina, unfurling a diaphanous parasol as if to partially shut out her "moted-eyed" brethren. "I have come to the conclusion that everyone is seeking something, and they never find. Perhaps it is the future, the thing we cannot overtake run we ever so swiftly."

Paley-Hyde rubbed his chin ; it was his only good feature, for in it could be read an intermingling of determination and romance, the latter quality being sternly denied by the upper part of the countenance.

“ They are looking,” he said, “ for manna from heaven—which never falls.”

Jacobina stole a sidelong glance at the cynical man ; she seldom quite understood his words. She followed as one who gropes in the dark, and occasionally laughed in the wrong place.

“ I am afraid nowadays we need a more complicated diet,” she retorted, and he felt that she looked oddly material as she spoke.

“ Yes,” he continued, “ no need for the manna of which Sir John Maundeville speaks in his book of ‘ Marvellous Adventures,’ and yet they seek it without knowledge, and the hunger is in their souls.”

Lady Livingstone had never heard of Sir John Maundeville, but she did not own to this.

“ What manna ? ” she murmured, her curiosity slightly piqued.

“ The manna that fell in the land of Job,” her companion replied, quoting Sir

John from memory : “ ‘ This manna is clept of angels. And it is a white thing that is full sweet and right delicious, and more sweet than honey or sugar. And it cometh of the dew of heaven that falleth upon the herbs in that country. And it congealeth and becometh all white and sweet.’ ” He paused ; Lady Livingstone kept her silence.

“ It was supposed,” he added, “ to purge out melancholy. Show me something that is white and sweet.”

She turned and pointed to a girl passing on foot under the trees, gowned in a simple robe of spotless muslin, and wearing a large picture hat crowned with doves’ wings, wild roses clustering beneath the brim.

She had the face of a Madonna, her skin like alabaster against the smooth dark hair.

“ Look,” said Lady Livingstone ; “ there you are ! I only know the girl by sight, but I always call her ‘ The Angel.’ ”

Paley-Hyde rested his eyes a moment on the graceful young figure.

“ You haven’t heard about her ? ” he queried, half incredulously. “ Well, I have ! She jilted three men last season, and is now engaged to a fourth.”

“ You speak so bitterly,” declared Jacobina,

“ I might almost suspect you were one of the victims.”

He shook his head.

“ It would require more than a few yards of muslin and a picture hat to ensnare me ! ”

“ Men are so sure of themselves till the angel swoops down with a flutter of wings,” laughed the woman. “ One common calamity, love, makes all men akin, though they differ in every other particular. I daresay the rejected are quite happy again now.”

“ The last shot himself,” said Paley-Hyde.

Jacobina shivered.

“ How vulgar ! ” she murmured, half wishing she had chosen a more congenial companion for her drive. There was Tommy Ludlow (otherwise known as “ Ha ! Ha ! ” a nickname which followed him from the hunting field to the ballroom, surviving two or three London seasons) simply praying to be allowed a quiet chat whenever and wherever she pleased. Tommy, all smiles and practical jokes (also called “ The Butterfly ”), unstable, attractive, merry as the morn when the thrushes burst their throats in song.

“ I think we might go back,” she said.

“The sun has given me a headache. I shall try to sleep for ten minutes before dinner.”

“Sleep,” he replied, “is only moonshine in the brain, and of little value. If you ate and drank less and rose earlier in the morning, you would be freer from headache and overstrained nerves.”

“My dear friend,” she cried, “I have gathered already that you would like to feed me on manna from the wilderness—or possibly you think the bread of tears preferable in my case to food ‘full sweet and right delicious’! But weeping is out of fashion; we are not even allowed to shed a tear at that awful tragedy, a wedding. Sleep makes for beauty—moonshine we know is beautiful! So now I am going to sit on you in judgment. If you stayed in bed every morning and learnt how to smile you would be a far greater success in society.”

“I don’t wish to be a success socially,” he answered, with the warmth of truth in his tone. “Real happiness is of a retiring nature, and an enemy to pomp or noise; false happiness loves to be in a crowd and to draw the eyes of the world.”

Looking at him as he spoke, Jacobina thought with what an honest and laudable

fortitude he dared to be ugly. He was not the least abashed by his physical imperfections and absence of personal charm ; he lacked ambition to please. She watched with a certain thrill for the time when he would awake. It must come some day, the hour of realisation, when the sun would shine for him. Jacobina waited expectantly from purely selfish motives, since to see him moved would be diverting, like the perusal of an interesting book or the production of an absorbing play.

She cared little for the good of those about her, but she cared much for the entertainment they afforded.

They had just turned out of the Park, and were driving towards Eaton Square, when Jacobina's wandering eye fell upon a newspaper poster.

"Death of Colonel Gervalle," she read. Then she said aloud : "Death of Colonel Gervalle !"

"He was a celebrated man, and justly so," remarked Daniel Paley-Hyde. "I had the greatest admiration for his character. Did you know him ?"

He asked the question casually.

"Know him ! Know him !" repeated Jacobina, amazed at the ignorance conveyed

in the question. "He is my brother-in-law. It is extraordinary that I should learn of his death from the papers. He must have died very suddenly in India. My poor sister also died out there. Such a wretched climate! I only saw him once after he was a widower, but I shall never forget the trying interview. Of course, I felt upset about my sister, but he did not consider that; he—he broke down in my presence. Some people are so selfish, and when a man shows weakness, what can a woman do? She is quite helpless. She may only look compassion; words wound. 'Death of Colonel Gervalle!' That I should learn it first from a street poster!" She tapped her foot impatiently under the rug, her voice vibrating with annoyance, the kind of anger a girl feels at her first ball if a laggard partner fails to claim her for his dance. Her pride was ruffled, but her heart was not touched.

"Had your brother any children?" asked Paley-Hyde, speaking no word of condolence, but attacking the matter in a business-like tone.

Lady Livingstone started and grew a little paler under her veil. He noticed her hand tremble suddenly; she lowered her

sunshade, and let her arm fall limply to her side.

“ Yes,” she said ; “ one girl.”

There was silence—a silence in which indolence played no part. The bright face of Lady Livingstone clouded now with an anxiety new to her features ; it was evident her brain worked busily. A set expression about the lips gave them a severity foreign to their nature, while little lines hitherto unobserved seemed to spring suddenly into life, revealing their presence under the thin layer of scented powder which protected her skin from sun and wind.

Paley-Hyde, quick of comprehension, despite an outward stolidity of manner, guessed the train of her thoughts. One girl, left fatherless, the orphan daughter of her dead sister, and an aunt in London—widowed, childless. Would not a relative in such a position be naturally expected to play the part of mother to the desolate girl ?

“ What age is Miss Gervalle ? ” he queried, his interest in her awakened through his admiration for her father.

“ She must be at least sixteen—that difficult and embarrassing age which usually lacks individuality. She has been brought

up at a foreign school, and was shortly to have joined her father in India. I am afraid I never showed Jocelyn any kindness; she has always been rather on my mind. I am in a perpetual state of meaning to ask her, but my good resolves fade like smoke when I try to brace myself for the fiery trial! I dislike young people, I have nothing in common with them, and they generally dislike me in return. We are enemies by a sort of unspoken mutual arrangement, a telepathy that exists between the old soul and the young. My soul was born old, and revolts against the passionless perversity of the bread-and-butter miss."

"What will become of her?" said Paley-Hyde, speaking more to himself than to Lady Livingstone.

The widow looked away, she hardly knew why, but she preferred not to meet his eyes.

"It's a stiff problem, isn't it?" she remarked. "I feel as if I were back at school doing sums. Relations ought never to have been invented; it is an outrage on society. Intimate friendships are forced upon us against our will by this bugbear 'relationship.' People we should never have tolerated as acquaintances obtain a footing in

our houses and press demands upon our time. It often surprises me that the whole social system does not rise in revolt. Even in this advanced age the old fashions keep their footing in our family life. Everyone will be telling me now, with spiteful righteousness, that I ought to offer Jocelyn a home, and launch her a year hence into society."

"Yes," he retorted, "they will certainly say that is the only course for you to take."

Lady Livingstone shrugged her shoulders defiantly, and the lines grew deeper.

"People will say anything but their prayers," she muttered; "still, I have a three-word motto which lifts me above the fetters of criticism—'Let them say'!"

"I suppose," he replied, with a sneer, "the word 'duty' is wholly out of date."

Jacobina felt the sting of his remark, but she smiled for the first time since the poster caught her eye. She would not let him see that he had made her feel ashamed.

"No," she replied, "duties towards self are strenuously regarded! I must think of my health, of my own comfort. Fancy me with a stupid girl always at my heels, when I have no maternal instincts, no penchant

for husband-hunting ! I should fail lamentably in the *rôle* of chaperon."

"Are you quite sure the girl is stupid ? If she takes after her father she should have brains."

"I only saw Jocelyn as a small child. She was pretty then—quite remarkably so ; but beautiful children often grow up plain. Her mother was our family beauty ; even India did not destroy her complexion. She ought never to have married an Army man, she wasn't fitted for the life. Besides, she had her choice of a title."

"Won't it be a bit of a scandal if you do nothing for the girl ? The circumstances are unusually sad ; to be left without parents at her age amounts to a tragedy."

"Scandal is an ugly word," said Jacobina.

She flashed a disapproving glance at him, the colour returning to her cheeks.

"It cuts like a knife," he remarked, "and so it is more than ugly—it is hurtful ! Cicero says, 'Nothing is so swift as scandal. Nothing is more easily sent abroad ; nothing received with more welcome ; nothing diffuses itself so universally.'"

"Ah !" she cried. "I discover for the first time that you are a moralist."

The carriage drew up as she spoke.

“Come in,” she said. “I really like to hear you moralise.”

He shook his head.

“I have an appointment,” he replied. “Good-bye.”

He touched her hand lightly. She wondered if he hated her at that moment.

The spirit of the coquette made her look up with moist eyes and a softening of the lips.

“I must reflect,” she declared; “and—who knows?—in the end I may do the right thing. It will be a struggle, a fight with that most powerful adversary—Inclination. I don’t know that I care what people say. I mind perhaps a little what you think. I fear I have often inconsiderately sacrificed my friends’ reputations to a spirit of raillery or satire. I cannot expect them to be merciful in return.”

She had entered the hall, and he lingered a moment, his cold face touched by the vague shadow of conflicting passions. He saw before him a woman in the pride of life, with hair the colour of ripe corn, somewhat coarse in texture, and waved in long, undulating sweeps. To men she was undoubtedly

attractive, her figure supple, her complexion fair, her grey-blue eyes changing colour with every mood, in turn alluringly blue and defiantly grey. The nose, a trifle *retroussé*, bespoke audacity; her manner boasted a certain aristocratic impudence.

She was absolutely sure of herself; she knew her own charm, and through all her indiscretions never stabbed in the dark. Could Jocelyn have stood before her at that moment she would have confessed her dilemma. No one ever accused Jacobina of a Judas kiss.

Paley-Hyde felt the weakness of her small effort. "Who knows? I may do right!" A mere compromise, a feeble endeavour to steer her barque from the whirlpool of self when she saw full well the stream must bear her on.

"I am afraid you are not in training for a fight," he said, turning to go. She made no answer, nor did she glance at his retreating figure. Instead she caught up a telegram, and, swiftly tearing the envelope, read without shock the delayed news of Colonel Gervalle's death.

"Poor James!" she said to herself. "I suppose he was a splendid character; everyone

admired him. He certainly served his country well, and he made Idena a good husband. Black is so very depressing, I wonder if I could mourn in mauve ? ”

She walked slowly to her boudoir, thinking of the engagements that must be cancelled, and wishing his end had not come in the height of the season.

Alone in the cosy little room, with its dainty vases of flowers and softly-cushioned lounges, Jacobina faced the situation. Death, she knew, brought inevitable changes. Death was life's most constant enemy, filling the mind with dread. For a moment Jacobina lost the rush and sparkle of her merry, pleasure-haunted world; the shades were round her, the grey shadows of circumstances that clashed with her present plans, and must be driven forth at any cost. The evils of life, represented by her brother-in-law's death and the existence of Jocelyn, appeared like rocks and precipices, rugged, barren, created to mar the little fruitful spots in her own particular garden. She tried to comfort herself with the thought that the thing she feared might not reach her.

Other plans would be made for Jocelyn. The girl was very well off, and somebody

would surely be willing to receive her, either from affection or mercenary motives. She would have made friends at school, possibly a family of good social standing might welcome her for a substantial consideration. These things could always be comfortably arranged, but it was unfortunate that she—Jacobina—should be the only female relation living.

“If the worst comes to the worst,” she told herself, “I must resort to nerves. A physical collapse is easily managed, and means one of those interesting cures so good for the complexion. I should like to live out of doors and drink nasty waters—the change would be delightful. In the end I should really begin to think I had been ill. I might even be led to present my doctor with a diamond scarf-pin in gratitude for the admirable treatment he had prescribed. Anything would be better than being saddled with that girl! Just for the moment Paley-Hyde influenced me. Those ugly creatures are dangerous; they gain a certain power unawares. I almost felt” (she paused in her soliloquy). “Bah! it is foolish to feel!”

She threw herself down in a low chair, and drew off her gloves, exquisitely soft little

gloves of suède, which fitted her hands like their own skin. Her feet rested on a white rug, spread upon the highly-polished floor. No need now for the ten minutes' sleep before dinner she had promised herself, for she could neither dine out nor go to the opera—a restriction that made her feel like a bridled horse fretting to be free.

She heard a bell ring, and wondered who called so late.

Parker, a man-servant, appeared to ask if her ladyship would receive visitors.

“Use discretion,” she said, for Parker, an old family servant, well understood the limits of this order. A moment later Sir Thomas Ludlow was announced.

Jacobina held out both hands. A little sigh of relief escaped her as she rested sparkling eyes on the pink-cheeked young man. He had a small, merry face framed in dark hair. His expression was the essence of cheerfulness; he twinkled all over like a star. Frequently those about him would laugh outright in response to his smile, though quite unable to explain why they felt amused. Few would have relied upon him—all voted him good company. It was his profession to be popular, and he found it a singularly easy one.

“ If I had been asked who in all the wide world I most wanted to see at this moment,” remarked Lady Livingstone, “ I should have said to the gods, ‘ Send me “ Ha ! Ha ! ” ’ Oh, Tommy, I’m just miserable, blue enough to lapse into Americanisms, worried enough to wish myself in a nursing home undergoing a rest cure for my sins.”

“ It’s like me to come in smiling,” replied Tommy, “ when I ought to put on a long face and condole. I am awfully sorry really about Colonel Gervalle ! I had not seen the papers, but I met my mother in the Park, and she told me. We had quite a long talk about you. I thought I’d call and ask how you were. Parker made me come in.”

“ Parker is a man of sense ; he always understands my mood. I can trust him to use discretion. There are not many people one can rely on like Parker.”

“ Worth his weight in gold ! ” murmured Tommy. “ To think that you and I were dancing at two o’clock this morning—and now you will have to chuck everything for a bit.”

“ I was only saying last night,” she replied, “ what an outlet dancing is to one’s pent-up physical energy. There’s also a subtle something that quickens the sympathies.”

The glamour of lights and music still lingered in her mind; the strains of the White Viennese Band floated through her brain as she shrank from the image of a warrior dead and the soul-rending thrill of funeral drums.

“My mother says, of course you will have Jocelyn Gervalle to live with you.”

The remark slipped out quite naturally, and the speaker had no idea his words fell like a cold chill upon Lady Livingstone’s half-awakened conscience. She heard the voice within her cry :

“Of course!” re-echoing his sentence. She said aloud : “Oh, no ! Oh, no !”

Tommy Ludlow noted with surprise the tempestuous wave of colour which flooded her cheek. Unconsciously he had struck the note of public opinion which would ring out, to sound and resound in her ears.

“Tommy,” she said, “do you know I was a Gervalle ? I married my cousin.”

He nodded. “What of that ?”

“All our women are peculiar, and they never get on with each other. Jocelyn would prove a thorn in my side—we could not possibly be happy. I was fond of dear, beautiful Idena, but we quarrelled like two

fiends. She and I both married cousins ; it was a little habit we had. I have set my face against offering Jocelyn a home, so please do not float the idea she is coming to me. I was not aware your mother even knew I had a niece."

"I should have thought you would get on with anyone," declared Tommy ; "and she is only a schoolgirl after all." Evidently he had not grasped the fact that Jacobina was fiercely combating the fate which by silent strides seemed stealing nearer every moment. She felt inclined to shake him.

"If I am to be turned by one fell stroke of fortune into the guide, keeper, and chaperon of Jocelyn Gervalle, may I find rest and quietness in Heaven, for I shall have none in this world !"

Jacobina's head drooped, her voice vibrated with despair.

Tommy Ludlow kissed her hand.

"You must stay down here a little longer," he told her. "We need some angels on earth !"

He remembered the old saying, "Sweet language will multiply friends."

CHAPTER II.

One with a flash begins and ends in smoke ;
 The other out of smoke brings glorious light,
 And (without raising expectation high)
 Surprises us with dazzling miracles.—*Roscommon.*

JACOBINA became reticent ; it was a new phase for her. She drove in deep violet, with large black picture hats, and wore pale lavender tea gowns when she was at home.

She seemed to have something on her mind, for through her old humour came a faint tinge of depression.

The letter of condolence written to Jocelyn gave her considerable trouble. The expressions of sympathy, unaccompanied by an invitation, mocked at Jacobina as she read. More than once she tore the black-edged sheet across, reclothing her sentiments in fresh wording, which pleased her no better.

At last she shut the envelope down in a fit of impatience, annoyed with herself for allowing so small a matter as Jocelyn's future to seriously perturb her mind. Letters of condolence were always difficult, she thought.

To give them warmth they needed the fire of genius, if only in sparks. Usually a telegram served Lady Livingstone, for its publicity warranted conventional terms, while its brevity relieved the brain of much troubled confusion.

Lady Ludlow, mother of Sir Thomas, was not alone in her surmise that Miss Gervalle would shortly arrive in Eaton Square to take up her residence with the flighty Jacobina.

“Young blood will hardly suit Lady Livingstone,” was the general remark, since the widow frequently proved herself intolerant of *débutantes*. She liked, not unnaturally, to hold the field without rivalry from budding beauty. She preferred men to women, and avoided girls. In the presence of her own sex she frequently adopted a negligent, unobservant air, calculated to reduce the humble to a state of mental invisibility, while even the self-assured felt piqued by the unspoken insult of her attitude.

“Why should I be a humbug and pretend to like women?” she would say. “They cannot be seriously affected by my likes or dislikes.”

In time her unblushing candour won the day, and the very people she ignored con-

fessed themselves interested in watching her behaviour, secretly learning a score of graces hitherto undreamt of in the art of taming man.

Lady Ludlow was Jacobina's most intimate friend—a woman who made her grey hairs an excuse for the utterance of many unpalatable truths. She dearly loved to give advice, and would have reconstructed the lives of her merest acquaintances had they asked her opinion or encouraged her tongue in its raid against the follies of womankind in general.

Jacobina christened her "Wisdom," declaring that Lady Ludlow's sermons were sufficiently entertaining to dissipate the sorrows of the heaviest heart. It was not till Lady Ludlow called to condole upon the death of Colonel Gervalle that Jacobina began to see how "busybodies" might appear on occasions more tiresome than humorous.

"Tommy tells me," she said, "that you are not offering your niece a home."

Lady Ludlow spoke the words in the tone of a judge addressing a prisoner before passing sentence. She poised her pince-nez on her nose, and her grey tulle bonnet was slightly on one side. She had something of Tommy's

twinkle, and was a proverbially untidy dresser, yet she never failed to look aristocratic in her shabby clothes. Her face lacked colour, but her animation made up for certain personal defects.

“Tommy knows nothing about it,” said Jacobina sharply. “He is a little chatter-box!”

“I thought he was possibly misinformed,” Lady Ludlow declared, letting her muscles relax. “I felt sure in the end that Jocelyn Gervalle would naturally come to you. She must be pretty if she takes after Mrs. Gervalle.”

The speaker turned to examine a photograph signed “Idena.”

“I often wish you had a daughter. What a joy she would be to you! Sons are all very well, but their mothers do not get so much pleasure from them. A sweet, affectionate girl—that is what I long for!”

“You can have Jocelyn—as a gift,” said the widow grimly. “To tell the truth, the whole thing is a nightmare to me.”

“Nonsense! The child will win your heart the moment you set eyes on her. You misjudge yourself, Jack. But it is natural to fear the untried.”

Jacobina braced herself to utter the fatal words which for the past few minutes had stuck in her throat.

“I have not invited Jocelyn here. I expect she will stay at school for another year. She is accustomed to spending her holidays there. The old mistress is very kind. Tommy was quite right.”

Jacobina made this confession with a passage from the Book of Proverbs ringing in her mind, the verse which suggested the nickname of “Wisdom” as suiting Lady Ludlow.

“Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets; she crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates.”

No longer would Jacobina’s boycotting of her orphan niece remain undiscussed. They might say what they liked now, these women who would champion the stranger unknown to them. Lady Ludlow could lead the crusade to her heart’s content, for Jacobina’s face was set like a flint.

She felt as though some great guilt hung upon her mind, but remained like one who walks on a line, knowing that the eyes must rest upon a point ahead—a cowardly glance

on either side might destroy her resolve, and plunge her into an abyss of weakness. Lady Ludlow listened in silence; she never remembered seeing Jacobina uncomfortable before. In a flash she read the working of her friend's mind, and the pause which followed was significant of the disapproval Lady Ludlow was about to express.

"Jack," she said, "I have heard you called selfish. I hope you are not going to make it impossible for me to contradict that statement."

"People can call me what they please. I am not particular. I have never posed as a saint."

"But you couldn't refuse the girl a home?"

"There is no limit to what I couldn't do!" laughed Jacobina, mirthlessly. "I discussed the matter with myself until I grew tired, and feel now I cannot discuss it with anyone else. Of course, life should conform, if possible, to both duty and inclination, but I put inclination first."

A defiant flash in Jacobina's eyes seemed to say: "There, I have told you the worst. Go and do with my reputation what you will."

Strangely enough, Lady Ludlow's face

softened. A light dawned upon it like an after-glow when the sun has set. Even her crooked bonnet did not appear grotesque.

All in a moment the tragedy of childlessness rose before her, representing a pathos that might excuse hardness, a void which explained worldliness. No baby fingers had ever touched that heart of snow, or nestled close to set aflame the beating pulses. Maternity stood apart, a goddess with veiled face and shadowed-form, in the valley of "Might-Have-Been."

The great education of love had escaped Jacobina, and Lady Ludlow viewed her suddenly as a Christian regards a heathen who has never known the light of knowledge.

Was Jacobina jealous of her sister's child, since she had not been similarly blessed? It was possible, even probable, and the venomous sting now influenced her actions.

"It isn't always safe to blindly follow inclination," said Lady Ludlow, with a tolerance Jacobina had not expected. "I see that so very plainly now from the vantage ground of my superior years. When the white moonbeams of eventide make pale the sunny glory of your hair, and the pleasures of life grow dim as well, losing their radiance,

you may want the love and gratitude of Jocelyn Gervalle. I was comparing the infelicities of old age to those of infancy. It seems to me the sorrows of childhood are chiefly due to negligence and misconduct of parents ; those of age to the past life, which may lead to all kinds of calamity. Now I have always tried to live in the world and out of it at the same time, which perhaps is the secret of my happiness. I see women in society, tired to death with the constant whirl, horribly wearied by the season's toil, yet they cannot relinquish their slavery ; they call for more lights when they have a mind to go to sleep. The whole scheme is unreasonable ! ”

“ But I am not tired,” said Jacobina, throbbing with vitality, her splendid physique speaking for itself, “ and I won't be turned into a dowager aunt ! Who knows, for all my talk, I might any day choose to marry again ? It would be a nice thing then to have an adopted niece on my hands.”

Lady Ludlow had not taken this possibility into consideration. So accustomed was she to hearing Jacobina's scathing remarks upon matrimony that the very suggestion came to her as a shock.

“ I know you have plenty of opportunity, but I understood you preferred freedom.”

Jacobina congratulated herself on scoring a point. The idea had only just occurred to her mind, and she saw it impressed her visitor.

“ There is a sensible saying—from whose pen I know not—‘ Praise marriage, but remain single.’ Now, I have done exactly the reverse, for from childhood I chanted pæns to liberty ! ”

Jacobina spoke lightly ; by clever tactics she was winning Lady Ludlow to her mood.

“ I have often wondered at your escaping fresh fetters. The very fact that you allow so many of your friends to call you ‘ Jack ’ places them on a footing of *camaraderie* that leads swiftly to something deeper. Since my widowhood I have worn nothing but subdued colours, bonnets with strings, and half-high evening dresses. But then, you must remember, my husband was all the world to me, almost the end of my devotion. It all depends upon whether you marry to please other people or yourself. I had no concern beyond the man I loved. He was my whole care. If I dressed prettily it was for him. I only read that my conversation might be agreeable to his taste. I loved to talk of

him, and never heard him named without pleasure and emotion."

"How wonderful!" sighed Jacobina. "It sounds like a miracle, people loving in that way. I suppose it really happens. It isn't just a kind of hypnotism, a trick of the imagination? My marriage began with a flash, and ended in smoke; yours brought 'glorious light'!"

Her voice sounded low and tender—the voice trained to melody—and Lady Ludlow wiped her eyes. She was a thoroughly good woman, whose interest in the affairs of others amounted almost to mania, constantly making her disliked when her intentions were rooted and grounded in charity. She accepted all rebuffs without complaint, knowing that outward actions could not possibly represent the perfections of the soul, since they failed to show the strength of those principles originating them. She never trifled with time or allowed it to run to waste. She said with Plato that "labour is preferable to idleness, as brightness to rust."

Already she had stayed longer than she intended with Jacobina, for her engagement book warned her that she must be at a charitable committee that afternoon, one of the

many at which she occupied the presidential chair.

“My dear,” she said, “I had almost forgotten a most important meeting, at which I am due in half an hour. I have now to go and preach thrift, for the writing-paper which called me to this gathering in charity’s name must have made quite an inroad on the working funds. I shall beg the secretary to beware of little expenses; a small leak will sink a large ship. Economy is in itself a great revenue.”

Jacobina fancied as Lady Ludlow rose that the details of her dress preached the same sermon, representing the revenue by innumerable significant signs. Jacobina began to believe in clothes as an index of character. She saw in Lady Ludlow’s attire a certain conservatism, mingled with philosophy. From the tilt of her bonnet she might certainly have been suspected of holding strong political views, while her footgear undoubtedly denoted that she took deep interest in all movements affecting her less fortunate brethren.

“I hope,” said Jacobina, with a slight twitching of her lips, “you will succeed in passing a motion that cheap writing paper be

used henceforth, and perhaps the secretary has fallen into the error of the penny stamp. Communications not of a strictly private nature may travel just as comfortably with a halfpenny stamp, while the sender is saved much wasted time fastening the envelopes."

"Now, Jack, you are making fun of me; but wait until you rub shoulders with the East End! You will then begin to realise the value of money."

"The idle," said Jacobina, "are written down as 'fools at large,' and, realising the bliss of ignorance, I elect to remain a fool."

She kissed Lady Ludlow hurriedly, afraid lest she should return to the subject of Jocelyn Gervalle, which had been temporarily swept aside by the flow of conversation.

She awaited her visitor's departure under a secret impatience, and sighed with relief when the door closed on the retreating form.

"I thought she was never going, and I have not even opened my letters," sighed Jacobina, turning to a pile of correspondence which had arrived simultaneously with Lady Ludlow.

Jacobina loved letters. She called them "the soft intercourse from soul to soul." As a rule, she read them several times in suc-

cession, and then discreetly destroyed what had presumably been penned for her eyes alone, ever fearful of the curiosity of a lady's maid or the serious disapproval of the possibly prying Parker.

She read the first with a vague smile which denoted pity rather than amusement. It was written from the Turf Club, and commenced "Dearest."

She laid it down with a sigh and a worried gnashing of teeth. "How silly men are!" she said, breaking the seal of a long document which carried an air of official importance that demanded attention.

"An advertisement for hats, looking like a deed of separation or a long-lost will," remarked Jacobina internally, as she let the paper fall, to examine a small thin envelope which might have appeased even Lady Ludlow, since it carried the stamp of poverty with aggressive suggestiveness.

"This," she told herself, "must be a begging letter."

The writing was strange to her, and gave the idea of age. Feeble, thin letters of wavering character traced the address in slanting lines. She instinctively thought of the oldest inhabitant of a workhouse, who,

springing suddenly into fame upon becoming a centenarian, receives royal gifts, and revels in his or her weight of years with a pride undreamed through a long, unvaried life of toil. Jacobina's lack of interest showed itself in the listless way she drew the flimsy sheet from its unsubstantial cover. She yawned as her eyes travelled to the paper, and glanced once more defiantly towards the letter she had first opened, in which a man had laid his heart bare to the blade of Jacobina's criticism.

"It is bad enough to say 'No.' It is worse to have to write it in pretty, graceful language, like the sugar on a pill," she thought, as once more her straying look returned to the spidery epistle.

"Heale Prior, Salford, Sussex."

"Heale Prior!" The name was familiar. Of course, Professor Gervalle lived at Salford; only somehow she had imagined he had died years ago—that old, old man, of whom she had heard a good deal when Idena first married.

She turned quickly to the signature, "Cosmo Gervalle," the name of her brother-in-law's father, Jocelyn's grandfather!

"Why, he must be well over eighty," she

exclaimed ; “ the sort of person one feels has hardly the right to be alive ! He is a terrible crank, too ; not all there in his mind, I believe—quite a hermit, and miserly in the extreme. I suppose even he will add his cry to the rest, and seek to force the girl into my unwilling arms. Poor Jacobina, poor trampled on, unprotected widow ! You only ask for peace, and behold ! there is no peace.”

As she read, an expression of great surprise crept over her face ; she bent lower to the page, and her eyes dilated slightly, while her lips parted. More than once she caught her breath with a little shiver. She hardly knew why, but fear, like a living presence, sat at her side, a dread that took form and substance. She turned sharply, looking over her shoulder, as if an unseen hand touched her, sending a cold chill through her veins. The room looked suddenly gloomy. Jacobina imagined that some uncanny influence drove the sunbeams away, creating long shadows, like dark figures with outstretched hands.

“ It is too horrible,” she said, “ for a young girl to live at Heale Prior alone with him, in that solitary spot, far away from any town or village. Idena went there once, and

the place nearly frightened her into fits ; she could never bear to talk of it afterwards. The loneliness appalled her, and she thought the old man quite impossible then."

Jacobina read again, with quickening pulses :

" Unless you are inclined to offer Jocelyn a home, I shall send for her to come and live with me. I understand she is now seventeen, and desires to leave school, having seen nothing of her relations for a great number of years. She has vague recollections of ' Aunt Jacobina,' who still sends her a Christmas card every year ' for remembrance.' Directly I hear from you I shall arrange for a governess to bring her from Wiesbaden. She is welcome to the hospitality of this old house, though I never see friends, and have absolutely withdrawn from the world. My son's death was a great blow to me, but I feel that I am now so near the end of the race, it will not be long before I join him. My salutations to yourself."

Jacobina thrust the letter from her ; the very sight of it congealed her blood. That weary, straggling handwriting had drawn her sharply up, bringing her to the point.

She saw in the proposition distinct salva-

tion from an embarrassing situation. It suited her programme while it shocked her sensibilities. Just seventeen—"sweet seventeen," as it has been named—the age when eyes look naturally for brightness in life, for colour in the world.

Involuntarily Jacobina wondered if the girl were fascinating. What had the years held for her, what would they hold? A strange tangle certainly, since "crabbed age and youth" were said to be at variance. It seemed the gods were playing tricks with Jocelyn Gervalle's destiny. They tossed her, like a pebble on a surf-swept beach, to and fro, till the barren shore claimed her for stillness, for the silent rest of uneventful days.

Would the waste places of the earth always be hers? What training could she gain for the future, which might claim her yet as a member of social circles where worldly knowledge is demanded? Poor little buried, stunted soul, left to the care of a barbarian in the shape of an old miserly professor!

The small white hands seemed to stretch pleadingly towards Jacobina, and she felt as one who watches a fellow-creature drown without raising a finger to avert the catastrophe. The young life must sink down into

obscurity, the fates willed it so—the gods who toss circumstances, like the winds of the world toss the whirling flakes of snow, whither they list—flakes that quickly dissolve and pass unseen into the great Invisible.

Jacobina felt angry that the decision remained with her. Why had not the old man insisted upon Jocelyn joining him, without choice, instead of inserting those tiresome words, “unless you are inclined to offer her a home” ? His common-sense should have told him Jacobina was certainly not inclined, or she would have offered without waiting for him to make the suggestion. But these scientific men could not be expected to deal in common-sense, that hopelessly bourgeois attribute bestowed upon the ordinary mind of unskilled mortals. Jacobina fiercely resented worry of any kind, and marvelled at the patience of people who regard life as a state of probation, and adversity as the post of honour assigned to the best and most select spirits.

The self-love in Jacobina made ready revolt against her kinder inclinations—mere striplings warring with mighty forces. She rose, conquered willingly by self, a slave to her own comfort, pledged to personal pleasure.

She paused a moment, seeing her face in a glass. "How strange I look!" she murmured. "I might be devil-haunted. That old man's letter must have had some weird effect upon my imagination. And yet I ought to be glad. It sounds well enough to say, 'My niece has gone to live in the country with her grandfather.' What more natural? I am saved all censure. 'My niece loves the wild fields of Nature; she would stifle in a town!' No one need hear he is a hermit, a miser, and everything that's dreadful. I shall not dilate upon the lack of hospitality at Heale Prior, and so the matter will blow over, and even Lady Ludlow will be satisfied."

Jacobina took up a telegraph form, and wrote upon it hastily: "Delighted for you to have Jocelyn; am in very bad health; impossible for me to invite her here. Much relieved at receiving your letter."

"There!" she sighed, as she touched the bell, "he will have to pay, no doubt, for the delivery of telegrams, and it may teach him to spare me further correspondence. Misers, of course, count every penny."

As she despatched the missive her heart grew glad again, for her moods varied with the suddenness of April weather. A moment

of storm, a flash of sunlight, a ripple of laughter, a tear shed lightly.

From that moment Jacobina closed the doors of her heart, and thought no more of Jocelyn Gervalle, save occasionally, when in a dream she saw a young mysterious face looking at her through a mist. The dream became a nightmare which only attacked her rarely, and could generally be explained away by some very mundane causes.

To Paley-Hyde, who remembered about the orphan girl and asked after her welfare, Jacobina made swift reply, with clasped hands, and eyes beaming a benediction. "It is quite delightful," she cooed; "the dear child has gone to live with her grandfather, such a charming intellectual man, so like his son, or perhaps I should say the son was like him. I get dreadfully muddled with relationships and likenesses. Of course, I had not the heart to keep her from him. They will prove such a comfort to each other, though I am not humbug enough to pretend I was very desirous of her company. After all, everything has turned out for the best. The country is healthier for a young girl, and, placed in such pleasant surroundings, she should find Heale Prior an ideal home."

“Heale Prior?” said Paley-Hyde, wrinkling his brow. “The name is somehow familiar to me. Why, yes, I remember. It’s one of the celebrated old places in Sussex, and has a host of ghost stories to its history. If Miss Gervalle is strong-minded she will close her ears to the many foolish legends which are associated with ancient buildings like Heale Prior.”

“Of course, the house is quaint,” Jacobina replied; “but I am sure Professor Gervalle will take good care his young charge is not frightened by silly gossip or imaginary spectres.”

She dismissed the subject with the lightest possible laugh, like the froth on a rippling wave. Paley-Hyde watched her curiously, for he doubted the laugh, mistrusting the widow’s merriment. He wondered if she were really contented with her life, if the thing so highly valued repaid her for the price at which she purchased her selfish ease. A few small sacrifices would surely have leavened the lump—a little unfolding of the hands for work.

She had looked for a redeeming point in him, a momentary transport from the set ugliness of his face, some manifestation of

emotion, of passion, of even temporary charm ; while he, in return, marvelled where she had hidden that spark of divinity which must exist in every human creature.

He saw her seeking continually superfluous and artificial enjoyments, till of late she unconsciously proved to him that no men or women have so much care as those who strive most after happiness.

He put society under a microscope, and mercilessly dissected its weakness. In doing so he grew more melancholy, and sighed for an utterly new system, a fresh world created to suit his too particular palate.

Jacobina dived deeply into his secret ponderings, and, drawing forth their substance, made fun of him to his face.

“Content,” she would say, “is natural wealth, and wealth is what we call desire. You should plant yourself a bower amidst a wood of nightingales ! In your regions of woodlands you might feed upon delicious fruits and herbs to your heart’s content. I think you were really intended for a pastoral life. Instead of the music of the streets, the bleating of flocks and lowing of herds would fall softly on your ear. Then perhaps you would learn to smile and laugh, and skip

like the young rams. Let me come and skip with you, for I should revel in pastoral life, too."

As these words of raillery fell from her lips she thought of the dreary old house on the Sussex hills. No laughter there, no herbs of gladness, no dancing or music—only skulls and maps, globes, skeletons, and books, dull with the dust of time. A voice cried to her, a voice that belonged to those hated dreams :

“ I am buried alive, and you have thrust me into the tomb ! ”

CHAPTER III.

A good man, and an angel! these between
How thin the barrier! What divides their fate?
Perhaps a moment, or perhaps a year.
Angels are men in lighter habit clad.

“SALFORD, Salford!” shouted a porter.

“Salford at last!” Jocelyn spoke the word with infinite relief as she sprang from the train and looked eagerly round. It was full ripe Summer, but Spring stood on the platform. Her journey had seemed long and wearisome; the French governess in many tiresome ways proved an irksome companion, while Jocelyn watched, with wondering eyes, great mountains growing out of small inconveniences, for Mademoiselle refused to believe that little molehills were not seething volcanoes in disguise.

Jocelyn saw the last of her at Charing Cross, a figure in drab cloth, travel-stained and tired-eyed, with sufficient energy left to root out mistakes in the railway guide and spot the inefficiency of officials. Arrogant in the extreme, creating on every side storm

and abuse, she swept the station like a March whirlwind, while Jocelyn's temperament blew her, with little tender breezes, to harbours of sunshine and smiles.

Jocelyn had found that courtesy made hard places smooth, knowing well it formed the silken string running through the pearl chain of life's amenities.

She sought now for some kindly face, some word of welcome, there on the desolate platform. Her eager eyes strayed in quest of a friend, becoming almost tearful as the few passengers straggled away, leaving her unclaimed. The lusty-lunged porter contemplated her curiously ; strangers were few and far between at Salford.

" I want to go to Heale Prior," she said. " I expected to be met."

The man's face expressed amazement. No visitor had troubled Professor Gervalle for years, and the overwise porter fancied there must be some mistake. Young people mixed up addresses ; young people sometimes grew dazed when travelling alone.

" Are you sure you mean Heale Prior ? " he queried, regarding her doubtfully. She looked oddly pathetic standing there, and the porter felt suddenly paternal ; possibly

he saw the gathering mist under Jocelyn's long eyelashes.

"Yes, Heale Prior, where Professor Gervalle lives. Could you fetch me a cab—as—as there is no carriage?"

She spoke with special pleading in her tone. The porter softened still more visibly, and scratched his head as a sign.

"Cabmen are a bit chary," he said, "of taking their horses up the hill to Heale Prior, but I daresay, if you wait a bit, I can persuade Simkins to oblige."

Jocelyn had no choice but to rely upon Simkins' good nature, so she sat on her box and counted the minutes. He came at last, a red-bearded man, driving a white horse, and Spring, with a drooping of petals, entered upon the last stage of her journey.

It was late on a brilliant summer afternoon, and the country smiled cheerfully from its evening bath of golden light. Here, in the heart of Sussex, where sunshiny hills met the horizon, Jocelyn revived, and once more found her smile. A far extending distance of hill and field now soothed her slightly ruffled and disappointed spirit. She breathed the enchantment of swelling downs and wind-mill-crowned heights, of woods and wild

wastes ! She figuratively kissed her hand to the cosy farmhouses, with their rambling cattle shelters, and blessed the sweet cottage gardens, warming to the unspoken welcome of stocks, sunflowers, hollyhocks, and flushed carnations. As the road grew steeper the white horse bore her to the centre of a very region of landscape, while hill and dale, wood and water, changed from gold to crimson, from green to grey, as the atmosphere deepened, and the gods made jewelled embroidery of simple English fields.

Slowly the cab wheels rattled up the steep ascent, till suddenly a surprise opening through the trees revealed Heale Prior, with its grand grey battlements and curious old-world dignity, its raised terraces, bordered by low walls ornamented with vases, some crumbling and broken in places, lichen-painted, weather-stained. The house likewise bore traces of brunts and bruises, relics of a feudal past, beautiful in stately and solemn decay.

Jocelyn saw visions of steel-clad knights ; she was back in the romantic days of chivalry, and bowed to gay spectres as she drove through the gateway into a spacious quadrangle round which the building ran. Every inch of the old dwelling whispered weird,

exciting legends; the breath of romance hung about its walls, spelling history in big capital letters.

In answer to the ringing of the great deep-throated bell an elderly woman appeared, and gave vent to a cry of surprise at seeing the girl.

“Gracious goodness!” she gasped. “It is never Miss Gervalle!”

“I am Jocelyn Gervalle here in the flesh,” replied the new-comer, smiling to see the confusion her words caused, yet conscious that her “station tears” were making a kind of rainbow through her smiles. “It seems my grandfather has forgotten me.”

“It’s him all over!” declared the old servant, regarding the visitor with excusable curiosity. “He has no more brain for ordinary matters than the flies buzzing outside.”

Jocelyn felt a little hurt at being called an ordinary matter. To her this was a thrilling adventure, a stepping out into the world, a coming forth to the Garden Wonderful, this storming of the old house, this unearthing of the hermit, who, though a near relative, was still a stranger, and hazy as a dream.

“Where is my grandfather?” she asked.

“I want, please, to remind him of my existence.”

Elizabeth, who watched over the old man as a mother might tend a refractory child, grew pale at this suggestion, silently leading the way to a room panelled in black oak, with beams across the ceiling, where deep window recesses invited reverie, and the fireplace of huge dimensions suggested comfort for winter evenings. She felt thankful that Jocelyn had paid and dismissed the cab, trembling lest her master should be troubled with mundane affairs.

“The Professor is very busy to-day,” she said; “but, for the matter of that, he is always busy in his own peculiar line. I don’t know what he does, for it isn’t my business to be prying into his affairs. Some people say he spends his time in raising the old spirits of the house. In ancient days there was a story that one member of the family here sold himself to the devil, and Heale Prior has never been lucky since. If it were not for my vigilance, I believe the Professor would hardly ever remember to eat or drink, in which case he must long since have wasted to a shadow and faded away. But I can’t forgive myself for not asking him the date

of your arrival. You see, I am entirely to blame in the matter. You could not have come at a worse moment, for he said most particularly I was not to disturb him on any pretext; so if you don't mind waiting until——”

“But I do mind,” broke in Jocelyn, burning with impatience. “When he hears I have come he will forgive your interrupting him. So do, like a good woman, go at once and say I am longing to see him. I have simply been counting the hours. I absolutely decline to wait!”

Elizabeth's face softened. It was so long since anyone had been anxious to see Professor Gervalle that she could not refuse the pleading of those violet eyes. As Elizabeth turned to go, Jocelyn put out her hand, and asked tremulously: “Where does he hide himself? It—it seems such a very big house for one old man.”

“Bless your heart, he does not use the half of it! Most of the rooms are shut up. I would gladly open out the place and welcome any number of new faces, but the master hates company, and won't see a soul. I pity any young creature coming to such a home. I don't know how you will pass your time.

He is in his laboratory ; so, if you really insist, I'll carry your message, but you must not be disappointed should it meet with no response."

Emphasising these discomfiting words, Elizabeth bustled away in fear and trembling at the task she had undertaken.

Jocelyn knelt on the window seat, and looked at the soft sky and colourful distances, a scene eminently refreshing for body and brain, wearied by the noise and fatigue of a tiresome journey. She had not very long to wait before the sound of voices reached her. From the far end of a corridor, she could hear Elizabeth giving vent to voluble explanations. Evidently she had proved successful in her quest, and was triumphantly bringing the hermit to book for his disgraceful lapse of memory. Already Jocelyn knew instinctively that Elizabeth was a character. There was an air of independence about her in no way offensive ; she seemed as much a part of the old building as the heavy mullioned windows and massive chimneys.

A moment later the figure of Jocelyn's grandfather appeared under the vaulted arch of the old doorway—a figure so quaintly mysterious that she fancied, just for a second,

he had materialised from another world. His thin, transparent face and white head betokened asceticism, while his sparse grey beard consisted of a few meagre hairs growing separately like a cat's or a leopard's. He looked dazed as Jocelyn advanced with outstretched hands. Evidently it had caused him pain and suffering to tear himself from his beloved study.

"My dear," he said, "I had quite forgotten that we fixed to-day for your arrival. You know how one forgets."

The sweet confiding smile of a child broke over his wizened countenance as his eyes met Jocelyn's. In hers he detected an expression of tenderness wrestling playfully with an evasive sparkle of humour. An underlying depth of pathos gave mysterious charm to a face instinct with character and sympathy. He had come in a kind of dream from the inner sanctum of strange magic to find a bewitching young creature with two illusive little dimples, one in each cheek, which gave piquancy to a frank, almost childish manner. The indefinable gift of fascination was a natural heritage which the girl possessed without being aware of her subtle power. He guessed her

ignorance; her unaffected manner betrayed her openly.

Elizabeth retreated, leaving this oddly assorted couple alone together. Jocelyn did not reproach him. Already the poor welcome was forgotten.

“I’ve come home,” were her first words, emphasising the obvious. “I’ve often wanted to come, but I thought I should be in your way.”

He gave a slight start of surprise as she used the word “home,” which roused him to the reality of their relationship. Since the day of her birth he had hardly given his granddaughter a thought. Now he looked at her kindly, but still with that queer abstract expression in his eyes.

“I might never have seen you,” he said, “had things been different.”

She laid her hand on his arm, and the light from the window fell across her face. Vague shadows of alarm crept into the violet eyes, as she spoke of a fate narrowly escaped.

“I was afraid I should have to go to Aunt Jacobina. I wanted to be alone in the country with you. The country is still and kind to mourners. I daresay Aunt Jacobina tried to be nice, but the sympathy in her

letter seemed a little forced. Some people do not understand when—when one suffers.”

The mutinous lips trembled. It was natural Spring should resent Winter’s blight.

Professor Gervalle read her sorrow. “You poor child,” he thought, “standing within touch of my hand, yet, oh! so far away from me, lost in the baffling distance of youth! Over sixty years between us! You poor child!”

Aloud he said :

“Little girl, the loss must be very bitter to you, but for me it is different. I am old, and my work is nearly done. Often I feel myself very near the world beyond, which is, after all, the world with us. I cannot take the place of your father; I am but a dry, dead stick, sere and withered. There lies between us a great gulf of Time that can never be bridged over. I am striving to master a mystery which you could not possibly understand, and my labours enthrall me to such a degree that worldly affairs are utterly effaced. So alas! for this old fossil, at best he makes but a poor companion.”

“We shall see,” she answered, with a subtle note of confidence in her tone. He felt a slight misgiving; the new element

startled him, for it took possession of his scattered senses, gathering them together as sunlight seeks out dust, making sport with it the while. He felt for the dust keenly. Why should sunbeams pursue it with such a fiendish, glowing joy? Sometimes the dust danced to their music, looking like rays of silver, till the brilliant gleams laughingly withdrew. Then the dust crept back into crevices unseen, and slept in ugliness till the judgment day of brooms and dustpans, when the things of darkness stood revealed.

Jocelyn's eyes strayed to the garden, and the fossil remembered with something of a shock that children always want to "go out and play." He was surprised at himself for remembering anything about children, but somehow Jocelyn's face contradicted the fact that she was grown up. Surely the long skirts had been donned for fun, as when the little people dress in mother's clothes to try and look grand, and impress grandpapa. Jocelyn, of course, was masquerading; she could not really have reached the important age of seventeen.

He hinted his doubts to her, as he obeyed the invitation of those deep clear eyes to "go out and play."

“ I will show you the grounds,” he said, a trifle stiffly, for he was half afraid of feeling frivolous under the influence of her youth.

Probably she guessed his trepidation, for she chaperoned him tenderly up and down his own garden paths with quite a little air of maternal pride at his walking without a stick, like a mother whose staggering child first finds the art of piloting his steps over the firm ground.

She indulged spasmodic gasps of delight, and scattered laudatory adjectives like soft dew upon every object—north, south, east, and west—till the Professor’s brain whirled.

She forcibly opened his eyes to the beauty of the grey twilight, the joy of that still summer evening. Over every nook and corner a strange spell of mystery hung, enchanting her fancy, taking her by storm. So great was her praise, and so genuine her enthusiasm, that the Professor declared at last she was only attracted by force of novelty ; it could all be explained on a practical basis. He put this strange new creature under a microscope and dissected her emotions.

“ You have seen nothing like Heale Prior,” he said ; “ but in time it will all appear commonplace enough, and then you will look

upon these walls as a prison. I see myself playing the part of ogre with jangling keys ! Novelty always excites a sensation of pleasure; that is why, when age advances, all amusements wither, existence turns flat and insipid. Old age becomes its own insupportable burden, having lost the capacity for pleasure."

Jocelyn looked at him wistfully. She knew he must be over eighty, but the keen light in his eyes and the magnetic force of his individuality overcame the burden to which he alluded. She marvelled not a little.

"I think you are happy," she said, "for you love your work, and there is always novelty in that, always charm and change."

"Yes," he answered, smiling, "my craze is my salvation. With the majority of very old people work loses its savour ; then nothing remains to relieve the satiety and weariness. The longer we have been in possession of life the less sensible is the joy we take in it, which explains the decay of the faculties."

"I know I shall always love Heale Prior," said Jocelyn, "even when it is no longer new to me. I shall love it for its age."

Professor Gervalle paused under the dark avenue of yews, and Jocelyn thought he

looked like a picture of Time, and should have carried a scythe to complete the illusion.

“Novelty,” he continued, “has a powerful and extensive influence; it is the source of admiration which lessens in proportion to our familiarity with objects, and upon a thorough acquaintance is utterly extinguished. When you grow tired of this weird old place you must cry aloud, you must beat your wings on the bars, for I shall never remember to ask how you prosper. Elizabeth tells me I am impossible, but I cannot reform; I go on my evil way unchecked, yet the gods forgive me.”

He watched Jocelyn's athletic figure as she ran before him, growing restive and less maternal, moving with a grace and activity he had not seen for years. His eyes glistened, his heart warmed.

“You remind me of a chamois,” he declared, as she returned breathless to his side. “Have you ever heard the old theory that the gods formed the souls of women out of the principles and elements of various animals? Some souls were said to have the composition of foxes. Those were discerning women with great insight. The cat women were unamiable, froward, and unloving, subject to

little thefts and cheatings. But superior to all was the bee, faultless and unblamable, full of virtue and prudence, the best wife Jupiter could bestow on a man."

"What a big, funny, twisted idea!" said Jocelyn. "I hope you won't find me a cat-woman, with nasty claws hidden away."

"The theory," he replied, "was evolved from the brain of an old satirist, whose fancy went even further, for some, he said, were made out of the earth, and they were indolent, having no alacrity in business, and crouching over the fire the whole winter. Some were made from the sea; they were variable, with uneven tempers, stormy and tempestuous, or sunshiny and calm."

"Like Mademoiselle," said Jocelyn, feeling far away now from the cramping influence of her late mistress. "Mademoiselle would one day joke and laugh till you imagined her a miracle of good humour; then suddenly the storm rose, she was nothing but fury, outrage, and hurricane!"

The Professor listened, but so abstractedly he hardly seemed to follow her words. He was drifting away from seventeen as they neared the house. Jocelyn longed to read

his thoughts and find out the mystery of his occupation, to decipher the yearning in those strange eyes, lit by the flame of some occult desire. She faltered with stumbling steps up the ladder of his ambitions, she banished Mademoiselle and spoke of science.

“It is fairy lore to me,” she declared. “Some day, perhaps, you will show me your laboratory. I long for a taste of the wonderful.”

He shook his head.

“If you only knew the forces I am combating,” he answered; “if you only knew! I strive with things impossible. If I might live another hundred years I should reach the truth. When the hour of death comes no one ever finds the day has been long enough. This life is the war of the false and the true, and the nurse of full-grown souls is solitude. For my aims life is all too short. Occasionally you will find me sullen, dull, despondent. Heaven grant I may not infect you with my gloom! Then, again, I fancy myself upon the brink of a marvellous discovery—a discovery for which I have been working all my life.”

Striking changes came over him as he hinted at success. His eyes grew bright with

a reflection of youth's keenness, while streaks of colour painfully emphasised his transparent skin. Great unspoken things were written in the still face—shadows of coming events—and the shadows tried to utter words to tell the meaning of it all; but as yet infancy made them speak like little children, whose patter mystifies the uninitiated.

Jocelyn saw in him a living memorial to "the quiet and exalted thoughts of loneliness." His work was his passion, and even speaking of it brought exultation to the faded face.

She realised, young as she was, that passions are necessary to the health of the mind, as the circulation of animal spirits to the health of the body, keeping it in strength and vigour. To this she ascribed the mental energy he still enjoyed in the sunset days of a long, arduous career, for Jocelyn could be very discerning when she chose.

Passions, she believed, must be little spirits born with every mortal. She had met these little spirits in various forms and guises; she knew and recognised their queer, unruly ways. Sometimes, of course, they were mild and peaceful, gentle tenants of the soul. More often they domineered disgracefully,

gaining a complete mastery over the reins of reason and the guidance of judgment. She wondered with a sudden sick aching at her heart whether he made science his splendid servant, or fell a slave beneath the burden of that continuous labour.

At last Professor Gervalle broke the pause, speaking in a dreamy, far-away tone.

“Have you ever dreamed of pneumatology comprehensively understood—the doctrine of spiritual existences?”

Jocelyn shook her head. She would not speak for fear of diverting his line of thought. Instead she watched him tentatively, as if he were some curious bird about to take flight. The Professor was drifting into deep waters which savoured of mysticism. Jocelyn felt out of her depth, but vaguely aspired to swim.

“Have you ever thought,” he continued, “of the third power, the unknown principle of life, and how much hinges upon it?”

He looked her full in the face now, compelling an answer.

“No,” she said, hesitatingly, wishing it might have been “Yes.” She knew she was hampered by ignorance, poor earth-bound child! His expression suggested awe and

ecstasy—the adoration of some unseen power by which miracles might be wrought in the twentieth century.

“Browning wrote,” murmured the Professor, “‘Man was made to grow, not to stop.’ Only think of it, Jocelyn, I am growing after eighty summers! Should I reach the goal of my ambitions I trust I shall never be tempted to advertise my discovery or seek fame thereby. Censure is the tax a man pays to the public for eminence, while fame is easily lost, and as difficult to be preserved as acquired. On every side I meet pitfalls; often I am unable to clearly define between mere creations of imagination and the legitimate results of analysis and abstractions.”

A slight shiver crept through Jocelyn’s veins, which even the warm summer air failed to counteract. She saw in fancy this weird old man tracked, and eventually captured, by the silent-footed hound, madness! With lurking steps the demoniacal monster might daily steal nearer, waiting to destroy his victim’s dazzled brain with poisonous fangs. She always thought of madness in the form of a huge, red-eyed dog, devouring the very soul of its prey, after long hunting over marshy ground.

When next Professor Gervalle spoke she gave quite a guilty start, convicted by her own dark fancies of treachery to him.

“The two pioneers of physical philosophy,” he continued, “are Accident and Hypothesis. So science, while professing to care for nothing but what is certain, has actually owed the extension of her domain greatly to chance and conjecture. The humiliating fact is freely acknowledged during the spring season of any single branch of science; but afterwards, when the new truth acquires firmness, and the system exacts submission, then it often frowns upon hypothesis and thinks itself beyond the reach of further accessions from accident. Some day, if the mysteries I hope to pierce become accomplished facts, the world will open out for you and me into wide and varied fields. Old as I am, I would give my whole life for one year of secret success—one year of real, vivid, charmed existence. I look for a higher order of things—the fabric of a dream may grow into a solid edifice, reaching from earth to heaven.”

He hardly appeared to address Jocelyn, though a little quiver came in his voice as the personal note vibrated through his fantasy,

the "you and me," cementing their enforced union.

She felt the influence of those two small words, which had a subtly sweet sound, charming her unconsciously. The Professor had drawn the frailest outline of a picture, which might some day find colour and substance. Being in her teens, Jocelyn naturally placed unlimited faith in "Some day."

It is possible he would, in sheer absence of mind, have opened the treasure store of his busy brain to the prying eyes of a frivolous schoolgirl only two days escaped from educational fetters had not Elizabeth unconsciously rescued him by ringing a tea-bell.

The tea-bell held in its unmusical throat the very warning he stood in need of, brazenly declaring that children preferred scones to science, marmalade to mysteries.

He awoke trembling. Jocelyn noticed he shivered and clutched her hand.

With unexpected tact she asked no questions, but just tucked his arm through hers, and obeyed Elizabeth's summons.

Who shall say what wheels of fancy the Professor's words had set in motion, how the budding intellect, bound in frail fresh green, struggled to open out and blossom in full-

grown knowledge, as the baby bird flutters through its cramping shell ?

With steps repressed to match his, Jocelyn guided her grandfather back to the house. She thought he needed her assistance, for a haze came over his eyes, strained from looking beyond at a too bright light ; he stumbled and groped as one in the dark.

They talked of other things that evening, and the Professor did not return to his laboratory.

With good-night a surprise awaited him. Quite naturally the soft, rose-like face bent to his, the flutter of angels' wings swept his cheek—Jocelyn (O nerve-shattering inconsiderate youth !)—without a thought, Jocelyn kissed him.

He heard her go, but his brain was in a whirl. Spectres of the past rattled their old bones, and gnashed fleshless jaws in the oak-panelled room. He crouched low down in his chair, and from his attitude he might have been struck a heavy blow by some malignant enemy.

The white face grew whiter, the blue eyelids trembled, the wasted hands clutched convulsively, and all because an ignorant granddaughter little guessed the hermit had forgotten the existence of a kiss.

CHAPTER IV.

The little more, and how much it is ;
 The little less, and what worlds away !

AFTER that first evening, Professor Gervalle braced himself for the ordeal of the kiss. He bore it best in the morning, when Jocelyn saluted him at breakfast, for then the ghosts were hidden away with the moonbeams, disgraced by daylight's unillusive presence. If Jocelyn wounded, she did it with such a frank air of simplicity that the Professor would not for the world have made her wise. He even grew accustomed in time to this refined torture, and met it with a certain relish.

Elizabeth watched in wonder this strange new bird building her nest, settling with perfect content at Heale Prior, and never once complaining of dullness or ennui.

To the old woman "Sweet Seventeen" preached a sermon, not a pulpit oration, but the sermon flowers preach in spring when they wake up with their "thank God" faces, and open out gloriously to the sun. Jocelyn natur-

ally suggested spring to the mind ; her body and soul seemed the very incarnation of all that is best in that season of glad promise. She looked with absolute confidence to the midsummer of life, believing greatly in the future, at which her grandfather still hinted with mystery in his tone.

Though Professor Gervalle had no acquaintances, it did not take Jocelyn long to make a host of friends. She discovered the most fascinating rustics, living in cottages that savoured of the Art Gallery and velvet-coated intruders, armed with brush, palette, and camp stool. The rustics owned ruddy-faced children, who wore clean frocks and dropped curtseys, but soon forgot their manners when scrambling on Jocelyn's knee, since she often accepted the ever-ready invitation to "Come in and sit down."

Every child was known to her by name for miles around ; she even remembered their ages—from Ferdinand Michael Macgregor Jones, in his seventh year, to Gladys Marigold Baker, who elected to remain at five for the last two summers because "she didn't want to grow no older."

There were dumb friends who talked to her in the language of the sniffing nose and the

welcoming eye—pathetic sheep, with the tragedy of the condemned writ large on their resigned faces ; furious watchdogs straining at chains, whose bark took a different tone at her step, while wagging tails reiterated the hearty “ Come in and sit down.”

Even the weed-grown garden at Heale Prior produced finer flowers for Jocelyn’s bouquet, as if the very earth loved her, yielding a grateful abundance in return for her energy with an old watering-pot which had taken holiday while she was at school.

The Professor, unlike the flowers, declined to expand. He continued his unhealthy indoor exercise with a pertinacity that boldly defied the laws of hygiene. An onlooker might fully have expected the humanising influence of Jocelyn to work miracles and charm the scientist from his lair, but Professor Gervalle seemed past reclaiming in the early days of his grandchild’s reign.

At times she talked boldly to him of the past ; but he remembered little, or perhaps the dust of ages blinded him, and he could not look back. She spoke of her grandmother, begging for little incidents of his married life, but he threw the merest crumbs to feed her imagination.

“ Was she pretty ? ” Jocelyn asked. “ Did she ever help you in your work ? I wonder if she knew the poor people in those quaint cottages at the foot of the hill.”

Professor Gervalle furnished but scanty information.

“ Your grandmother had curly hair,” he said. “ It hung on her neck, in ringlets ; she was considered pretty. I don’t know how she amused herself, but she cared little for problems or scientific experiments. She was just there, you know, just there ! When she died, I often thought her spirit stayed behind and walked the corridors at night. The little footsteps steal to my door even now, but I never open to her ; she could pass in, if she chose.”

That was all he told of the woman who made his life’s romance—she walked after death and wore curly hair. Poor grand-mamma ! Once Jocelyn shed some tender little tears for the ghost outside the door. She had been outside always—Jocelyn felt sure of that ; she might have passed in had she chosen, only she never realised he waited for her to take the initiative.

Later on Jocelyn led the conversation to her own mother, the beautiful Idena. When

first she came to Heale Prior Professor Gervalle was a widower. He recalled her complimenting the old house profusely, and leaving by an early train the following day.

“Some business appointment in London,” he explained. “She was very sorry to go.”

Elizabeth, however, told a different story, since she well remembered the Captain’s visit with his young bride.

“Mrs. Gervalle had a fit of hysterics in the night, poor dear lady, and rang me up to ask why the door handle kept rattling,” was the old servant’s version. “I never saw such a timid creature; she vowed her hair would turn grey if the Captain didn’t take her straight back to London the next morning. It was her first and last visit, but the Professor never knew what a horror she took of the place.”

“I expect,” said Jocelyn, “grandmamma wanted to get in. She did not know the strange woman had a right there. People always misunderstood grandmamma.”

Elizabeth shrugged methodical shoulders, she knew that Jocelyn wove some pretty fancies round defunct relations. Her father alone escaped these imaginative romances; his death was too recent for the balm of fantasy, and remained an open, bitter wound in the

region of Jocelyn's heart. But once had she broached the subject, when pinning a bunch of coloured flowers on her black dress.

"Father would wish me to wear them," she said. "He always liked people to be gay. Father was very real to me, though we were separated for many years. When he died I felt as if someone were stabbing me through and through with a knife, but I couldn't cry out, I couldn't resist the pain. It comes back often now when I am laughing, and nobody suspects. I think it will be like that always—the pain and the silence."

Elizabeth could be marvellously sympathetic in the twilight. During the day her sympathies seemed warped, but after sunset Elizabeth's soul grew younger as her household duties decreased. She then released the set muscles of her face, telling Jocelyn anecdotes of her great uncles and aunts while she nursed a kitten which always fled from her in the morning.

Having spent nearly her whole life at Heale Prior, she would convincingly expatiate on the doings of "the great folk in London," criticising their habits, and reorganising in her own quaint way many established customs and fashions.

Jocelyn, who knew a great deal more than Elizabeth imagined, refrained from shaking that worthy woman's faith in a friend from Hammersmith who occasionally visited Salford and taxed the credulity of the natives for his own private amusement.

"Thomas tells me," Elizabeth would relate, "that only motor-cars are allowed in Hyde Park now, and they've built a lot of little bridges over the roads for foot passengers because of the danger. Piccadilly is entirely used for electric trams, so all the carriage folk have migrated to the suburbs! Houses in Hammersmith last season cost more than houses in Park Lane; so Thomas gave up his, and went to lodgings on account of the enormous rent."

Jocelyn discovered Thomas had played in pantomime and occasionally wrote for the papers. He was well known in sporting circles and "did a bit on the turf." Elizabeth prided herself greatly upon his acquaintance, and the girl was too kind to shatter such a glorious idol. She only wondered whether in time she might not grow like Elizabeth, and believe in any traveller's tale from the far distant shores of London Town.

With the waning of summer came autumn's

wealth of colour and mellow charm, tempting her to try and paint the holy glory of crimson clinging leaves and golden forests. What matter that she soiled her fingers and destroyed good canvas; the artist's soul was there, struggling to attain. She tried the least ambitious subjects—rustic cottages, fortified by blackberry hedges or broken-down gates—scenes of infinite simplicity.

But she painted them into her memory and into her soul, having nothing to show for her labour but a charred inspiration cremated under the grate.

The autumn days saw many repetitions of these sorry failures, till silent-footed winter stole a sudden march upon the coloured vestments of the trees. Off Jack Frost swept them, the hard-hearted, white-footed knave, chasing Jocelyn indoors, to seek fresh pastimes under Heale Prior's silvered towers.

The funny part of it was, until she told him, the Professor did not know winter had come.

A faint stirring of conscience warned him that long, lonely, desolate months awaited Jocelyn. Consequently he sought some entertainment for her, with boredom written on every line of his faded face.

At last a solution of the difficulty flashed

across his mind. Books ! They were the key to a happy country life ; in reading lay salvation. With much pomp an old chest was removed from his laboratory to Jocelyn's private chamber, in which, he informed her, she would find a store of delightful literature.

Jocelyn thanked him with a repetition of her morning and evening offence. That he should think of her moved the girl strangely. The flashes of affection which crept occasionally from under his fossilised exterior met with such a glowing reception that the poor unaccustomed rays shot back affrighted to their hiding-place, knowing that the day had not yet come for warm glad knowledge and unchecked light.

In the Professor's chest of light reading she unearthed strange works for a young mind. It did not strike him as incongruous to find the delicate flushed face, with its soft spring bloom, bending over Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy" and Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason," or studying with a mystifying rapture the "Logic" of John Stuart Mill.

Jocelyn called it her "reading winter." The months seemed like a time of probation, yet she could not have explained for what she waited.

She felt herself shipwrecked for a little while on a narrow island, in the midst of an ocean immeasurably diffused on every side, as far as the eye could reach. Yet she knew a change must come, and her ship might any day bound in, blown by sure breezes to that silent harbour. Then she would spring to its deck with a light heart, possibly dragging the hermit after her, unwilling to leave him on the desert island, though he pleaded hard to stay.

She did not forget her cottage children in the cold dark days, though they greeted her with sneezes instead of flowers, and their faces grew older with the pinch of winter's blight. The little girl who wished to be five found it harder to deceive when her small snub nose turned red from cold and chilblains disfigured her fingers. Stern Father Time withered her with a glance, proclaiming: "You are now seven and a half, but when summer comes you may perhaps be five again!" For even Father Time gives back a store of youth when the world is a tender green and the mother of new-born flowers.

During all these long months Jocelyn heard nothing of Jacobina, till Christmas brought its usual card with its cynical "For Remembrance." Jocelyn left it unacknow-

ledged, telling herself Lady Livingstone would be too busy to care whether a country cousin wrote or kept silence.

In her heart she knew Jacobina deserved no news from Heale Prior. The Professor always spoke kindly of her. Remembering she was a Gervalle, he felt he owed the woman some gratitude for keeping away from him. He had always genuinely feared his relations. "Drive out Nature with a fork, she comes running back," was one of the mottoes that increased his alarm. He instinctively defined a woman as "an animal that delights in finery"; but Jocelyn disturbed his old theories.

He occasionally found time to observe his granddaughter, and on reflection admitted to himself she was almost beautiful. In a very short time he believed she might grow quite beautiful, without a flaw in her bewildering composition.

A woman with gifts (for Jocelyn held many in those little white hands) appeared no small responsibility to a man past eighty. The indisputable fact of her claim upon him bade Professor Gervalle dream no longer of quiet life, for "care finds the careless out."

He grew more haggard, more sternly aged,

as the winter advanced. He was still thin and transparent, but the deep-set lines in his face took a fresh character, ennobling rather than marring the striking individuality of that strained, thoughtful countenance. Jocelyn saw much to admire in the Professor's appearance, and her admiration was akin to the deep emotion which Heale Prior awoke in her heart. Old trees, in their stately grandeur, ever brought him to her mind. Nature was undoubtedly full of a sublime family likeness throughout her works.

In tremulous expectation Jocelyn waited for Spring, her twin sister; but the artful sprite tarried wilfully. It is often so with those who know their charm; they sulk in corners that the seekers may be better pleased when the glad finding comes.

Winter spared her snow, but March burst in with desperate showers of whirling dizzy flakes, playing mad pranks in the wind, and making the Sussex hills like Alpine heights, clad in virgin whiteness.

The fiend undoubtedly owned a dazzling brush, under whose touch the country stood beautified, as a bride on her wedding morning. Was it wonderful that, being only seventeen, Spring's twin sister should romp down the hill

with those red-nosed children, who forgot to sneeze in their delight at the newly fallen treasure, made for snowballing battles? Having conquered Jocelyn through force of numbers, they followed their laughing foe back up the steep, winding road, fearful lest she should be destroyed of bears and wolves, or induced to slumber from sheer exhaustion after a desperate fray.

“You would never be found again if the snow buried you,” Ferdinand Michael Macgregor Jones informed her, and being the son of a highly superior farmer, whose wife was once a lady’s maid, he, of course, possessed a very fair share of this world’s wisdom. “Gladys once lost twopence in the snow, and we think it melted when the snow went, because she never got it back again.”

“The snow,” said Jocelyn, “has come to hatch the April flowers. It is really warm down off big white birds called ice-birds, because they live in the Arctic regions. That is why the daisies are white. You see, the snow lies longer on the fields.”

“Are the ice-birds like geese?” asked Ferdinand.

“Yes, in a way.”

“There would be a mighty lot of them,”

soliloquised the farmer's son. "What a time the folks must have at Michaelmas in their village!"

Oh! hopelessly unromantic Ferdinand, with your heart set on the groaning board, would you reach manhood with no higher thought than the eating of those dumb fluttering spirits which dwell in the shape of white-winged birds? What pathos may live in the face of a foolish gosling!

Miss Gervalle looked almost twenty-one as she discreetly turned the subject. "Children," she said, bidding her youthful escorts good-bye at the gates, "it is my eighteenth birthday next month, so I am going to ask you all to tea. Elizabeth will make a big iced cake, and we shall play games."

She returned to the house with the satisfaction of knowing that loving eyes followed her. Aglow from healthy exercise, her pulses beating like sledge hammers, she sought Elizabeth's society. It was impossible to remember Elizabeth particularly disliked wet boots in her room, but flesh and blood could not restrain a smile at sight of Jocelyn's scarlet cheeks and parted lips.

So Elizabeth received her like a sunbeam, and forgave the boots.

“ I’ve made those children in such a mess ! ” the mischievous girl confessed. “ I am guilty of ever so many snow-drenched frocks and battered hats. I feel I ought to re-clothe the whole village. The mutinous creatures really thought it was the battle of Waterloo, and I had to be defeated by young England, since in a weak moment I turned traitor to my country. I told them of our plan for my birthday, but mind, I don’t want grandfather to know when I am eighteen, and need we mention my tea-party to him ? ”

“ No, children are not in his line,” Elizabeth freely acknowledged. “ But why keep your age a secret, miss ? ”

“ It might worry him,” said Jocelyn, with unwonted tenderness. “ Girls come out at eighteen, and I can’t bear to see that hunted look in his eyes when he remembers about me.”

“ The master has been stranger than ever of late,” mused Elizabeth. “ I cannot understand his moods. I see a difference in him, a marked change. He seems at times to be labouring under almost unbearable excitement. I heard him talking to you so wildly. I wondered you were not afraid. His mind runs upon matters that are beyond our reach.

Sometimes I think he sees into another world. I know you believe in guardian angels, and perhaps that is why you don't seem frightened ; but for myself, he scares me out of my wits when his eyes suddenly glisten and his jaw drops. I fancy then he is in the grip of an unseen spirit. That room he calls his laboratory is, to my belief, a haunt of devils. The awful creatures have had him in their power, and they come to life when we least suspect their presence.

Elizabeth spoke from conviction, glancing nervously from right to left, as if expecting apparitions. Elizabeth, be it remembered, had not returned glowing from a scamper through the snow, or possibly her faith in psychical phenomena might have melted with warm circulation.

"I would rather think angels were around him," said Jocelyn softly. "He certainly varies from day to day, as if, indeed, the angels and devils used him as a shuttlecock."

"If that is the case they are having a queer game," snapped Elizabeth, for twilight had not yet fallen, and she was still in a hardened mood. "I assure you this morning, Miss Jocelyn, I felt regularly scared, for you could never, never guess what the master

did." She paused, and Jocelyn drew closer, with a little eerie flutter at her heart.

"Tell me," she said, deceiving Elizabeth by a laugh which implied scepticism.

"You know, miss, the Professor doesn't trouble his head with household affairs. Well, it's almost incredible, but after breakfast, when you were on the terrace feeding the birds, he came running down just as fast as his poor old feet could carry him to the back door. 'I want to see the tradespeople,' he said, trembling with agitation, and I began to tremble too, for I thought he had gone daft. The baker's cart was just coming up the drive, and you can imagine the young fellow's surprise when the Professor himself bounced out of the kitchen and asked him quite rational questions about prices and trade. He waited to interview them all in turn, and when I told him there would be no more callers to-day, he went back with a sigh. Great beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead. I helped him up the stairs, for I thought every moment he would fall."

Elizabeth's story brought an expression to Jocelyn's eyes which only dwelt there when she thought of the silent-footed hound.

"Grandfather is full of whims," she said,

trying to speak in a matter-of-fact tone. "We must not be surprised at anything. Had he that strange new ear-trumpet with him?"

"Yes, he kept it in his ear all the time, and told the tradespeople the cold affected his hearing. He has never complained of deafness before, and that too, I believe, is just a crank—an imaginative ailment. I notice he hears just as well without it, but I suppose he is proud of making the instrument himself, though it isn't like any ear-trumpet I ever saw."

"It certainly is rather an odd shape, but I think it sharpens his intelligence, for he always has an amazingly rapt expression when it is in use. He may have been deaf before without our detecting anything, for his conversation is so often disjointed one hardly notices if he doesn't answer. He takes great care of his beloved trumpet, and won't let me touch it, for he says it is a very delicate piece of mechanism. Really, I sometimes believe he takes me for a child."

Jocelyn pouted with charming disdain, vaguely aware she suffered from youth. The violet eyes could look strangely bright under the fire of rebellion, though in truth it was

always a mock-war, like the snowballing battle of Waterloo.

She crossed restlessly to the diamond-paned windows, listening to the melodious chimes from the old clock tower. Suddenly she turned with an exclamation of surprise, and beckoned Elizabeth.

“Look!” she whispered; “look! Grandfather has been out in the snow. He is walking like a two-year-old. I do believe he’s taken a fresh lease of life.”

Elizabeth raised her eyes to the ceiling-beams with a pious gesture, and hurried to the window. The Professor was coming towards the house, his shrunken figure huddled in a long overcoat, his steps firm, and far from slow. They seemed defying age, though the white ground matched his hair and beard.

“Doesn’t he look like Father Christmas?” said Jocelyn. “He told me he never went out in the cold. I should love to have walked with him.”

She ran to meet the Professor with her tam-o’-shanter cap at a rakish angle, and her furs open at the throat, bounding two steps at a time down the ghostly wide oak staircase, and darting out through a carved porch,

with great dragons keeping their deathless watch upon the spandrels above.

“Come in to the fire, grandfather,” she cried; “you must be nearly frozen.”

A glance at his face told that he felt the cold acutely. Breathless from quick walking, he obeyed without a word, silently thanking her with his fragile smile as she drew an arm-chair to the hearth. Bright flames traced ruddy patterns over the fantastic mantelpiece, throwing crimson light on the old man’s yellow skin.

Jocelyn removed his long, sable-lined coat. She noticed the fur was falling to pieces, having entirely disappeared in parts, while both cuffs and collar bore evidence of Elizabeth’s needle.

She wondered if her brain had also suffered the destruction of the moth as he rescued from a deep pocket the mysterious home-made ear trumpet which he guarded with such marked vigilance.

“Where have you been?” she asked, raising her voice and bending to the instrument. She felt a great tenderness towards him, mingling with fond fears, as she remembered Elizabeth’s conversation.

The old man’s eyes seemed piercing her, as

she knelt at his feet, her hands outstretched to the fire.

“ I walked down the hill,” he answered, watching her start of surprise. “ It is many years since I called at any of the cottages, and I thought they might need help this weather, so I took them some money. I stayed talking a long while, otherwise I should not have felt cold. The effort of walking taxed my strength a good deal. All the faces were strange to me ; I had to introduce myself. I have not been into the village since your grandmother died, and Elizabeth tells me the tree I then planted by her grave is tall enough to sit under now. I frightened some of the children, for they see so few strangers. I heard a fair-sized lad whisper to his sister, ‘ It’s the old miser from the big house ! ’ His words merely echoed what I read in every eye ; they all think the same ; they all believe I am a miser. We learn much through mixing with our fellows ; we learn more when years are spent in solitude. Jocelyn, I have had a great education. ‘ Life is action, and not to do is death.’ In my youth, even, I knew I was never less alone than when alone. I have worked unceasingly, and now I am on the threshold of reward. I

have touched the golden border of my dreams. I spent half a century longing and striving for light, but all the light I found was second-hand. Then I grew crafty, as wisdom increased; when despair knocked at my door I turned the key. You think that I am mad—poor little girl, small wonder, for at your age it is hard to realise solitude often makes the best society. Perhaps you believe I deserve the term miser, but a miser is one who hoards his store for the lustful love of gold. I merely ignored my wealth because I had not time to waste upon it, and wealth is a very exacting mistress. The fewer our wants, the nearer we resemble the gods. With many, life is only a circulation of little mean actions. They lie down, rise again, dress and undress, feed, become hungry, work, play, grow weary, and once more rest—so the circle returns. I never submitted to the slavery of routine, my programme was always a strange variety of absorbing study. Within the last few weeks I have touched success, breaking down the limitations that cramped and fettered me. As in the case of rumbling thunder, lightning has passed from cloud to cloud, so I pierced the darkness, and now stand ready for the day!”

His words came with halting breath, the tremulous hands outstretched and gripped Jocelyn's strong young shoulders.

"Will you come into the world with me," he asked, "away from solitude to the bright gardens of social intercourse, where life beats fullest, where human beings throng thickest? We must make our *début* together—the man of eighty and the girl of eighteen! We'll take the mortals by storm, you and I, with rich gifts from the gods. I am impatient for the fray, young April, if you can join hands with December. Let us shake the dust of Heale Prior from our feet. Discovery opens large fields, vast scope remains for experiment and enterprise."

He held the trumpet to his ear, and Jocelyn fancied he must catch the wild beating of her heart. She swayed nearer, an odd dizziness filling her brain.

Professor Gervalle opened his arms, and something sweetly young crept into them—Spring, with rain-drenched eyes, gazing on shining prospects and bright golden scenes, while fair phantoms of the future threw mocking kisses to the played-out ghosts of the past.

CHAPTER V.

Each man makes his own stature, builds himself.

—*Young.*

JOCELYN had much to learn on that snow-clad afternoon, though the Professor gave no definite reason for the great change in his life's plan. It was no sudden thought, he told her. It might have happened years ago, or years hence had he still lived. It was all a matter of scientific failure or success. He emphasised the fact that she had not influenced his actions, though he well knew she would be eighteen on the twenty-first day of April, and approved a certain tea-party to be held in honour of that event.

"I asked Elizabeth not to tell," said Jocelyn. "I fancied it might trouble you a little."

"And Elizabeth kept faithful silence," retorted the old man, with a glint of cynical humour in his eyes. "I found you out nevertheless, and, as the London season begins in May, you need not disappoint your little friends."

“The London season!” gasped Jocelyn, looking instinctively at the thin wasted hands which lay on her shoulders.

“Ah! you think I haven’t the health to face such an ordeal,” he murmured; “you judge by appearances. If I had sufficient energy to work, it stands to reason I shall also find strength enough to play. There will be purpose and study in all our doings, a sort of kindergarten game for full-grown scientists.”

He laughed, just a low little chuckle, expressive of delight.

“But I am no scientist,” said Jocelyn, “only I should like to find out what it really means. I hope you are going to explain the mystery. There is a certain irritating triumph in your eyes that simply tortures my curiosity, and, of course, in my heart I feel quite sure it is all a dream, and we are not really going to London.”

“Explanations come of themselves to tell their own story, if you wait long enough,” he answered, touching her hair with nervous fingers. “Why should I tell you in two minutes what it has taken me sixty years to learn? Really, a woman has no sense of proportion.”

“Elizabeth will never believe in your

‘coming out,’” Jocelyn declared, with a sound of satisfaction like a dove cooing. “I know when I tell her she will take my temperature, feel my pulse, and mix me a cooling dose. Shall you give a ball, grandfather? Do you think you could dance?”

“I am afraid not, but somebody else could. I shall take a big house and entertain. I must have people—people all round me, puppets to dance to my tune. Only think, I was reduced this morning to conversing with the tradesmen. Elizabeth has a theory that I owe my wonderful constitution (she always calls it wonderful) to the bracing climate of Salford. She will not give my life many months’ lease, I fear, when she learns I am going to try a change of scene. In her opinion London and all large cities are shut off from fresh air. She could never understand that the air from the earth rises in streams and bubbles, and even in London it is always sending slender spirals of air twisting up to the pure regions above, so that air-falls of a cold, pure nature rush downwards, whirling away germs of disease and unprofitable gases. But, at the best, I must anticipate a short career.” His voice shook slightly. “If I could have gone back sooner, God alone knows what I

might have been, what I might have done. It wasn't meant, the Great Justice willed otherwise ; He knows my weakness and age ; He guards well the economy of the world. A little power may be given to man, just sometimes mortal hands may touch the supreme reins, and guide for a few short moments the destiny of human races. But the great God is a jealous God, and we must not ask too much. ' Cast yourself down, and all the kingdoms of the world shall be yours ' is still the temptation of the hour, whispered in various tongues, and wrapt in many disguises. I, Jocelyn, old, exhausted, dried up and withered, stand in the wilderness to-day, seeing the cities at my feet. Had you listened at my door you might have heard me cry, ' Get thee behind me ! ' A man may choose whether he will purchase with the strength he possesses happiness or repentance. I mean to hug my secret to myself, to guard it with a vigilance that nothing shall break down. Jocelyn, my child, you are not afraid ? I talk as if you understood my methods ; I lead you stumbling through the dark, and you follow without crying for a light."

Jocelyn rose. She stood before him now, very erect, strangely commanding. He saw

she had succeeded in becoming quite beautiful, with a beauty of the soul which shone through her eyes.

“I am not afraid,” she declared. “I have been alone long enough to conquer fear. Solitude, you see, has taught me something.”

The weakly young tree seemed suddenly stretching out protecting boughs, which in the shade and solitude of Heale Prior had developed with amazing growth. Jocelyn was not handsome by the force of features alone—her eyes, with their rapt expression, testified that the unseen world may sometimes blend its colour with our earth below, and there was a sanctity in the youthful face which jarred not at all with laughter or merry-making.

“She will be something new to the women of London,” thought Professor Gervalle. “Will they treat her as a shrine, or tear her in pieces with their cynicism?”

He contemplated, in contrast to Jocelyn, women who never throw away a thought on those ornaments of mind that make people illustrious in themselves and useful to others. She, during the brief pause, marvelled that he should know temptations, consoling herself by thinking that all great genius has faults mixed

with virtue, resembling the flaming bush which had thorns amongst light.

“I shall be curious to see how society affects you,” he murmured. “I hope you will stand out as a character, rather than swim with the stream. I intend you to be very strong. Remember that youth and beauty are red rags to the cat-women, who see in the dark, and spring on the sparrows. Then there are men-wolves busy with human sacrifice—the men who only love women for the wealth contained in a suitable marriage settlement, expecting a wife to replenish their coffers. Man is possibly the middle link between angels and brutes. Some of the ancients imagined that as men during their lives inclined more to the angel or the brute, so after death they transmigrated into one or the other. You may picture the several species of brutes to which tyrants or—or misers might be changed.”

Jocelyn tossed her proud young head indignantly, noting he laid a significant stress on the word “misers.” She was ready to defend him against calumny, to strike dumb with a glance, or crush by a look, any who dared take his name in vain. She even resented a reflection from his own lips on the virtues she felt sure he possessed.

This day he had risen to great heights in Jocelyn's estimation. She admired, vastly, his power of shedding the old shackles, and facing new modes of life with a careless smile at his advanced age. She appreciated the infinite variety of this strange temperament, no longer deeming him mad, but hailing him genius !

Yet she felt it must all be short, she knew he was nearing the narrow border which divides the seen from the unseen. Did her moist eyes betray her, or, if not, why should he take up the drift of her thoughts, as if she had spoken and demanded an answer ?

"You must not mind," he said, "that I am old. The ultimate end of man is the enjoyment of God, beyond which he cannot form a wish. I tell myself this when rebellion creeps in. A little more life, and then Eternity."

The great word lingered on his lips ; he drew his finger along the arm of his chair.

"Eternity," he murmured, "or infinite duration, a line without beginning or end. The particular place where we exist is to us a kind of centre to the whole expansion. But the unseen world is the greatest, my child,

for it holds in its kingdom all that we worship. It embraces the future and the past ; it contains our souls. We have it with us always, that nation of vast shadows, which is inalienable. Infinite space gives room to infinite knowledge ; it is, as it were, the organ of omniscience."

How characteristic that Professor Gervalle should stray involuntarily from the practical to the intangible !

"Grandfather," said Jocelyn, "you always seem able to read my thoughts. Does that mean we are in strong sympathy with each other ? I hope so, for it happened in much the same way at school if I grew very fond of a girl and was a great deal with her. We called it telepathy."

He passed his hand over his forehead, that lined expanse which, like the clock of time, spelt "Age" in deep, indelible letters. He looked away as he replied :—

"A quotation from Browning describes that quick passing of ideas : 'Speech where an accent's change gives each the other's soul.'"

He raised himself with an effort, and waved aside her help, seeking to conceal his palpable fatigue.

“I must write letters,” he said. “Our migration to London needs some forethought, little woman. I have much to consider.”

He crossed the room slowly, and his figure in the shadows looked so ghostly, so ethereal, he might have passed from life already. She pictured him gliding quite naturally through the “dark Amaze of Death,” fearless in that tempest hour when flesh and soul mysteriously part. Could such a grey, flickering spirit face the rush and whirl of social functions? Was it not rather some wild joke of the imagination? It must all be a strange phase of satire, an illusion, a mist within the brain. She followed him to the door, her heart kindling with the steady fire of perpetual kindness, which had burnt there ever since she had first walked by his side, proud that he discarded the help of a stick. That vague stirring of maternal solicitude met with no eclipse; it grew in silence, sometimes repulsed, never defeated.

“You must let me be your secretary,” she said, “if—if you really—mean——”

She stammered and left her sentence unfinished, afraid of hurting his feelings.

“I hope to engage a first-rate secretary,” he replied, ignoring her incredulity.

“Already I am in communication with one who has been in the Duke of Hamblin’s service for many years ; he sends me splendid testimonials. I shall want him to find a house for us, and arrange everything. Meanwhile I can get on without help, thank you all the same. You might tell Elizabeth my plans. Break them to her gently, for she’s old, poor soul, and really suffers when her groove is attacked by earthquake and upheaval. I frightened her this morning. I forgot how sensitive women are.”

A new sympathy rang in his tone. Jocelyn had known him resort to satire, sharp and biting as a sword. Now he seemed to look with quiet tolerance upon all weakness, even considering Elizabeth !

In the past she appeared somewhat as an enemy, one who would fain have lured him from his endless study by little tricks and subtle deceits. She had been known to alter the hands of the clock, but time could not hold him in bondage, and so the subterfuge failed. Poor creature, her power to control the hermit being *nil*, she must needs content herself with meaner subjects, ruling the frightened kitchen-maid and lording it over the meagre household.

“ Will Elizabeth come to London with us ? ” asked Jocelyn.

She wanted to be sure of her ground before bursting her bombshell.

“ Oh, yes ; if it please her. Elizabeth is an institution, impossible to shake her foundations. You might as well meditate an attack upon Westminster Abbey. But we shall naturally require a more modern style of housekeeper, when entertaining on a large scale. Let Elizabeth wear a silk frock, sit in her own parlour, and pay the maids their wages. The working housekeeper will see that the men-servants do their duty, and order the bill of fare. Tell Elizabeth she is to be a lady and rest upon her oars.”

Jocelyn flitted away with her wonderful news. She felt like a mythical Santa Claus bearing dazzling toys, rich fruits and crackers, stealing down an old chimney to the room of some sleeping child. For what did Elizabeth’s mind resemble more than credulous childhood, which hopeth all things, feareth all things ?

“ How is your heart, Elizabeth ? ” she asked, stealing on tiptoe to the sombre figure.

“ Bless you, there’s nothing wrong with my heart, Miss Jocelyn ! What a question, to be sure ! ”

The peaceful twilight stretched dim fingers across the room, and the kitten had stolen to Elizabeth's knee with a faint mew, its "open sesame" to the palace of her affections.

"Then brace yourself," cried Jocelyn, "for a great surprise. It is a long lane that has no turning. Grandfather has at last turned."

"Oh, miss, don't talk in that wild way. It sounds like something tinned in hot weather," gasped Elizabeth, fanning herself with her pocket-handkerchief.

Jocelyn's mind touched a more romantic line of thought.

"You know," she said, "that after the wilderness came the land flowing with milk and honey. We have all been in the desert together, very much alone, seeing the same view day after day, pilgrimaging through quiet months. But in the end the great reward breaks upon our languishing sight, Elizabeth. You know your sight is languishing, or you would not be wearing those glasses."

Jocelyn was laughing now, her face rippling with sunbeams, her dimples quite in their best form.

"I wish you wouldn't talk in riddles, miss; my head is going round. Parables are all very

well in the great Book, but I can't see what wildernesses and deserts have to do with us."

Resignation, tinged with disappointment, subdued Jocelyn's dimples. How was it possible to make Elizabeth understand the similitude? Such density was its own obstacle, and fettered the wings of imagination. Certainly Elizabeth would never fly!

"The land flowing with milk and honey is London," said the girl, in the tone of a teacher explaining a lesson. (She felt very like Mademoiselle at that moment.) "The wilderness, Salford. We are going to London, you and I and——" (She paused to make the effect more startling) "and grandfather!"

Elizabeth's knees sank, precipitating the kitten on the floor.

"It's never true?" she gasped. "You're trying to make a fool of me, miss, before the first of April."

"No, I am not quite so unorthodox," Jocelyn declared, as she expounded the amazing plan, using some of the Professor's words to emphasise the reality of her tale. "Grandfather wants to 'come out,' and so do I. A season in London will be a novelty to us both, the whole colour of our lives will change. He has always been busy, working

in the dark like an ant underground ; now he wants to be a butterfly. The great law of change has laid hold upon him suddenly. Once he told me ants see in the ultra-violet rays a colour unknown to human eyes. The presence of this colour transforms the entire aspect of Nature, while other animals perceive vibrations that do not affect our ears, hearing sounds and melodies to which we are deaf. I see now fresh colours and hear strange music. Can you see and hear them too ? ”

Jocelyn looked quite uncanny for a moment, as if she had caught the influence of her grandfather's mysticism. Elizabeth asked eager conventional questions, not deigning a reply to the girl's romancing.

Elizabeth heard only the hissing of the kettle, saw only the twilight and blue flame which leapt from crackling wood. Yet she, too, wandered through enchanted forests, as she laid her plans for a flight to Mayfair, forests containing little beauty, perhaps, but planted with methodical groves of fruit-bearing trees.

Everything took a different aspect now. Good-bye hung in the atmosphere, enhancing familiar objects at Heale Prior with a sentimental interest.

Jocelyn wandered from room to room, conscious that her grandfather's prophecy had come true—with the dwindling of novelty enthusiasm waned. Why should the human soul always require variety? Why was it well-nigh impossible to delight continually in the same objects? She recognised novelty as a power. Through its agency, mountains might be moved and cast into the sea. She developed philosophy and analysed this thing of might. What but novelty enhances pleasure, provokes envy, awakens desire, inspires horror? By use even monsters are beheld without loathing, and beauty without rapture. Thus she argued with herself. At first the old treasures at Heale Prior inspired her with an awe nearly akin to worship. She looked with reverential eyes at a fragment of chain mail. An Elizabethan saddle of green velvet, painfully dilapidated, stirred her pulses and sent poetry ringing through her brain. Here and there a rusty sword told stories of thrilling deeds, while dainty ladies and gallant knights materialised at fancy's dictation on the raised dais which had suffered not at all from the corroding hand of time.

But with the lapse of months, even suits of armour and weapons of amazing shapes

grew dumb, and unable any more to tell her their past romances. There was something a little tiring about antique chairs and tables, which fitted in nooks and corners as if they had stood for centuries, without change of plan and at the same monotonous angle.

So the picturesque ideal of bygone days lost its savour, and modernity flitted like an alluring goddess before Jocelyn's enraptured eyes. For the country outside she felt a little homesick pang, since Nature was very dear to her, "not a grand Nature," but "a sweet familiar Nature, stealing in as a dog might, or child, to touch a loved one's hand." She faltered just a little as she thought of certain leave-takings, dreaming that she was driving down the dear old hill, with Professor Gervalle at her side, on their pilgrimage to Salford Station. Good-bye to the quaint, timbered cottages, weathered into countless hues, their red-tiled roofs aglow with gold and silver lichens. Good-bye to the vast woodscape and grand panoramic views. Farewell, rustic folk, in your lovable little nests. Stay, stay in your wealth of quiet beauty, nor seek to follow the dreamer to busy, troublous London. The poms and show of the city lie ahead ; but you, rustic folk, you have chosen the better part !

CHAPTER VI.

No slumber seals the eye of Providence:

JACOBINA wished occasionally that by some turn of Fate's wheel she might hear news of Jocelyn, without appearing to seek it of her own free will. She feared to raise a finger by which the girl might be encouraged, yet natural curiosity would not always sleep. Her going to Heale Prior, and her sojourn with the hermit remained a mystery, no word reaching Lady Livingstone since the day she sent her decisive telegram to Professor Gervalle. Occasionally some friend who remembered asked casually after the orphaned niece, and in replying, her aunt never betrayed ignorance as to Jocelyn's state. The ready answer tripped from her lips, as if they were in weekly correspondence, though under the veil a lurking uneasiness accompanied thoughts of Heale Prior.

Was the girl happy, or moped? Would the old man write even if Jocelyn no longer existed? Had he treated her with proper consideration, or was she kept short of food

by the miser's meanness? Stood she possibly in want of warm clothing and garments suitable to her station?

It hardly seemed that Jacobina, the woman ingrainedly selfish, asked her conscience these questions; rather they were put to her by the dead Idena, stirring in her grave at the bare remembrance of Heale Prior.

Things had gone gaily for Jacobina. Fresh triumphs swelled the list of her conquests, for she still held sway over the heart of man, still snapped her fingers at the thought of marriage. "There were plenty of good women," she said, "to mend the hearts she broke," declaring, as she dismissed her injured, that any amount of hospital nurses waited to bind up lacerated feelings and wounded affections. Possibly she was right, for the Jacobinas of this world must ever appeal to surface love, missing deeper notes which continue to vibrate when beauty wanes and wit fails.

Easter saw her at Tanley Court, the Ludlows' country house, capable of containing a vast number of guests, and celebrated for the cheery nature of its house-parties. Tommy, light-hearted as ever, and fancy free, justified his pseudonym by "ha! ha!-ing" right

lustily, as if he needed to proclaim that man, by laughter, stands distinguished from all other creatures.

His mirth arose from genuine high spirits and an unending source of fun. Nobody saw a joke quicker than Sir Thomas Ludlow, nobody could have better fitted the friendly abbreviation which hailed him "Tommy."

To Jacobina he always came as an exhilarating refreshment, a sea breeze without the accompanying disadvantage of being on a yacht, since Jacobina loved not the restless ocean, which has no respect of persons. She enjoyed this particular sea-breeze under cover, frequently indulging him to the extent of lengthy *tête-à-têtes* in the winter garden, a paradise of easy wicker chairs, luxurious cushions, flowers, palms, and artificial waterfalls.

"Tommy," she said, tracking him down because he had appropriated the very paper she wanted to read, "why can't you cure yourself of always sitting in my favourite chair, and detaining my own particular literature?"

She stood over him, graceful as the tall ferns which framed this spot of ease. The light on her richly tinted hair gave a *bizarre*

effect to the green parrot's wings in her dark blue hat.

"I'm awfully sorry," he cried, bounding to his feet; but on reflection took back the words emphatically. "No, I am not sorry, since it brought you here. I've been fishing a long time for some good society, and at last I've caught a Jack! You may sit in the chair, but I am going to keep these papers, for you've hardly spoken a word to me to-day."

"Selfish little thing!" she muttered, smiling nevertheless as he arranged the cushions behind her head. The papers had fallen to the ground and lay mutually discarded. "You must not be surprised if I neglect you. It's your own fault for inviting so many interesting people," she added in self-defence.

"I see you are getting on uncommonly well with Chandoss. But, I say, Jack, though he's nice enough in his way, doesn't he strike you as a fellow one couldn't really trust?"

"Major Chandoss is a delightful companion. I certainly know nothing of his morals, and care less. He entertains me, which covers a multitude of sins. You are so critical about the people I like. What fun you always made of Daniel Paley-Hyde! I

got quite breathless defending the poor creature."

"Oh, I only called him lugubrious!" protested Tommy, "and that was so obvious it needed no defence. I am sure he felt it his duty to be sad and depressing. An innocent joke startled him like a blasphemy, and I know he looked on a sudden fit of laughter as a breach of his baptismal vow."

"Certainly he usually sighed at the conclusion of a funny story," Jacobina acknowledged. "I tried to break him of the habit by saying he darkened the face of Nature, and destroyed all relish of being alive. Now he is in Parliament I don't see him so often, though I half suspect his melancholy influence dulls the current political news."

"I thought at one time you were going to marry him. It was quite talked about; even mother believed there was some truth in the report."

Jacobina smiled, but she turned a little pinker.

"Poor old Daniel never committed himself. I tried to find the smallest patch of human playground in his severe, unrelenting composition, but the soil was sadly barren, and never yielded fruit. I would like to have

humanised him—though, of course, I was not serious, and possibly he knew that. Married life, child Thomas, is like *table d'hôte*, you get everything but what you want.”

“Marry anyone but Chandoss,” grumbled Tommy, kicking his feet. His merry eyes were quite surprisingly gloomy.

“Your head runs on that man. If you mistrust him, why did you ask him here?”

“We got very friendly at the Riviera. You know how it is when you meet a chap every day. We found we knew several of his relations, and he was awfully civil to mother. We were in the same hotel. She said he must spend Easter with us; but when we came back we found, from the relations he had mentioned, they are not on speaking terms—some family quarrel. As mother had already asked him, we could not back out; only I thought it would have been straighter to tell us at first that his own people had shunted him.”

“I never blame anyone for breaking with their relations,” said Jacobina. “You see, a relation is a necessity, while a friend is voluntary; so it is worse to neglect the latter. I rather fancy, in direct opposition to your theory, that Major Chandoss might prove a

very staunch friend. I have a tiresome way of clinging to my own convictions, and liking a man rather better if others run him down, so beware how you chivy me into the arms of the black sheep."

Tommy handed her the papers. "Perhaps you would like to read," he said sulkily.

Jacobina leant back and closed her eyes. "Pick out interesting little bits," she answered. "That paper often gives me a paragraph, so I take it on principle. My dresses generally sound well in print. I consider how they will read when ordering them."

Tommy turned over the pages listlessly. At last he paused.

"Is your niece, Miss Gervalle, coming to town?" he asked.

"No," snapped Jacobina abruptly. "I thought I told you she cares only for the country. She and her grandfather are perfectly happy ruralising. They are the most contented, stay-at-home couple imaginable."

She spoke with authority, and turned her head on the cushion to stifle a yawn.

"That's odd," said Tommy. "Just listen to this."

He read aloud:—

"Lord Curdford has let his charming town

house furnished for the season to Professor Gervalle, of Heale Prior, Salford. Heale Prior is one of the best known of the old historical Sussex mansions. The Professor's granddaughter, Miss Jocelyn Gervalle, is expected to make her *début* in London early this May."

Jacobina sat up now, and opened her startled eyes widely.

CHAPTER VII.

Dabo vobis terram fluentem lacte at melle.

(I shall give thee a land flowing with milk and honey.)

IF Jacobina intentionally snubbed her host he now reaped a very satisfactory revenge as he watched the electrifying effect of the paragraph. But Tommy was far too good-natured for the pleasures of revenge; they left him unamused. Instead, he felt slightly annoyed at having found Jacobina out.

So, after all, she knew nothing really of the neglected niece, whose fate had been the subject of so much speculation the previous summer. It was, as Tommy frequently suspected, a clear case of romancing when Jacobina talked of Jocelyn's doings in the country. She had shunted the girl with a will. Tommy knew this in his heart of hearts, though he kept the knowledge carefully to himself out of loyalty to Jacobina. He could well picture the precision with which she would bid the younger generation "Keep off the grass!"

fearful lest strange feet should trample upon her own happy hunting ground.

At first she seemed scarcely able to credit the words, and, taking the paper from him, read for herself the astounding intelligence. "I can't understand it," she said. "The old man has vegetated at Heale Prior without budging for half a century. He hates to spend a farthing of his money, though he was always extremely wealthy. Now that his riches have accumulated he must be a regular Croesus. I believe, in his own line, he's highly talented, unless his eccentricity has by this time developed into maudlin imbecility."

"A nice companion for a young girl," Tommy could not resist remarking.

"Oh, I have no doubt he's very kind to her, and if it's true that he is coming to London for the season, she must have obtained an amazing influence over him. A pretty face and a little diplomacy will wheedle a man of his age into doing all sorts of absurd things. It really seems silly for a hermit to suddenly take a house like Lord Curdford's, for I don't suppose he has an idea of entertaining. He could gather a number of illustrious people round him if he chose, for he is certainly a character. His many connections would wel-

come him gladly if he cared about a social life, and he has money enough to make a sensation if he only would disburse it. I shall, of course, offer to 'present' Jocelyn, and will take her to Court as soon as possible."

Jacobina was turning it all over in her mind as she talked. A niece would not be such an appalling matter, established in a home of her own, the chatelaine of a magnificent mansion in Grosvenor Square. She was curious to see Jocelyn and the old Professor, conscious they would be "unusual," something strikingly queer and different from the ordinary run of her acquaintance. If the old man could be induced to keep open house, what countless festivities she might inaugurate, what brilliant functions, popularised through her social gifts and *chic* modernity.

At this present juncture she perceived in the advent of a rich relation unlimited possibilities. She had lived recklessly, till at last her extravagances began to find her out. Losses at bridge were accountable for much, and a *penchant* for gambling on the turf, and Stock Exchange speculations, made retrenching absolutely necessary. With stocks and shares of an unsatisfactory nature nibbling

away her income, Jacobina foresaw financial difficulties, which, with the Professor looming in the background, took a less formidable shape. A miser seemed a poor prop to lean against, but this latest move did not coincide with niggardliness.

Any mental worry, Jacobina fully realised, gave imperceptible strokes to the delicate fibres of vital parts. There were grey hairs to be feared, for she liked not your messy dyes, and rejoiced that her head was crowned by pure gold—no sham gilt in those brilliant locks. She knew diminishing means meant increasing crowsfeet, like weeds on a neglected path, though as yet the vigilance of a professional *masseuse* kept Jacobina's handsome countenance unlined. Still, ease of mind and lack of worry proved the best cosmetic. She sought happiness, convinced it was the greatest tonic and the envy of dyspeptics.

If Jocelyn proved pretty, her advantages were certainly astounding. The Professor's colossal fortune would, of course, be hers in time, and the Gervalles were one of the oldest families in England. Reflected pride, and mercenary considerations, made Jacobina unbend quite tenderly towards the coming *débutante*.

“ I shall write at once and see what I can do for them,” she said. “ I am quite delighted at the prospect, only naturally I felt a little hurt at first, thinking Jocelyn might have told me their plans. It is really quite queer if you look at it all round ; to unearth a hermit is a herculean task, and must have necessitated in the young woman a lot of exertion ! ”

Tommy listened with extreme interest ; he hardly knew why, but he had always wished to see Miss Gervalle. Her career appeared somewhat pathetic to one lapped round with love and pleasure, the idol of his mother, the pet of many devoted friends. In all his large circle of acquaintances Tommy Ludlow could hardly count an enemy. The world recognised instantly that his heart was young and free from bitterness, accepting him as a bright untarnished element, which attracted kindly feelings in return for the sparkling good humour he shed on all sides.

Jacobina tore the paragraph from the paper and placed it in a silver bag slung at her waist. She wore as a belt a marvellous jewelled snake, with eyes of flame, presented to her (perchance in cynicism) by a discarded lover. Possibly the bauble illustrated a

maxim which fitted Jacobina alarmingly well :—

Teach woman wiles and arts ! As well you may
Instruct a snake to bite, or wolf to prey.

“ Jack,” said Tommy, wriggling his chair nearer, “ you are not in your usual form this afternoon. Try a cigarette.”

She selected one from the case he handed her, but her eyes gave back no answering flash to the merry twinkle in his.

“ I am thinking,” she replied, “ and it’s a novel practice for me. I am not sure whether thought is highly becoming or decidedly the reverse. How does the exercise suit me ? ”

“ It alters the curve of your mouth,” he told her. “ It makes you more seraphic and less ‘ kissable-looking ’—you know what I mean.”

“ Yes, if a woman is a fool, men always want to kiss her ; if she’s intellectual, they only hold her hand.”

“ Tell me the thoughts,” he demanded, “ that I may judge whether they are worth the sacrifice of a dimple.”

“ I never had a dimple in my life. They were Idena’s weapons, and I daresay she handed them down to her enigmatical daugh-

ter. The girl is, I feel, a mystery—and a little cold and heartless where relations are concerned. I think she might have confided the Professor's plans to her mother's only sister, don't you? Lack of sympathy and good feeling in a woman is abominable; but youth claims many indulgences. I was really thinking of Paley-Hyde, and some of his sayings. I remember him remarking on Machiavelli's observation, 'that every state should entertain a perpetual jealousy of its neighbours, and so never be unprovided when emergency happens.' Now, Paley-Hyde lived up to that theory, but I laughed at it, and so emergency is apt to find me unprepared. He asked a good deal about Jocelyn at one time. I shall make a point of introducing him to her and the Professor. Colonel Gervalle's career held great fascination for our lugubrious M.P. I wonder if I shall ever be afforded the satisfaction of knowing the real Paley-Hyde?"

"It might be rather a shock, but his politics are all right. Mother has heard him rasping out lengthy orations on provincial platforms, and she confessed herself impressed."

"I fancy, humanly speaking," said Jacobina, "in seeking to regulate his passions he

has entirely extinguished them, thus putting out the light of the soul. He is all very well as a methodical, hard-working machine. To be without passion, or to be hurried away with it, is equally bad. Paley-Hyde has slipped into the former pitfall."

Jacobina swung her elegant body out of the low wicker chair, stretching herself like a lioness waking in the sun. She was proud of her splendid vitality—the Gervalle women came of a healthy stock.

"Good-bye, 'Ha! Ha!'" she yawned, showing her dazzling white teeth, and wondering if he knew she had never been to a dentist. "I will leave you to light literature and the goddess Nicotine. My parrot's wings are giving me a headache; I must go and take off my hat."

As she glided away, with the long, noiseless step of a graceful walker, she looked, as she often did now, at the blazing diamond rings on her fingers. She wondered if those fingers would ever be denuded of their gems, remembering vast piles of unpaid bills and those disastrous losses at bridge.

She had lived long in the land flowing with milk and honey, tasting its sweets, and never knowing the feverish thirst of the desert.

Now that fair land opened out for Jocelyn—the girl who had cried to her in the night through wild unwelcome dreams. The words still lived in her memory—“I am buried alive, and you have thrust me into the tomb.”

The seedling, with spring's advent, shot through the dry ground, and Jacobina recognised in this new turn of fate the unslumbering eye of a watchful Providence.

“I must be nice to Jocelyn, even if she's a prig,” Jacobina told herself. “‘Beggars cannot be choosers,’ and if I don't take care I may soon be looking bankruptcy in the face. Bridge again to-night—what an inveterate player I am! No one would guess the shoe pinches, it is of too expensive a design; only cheap shoes make delicate feet footsore and weary while sitting still. Let me see, Major Chandoss lent me five hundred pounds last night—offered to be my banker—lost seven hundred, and owe him for the night before. The luck must change; it's no use funking.”

She opened a black book which she kept in her dressing-bag, and jotted down a few figures. When, later on, her maid came to ask if she would change for tea, Lady Livingstone was still poring over the small account

book ; she had forgotten to take off the hat with the green wings. Perhaps the tired head had other causes for weariness, far removed from the light weight of parrot's plumage and twisted gauze !

CHAPTER VIII.

Upon the heels of Pleasure.

THERE were many rumours afloat connected with Professor Gervalle's arrival in London. The scientific world waited expectantly in the hope that he might have certain discoveries to disclose, for his ceaseless labours were known to a large field of scientists throughout Europe.

Already the mysterious theory of pneumatology was becoming a fashionable subject of conversation in Mayfair drawing-rooms ; women, ever eager to welcome the occult, snatched at hints which reached them through the Press of a possible disclosure which might revolutionise the world.

Professor Gervalle had little thought of being received as a celebrity, quite unaware that London ever awaits the new, the strange, the untried, thrilling at the first faint distant roar of a lion in their midst.

Without a word from the Sussex wizard, as he had been irreverently called, the startling

intelligence gained credence that the wealthy scientist, after a lifetime of research, had recently discovered the intermixture of invisible and impalpable beings with human society. He was reported to possess the power of discerning bodies and their movements by certain vibrations of light, these bodies being invisible to ordinary sight. When the fascinating belief first reached Jacobina, shortly before her relative's arrival, she perceived in it a dazzling attraction, a means whereby she might make the Professor's house a highly enviable resort. Utterly sceptical herself, she encouraged the idea, enlarging upon it from her own imagination. Lady Ludlow, proverbially wise, found a great deal to say on the subject; in fact, she could talk of nothing else, so enthralled was she by the mystical notion.

“My dear,” she said, wringing Jacobina's hands in her excitement, “I am simply living to see Professor Gervalle! I hear he is the most marvellous man of the century. It all seems so romantic, too, that his life should have been entirely sacrificed to study. While he was wholly given up to research, the best years of his manhood were slipping away, never to be reclaimed.”

“It was his choice,” replied Lady Living-

stone, "and to spend our time in our own way is, I suppose, the essence of luxury. I expect he realised that the best method of separating oneself from the world is to give up all pomp and show. Meanwhile his fortune has accumulated gigantically, and it's a perfect blessing he has at last come to his senses, that he may enjoy a little of it before he dies. I was very surprised to hear from Jocelyn he wishes to entertain. I fully expected I should have to drive the idea into his woolly head—for woolly I know it must be after a life of 'all work and no play.' Of course, I am ready enough to fall down and worship his marvellous brain; do not imagine I am underrating my clever but eccentric relative. I think in my own heart I'm, if anything, too proud; I go boasting from house to house."

Jacobina's face smiled and flushed as she discussed this alluring subject. She felt like an actress creating a new part, not sure if it were light comedy or real downright farce, but leniently inclined to the former.

"I know very little," sighed Lady Ludlow, "but I can fully grasp the existence around us of an invisible element sustaining its own species of beings. Professor Gervalle has undoubtedly discovered they are capable of being

seen, as invisible stars and microbes have been brought, by the aid of science, under our vision. Whether he will part with his secret is another matter. I understand he is not an easy man to approach, for he has certainly never sought fame."

"Those who desire it are generally most unsuccessful in their pursuit after fame," declared Jacobina, trying to look almost as wise as Lady Ludlow, but failing under the influence of a frivolous hat.

"Wisdom," in the shape of Tommy's mother, wore grey crêpe, so, of course, could afford to talk learnedly, and even quote from the ancients without appearing incongruous.

"Sallust remarked of Cato that the less he coveted glory the more he acquired it," she murmured, in a tone which seemed to convey, "I said I knew very little, but I meant you to contradict me."

Jacobina really respected Lady Ludlow, though she sometimes thought the love of praise proved a strong incentive to worthy actions. This good woman, full of philanthropic works and high ideals, would lay traps for a little incense even from those whose opinion she valued in nothing but her own favour. Like most of her sex, she only looked

for one homage—constant attention. She seldom cared to analyse the object of it or the cause.

“ I envy a man who can rise above a vain wish for personal glory,” said Jacobina. “ Ambitious people must be so frequently disappointed and cast down when they do not receive the adulation they expect, or feel mortified with the very praise received should it not reach the height desired. With Professor Gervalle’s passion for work he was bound to succeed in the end, since genius is an ‘infinite capacity for taking pains.’ If a man does anything really great the world never regards him with an indifferent eye, but always as a friend or an enemy. He will have his followers and revilers. My dear old relative must not expect to escape criticism. I doubt if he would plunge, now, into the publicity of social life if he guessed with what energy tongues are wagging, and making free with his name. A revolution in intellectual circles is expected, though many frown upon any attempt at enlightenment and psychological discovery, considering it not merely fruitless, but reprehensible and dangerous.”

Lady Ludlow would fain have detained Jacobina for hours, eager to discuss the

problems which pneumatology involved, but the younger woman's time was precious, and she saw the probability of drifting out of her depth.

Jacobina pleaded a multitude of business, and escaped the clutches of her discursive friend.

There were dressmakers to be interviewed—and cajoled—for as yet Lady Livingstone had not exhausted her credit, though a few of the best firms were growing slightly restive and suspicious. She threw out all her magnetism to divert their thoughts from the very large accounts owing from last season. She had never descended to introducing customers and receiving commission, for Jacobina had the Gervalle pride rooted and grounded deeply in her composition.

In direct contrast to her modern methods, there were old-fashioned cranks which asserted authority. She had a distinct abhorrence of trade, aware that every hard-working business man lives perpetually under a secret impatience of the hurry and fatigue he suffers, with no time to fall under the sway, or dawdle at the feet, of idle women. The drones of the earth were her playmates, and very satisfactory companions she found them.

Since her return to London, after the somewhat disastrous visit to Tanley Court, Jacobina had seen Major Chandoss constantly. Her losses still remained unpaid, to the vast discomfiture of her soul, and fresh plunges into speculative enterprise made matters worse instead of better. She gradually accustomed herself to the realisation that luck was against her, though she knew it would be vain to make apologies and multiply words for what could never be defended by the best advocate in the world—the guilt of being unfortunate. So she let the matter stand over, and received Major Chandoss with extreme graciousness, and a sensation of discomfort subtly hidden under light badinage and smiles.

She had thought him very fascinating at Tanley Court, for even at breakfast he never failed to talk entertainingly, and almost rivalled Tommy in boisterous spirits, tricks, and joking. He sang dashing Spanish love songs to the guitar, songs which always addressed themselves to Lady Livingstone, though she drifted to the very furthest corner of the room. In London the guitar was not in evidence, and town garb gave a more elderly expression to Major Chandoss' tall,

important figure. He had a most remarkable habit of changing his personality with bewildering swiftness. One moment he brought back the cavalier of bygone ages, his courtesy and charm outshining the efforts of younger men to gain distinction, then anon the cavalier manner changed to amazing stolidity.

He was in one of his stolid moods the day of Professor Gervalle's arrival in town.

Jacobina, dressed for driving, met him in the hall.

"I am just going to call on the Gervalles," she said. "I had a letter from my niece asking me to come and see her grandfather this afternoon."

"So you are not at home to visitors?" he queried, and the look in his eyes warned her not to trifle with his friendship.

"The carriage can wait," she answered, leading the way to the boudoir. "I could not dream of letting you go."

Her tone implied flattery; she threw him a melting glance. Of course, he could not suggest, here in her own house, after the sacrifice of time endured on his behalf, that certain sums should be refunded. Her pride suffered considerably as she recalled those

reckless nights of gambling—she wished she had never seen a card or heard of bridge.

At first he talked disconnectedly, on matters of no importance, avoiding her eyes, and acutely aware his society must pall upon this woman of temperament. Women of temperament he knew were the jokes of the gods. Even the hardest natures have moments of penitential hesitation, for a pretty woman, smiling half fearfully, is not the victim a man would choose for the driving of a hard bargain. But Major Chandoss kept his conscience severely under control.

“I came to-day,” he said, with a little preliminary cough, “to talk business. I hope you do not mind?”

Jacobina started, but was not aware she betrayed surprise, only the small pink ear flushed scarlet, the thin expressive lips forgot their smiles.

“Oh,” she murmured, “business.”

She leant back against the sofa cushions with pathetic limpness, the room swam suddenly before her eyes.

“Yes, it’s a tiresome matter about those losses of yours. I only wish I could afford to ignore the amount you unfortunately borrowed. You surely realise what a very

painful position I put myself in when I advanced so large a sum. I must ask you to find the money, or the equivalent."

His voice rang hard as steel, the society mask slipped from his features, set, crafty, and stern. The black sheep of an aristocratic family had not crept into Tanley Court in vain. He trapped his prey in Jacobina, and now the work of fleecing began.

She felt like a hunted animal at bay, for Lady Livingstone resented retribution as a vulgar, uninvited guest.

"Can't you give me a little time?" she said, trying to speak casually. "You come at a sadly inconvenient juncture. To use the commonest slang, which is ever the most expressive, for the moment I am stony broke."

The words rippled off her tongue with a forced laugh, in itself an apology for the confession. Jacobina waited breathlessly for him to laugh also. Instead, the grim face grew even more thoughtful; it was hard to believe he was the singer of those gay Spanish ballads.

"I noticed," he said, "at Tanley Court, that your family jewels made a substantial security, or I must have declined the honour of being your banker."

A cold shiver ran through Jacobina, her eyes expanded till the pupils grew enormous, but she made no answer.

Words failed her as a wave of indignation set her nerves tingling, turned her blood to flame.

“You see,” he continued, quite coolly, “you owe me £5,000, which I could raise on a few of your trinkets, say the diamond tiara, the big single stone necklace, and that historic emerald pendant which belonged to Marie Antoinette. I propose getting them exactly imitated for you, so no one need know of our transaction. Surely it is the easiest way out of a difficulty—if you find it inconvenient to refund the money.”

Jacobina was terrified at the idea of debt. Womanlike, she dreaded to name the subject to her closest friend. She was one of many unstable souls who swell the coffers of the money-lender, lacking moral courage when the screw is turned to seek advice in safe quarters.

The idea of hiding her humiliation and obtaining a copy of her treasured heirlooms appealed to her forcibly. She thought at once of the comments their absence would attract. She felt dazed, driven into a corner, chased

to the very brink of a yawning abyss. When deep waters close over a drowning soul any straw appeals to the hands seeking safety—thus Jacobina clutched at the straw he proffered.

She repeated the bargain, as if learning a lesson—one bitterly hard to master, taught in the school of adversity. “The necklace, the pendant, the tiara,” she murmured, counting each article on her fingers, with her brow twisted in a frown, “these to be relinquished for my debt to you ; but surely they are worth more ? ”

“In that case,” he replied, “dispose of them yourself.”

A sensitive shrinking from any such course, and fear of publicity, made her favour the first suggestion.

“I think,” she said, “I had better rely upon you. Nobody need ever suspect, if the duplicates correspond in the minutest detail. I will tell my maid I wish to take them to be cleaned, so if you will call here to-morrow I will hand them to you myself.”

It caused her a supreme effort of self-control to deliver these words in an unemotional voice. She was astute enough to know tears or lamentations would be wasted

on this imperturbable creditor, and, with a desperate desire to retain a certain amount of pride, held her head high, viewing him haughtily. Her eyes expressed scornfully that she knew him at last, the enemy who had masqueraded, leading her to fear nothing at his hands.

“I must go,” she said, rising with an effort, and holding her forehead a moment to collect her thoughts; “the Gervalles are expecting me.”

She saw no further need of entertaining him; he was to be paid in full; he was taking from her the dearest treasures of her heart. She felt sick, dizzy, unstrung; her face looked white, almost haggard.

“May I accompany you?” he asked, boldly. “I have a great desire to know Professor Gervalle, nor am I alone in my wish to meet him. He is to be something of a *furor*, I understand.”

The request startled Jacobina. For some days past she had anticipated with distinct trepidation her first visit to the Gervalles. She knew that Jocelyn must hold her in light esteem. She also half suspected the Professor might resent her lack of sympathy, her evident desire to escape responsibility

when Jocelyn's future hung in the balance. Might it not be advisable to have the support of a stranger's presence in the first awkward moment of reunion ?

" Yes, you can come if you like," she said, shortly. Her voice had never sounded less mellow.

Major Chandoss bowed in quite his old courtly manner as he followed her to the carriage.

CHAPTER IX.

Hints haunt me ever of a more beyond ;
 I am rebuked by a sense of the incomplete,
 Of a completion over-soon assumed,
 Of adding up too soon.—*Clough.*

LADY LIVINGSTONE and Major Chandoss spoke little as they drove to Grosvenor Square. He attempted conversation, but she was unresponsive and reticent. It seemed she purposely shut off the sparkle and vivacity which proved her chief charm, making herself wilfully dull.

He had spoken truly when expressing a wish to know the Gervalles, for report said the old man's granddaughter was the richest heiress of the season. Major Chandoss saw by the looking-glass he was well favoured, and very young girls usually preferred men of a certain age. But this alone was not the sole reason why he forced his company upon Jacobina. He knew the thought of parting with her jewels came as a bitter blow, a heavy nerve-shattering shock, and he feared in her

agitation she might unfold her troubles to the Professor.

Accordingly Major Chandoss determined to see the visit out, and on the morrow his bargain would meet with fulfilment—on the morrow the jewels would be safely lodged in his keeping. He cared little that Jacobina hated him ; he cared much that she was under his heel. To see her reserved, and wrapt in freezing disdain, proved amusing to his callous temperament. The butterfly on the pin gratified his love of control.

She thought as she glanced at the hypocritical face that false friendship, like ivy, decays and ruins the walls it embraces.

Major Chandoss felt glad when the drive came to an end ; he was not accustomed to endure blank ineloquent silence.

Lady Livingstone forced back some of her habitual gaiety as she entered the large outer hall, classical by reason of its Flaxman frieze. The inner hall, containing many curious busts, formed an ante-chamber to a suite of rooms. They were not shown up the reddish veined marble staircase, but conducted to a distant apartment on the ground floor, a room hung with exquisite Boucher tapestries, every detail arranged in harmonious design.

Jacobina took it all in with swift eye ; she knew the setting exactly suited her imposing figure, and felt instantly at home. She reared her stately head, aware that her long loose coat of filmy lace added height to her already commanding stature ; she was a mixture of mellow-tinted *guipure*, chiffon ruchings, expensive odours, and hothouse flowers, the latter from the Tanley Court conservatories, sent by order of the thoughtful Tommy. At least her entrance lacked nothing from effect, for Jacobina believed in the value of first impressions ; she realised there was much lost ground to be retrieved. But even her *sangfroid* betrayed surprise at the first glimpse she obtained of these new comers.

On a large, deep sofa sat a frail, old, white-haired man, billowed around with an atmosphere of mystery—one so like, save for his beard, her preconceived idea of the late Pope, that involuntarily the inclination seized her to bend a reverential knee. Beside him, as if watching over his fragility, stood a young and radiant girl, her face and figure set off to perfection by the simple princess dress, made of some clinging material, with the shimmering softness of *panne*. Behind her were two giant roses in a quaint green vase, and Jocelyn

herself looked so like a rose, that Jacobina felt, with surprise, her own beauty wane in contrast to this freshly opened flower.

There was not a trace of embarrassment or reserve on either side, as these "stranger-relatives" linked hands. Jacobina realised, in a flash, this striking couple were above spite or revenge; they stood upon a mystic plane in the region of forgotten, outlived sincerity, kindness, and truth.

"Idena glorified," she thought, as she kissed the delicately flushing face of her neglected niece. "Idena come back from the dead, with her earthliness extracted; Idena aglow from the light of a better, brighter world."

The Professor stood only a moment, just to greet Lady Livingstone and her companion, whom she introduced in the most offhand manner. Then the weak body sank gladly back to the inviting support of cushions.

"Grandfather is very tired after his journey," said Jocelyn. "We only arrived this morning, and I wanted him to lie down after lunch, but he wouldn't."

The simple words betrayed anxiety, as she glanced at him with her large tender eyes,

which seemed looking up to the world for protection.

“Employment is Nature’s physician,” replied the Professor, his sweet, slow smile lighting the weary face with a sudden flash. “I was a little shaken by the railway journey, not having travelled by train for many years. The noise and rattle has unfortunately increased my deafness. I must ask you, Jacobina, to talk through this ear-trumpet—such a convenience. You see I am too considerate to make my friends shout every time they are good enough to address me.”

Lady Livingstone looked with wonder at the queer instrument; she did not like to remark upon its peculiarity. If he must use an ear-trumpet she felt glad he had obtained something unique, which would be in keeping with his reported eccentricity. She fluttered gracefully down on the sofa beside him, while Jocelyn, with the air of one accustomed to entertain, took Major Chandoss under her half-fledged wing, and entered into cheerful conversation. The girl’s manner, absolutely devoid of *gaucherie*, surprised Jacobina; she remembered young people sometimes needed cautioning against a despicable simplicity. The soul of frankness might be taking, but there

was something a little galling to the older woman in her niece's bold disregard of little affectations.

Realising the truth of the French proverb that you cannot be in the procession and look out of the window at the same time, Lady Livingstone withdrew her critical gaze, and talked to the Professor. He drank in her every word, as if each utterance were worth its weight in gold, though at first she merely discussed the safe subject of his health.

"I have never regarded health over much," he said, in answer to her sympathetic inquiries, "since we cannot enjoy what we are constantly afraid of losing. No doctor has entered my house since I retired to a life of study and solitude—the ills of the flesh passed me by, because my mind was otherwise employed. An old maxim says, 'When a nation abounds in physicians, it grows thin of people.'"

"London swarms with medical men," Jacobina retorted, "but the population does not decrease! Old maxims wear out, you know, Professor, like old clothes."

"And old men!"

"No, no; I did not say that."

The Professor was actually laughing. Jacobina rejoiced that a dry-as-dust fossil could make a joke against himself.

“In my day the three great professions—Divinity, Law, and Physic—were overburdened with practitioners,” he said, “filled, indeed, with multitudes of ingenious gentlemen, who starved one another out. They were like Virgil’s army, so crowded, many had not room to use their weapons. The best medicine for my old age is pleasant society, long abstained from, as you know. Cheerful folk are like spies, bringing with them clusters of grapes and delicious fruits to invite their companions to a pleasant country.”

Jacobina took the words as a compliment; quaintly stilted as his speech appeared, she was attracted by a mind so obviously capable of retaining a perpetual serenity.

But thoughts of him and criticisms of Jocelyn were not the only reflections seething through Jacobina’s busy brain. The shock of the afternoon’s bargaining still held vivid sway over her peace of mind, making her talk in a somewhat abstracted manner. Every now and again her eyes strayed fearfully in Major Chandoss’ direction, with the haunting memory that on the morrow her family jewels

would pass into the hands of the usurer. He, on his part with triumph, also recollected the piece of sharp practice carried through with such surprising ease. He put out all his attractions to gain the good will of Jocelyn, feeling that a footing in such a house would complete a very satisfactory day's work. Her lack of experience made her girlishly proud of this easy conquest ; it was good to be in the midst of throbbing life, to see fresh faces, and exchange ideas with modern men.

“ You must be very interested in Jocelyn,” said Lady Livingstone. “ It's a novelty to find yourself chaperoning a young girl ! I expect already you have submitted to ‘ Home Rule.’ ”

He shook his head.

“ The child has nothing of the tyrant in her composition,” he declared. “ ‘ Home Rule ’ is the cry of the horse-leech's daughter— ‘ Give ! give ! ’ Jocelyn has never asked me for anything. I am going now to study your sex ; I think it is a comedy, only too often productive of melodrama. I have come to London to mix as much with men and women as possible, to burn the midnight oil in social pleasures, to spend my day with congenial companions, to make up in a few short months

the arrears of long decades. I shall grudge every moment spent in rest, for the long, long rest lies ahead, and I shall have time enough to slumber in the grave. Do you ever think how you fritter away your time on trifles, and when the night comes throw yourself without a regret into the folly of dreams, broken thoughts, and imaginations? Your reason lies dormant by you, so you are for the time as brutes that sleep in the field."

"If all that people say of you is true," answered Jacobina, "I don't wonder my life, with a thousand others, seems so much dross in your eyes. Society has it that you are responsible for a great discovery."

The Professor drew away sharply, involuntarily removing his ear-trumpet and half covering it with the sofa cushions.

"A discovery!" he snapped. "What discovery?"

His eyes grew keen, and flashed oddly, like distant lights seen suddenly on a dark evening.

Jacobina perceived she was treading on holy ground, but knew not how to make amends, since she could find no practical way of putting the shoes from off her feet.

"They say you have discovered a new

sense ; that whereas ancient philosophy supposed there were only four elements—earth, air, fire, and water—and we now reckon a vast number, so there may be more than five senses.”

The words came stumbling out with an unaccustomed sound from Jacobina’s lips ; she fancied someone else must be speaking ; she wished she had never approached the bewildering subject.

“ Oh ! ” he murmured, “ people talk now as of old, I perceive. ‘ What thou doest in secret shall be told in the noonday.’ All the hidden things must be mercilessly revealed. Is it not so ? ”

“ It is so.”

“ What else have you heard, Jacobina ? ”

She tried to escape from the mastery of those small, bright, terrible eyes, yet somehow they compelled her to continue against her will.

“ People are beginning to discuss, and half believe in, a second universe around us. Lady Ludlow feels convinced that it exists, and is not less real than our own.”

The Professor’s face softened. He might have come through a great crisis from the deep-drawn sigh of relief which escaped him.

He brought forth his ear-trumpet again, blissfully ignoring the fact that he had conversed quite comfortably without its help.

“A universe,” he said, “complete with life, doubtless believing, as we do, itself to be the only reality. And why not? At present men will tell you that sight, hearing, and touch only make us acquainted with a certain stage of the creation, informing us merely of whatever is moving upon it, and there they stop. Does it seem to you incomprehensible that the inner form of matter might be perceptible as well as the external form, and the specific causes of all we see become as perceptible as are now the ulterior products? Why should not the human brain, besides knowing effects, discover causes, tracing forms and affinities, a stage or two higher than in the past? Inner perception might consist with the simultaneous perception of external things!”

He had brightened up like a coal fire, this shrunken, emaciated figure, so strikingly similar to his Holiness of the Vatican. But he found in the brilliant Jacobina a poor arguer where science was concerned, nor did she ape knowledge, but confessed a shameless ignorance, with smiles and little shakes of her elegant head.

He watched with discernment and sharp observation the extreme contrast between Jacobina and her young niece. The slender girl with soft silken hair that had no will of its own, looked now and again like a startled deer when Major Chandoss plunged into some very up-to-date story of social doings. More than once he brought a blush to the face of this unplucked flower, with its beautiful curved mouth and drooping eyelids, weighed down by such long lashes! Then, again, those eyes, the irises of which seemed bluer than the very heavens, would look up with dilated pupils to comment, question, and hang upon his words.

But the siren on the sofa was of different clay, a woman not absolutely beautiful, but undeniably fascinating, every movement a changing charm, every motion a power of attraction, drawing her victims nearer and nearer adoration. The Professor used her as a study of certain species he had almost forgotten. Her voice recalled his son's wife; she interested him, if she failed to please. He was not sure if the rustle of her dress recalled the sound of the bird in its nest or the serpent in the grass—he inclined to the latter simile. A number of small details revealed her character, living in his mind long after she had

glided away, tracked by the watchful Major Chandoss—that indefinable perfume which enveloped her as an atmosphere round a dazzling planet, that happy, careless selfishness, never likely to drop a tear for another’s suffering, yet shutting out, by pure glamour, this view of her actions from the average mind.

“She is a body of electricity,” he told Jocelyn afterwards, “and the subtle fluid does not ooze out of her fingers, but flies like lightning as she passes, if you but touch the hem of her dress.”

“You have taught me a great deal,” he said, after regarding her some moments in silence, still with his ear-trumpet poised within easy range of the deficient organs of sound, which had a surprising knack of temporary recovery. “I have come to London to learn. I hope to know you very well in time. Possibly we shall before the end fully understand each other.”

His voice retained its mystic note, and his words seemed to hold an inner meaning, which might not be expressed in speech. Jacobina felt suddenly at sea, a strange palpitation affected her heart; she thought of her past behaviour, wondering guiltily if the words savoured of reproach or threat. “Before the

end " must surely mean he felt the shadow of death creeping through the glitter of this new home. She shivered and closed her eyes.

" Those who know us best must love or dread us most," he continued, and his far-away look inspired love rather than fear. Instinctively Jacobina unlocked her eyes, feeling them drawn once more to his face. She fancied she read sympathy in that pale countenance, like a mask, taken after death, with a sudden miraculous revival of expression. She wondered if her anxiety was in any way palpable to an astute observer. The haunting thought of her jewels returned again and again to hang, like the sword of Damocles, over her spirit, subduing the vivacity she struggled to maintain.

" Pain and worry," he remarked, discerning her mood, " would be devilish if there were no purpose in them."

She started, and flushed such a vivid crimson that even Jocelyn, at a distance, wondered what he could have said.

" We live in a devilish world," answered Lady Livingstone, and her face grew hard, while she cast a look in Major Chandoss' direction which implied the query, " Are you never going ? "

She guessed he was determined to sit her out, but found no clue to account for what she considered extremely bad taste. He knew she was meeting relatives after many years, yet continued monopolising Jocelyn, though tea had been dispensed, and the hour grew late.

The Professor rose suddenly, with an alacrity of movement which astonished Jacobina, and, ignoring her remark, crossed over to Major Chandoss, bending to him with the trumpet well in evidence. He made no excuse for deserting his fair relative, and engaged her companion in conversation, showing by his eager questioning and quick retorts with what rapidity his brain worked. Major Chandoss thought of the jewels, and felt strangely uncomfortable beneath the scrutiny of those piercing eyes. He hoped the Professor would never learn the truth, for, though old and feeble in body, he yet might prove a powerful enemy, with his extraordinary intelligence, his mental vigour and vast possessions. As a friend—how useful! As a foe—how alarming and uncanny! It seemed he might turn the evil eye upon a wrongdoer, and curse him for ever afterwards—with a look.

Jocelyn rose, and gently pushing her

grandfather into the chair she had vacated, joined Jacobina on the sofa.

“Isn’t it strange,” she said, “that both our names begin with J ? Before you married your initials were the same as mine.”

“The girl has no conversation,” thought Lady Livingstone ; “but she’s pretty enough to be dumb ; she would still attract attention.”

“Yes, ‘J’ stands for jilt, so be warned in time, Miss Jocelyn Gervalle,” laughed Jacobina, touching lightly the lustrous hair, which clung like the tendrils of a vine round her niece’s beautiful forehead. “I have great store cupboards of advice waiting to open their doors when you come and knock, my child ; so don’t fall in love without consulting Aunt Jack, for I assure you she has had good training and experience. Remember, first of all, that women, when wise, always keep something in store for the men they love. I expect, like most young people, you will rush into matrimony, just because the riskiness of it makes the trap fascinating. We are all gamblers at heart, and take desperate chances. But love is romantic, and matrimony decidedly matter of fact.”

Jocelyn noticed her aunt’s voice shake

with an odd little tremor at the word "gamblers."

"I can't think of marriage as unromantic," said Jocelyn, "for it is love still."

The widow smiled at youth's illusions; her own experience made grey the very thought of honeymooning, and tinted orange-blossoms with the decay which her own bright hopes had suffered. She remembered Lord Livingstone as the incarnation of an unredeemed bore, realising that boredom may prove more contagious than measles, and that even at a large gathering one thoroughly boring guest can depress and spoil a whole party.

"Your grandfather frightens me," said Jacobina, glancing at the old man. "He looks so frail and white, a breath might blow him away!"

"Yes," answered the girl. "I felt that last year, when I first went to Heale Prior; his fragility was a daily terror. I never expected he could live through the coming winter, much less that we should be settled in London the following May. You see, his mind triumphs over bodily weakness. It is wonderful. You have to live with him to realise its worth, to fully appreciate its true value. I think he must make people feel they would do

anything for him directly they see the far-away expression in his eyes, and the spirituality of his face. He is very remarkable, quite different from other old men."

Jacobina listened with some surprise to Jocelyn's tender adulation. The girl at least had the good sense to appreciate talent of a very uncommon, mystifying type.

"Age," replied her aunt, "has etherealised instead of coarsening him, which is rare, and exceptionally delightful. Many a fine nature is apt to become tinged by a certain grossness when the prime of life is left behind ; the little fastidious refinements of youth grow old and rusty with the body."

"Grandfather has escaped rust," said Jocelyn, "by keeping the keen edge of his intellect sharpened with unflinching research. He has come to London to study something I cannot understand. He called our entrance into the world of pleasure 'a kindergarten game for full-grown scientists.' Of course, I cannot follow all his deep ideas, but I love to hear them. We had many happy hours together at Heale Prior, though he kept me rather short of his society ; I never had as much of it as I wanted, nor did he let me see his laboratory once the whole time. That

increased the mystery ; it became a kind of Blue Beard's cupboard. Elizabeth thought he raised spirits ; she was often talking of devils and dreadful things."

" Pleasant for you ! " remarked Jacobina satirically.

" Oh, I don't mind ! I had grandfather, and if you love a person you can't feel frightened."

During the brief pause which followed these words the violet-blue eyes rested with genuine admiration on the Professor.

" It is fortunate you and your grandfather get on so well," murmured Lady Livingstone, forgetting now her own selfish motives, and feeling instead she had done a very fine work by throwing these two together. She was ready to pride herself upon generous forethought and discernment which had never existed.

This happy accident, freeing her from reproach, made for vanity. She figuratively patted herself on the back, wiping off her score with Idena, whose ghost was for ever laid.

" Grandfather says," continued Jocelyn, eager to tell his words of wisdom, " that tact is the most helpful weapon in society. Tact, he believes, makes people more beautiful and

acceptable than the smartest clothes or most brilliant conversation. Being home-made, the secret of its composition is only known to few ; that's why it is such a rare and valuable addition to social adornment. You see, I'm repeating his words, 'as tact is to the outside, so truth, its twin sister, should exist within, that the two may work as one.' "

Jacobina shrugged her shapely shoulders.

"No praise can over-estimate tact," she replied, "but I don't see how you can practise truth in society! You must surely look happy when you are horribly bored, and say you are pleased to see people when you wish them at Jericho. Talking of that, I am sure it is taxing the Professor's strength receiving visitors on the day of his arrival, so I am going to set the good example, and bid you adieu. I think Major Chandoss" (speaking in a whisper) "might have gone before. He asked me to bring him, so I could not very well decline. I expect he will take advantage of my introduction to haunt your house. If so—shunt him. He is no particular friend of mine."

"He is very pleasant," answered Jocelyn, "and I'm sure grandfather was glad you came. He wanted to see you. Don't you like Major Chandoss?"

“ No ; he impresses people at first. I fell into the error of being impressed. He has a number of amusing stories and sings charmingly, but he is really very shallow—an unreliable friend. Narrow souls are like narrow-necked bottles, the less they have inside them the more noise in pouring out.”

Jacobina patted the girl’s hand, and got up to go, with a smile which flashed from Jocelyn to the Professor, eloquently expressing approval of all she had heard and seen. Major Chandoss also smiled and bade them good-bye, keeping Jocelyn’s hand a moment longer than conventionality warranted in farewell.

“ I can drive back a little way with you,” he said familiarly to Lady Livingstone, as she stepped into the carriage, taking his place uninvited at her side.

“ A most refreshing couple,” he said, “ that old man and his granddaughter, the latter utterly charming, the former certainly amusing.”

“ Why amusing ? ” queried Jacobina languidly. If eyes can borrow the weapon of the lips and sneer, hers were certainly satirical as they met his coldly.

“ Well, he strikes me as the kind of person to give valuable advice as to which phase of the moon is most favourable to a sufferer

before gathering a medicinal herb! I could picture him counselling mothers of children afflicted by whooping cough to pass them under the body of a white donkey. He has a face that naturally suggests the fanciful and occult—in which I have no faith. I never believe what I cannot understand.”

“Then you must have the shortest possible creed,” declared Jacobina. “Many will make fun of the Professor, for there is no defence against inopportune ridicule but obscurity. It is foolish if an eminent man expects to escape gibes, and still more foolish to be affected by them. You evidently take Positivism as your guide.”

Major Chandoss listened complacently to Jacobina’s snubbing. He guessed she could not be in a good or pleasant mood, since luxury and the gratification of every whim are not conducive to patience when the day of reckoning comes.

He soon found he was in a hurry to be off, but thanked her in parting for introducing him to the nymph with the sweet, half wild, sylvan air.

“I shall call to-morrow,” he said, “for the little parcel, as I understand you wish to hand it me yourself.”

“Your understanding grasps that much, oh man of earth!” she said, with a ring of bitter playfulness, as she proffered him the tips of her small, neatly-gloved fingers. “I do not quite see you making a pal of so young a girl as Jocelyn Gervalle. Yours is the last hand to pluck a pure white lily on a stagnant pond.”

“Stagnant merely because the waters have not been stirred,” he answered boldly. “*À demain*, Lady Livingstone.”

He raised his hat, and was gone, before Jacobina could snatch the pleasure of a last thrust.

“To-morrow,” she muttered, and breathed hard.

Her reign of uncontrolled luxury suffered a severe check. Hitherto she had not swerved from the rank of pleasure seekers, enjoying a state of things made for such as have large appetites, no liver, and no conscience. Now their motto, “Let us always be amused,” mocked the sacrifice in store.

“To-morrow! To-morrow! To-morrow!”

CHAPTER X.

Go, speed the stars of thought
 On to their shining goals ;
 The sower scatters broad his seed,
 The wheat thou strew'st be souls.

JACOBINA had several evening engagements, but she resigned them all to the predominating influence of depression.

She intended wearing her emerald pendant at a fancy dress ball that night, having procured a costume representing its original owner—Marie Antoinette. The pendant was so well known she would not have donned the dress without it, and a morbid fear of losing the ornament, which on the morrow must pass for ever from her keeping, made her decide to stay at home and mourn her fate.

“ I feel inclined to give myself up to a good old mope,” she thought ; “ the whole business is so sickening. I shall not enjoy myself if I do go out. Besides, masque balls are ‘ banal,’ merely an adulation trap, which, like a roasting jack, turns round and round before the fire of friendly approbation, while

the smoke of self-glorification thickens the atmosphere of social intercourse for days after. Better remain at home in dust and ashes than endure the strain of trying to appear cheerful when inwardly raging."

"Dust and ashes" took the form of an elegant teagown, composed of mauve and silver, with embroidered sprays of lilac nestling in delicate green foliage, the transparent elbow sleeves finished off with quaint cuffs. No jewels, not even her rings, for the diamonds' glitter roused stinging memories.

Lady Livingstone's maid felt quite anxious about her mistress. It was so unlike Jacobina to stay at home for apparently no reason. A lonely dinner was in keeping with the sufferer's mood, tortured by mental fury, and growing horror of relinquishing her heirlooms. After dinner she dived lazily into the papers, smoked, and read a book upside down. She was not aware that the lines conveyed no meaning, but felt in those hours of solitude her *joie de vivre* withering slowly, like the freshness of a plant deprived of sunshine. Now and again she soliloquised, declaring that the original mistake of being born made successful life a sheer impossibility.

So absorbed was she in her drab-tinted

reverie that steps on the stairs failed to attract her attention till the door suddenly opened, and a footman announced :

“ Miss Gervalle.”

The fresh spring-like figure of Jocelyn came quickly forward, in a soft white semi-low muslin gown, covered by a picturesque cloak of pansy purple *panne*, her hair coiled low on her neck, showing off the pretty curve of her head.

The *joie de vivre* resurrected in the sudden presence of this unexpected visitor. The light of excitement glowed in her eyes, her cheeks wore the faint pink of the Banksia rose.

“ I hardly expected to find you in,” she said, half hesitating, as the folding doors closed behind her.

The tall form of Lady Livingstone advanced across the long, dimly-lighted apartment, like a grenadier marching to attack a redoubt.

“ You sweet thing, to come and relieve my solitude,” exclaimed the silvery voice of the widow, and Jocelyn felt both her hands captured in quite a theatrical manner, which struck her as a little forced and bewildering. The older woman’s expression just

then was as simple as that of a healthy, generous-minded child.

“Grandfather thought if you didn’t go out to-night it would be because you were worried. He noticed you looked anxious and careworn this afternoon, and we both concluded, under the circumstances, you would probably not sleep very well. Worry keeps one awake more than anything; it’s as persistent as toothache.”

Jacobina listened to these startling words spoken with utter simplicity, a nervous tremor quickening the beat of her pulses, fearful lest Jocelyn suspected the cause of her uneasiness.

“Careworn,” she re-echoed, glancing at a mirror, “did I really look careworn? How horrid it sounds!”

“Oh, please don’t think I meant anything rude!” exclaimed Jocelyn quickly. “Your clothes were so lovely they quite took my breath away. I thought, until I saw them, the beautiful things grandfather let me order for myself were too wonderful for words. I see now they may be easily outshone.”

“Clothes are merely bought,” Jacobina replied lightly; “careworn faces cannot be cast off like rags. In the race for beauty and

eternal youth 'many are called, but few are chosen.' So you came to see me because you thought I looked unhappy. That was nice of you, and unusual. The world is always ready to laugh with me, but I have not often tested the saying, 'Weep, and you weep alone.' "

She drew off the girl's cloak, watching her as she stood on a large white rug, all white—her dress, her soul, her setting—for Jacobina's white room was full of tall lilies and other pale-faced blossoms. She turned on some more electric light, held in clusters by small Cupids. The blaze momentarily dazzled Jocelyn, the effect of the sudden brilliance being enhanced by a number of mirrors enclosed in panels.

"What a fairy-like place!" cried the girl. "It looks like a bride's bower."

"For many years it was unique," declared Lady Livingstone; "indeed, it may be said to have set the present fashion of white drawing-rooms."

"I know nothing of London fashions, but I managed all right about dresses and things, for I just went to safe places with my new maid—a Frenchwoman—and asked the people to give me the prettiest garments they could find, for grandfather said money was of

no account. I should be afraid to tell you what we spent, Elise and I, in the shops together. I came up from Salford several times, and went back the same day."

"You might have asked me to help you," said Jacobina.

The girl looked her straight in the eyes, with such an unflinching gaze that Lady Livingstone wished she had not spoken.

"Might I?"

Only two short words, but they conveyed a clear meaning, turning Jacobina's cheeks pink.

She was thinking how odd it was for her niece to seek her out so soon after their first meeting, and at such an unconventional hour. A lurking suspicion warned her that Jocelyn had come for some purpose as yet unexplained. The girl more than once seemed contemplating an attack—she wanted to say difficult and embarrassing things; she sought her opportunity.

The moment Jacobina paused, Jocelyn drew a step nearer; a quick expression of sympathy lighted her face, robbing her of shyness. She spoke now from her heart, in hushed, feeling accents, glancing round as if the very walls had ears.

“Aunt Jack,” she half whispered, “grandfather says, don’t sell your family jewels to Major Chandoss.”

The words were electrical in their effect. Lady Livingstone turned to her with staring eyes and trembling lips, limp hands hung nervelessly against the silver and mauve tea-gown; all the colour vanished from the widow’s face.

“How did you know? How did he know?” she asked breathlessly.

“I can’t tell you,” Jocelyn replied; “please do not question me. We are sorry that you’re in trouble. Grandfather realises how you must hate parting with the beautiful pendant; he thinks he would like to see you in the tiara at my ‘coming out’ ball. He is sure you have a throat to set off that single stone necklace of diamonds. Besides, they are heirlooms, and should only pass to members of your husband’s family.”

Jocelyn looked quite commanding now, with her little head held high. She no longer felt insignificant beside the elaborately-fashionable Lady Livingstone.

Jacobina had lost her power of speech for the moment. She waited like one dumb,

watching, listening. She realised Jocelyn had more to say.

“Major Chandoss is nothing but a swindler,” continued the girl, with rising indignation, and somehow she belied Jacobina’s comparison of her to a lily on a stagnant pool. Deep waters swelled beneath that calm exterior, the soul peeped out with its wonderful radiance through eyes that glowed darkly in the shadows. Her tone of scorn might have withered even the imperturbable Major Chandoss.

“Oh, when I think of that man I feel—well, I hardly like to tell you, Aunt Jacobina, how I feel! He looked so suave to-day, so bland and amiable, while all the time he was congratulating himself on cheating you. He knows the jewels are worth £50,000, and is laughing in his sleeve at your relinquishing them to pay a debt of £5,000. Laughing, and yet frightened that his trickery may be found out.”

“Can it be possible?” gasped Lady Livingstone. “Then he must have planned to rob me long ago, and boasted of his prowess, or how could you hear of the disgraceful bargain? Fifty thousand pounds! Good heavens! and I should have given them up to-morrow for five!”

If the most awful human tragedy in the pages of the world's history had been enacted before her eyes, Jacobina could scarcely have looked more horrified. This affected herself alone, and her own interests; therefore it was of absorbing importance, and Jocelyn appeared as an angel of light, showing her the folly of her ways, the pitfall into which she would have glided.

“ Yes, he is even unscrupulous enough for that, the polished gentleman who talked so wittily and kept me entertained with stories of his aristocratic acquaintance. He thinks he has you in his clutches, but fortunately grandfather found him out in time to save you. He sent me to-night with the sum you owe Major Chandoss, that to-morrow you may pay him in money, instead of jewels. Grandfather asks for no security but your word, believing you will return him the £5,000 when you are able.”

The girl handed her an envelope, addressed in the wavering writing that only last summer filled her with a sense of loathing, as she read the so-called miser's letter, indignant at his asking whether she would offer Jocelyn a home.

Now she clutched it with tremulous fingers, swaying as if from faintness, while a strange

blue haze seemed to rise before her eyes, blotting out the white-robed figure of this ministering angel.

“ Aunt Jack, do you feel ill ? Hadn't you better sit down ? ”

Lady Livingstone sank into the arms of a huge chair, and, turning her head away, buried her face in the cream brocade cushions. For many a long year no tear had stained her cheek ; now she felt her eyes burn, and knew that they were wet. What did it mean, this sudden feminine weakness which tore at her heartstrings ? Was she crying for very joy, or for deep, perplexing sorrow ? Coals of fire, brought under cover of a sealed envelope, burnt deep into her soul, which for a brief period took mastery over the flesh, redeeming this woman of earth, making her resemble something holy.

It was simply a miracle, the wonderful coming of Jocelyn, bringing release. Her presence had removed, like some fabled wand, the gnawing anxiety eating into Jacobina's heart, and the tears that watered the hard ground were soft as morning dew. Yet the Professor's kindness came as a reproach, censuring while it satisfied—a most welcome martyrdom !

Jocelyn knelt down beside the abject figure, a little alarmed at the utter abandon of her aunt's attitude. She put her arms round the shimmering silver draperies, and nestling near, begged her to look up. It was new to Jacobina to feel warm breath close to her cheek, to know that something young and eager cared whether she suffered or was gay.

Pulling herself together, and keeping her fingers clasped tightly over the precious loan, she raised her head, looking between half-closed lids at the girl's sympathetic face.

"Jocelyn," she said, with a return of her old brightness, "you're a little brick! Oh, you don't know what I have been through to-day! Have you ever suffered loss of pride? It's the most galling, hideous bereavement; leaves one empty and sore; it's like a cane stinging delicate flesh, only you can't cry out. Debt is a horrible bondage; it clogs the spirit, destroys youth, makes cowards of us all. Prudent people who owe little clear it off quickly, but those who by long negligence owe a great deal despair in time of ever repaying, and so drift on without looking into their accounts at all. Won't you tell me, child, how you knew? I can't stand the darkness! You must see it's too bewildering and painful."

“ I may not satisfy your curiosity, even if you ask me on your knees,” replied the girl. “ Grandfather enclosed a letter with the cheque ; perhaps you will find some information in that.”

Jacobina quickly broke the seal, and hastily read the Professor’s epistle.

“ He says nothing—nothing to throw a ray of light on the mystery ; he is silent as the grave.”

The letter fluttered from her hands, and rested like a white butterfly on a cluster of embroidered lilac.

“ Yet,” said Jocelyn, looking at the sheet, “ that’s a very long letter for grandfather to write.”

“ It’s the best sermon I ever read,” replied Jacobina. “ He puts me on my honour, he trusts me. There’s a lot in that ; it ties one faster than any agreement or security. He lends me this sum if I will give him my word—only my word, mind—to forego from to-night my fatal passion for gambling. I am afraid not many people would care to stake so much on my word ! I’ve been careless, and possibly untruthful at times. I boast few scruples, but the Professor understands how to nail a woman down. Jocelyn, I’m a poor

creature morally, but I'd burn my right hand off sooner than betray the trust he puts in me."

All that was best in Jacobina rose to the surface, brought out by noble treatment. She felt uplifted, braced to a certain reformation, bewildered, too, by the startling generosity of the Professor's system.

Possibly the old man knew, when entrusting this mission to Jocelyn's unaccustomed hands, that by making the girl his envoy he placed her once and for all in the topmost rank of her aunt's good graces. Professor Gervalle remembered that Julius Cæsar, when lampooned by Catullus, invited the poet to supper and treated him with such generous civility that he made him his friend for ever. Some such strategy lurked in this remarkably amiable action on the part of the far-sighted man of science.

"I ought to be getting back," said Jocelyn; "the carriage is waiting for me; it's simply delightful having a great big carriage of one's own."

Jacobina considered a moment. An inspiration flitted through her brain, as she looked Jocelyn up and down, evidently contemplating some fresh move.

"I could not have slept for worry," she

said, "if you hadn't burst like a good fairy on my gloom and despondency. Now I feel I can't for the life of me go to bed—excitement and thankfulness would keep me awake, thinking—thinking for hours! The night is still young, and I am expected at a fancy dress dance in Park Lane. It's a big affair, and will be worth seeing. Suppose we go together, Jocelyn. Do you feel up to an impromptu adventure? I can send a letter quickly to the Professor; he could not possibly object."

The girl's face flushed with pleasure, but she looked doubtfully down at her dress.

"I have no costume," she said, "or, of course, I should love to go."

"White," murmured Jacobina, eyeing her dainty frock; "a white rosebud, fresh from the country. I have any amount of French roses upstairs. My maid shall shower them from your shoulders to your toes, and transform you magically into Flora herself. Powdered hair, I think, should complete the effect, cold and white as the driving snow, while two black beauty patches shall sport with your dimples. I have no doubt of turning you into a most bewitching companion to Marie Antoinette. Before, the historic pendant would have scorched my neck, I could not have

donned it with any heart ; now I shall sail bravely into the fray, aware that my menaced citadel remains secure."

Jacobina flung herself heart and soul into the scheme of adorning Jocelyn, after first despatching an explanatory note to the Professor, with certain words of gratitude that held a world of sincerity.

Never had *débutante's* dress been dashed at in more haphazard fashion, and never had one proved more wholly successful.

"You look as if the fairies had just breathed on you, and your human form divine instantly developed into a flower," said the dazzling Marie Antoinette, as she gazed approvingly on the result of her skill. "We don't clash in the least, we are such utterly different types. You look amazingly like your mother to-night. I remember going to a *bal poudré* with her some sixteen years ago."

"I shall certainly never forget my first dance," laughed Jocelyn, as she wriggled gingerly into her pansy cloak, fearful of crushing the fair white rose trails which enveloped her lissom figure. "It is really far nicer when things come as a surprise."

She fixed her eyes admiringly on the superb pendant, with its remarkably large emerald.

“ Yes, far nicer,” echoed Jacobina significantly, fastening a diamond flower-spray, which formed a comb, into the girl’s elaborately coiffured head. The blossoms were skilfully mounted, so that at every turn they flashed and oscillated amongst the crown of white rosebuds.

The Professor’s carriage was utilised to take them to the ball, and Jocelyn talked eagerly all the way, questioning Jacobina on many matters, anxious to explore her “ carpet bag ” of social experience, which might be taken out and used, as necessity arose. She could not help feeling Jacobina must have met with many disappointments before learning all her worldly wisdom.

“ Your eyes are made to do a deal of damage, little lady ! ” Jacobina assured her ; “ but bear this in mind, the constant use of them prevents a man mentally photographing you, and he cannot fall in love if he only briefly glances. Make a gaze from your eyes as precious as diamonds, but just before you hook your fish look him straight in the face.”

“ But I don’t want to catch a husband,” protested Jocelyn, inclined to take offence at her aunt’s somewhat broad insinuations. It savoured of vulgarity, the very thought of

likening a man to a hooked fish. "I shall never marry while grandfather lives. I could not leave him."

"Oh, nonsense! Wait till you fall in love, my dear! If you don't want a fascinating husband, endowed with every gift under the sun, a veritable Prince Charming; you are different from most girls of your age. But," pursuing a distasteful subject, "men are like fish, you know. Look at a salmon—fastidious, dainty, and capricious; yet if he does advance, what a rush he makes when you least expect it! Once fairly hooked, give him plenty of line, but always a gentle strain, and you will land him as if he almost liked it. I have a dear little friend for you to play with to-night, only please be very gentle with him, because he's precious, and a good boy. I call him little, not because he is short in stature, but more on account of a small-featured face, and much popularity. Have you noticed very popular merry people are often termed 'little'? It rolls so affectionately off the tongue."

"What is his name?" asked Jocelyn.

"Sir Thomas Ludlow, but I don't mind betting you will call him Tommy in a week! Oh, I forgot! I mustn't bet. How shocking

of me ! Tommy is always the same, which is a very rare attribute, and one to be commended. Man unbends at dinner ; he is then at his best and happiest, surveying the world through the colours of a wine-glass ; but even at breakfast, which is exceptionally a meal of solitude, Tommy can make one feel life is really worth living. He is happiest of all in the hunting field or the ballroom ; movement appeals to him."

The carriage had stopped at the end of a long queue, and Jocelyn's impatience quite tortured her, before she found herself following Lady Livingstone into a palace of light and splendour.

Jacobina forgot she had ever thought a fancy dress dance "banal." Now it appeared as an interesting and fashionable revival of an entertainment much affected during the eighteenth century. Moods alter opinions, and a turn of Fate's wheel changes the colour of the night with kaleidoscopic swiftness.

The woman and the girl, both remarkable for beauty of a striking type, caused many an eye to turn in their direction as they entered the almost garish ballroom, the designer of which had realised that, when aglow with

light, gilt in profusion may be decidedly effective. To Jocelyn such a room came as a revelation of splendour. From the mass of costumed guests her fascinated eyes roved to the complicated ornamentation of her surroundings, the gorgeous painted ceiling and yellow silk panels. How like a wonderful vision, a fabrication of the senses!

Through this waking dream she heard a familiar voice. "Am I so fortunate? Can it really be Miss Gervalle? Why did you not tell me you were masquerading this evening? I hardly knew you with powdered hair. You were betrayed simply by your dimples."

The words came glibly from a Spanish matador, who, bending low, made a graceful bow, as if to a vast cheering arena thirsting for blood.

Instantly Jocelyn recognised Major Chandoss. With the frigidity of an icicle the white rosebud reared a wintry head, the blue eyes held the glitter of steel, the mobile childish lips set firm with mute disdain. The matador asked himself if he had possibly made a mistake.

"You—you are Miss Gervalle?" he stammered, reddening.

"Yes," replied the icicle.

“ I was afraid I'd blundered. I hope you are going to give me a dance ? ”

The little chin went even higher into the air, and the jewelled flowers on the diamond comb vibrated emphatically, throwing forth a decided “ No.” She looked at him a moment half incredulously, as though unable to fully realise he was the unscrupulous swindler scheming to rob Jacobina. Finally her answer came in clear, direct accents :—

“ Certainly not ! ”

He stood staggered, hardly able to believe his ears. What had he done to offend ? Only a few hours ago that rounded cheek dimpled for him, the eyes smiled like summer seas twinkling with sunbeams, nor did the little hand apparently resent his farewell pressure. Surely a complete individuality ought not to change with powder and patches. There was more in this barefaced affront than his thoughts could solve in the brief pause that followed.

“ The girl is a mass of impudence and conceit,” he told himself, forgetting he called her “ utterly charming ” that very day. “ I'm dashed if I know what she's huffy about ! ”

Then a sudden idea flashed across him. Already Jacobina was revenging herself ; she

had taken good care to poison the girl's mind against him, probably extracting a promise from her to have no further acquaintance with the friend of the afternoon. It was just what a spiteful woman would do, and glory in the meanness of such an easily attained triumph.

He turned, with a flush of anger rising like a danger signal under his sallow skin, to where Marie Antoinette, displaying on her white neck the famous emerald pendant, conversed vivaciously with Sir Thomas Ludlow.

"Yes," she was saying, "of course I will introduce you. I am very proud of my *débutante*, especially as the white rose idea is my own creation. You didn't know I excelled in the designing of costumes; but persuade her not to dance too violently, for she may drop to pieces at any moment, like Cinderella on the stroke of twelve. Why? Oh, I can't explain now; but Jocelyn will tell you if you ask her; it's the greatest joke!"

She avoided the sinister eyes of the matador while presenting Tommy, arrayed as a jester, to the floral milk-white vision in the bud of a rose's youth.

"You shall pay for this, my lady!" thought Chandoss, grinding his teeth. "A

full explanation, and then on your knees, or I'll make things awkward for you. At least it's the last time you'll flaunt your pendant with that insolent air. Can you have forgotten your humiliation so soon? I fancy not! What actresses you women are!"

"Lady Livingstone," he said, "haven't you a word for me?"

The question was a gibe rather than a plea. Still believing he had the whip-hand over her, he adopted a masterful tone; his eyes wore an evil, menacing glance.

"Yes," she answered, "a good many words! No thanks, I would rather not dance. Come where we can talk. I have something of importance to say."

Her manner made him feel suddenly uncomfortable; his guilty conscience warned him that a storm was brewing. Already Tommy and the beautiful girl in white were drifting round the room, and Marie Antoinette vanished through the doorway, motioning the bull-fighting hero to follow in her wake.

She walked like a deer-stalker down the long corridor, to a deserted lounge, arranged with an awning of palms and flowers, the gigantic foliage resembling Brobdingnagian Japanese fans.

For a moment her companion felt uncertain as to which was the hunter, and which the hunted.

Jacobina waved him to a seat at her side, and, turning with a little snap of white teeth, opened fire :

“ Now, Major Chandoss,” she said, catching her breath, and laying her hand across the huge flashing emerald, “ now ! ”

CHAPTER XI.

On with the dance ! Let joy be unconfined.—*Byron* :

“ It seems you have something unpleasant to say,” remarked Major Chandoss, after a long pause.

He was angry at the mere idea of Jacobina daring to be unpleasant, and flashed a half-disdainful, half-injured glance in her direction. She was a woman who could, he suspected, lose her temper on occasions, with an utter disregard of the fitness of things. A masquerade, music, lights, pretty faces, naturally suggested pleasant conversation ; he had not expected to find himself fixed by glittering eyes, with a fine show of scorn in their liquid depths ; nor could he have anticipated the sudden attack of that very emphatic “ *Now !* ”

Jacobina pressed her hands together. She looked amazingly handsome and imposing.

“ I understood,” she replied in a clear, hard voice, “ that our financial transactions, our bargain, were to be a secret. Who, then,

have you told, since the story has become common property, reaching even the ears of my relations? They only arrived in town to-day; yet before to-night the details were known to them. Gossip travels quickly; some babbler lost little time in spreading the story. It was not a very proud boast on your part to demand, in payment for £5,000, jewels worth £50,000. You trusted to a woman's ignorance, and, if you had kept your secret, the woman would undoubtedly have proved the dupe of your sharp practice. Instead, her eyes have been opened in time; she prefers to pay cash down, and retain the heirlooms for a future occasion."

Lady Livingstone's melodious voice lost much of its charm by the jarring notes of cynicism, which cut like a sharp-edged knife, causing physical pain to the man who listened. His face first reddened, and then grew grey; he tugged at his moustache, biting his lips savagely, and wrestling with an inner sense of confusion, which temporarily robbed him of speech.

"I swear," he muttered at last, "I breathed no word of it to a living soul! As to the worth of the baubles, how should I know their value? You magnify them, I presume,

in jest, some twisted joke which my duller perception fails to follow. It stands to reason I should consider you first—you, who have always been my friend.”

He felt like a rat in a corner ; he was at bay, and his only chance stood now in veering round to the old seductive manner. He hoped she did not see his knees shaking, for detection came as a shock to his whole system, unnerving him miserably. He spoke the truth, and nothing but the truth, when he swore, “ I breathed no word of it to a living soul,” and the ring of sincerity partially convinced Jacobina, for his tone unconsciously implied, “ Should I be likely to risk an exposure ? Am I fool enough to betray myself and my own interests ? ”

“ Please don’t talk of friendship,” she answered icily ; “ I know too much now. I cannot be deceived by soft words. I see you, robbed of all that can lay claim to the word ‘ friend ’ ; I look upon you as nothing but a common thief. If you broke into my house and took £45,000 from a safe, it would be the same in the end as receiving from my hands the necklace, the tiara, and this pendant in payment for my gambling debts.”

Once more her fingers lay across the

glorious emerald, now with a loving, more than a protecting, touch. Major Chandoss, she felt, was miles away. She spoke words which, in cold blood, she might have hesitated to utter. It certainly seemed easier for Marie Antoinette to revile a bull-fighter than for Lady Livingstone to utter unvarnished truths to a black-coated major in the King's Army.

"Take care what you are saying," he hissed. "Do you think flesh and blood can stand your slanderous tongue? You've been deceived by some spiteful enemy of mine; but I won't press the point. If you can pay, all well and good; we need not talk of the jewels again. But, mind you, it's dangerous to use libellous words, and I cannot risk losing my character because your temper has overmastered reason! You have called me a thief to my face. I demand an apology, and insist upon your taking back that statement."

He gripped her arm, and bent glowering over her, till she could feel his hot breath on her cheek.

"I take nothing back, but what I said to you I should not dream of repeating. I only want the incident to end. From to-night our acquaintance ceases, for I am able, by the Professor's help, to save you the trouble of

getting my jewels copied. Bah ! could I ever have borne to wear an imitation ? ”

Major Chandoss had turned so white he looked in danger of fainting, his breathing sounded laboured, and he appeared strangely older since their interview.

“ How did the Professor know ? ” he whispered, in a hoarse, dictatorial undertone. “ You must have told him yourself ! ”

Lady Livingstone shook her head.

“ I was never more surprised than when Miss Gervalle came to save me from carrying out a most unfair bargain. She refused to give me any clue ; you had better ask her, if you wish to know.”

He wiped his forehead, and turned away, for every moment his self-respect grew frailer, his cowardice increased. He felt like a whipped hound under the scathing light of correct information.

A number of people streamed down the corridor ; further parley was impossible.

Jacobina rose, and, ignoring his escort, sailed back to the ballroom, where she was instantly the centre of an admiring group. In a moment she dropped the stern set of her features, and stood transformed, a creature of smiles and sallies, a coquette to the tips of her

fingers, with the heart of a rake—gleeful in finding herself free from oppression, ready to dance, laugh, and frivol, as if the chill twilight of care had never gathered upon her unclouded brow.

If wallflowers bloomed round the panels of the gilded drawing-room, Fate planted them in an excellent school, cared they so much as to raise their eyes, and follow with a glance the subtle, illusive, man-subjecting Jacobina. What charming methods she used to confer slight obligations on her eager partners! How energetically she flattered the useful members of her circle with words and looks in league with each other to charm! A wave of her hands, a whirl of her skirts, expressed more than an average woman's complete individuality, for tricks and graces grew lavishly in the fertile soil of Lady Livingstone's environment.

Only one pair of eyes looked savagely at the widow's trivial successes, turning away as though disgusted by her mannerisms, seeking instead the white roses which breathed purity and youth, with a bitter recollection that the simple, colourless flower decked an icy reserve—a stern disapproval—a heart grown cold to a supposed enemy.

“I would have been good to her,” mut-

tered Major Chandoss, with pity for the girl who had foolishly missed what little good might be found in him. "My chance is all up now ; she'll never be friendly again ; but I'll try and sift the matter to the bottom—it's so mysterious !"

He sought long and diligently for the white rose, finally espying her hiding shy petals in a flower-decked nook, dimly lighted, and suggestive of flirtation.

The second figure in the scented bower was unmistakably Sir Thomas Ludlow, waving a dainty fan in close proximity to his partner's face, and talking with his usual animation.

Evidently the two were getting on admirably at first acquaintance, and the matador wondered whether the girl always began with smiles to make her frowns more telling in the future. He felt unreasonably jealous of the gaily attired jester (the fool who thus enjoyed a brief triumph), hoping his fall might shortly follow.

Jocelyn, quite unconscious of being watched, gave herself up to the pleasure of congenial companionship. The vein of simplicity which made this young man's character so peculiarly charming appealed to her instantly ; he was absolutely devoid of

affectation or conceit. His light-heartedness captured her fancy. After long months with subdued old age, youth burst upon the scene with refreshing vigour, answering back to her youth with a sweet responsive note.

He at once made a decided impression on Jocelyn's quick brain, setting the dimples constantly in motion, without a thought for the havoc they played with his jester's heart. The game of life went giddily on for these happy souls redolent of spring, till, coming forth from their bower at the call of the music, a dark figure confronted them.

"Miss Gervalle," said Major Chandoss, in grave, impressive accents, "you declined to favour me with a dance, but I must beg you to spare me a few moments, as I have an important question to ask. It concerns others rather than yourself. I hope you will not refuse my request."

Jocelyn glanced quickly at Sir Thomas, with something of appeal in her eyes. He made a sign as if to hurry her on, impatient in his boyish way of this interruption, which marred the social brightness of their surroundings, savouring of threat.

"You won't refuse?" persisted the voice

at her elbow, seeing her hesitate, and pressing the point with vigour.

Whispering an apology to her partner, she moved away a few steps, and answered coldly :

“ No, I will speak to you now.”

In a few words Major Chandoss explained the situation to his own advantage. He had been cruelly misjudged and ill-used by some malicious foe, consequently falling in the estimation of Lady Livingstone and Miss Gervalle. Would the latter, in justice to himself, reveal the source from which her knowledge sprang, that he might have an opportunity of confronting those false friends who had taken his name in vain ?

“ I am a deeply injured and misunderstood man,” he declared in conclusion. “ It rests with you to enable me to clear my character. Having lowered me in the eyes of Lady Livingstone, you injure me socially, for to be the enemy of such a woman is no light matter. Her words carry weight ; she has only to shrug her shoulders and raise those finely pencilled eyebrows to start a crusade against the popularity of a defenceless man. The harsher sex dread her cynical nonchalance ; therein lies much diplomacy. She is a past-

mistress in crushing those who lose her favour ! ”

Jocelyn raised a protesting hand, and with that little action seemed waving him far into the realms of insignificance. His long speech appeared as a worthless froth of words, holding little substance, producing no effect. The truthful eyes met his unflinchingly ; there was something splendid in that moment about the very young girl throned upon a citadel of self-reliance.

“ I do not think my aunt will trouble to talk of you,” she said.

“ Indeed ! ”

The ejaculation vibrated with surprised resentment. What right had she to think ? Surely he knew more of women than this eighteen-year-old *débutante* at her first ball !

She took no notice of the monosyllabic reply, hardly appearing conscious of his attitude of offence.

“ You demand a great deal,” she continued, “ in asking an explanation.”

“ Why ? ”

“ Because you ask the impossible.”

His eyes blazed with unconcealed anger at the quiet, deliberate retort. He would have

liked to shake that slim, unbending figure, in its white mystery.

“ You brought some foolish story to your aunt ; you made me out a thief, a villain, a liar—tell me, is it not so ? You ruined our friendship, yet you look so innocent ! I sometimes think the devil hides in a body such as yours.”

Jocelyn listened with cold interest. Major Chandoss had but a weak hold upon his emotions, and this show of anger lowered him still further in Miss Gervalle’s estimation.

“ I tried to do her a good turn,” he continued. “ I lent her money when she needed it, and, instead of being grateful, she rends me because I am unable to make the loan a gift. We are not all millionaires, you know, and I couldn’t afford to lose £5,000.”

“ Possibly not, but you might have been content to get it back without such enormous usury.”

He winced. Such straight speaking unmanned him.

“ I must find out,” he said, “ who has spread this evil rumour, and when I do ”—he paused, and without finishing the sentence, murmured, “ when I do !——”

Jocelyn looked up quickly, her face flushing, her eyes intensely bright.

“What evil rumour?” she asked. “It was the truth—surely! Everyone has a right to speak the truth. Why should you complain? I discovered my aunt owed you money, for which sum you demanded her jewels. Now that the transaction is not to be carried out, it seems, the matter is at an end.”

This quiet retort to his rhodomontade brought forcibly before Major Chandoss the unpleasant conviction he was making a fool of himself. Her reply sounded the order to retreat; she signalled with a glance from her eyes to her impatient partner hovering near.

Tommy Ludlow, who never could conceal his feelings, showed plainly his resentment at the matador’s unconventional interruption. There are more ways than one of expressing unspoken contempt, and the younger man held Major Chandoss in supreme disdain.

It was a triumphant moment when he bore away the white rose, who eagerly assured him in answer to a quick question that she had not given the intruder a dance.

“Awful cheek,” muttered Tommy, “forcing himself upon you like that! I couldn’t say anything, but I looked a lot!”

“You did,” laughed Jocelyn. “It was not at all in keeping with your costume. Let us dance and forget everything. I feel as if Major Chandoss had momentarily damped my spirits. I want to enjoy each moment of to-night, for one’s first ball can never come again.”

Major Chandoss stood as if dazed, staring after Miss Gervalle’s retreating figure. He was glad to lean against a curious Italian pillar, one of six, ornamenting the corridor, each an interesting example of an out-of-the-way art, covered with an excellently modelled vine in gilt. His head rested dizzily against a hard cluster of grapes; the thoughts disturbing him gave his face an exceedingly unprepossessing expression.

No woman, young and fascinating, had ever treated him with the cool indifference of the Professor’s granddaughter, and recalling her words, “You demand a great deal; you ask the impossible,” he shivered involuntarily. He remembered that her eyes, as she spoke, appeared unfathomable; he thought of her instinctively as a creature bewitched. Vexed with himself for allowing the breath of superstition to colour his fancies, he tried to shake himself free from the haunting idea of anything supernatural.

He had always looked upon the occult as a livelihood for fashionable, charlatanic clairvoyants, encouraged by would-be enlightened patrons of a credulous type. But when he remembered the Professor's face, an odd, uncanny chill proved him in reality not to be the callous sceptic he once believed himself.

Another and even more startling revelation worked in his mind—the smouldering knowledge that a certain attraction for the girl who despised him was gradually rising to a flame. Apart from the wealth she would inherit, the woman outshone the heiress; there was that in her personality which a man recognises but once in a lifetime. Major Chandoss had never credited himself with capacity for a great passion; now he felt the possibility, aware that its fiery magic already enslaved his imagination, filling him with uncontrollable hatred and jealousy towards Sir Thomas.

“At least, he shall never get her,” muttered the revengeful voice, “if I move heaven and earth to part them. His airs to-night, his intolerance of me, may cost him more than he bargains for, the young idiot!”

Thus Tommy Ludlow gained his first enemy.

The night, with its charms, its storms, its heart-beats, waned, and with the dawn a tired but happy *débutante* returned to Grosvenor Square.

Lady Livingstone watched her vanish through the large door, with a wave of her hand and a parting smile. The two women realised that their sympathies responded ; no fickle smile, no Judas' kiss, disturbed the beauty of that new-born summer's day.

Jocelyn crept quietly to her room on tip-toe, looking like a ghost, white tressed, white gowned ; only the throbbing life in her veins awoke in those silent passages responsive notes from unseen presences.

Scarcely had she entered her room when a step outside, lacking the light spring of youth, caught her ear. The door opened, and Elizabeth, pale, weary, anxious-eyed, appeared in a long red flannel dressing-gown and woollen slippers.

She started violently at the sight of Jocelyn's powdered hair.

" My word ! " she exclaimed, " is it really you, miss ? "

" No, of course not. Bow low before the Rose Queen ! "

Jocelyn flung a wreath of artificial flowers

over Elizabeth's grey head, and the effect was so comic in connection with this homely flannel wrapper that the girl laughed heartily.

"Elizabeth, why are you looking so glum?" asked the merry voice. "Don't you know we are really in London at last? My *début* has been made at the most delightful masquerade. I can't tell you how I have enjoyed this evening."

"Well, that's a comfort, for it's more than I have. London, indeed! Give me Salford, and good old Heale Prior; we were free from trouble there."

"I hope nothing has happened to worry you," said Jocelyn considerately, as Elizabeth helped her undress.

"It's all worry," replied the disillusioned woman. "I knew I shouldn't sleep, so I told Elise to go to bed, and I would wait up till you came back. The master was better at home in the country, miss; he looked tired to death this evening; yet he busied himself with affairs of the household. It's that which makes me think he's going queer in the head. After you left, he sent for Mrs. Burrows, the new housekeeper, and told her he wanted to interview all the servants in his study. He

had 'em up, one by one, and talked to each a long time. There was a lot of whispering and discussion afterwards in the servants' hall. I don't know who started the idea, but they've got it into their heads he is a wizard. He appeared to know a deal too much about them to please their liking, and before bedtime every man and woman in the establishment had been to Mrs. Burrows and given a month's notice. If you don't call that an upset and an insult—a regular, downright insult to the best gentleman that ever breathed! They are impudent hussies and puppies all, and that old butler ain't no better; I heard him egging them on with his 'very mysterious,' and 'not the same as other people'! I should like to have given him a piece of my mind."

"Why didn't you? Inexpensive, but effectual!" declared Jocelyn, striving hard to suppress a smile. "Was Mrs. Burrows very perturbed?"

"Oh, she's one of your modern bodies, that don't take nothing to heart," declared Elizabeth. "She merely shrugged her shoulders, and said 'There were as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it, and the fresh set would arrive without master noticing the difference.' But it's their attitude that

rankles with me—a wizard, indeed! Did you ever hear the like?”

Jocelyn, now bereft of her ballroom finery, and wrapped in a soft silk kimono, pushed Elizabeth gently into an armchair.

“You have been sitting up all night magnifying things,” she said. “You are angry with these people for putting your own sentiments into words. You have always told me that dear old grandfather raised spirits and talked with devils, but I never took offence. You see, he impresses people oddly, and there is, undeniably, something strange about him—something that might appear to those who do not love him, uncanny, even alarming. He is all soul, and those men and maidservants, perhaps, never talked with a soul before. They came expecting a body; instead they found a spirit, wrapt in a shadowy veil of flesh. Let him be a wizard, and frighten away all the ignorant and unfaithful. We shall love him none the less. Everything about grandfather is mysterious, or, rather, bespeaks the existence of powers and instincts more fully developed than is usual. He says nothing ought to be considered incredible, or even unlikely, concerning the destiny of man. Every day I live near him I find his intelli-

gence more startling, not in a thousand ways only, but in a hundred thousand. Is it so amazing then, that in quiet talk, alone with ignorant minds, he should bewilder, terrify, with his astonishing discernment? Do you remember, when he knew about my birthday tea, we fancied he had some machine by which he detected what we said at the opposite end of the house? The source of his information never came to light."

Elizabeth grew calmer. Guessing Miss Gervalle must be tired, she rose, and edged towards the door.

"I daresay you are right, miss, and I took the matter too deeply to heart," she sighed. "But it wasn't the only shock, for Mrs. Burrows tells me my friend Thomas was making fun of us all at Salford about those electric trams in Piccadilly and the fashionable houses at Hammersmith. My whole faith in human nature seems shook; we've come to London for no good—no good!"

With this mournful last word the ungrammatical, flannel-gowned Elizabeth vanished silent-footedly.

"She went like a shadow," thought Jocelyn, "making scarcely more noise than grandmamma when she knocks on the

doors at Heale Prior. I wonder if grand-mamma's ghost crept to-night to the empty rooms to search for her husband. Perhaps she looked for him in heaven, perhaps in hell, but never, never could she think to seek him in the gay vortex of London society. Dear, pretty, curly-haired grandmamma, let me keep him a little longer, only a little longer. He will come to you soon ! ”

CHAPTER XII.

Mystical more than magical is that communing of Soul with Soul.—*Carlyle*.

THE Professor's *début*, which followed Jocelyn's impromptu "coming out," was a stately, interesting, almost moving event. It took the form of much society, comprised not in frivolous amusements befitting the young, but in the friendship and companionship of great men. There were dinners and lunches at his house in Grosvenor Square, at which mustered politicians, statesmen, ambassadors, men of law and letters, but more especially scientists.

Upon all acquaintances the Professor took an immediate hold, riveting their imaginations, and acting as a living guide, manual, or chart, able to discern the character of each by means of some strange sorcery, attracting like a magnet.

The mysticism and enchantment of this old man became so speedily bruited abroad that a new word was coined. Hypnotism often passed under the name of "Gervallism,"

thus termed by those who, being unacquainted with the Professor, believed he mesmerised the great minds flocking to consort with his own.

Lady Livingstone lost no time in taking Daniel Paley-Hyde to visit her interesting relative.

Lately the undemonstrative member of Parliament had drifted from her circle, but to no one dared she confess that his absence left a very slight, but distinctly uncomfortable, void.

"I suppose my nature needs a contrast," she told herself, when secretly analysing her emotions.

To the outer eye there could be little attraction in the severe, colourless countenance of that partially bald man, who had such an irritating way of looking right through a pretty woman, placing her on the lowest rung of self-conceit's high ladder.

What if his chin redeemed certain defects by its admirable blending of firmness allied to sentiment, there was always the upper portion of the face to protest against the possibility of a really poetic vein.

Jacobina still waited with extraordinary patience for a revelation, vaguely clinging to

the dream that some day she might see the man without his mask. She knew, when first she took him to the shrine of science, that his interview with the Professor would be greatly enhanced by her absence. With tact, for which Paley-Hyde had hardly credited her, she just deposited him in the pleasant study, and flitted away, pleading another engagement.

She had first warned him that Professor Gervalle already palpably showed signs of increasing fatigue.

His brilliant moments would often be followed by long intervals of silence, during which he lay back in his chair as though asleep, with muscles relaxed and eyes closed. These moments, he explained, were necessary to him for recuperative purposes ; they gave him strength to continue converse ; they were his silent draughts of life-giving elixir.

No one could resent in this frail old man what from others would have been taken as rudeness. He was allowed to be eccentric, and nothing he did caused surprise or offence. Fair dealing, with all the martial host of conscience, gave out its watchword from those gracious lips. His smile still retained its innocent, almost childlike charm, as if great

thoughts had left their bright reflection on his face, unspoiled by the flight of time.

To Paley-Hyde he came as an awakening—a pool of water, deep, refreshing, in the arid desert of commonplace minds.

Scarcely a word had been exchanged before these men knew they were in touch. Paley-Hyde could not tell why, but at once he talked instinctively of failures. To him life seemed a lamentable failure, even for the prosperous and worldly wise; it was part of his lugubrious nature to decide it should be so.

The Professor listened at first tolerantly. Possibly his far-seeing eyes could catch a ray of light beyond—a place of peace, a safe shore lying in the hidden future, like some fair island set on sunny seas.

“Men are blamed in this world,” he said, “for failing to fill creditably a situation they have not chosen, from which they cannot escape, and which is probably the one least suited to them; and yet we celebrate birthdays! Observation is useful to an old man’s memory. I notice that we all pardon absurdities in ourselves that we cannot suffer in others. It has been said ‘philosophy dreams while science realises.’ The scientific world is picking at me for an explanation of certain

facts which I hold as my own secret. Tell me, Mr. Paley-Hyde, have you come with a pickaxe, like the rest? Jacobina said you were interested in science."

He put the question clearly, his eyes fixed penetratingly on Daniel, awaiting an answer with the ear-trumpet held invitingly towards the sad-faced man's expressive lips.

"Yes," the reply broke unfalteringly, "a pickaxe keener than any, whetted by a craving to know and understand!"

CHAPTER XIII.

Iron sharpeneth iron ; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.—*Proverbs.*

“ THE belief in pneumatology is exceptional,” continued Paley-Hyde, “ human nature being unable to grasp the unseen. I envy you your years of research, and any light you can throw on the subject will be deeply interesting to me.”

At least he was honest, and had no desire to deceive the Professor, or draw from him by subtle means more than he wished to give.

Being a blunt man, Daniel said just what he meant, and no more. The Professor’s face expressed approval as he replied :

“ You realise, of course, we are living in a very limited world. The fact that the Creator works on a scale which, in a mathematical sense, is greater than can be computed or imagined, is ever before us. We are almost compelled to believe the invisible orders are not less numerous than the visible, when we see that the utmost range of variety, both in

principle and form, is taken in the construction of the sentient system. The physical capacity of our own world for sustaining life is indefinitely enlarged by the suffusion of element upon element, and each peopled with its animated orders. Is it therefore to be thought for one moment that the eye of man is the measure of the Creator's power? Has He created nothing which He has not exposed to our senses? The contrary seems much more than barely possible; ought we not to think it almost certain?"

The Professor bent nearer, his eyes glistened now like living coals, lighted by the mysterious fire of the soul.

Paley-Hyde felt a queer sensation creep over him, a thrill of responsive interest that set his veins tingling. It seemed as if the Professor were leading him by the hand to a higher plane of thought, towards which he had looked longingly, like a climber to the topmost peak of some impassable glacier.

"The conjecture that visible and invisible worlds may co-exist within the same space, and yet be unconscious of each other, and not related by any affinities, is abstractedly possible," answered Paley-Hyde, in his slow, measured tones. "Many now believe that

you could, if you pleased, throw some light on an invisible, sentient, and rational economy, co-existent with the visible universe, and occupying corporeally the same field."

Professor Gervalle made a little impatient movement which drew the speaker up sharply. Evidently the old man resented the speculation of others; he only wanted now to hear his new acquaintance's ideas on this oddly alluring subject.

"That theory," murmured the weak but magnetic voice, "comports well enough with the intimations of Scripture regarding the spiritual world, and is consistent with every analogy of the physical system, as understood by modern science. Already it has been ascertained that ponderable elements pervade one the other—that the imponderable pervade all. Different kinds of emanations or vibrations are continually passing and re-passing in the most intricate manner, through the same spaces, without in the least degree disturbing each other. The most powerful agencies are in operation around us, of which we have not the faintest perception, and which we detect only by deductions from circuitous experiments."

Paley-Hyde perceived a faint, half-satirical

smile flit, like some partially materialised ghost, over the Professor's features, as he said "of which *we* have not the faintest perception." It almost seemed he hesitated over the "we," inclined to correct himself and substitute the word "you," you who have lived in the gay world, you who think yourselves wise after a few years' study mixed with other pursuits—the great "you" of the universe, apart from the weird aloof figure, the hermit of Heale Prior.

"I have often thought," said Paley-Hyde, "there may be an elastic ether, susceptible of sonorous vibrations in a still more delicate manner, and capable of conveying these vibrations much further, and more instantaneously, than any of the bodies actually known to us."

He paused.

"You might go a step further," chimed in the Professor. "The sensation of light is now believed to result from the vibrations, not the emanations, of an elastic fluid or ether; but why may not this same element be capable of another species of vibrations? A conjecture of this sort is neither extravagant nor destitute of philosophic probability. Does the vast field stagger you? Do you find yourself

shrivelling up at the thought of an element as universally suffused as light, susceptible of certain vibrations which might prove the medium of sonorous undulations, equally rapid and distinct, serving to connect the most remote regions of the universe by the conveyance of sounds, just as they are actually connected by the passage of light? Contemplate the heavens on a starry night, and indulge the belief that speech, inquiry, response, debate, instruction, petitions, demands are passing to and fro. Perhaps it may drive you back hurriedly to the material, and the thought that where nothing is seen nothing exists! Not everyone appreciates the probability of the existence near us of invisible beings."

How still the room seemed! The Professor's voice rang out, spoke he merely in a whisper, with the clearness of a bell. No sound reached them from the busy world; those two alone felt suddenly detached from ordinary affairs of life. Paley-Hyde felt a hushed reverence steal over him, as if, finding himself suddenly transported to some grand cathedral, where music and praise, organ and song, lifted the soul in fantasy to the very throne of God. He pictured corporeally pre-

sent the human crowd, and the extra-human crowd, the latter as naturally present and vividly conscious of the material world as the former, and prompted as energetically by passions, interests, desires, hopes, fears ! Could the Professor but produce one well attested instance of the intelligent agency of an invisible being, it would be sufficient to carry the question of an unseen economy pervading the universe, to make sure the abstract probability of a race capable of definite advancement, rising to the very highest range of generalisation, and eventually coming into correspondence with other national orders, and perhaps with all.

He had not answered the Professor's last remark, nor did the old man appear to notice the omission. Possibly he guessed the mind with which he communed was too deep in thought to treat their conversation on a conventional basis. He knew that Paley-Hyde was, for the time being, engrossed by conjectures concerning the material universe, considered as the theatre of a great intellectual economy, and the relation of the material to the spiritual universe. Such thoughts might well make him absent-minded, since they embraced a mighty range of problems.

He had pondered deeply over metaphysical as well as material scepticism, had wavered between the idealism of Berkeley and the scientific theory of Boscovich, finding no real connection between the two, though popularly their systems amounted to the same. To a mind accustomed to pursue abstruse speculations, the "*Theoria Philosophiæ naturalis*" of Boscovich presented little new.

When first he heard a rumour that Professor Gervalle had mastered a branch of intellectual philosophy or pneumatology, with important results, a desperate longing to meet the man sprang instinctively to life in this undemonstrative and socially retiring member of Parliament.

The Professor, he understood, had made an extensive and laborious examination of the corporeal mental structure of the various sentient tribes, unravelling a great secret as yet unknown to any but himself. If he pleased he could place pneumatology on a broad, firm, and reliable basis, thus opening a road to the great spiritual economy of creation. Instead he stood as a gaoler might by the door, keeping the gate fast shut, holding the keys in close security, locking away his knowledge, and harbouring his precious hoard

of enlightenment like a miser with a golden store.

Yet Paley-Hyde could see nothing dogged, vicious, or ill-natured in the wan, attractive face. Every feature had a refinement, unmistakably pure and impressive, as if, while employing his reasoning faculties, he had sent his mind forward with its insatiable thirst after knowledge, towards the sublime mysteries of the Divine Nature.

He had passed indifferently by worldly gratifications, the pomp of life, the pleasures of pride, ignoring the artificial glare in which others lived, his mind retaining for over eighty years its native superiority. The plump world, sleek with delicacies, lay at his feet despised, and what to less discerning eyes looked gay, blooming, and of great price, was to him but a gaunt skeleton, barely knit together with its sere sinews.

Daniel Paley-Hyde, who had loved little, and feasted but meagrely upon emotion, felt irresistibly drawn towards this great silent mind, which seemed to have pushed forward towards the Ineffable Perfection. Enchantment lingered round the shrunken figure, which held its companion in a spell.

During the silence the Professor closed his

eyes, yet Daniel never imagined for one moment that his host slept. He simply felt the silent form "willed" him to be still, to come apart and rest awhile, to forget the necessity for speech, and give rein to thought.

In those moments, much that had happened during the day flitted through Paley-Hyde's stimulated brain. He remembered, with a start, something which seriously affected and annoyed him, looking down casually at his hands, grown much thinner during the last few months. For the first time since his mother's death he saw a ringless finger, with the mark still faintly showing on the flesh where for years a heavy band had been worn. An old historic family ring, it carried with it innumerable associations, and not a little superstition. His mother had called it the mascot of their race, since from father to son the quaint ornament was handed down for generations. After his father's death Mrs. Paley-Hyde wore it on a chain suspended from her neck, never removing the treasured possession till, with failing sight, she placed it on her boy's hand, and smiling, murmured, "For luck, Daniel!"

The Professor presently sat up, making no excuse for this restful interlude, but the slight

colour in his pale face seemed to indicate he had gained refreshment. Paley-Hyde vaguely wished the beneficial influence of long, peaceful, unembarrassing pauses might become general, to be even indulged on first acquaintance. He wondered how Professor Gervalle would break the silence, and awaited his words with curiosity. The old man blinked his eyes once or twice, then bent forward with his chin on his hand.

“Where did you lose it?” he asked.

Paley-Hyde gave a violent start, accompanied by something of a shiver.

“Lose what?” he queried, and the answer implied he was nervous, for its tone held a nettled note.

“That old family ring you prized so highly, the one you lost this afternoon, the one your mother gave you on her death-bed.”

Daniel's jaw dropped. He took out a large silk handkerchief, and passed it expressively over his brow. Amazed as he was, he answered the question without comment, though his face formed a very decided query, and his eyebrows seemed vanishing into the vicinity of that extremely hairless forehead.

“I was strolling on the Terrace early this afternoon. I had lunched at the House of

Commons. Being alone, I stopped to lean over the parapet. I looked for a long time down into the water. I was thinking out a speech, and water always helps me to think. I suppose I was working my hands—washing them, you know, with invisible soap; it's a habit of mine when I'm worried. I heard a little splash, and caught the glimmer of something gold. Then I realised I should never see my ring again. I come of a superstitious family, and the loss preys on my mind."

"Yes, I know," murmured the Professor; "I know!"

"How did you know, how do you know?" broke quickly from astonished lips. "I didn't tell anyone; I came straight here to you from the House."

"Ah!" sighed Professor Gervalle with a shake of his head, "the pickaxe again! I wondered how soon you would use it, my honest friend. 'How did you know?' That question meets me at every turn. I parried it at first, for, oddly enough, I do seem to know more than most people, and the fact serves to make me many friends, but still more enemies. The servants here are leaving because they think I am a wizard. I ascertained that fact without being told. I like you

because there is no pretence about you, no sham. I have met many skilful liars since I came to town, but somehow I have no wish to cultivate their art myself, though occasionally I am bound to admire them as the unlicensed poets of the drawing-room, supplying the oil of society. But you are thinking that I am not answering your question. Remember the axe may pick, but the ground does not always give way. I spoke about your ring, because it surprised me to find a man of stern common-sense moved by superstitious fears. Losing or gaining luck through the wearing of anything is absurd, and old associations crumble when we realise that worry, emotion, concern, are chiefly affected by the liver, while, sad to say, half of life's interest gathers round the digestive organs."

Paley-Hyde was prepared to further press his curiosity, but at that moment the door opened, and Jocelyn, a vision of white lace draped gracefully on the softest ground of chiffon, entered the room.

The visitor's figure sunk low in a huge chair escaped her notice for a moment, as she moved quickly towards her grandfather with a light step and graceful manner that attracted Paley-Hyde.

“ Oh, I’ve been to a most lovely party with Lady Ludlow ! ” she cried. “ Such music, and heaps of people ! Aunt Jack rushed in late, but she couldn’t stay long, so I was glad I didn’t go with her. Sir Thomas went too. His mother says he hates ‘ At Homes,’ but we——”

Here she broke off suddenly, her eyes falling across the motionless figure of the Professor’s guest.

“ I beg your pardon,” she said ; “ I didn’t see you.”

Paley-Hyde sprang quickly to his feet, greeting her in quite an ecstatic way for him.

“ I like hearing about the party,” he declared ; “ please go on.”

She flushed slightly under her picture hat.

“ I forget where I stopped,” she said, laughing, and her embarrassment betrayed that shortness of memory made for convenience.

“ I know Lady Ludlow,” he continued. “ I believe I am to meet her at dinner to-night.”

“ She’s a dear ! ” Jocelyn vouchsafed, perching herself on the arm of the Professor’s chair, and waving Paley-Hyde back to his. She thought he looked pale and excited, and

wondered if he were like the servants—frightened of grandpapa. But her mind was quickly set at rest on this score as she noticed with what admiringly reverent eyes he glanced from her to the old man, now smiling up at Jocelyn with kindly interest. Not only were Daniel's eyes reverent, but wondering and mystified, as if dreaming, yet awake.

“I made friends with a woman—quite young, but married, and very pretty,” Jocelyn informed them emphatically. “She asked if she might come and see me, so, of course, I said ‘Yes.’ I thought perhaps she really only wanted to see you, grandfather; so I asked her if she were interested in science, and she said, ‘Not a bit!’”

“That must have been a comfort to you,” laughed the Professor.

Jocelyn stroked his white hair caressingly. “Naturally it was,” she replied, with a sly little look that took Daniel into her confidence.

“What is her name?” asked the Professor.

“Mrs. Winnington.”

Paley-Hyde glanced up quickly, and the expression of surprise, almost resentment, in his eyes was silently noted by the quiet sparse

figure against which Jocelyn leant confidently.

“Aunt Jack told me quite a lot about her in five minutes ; that was after we had made friends and fixed to meet again.”

“Did Lady Livingstone know her ?” asked Paley-Hyde.

“Only by sight, and what she had heard came, I think, from you. Mrs. Winnington was engaged to be married three times before finally taking the fatal step. Her last jilted *fiancé* shot himself, so after that, she thought she had better give up breaking hearts and settle down for a change. Aunt Jack called her ‘The Angel.’ Certainly, she has a very Madonna-like face.”

“I remember telling Lady Livingstone about the girl last year when we were driving in the Park one day,” said Paley-Hyde. He did not add : “The day we heard of your father’s death.”

“I fancy,” he continued, “she is not very happy with her husband. Already they ‘go their own way.’ It’s only one of many warnings.”

He spoke pessimistically ; evidently the subject of Mrs. Winnington proved uninspiring.

“ She seemed such an easy person to get on with,” Jocelyn said thoughtfully, as if weighing the problem of matrimonial failure. “ Really you would have thought she was putting herself out to be nice. She also talked a good deal to Lady Ludlow. It was then Aunt Jack discussed her with me. She said ‘ The Angel ’ had made a ‘ one-horse marriage that didn’t suit her book ’—you know how Aunt Jack puts things.”

“ Yes,” answered Paley-Hyde dryly.

“ Aunt Jack is very amusing,” continued Jocelyn, with relish, flowing on like a pleasant brook—a very young brook—that has yet to reach the river. “ She thinks Mrs. Winnington had too large a heart, and love often dies of indigestion. Its menu should always be frugal.”

“ I trust,” muttered the Professor, “ that Jacobina lives up to her theories. I fancy she is not averse to a few flirtations herself. She always appears to be frittering her affections in a dozen different directions at once. I’m afraid, little lady, all women are more or less humbugs, unless painfully ugly, or irredeemably old ! I expect your beautiful Mrs. Winnington wanted to be worshipped all her life on a pedestal, forgetting that when a

man becomes familiar with his goddess she quickly sinks into a woman."

"A woman's good enough!" protested Jocelyn, who had no desire to be thought anything else.

"You see," laughed the Professor, "the weaker sex must always have the last word," glancing across with twinkling eyes at Paley-Hyde. "We are an oddly-assorted couple, don't you think? She just entering life, I about to leave it. Age and youth linked together, and as happy as if we were twins!"

Paley-Hyde nodded; he hardly knew what to say.

"I wish you wouldn't put yourself on the shelf in that way," Jocelyn murmured under her breath.

The Professor was in a teasing mood, and ran his thrust home with an almost cruel persistence.

"No good blinking matters," he declared; "don't you agree with me?" addressing Daniel. Then turning again to Jocelyn, continued: "You have only lately emerged from childhood, while I, according to the law of Nature, am soon to return to it—my second childhood—and sometimes I feel half inclined to welcome the nursery of old age. You are

full of roses and hopes, I of wrinkles and recollections. Your history is before you with pages uncut ; mine is rather like an Oriental book, which one reads backwards."

A serious look came over Jocelyn's face like a white summer-day cloud, which increases rather than mars the beauty of the clear blue sky.

Paley-Hyde watched her with the interest he felt in a beautiful landscape or sunset, watched her as something distant and unattainable, yet soothing to the sight, bracing to the senses.

" You like society," he remarked, turning the subject, and terribly afraid lest a tear should glimmer in those wide, child-like eyes.

" Yes, but grandfather says all people are outwardly so painfully alike that he wonders I am not bored."

" It isn't given to many of us to see deeper," answered Daniel, and he felt his heart beats quicken at the memory of his quiet talk alone with the Professor. " If you keep in the common groove, Miss Gervalle, you will avoid eccentricity, but never attain superiority. You'll soon learn that Mayfair is but a corner of London, and London but a spot in the world, the world but a speck in creation. You

know each spider's web which your housemaid ruthlessly destroys is, for minuteness in detail, a universe in itself."

This man of few words spoke now without a trace of reserve. He felt in his natural element; the Professor's magnetism and the girl's beauty acted like a charm. Already Jocelyn had learnt that in conversation the more you joke and the less you laugh the better, and she soon provoked many a protesting smile from the lips of the man so notoriously lugubrious.

"He smiles," she afterwards told her grandfather, "as if it needed an apology, and ought not to be committed."

Before he left he asked her if she would come with Lady Livingstone to tea on the Terrace. Hitherto he had never ventured to invite feminine guests to Westminster.

Jocelyn gladly accepted. From a little hint her aunt had dropped she gathered that lady was favourably disposed towards Daniel Paley-Hyde, and Jocelyn delighted in the thought that the chaperon might be the chaperoned.

"It will be my first visit to the House," she said. "There have been so many 'first things' for me since we came to London."

The Professor looked at his engagement list, and asked Paley-Hyde if he would dine with them the following week to meet the Prime Minister.

Daniel thanked him, and booked the date ; he thought more of meeting Professor Gervalle again than of anyone else. He cared little for the prospective company ; unresistingly he had given his soul to the old pathetic spiritualised figure with one foot in the grave.

“Have you heard an Irish member’s definition of a patriot and a statesman ?” said Jocelyn. “The latter is a ‘place-hunter,’ and the former ‘one who has found it’ !”

“A minister,” answered Paley-Hyde, “really does not pursue a policy at all. He has to interpret the wishes of the country as correctly as possible. No party now seems to possess any settled principles, aspirations, or policy ; the system of government has become a coagulation of vestry interests.”

He spoke to the Professor, aware his words might weary Jocelyn, whose extremely youthful appearance alienated her from political discussion.

“Ministers must be useful people abroad, especially in these gad-about days ; one could hardly do without them,” said Professor

Gervalle. "No doubt it saves trouble to find everyone worth knowing in the British Minister's drawing-room, but to keep open house their salaries must be large enough to buy tea and candles! I am only just crawling back to the world. Like time, I date myself. I find the same artifices at work now as when last I took interest in politics. I remember Baron de Brunnow, apparently all frankness and candour, when scheming for the Court of Russia. He was credited with the feat of hoodwinking Lord Palmerston. I had no very deep discernment then. I wish——"

The Professor spoke dreamily, suddenly drawing himself up, with a sigh that spoke volumes of suppressed desire. Was he feeling his age, that the bright eye dimmed and the thin hand clutched instinctively at the nearest support?

"Still," he murmured, "like the messenger of Æolus, the Government of this great country holds the bag in which the four winds are tied up, ready to let them loose when occasion offers."

Paley-Hyde would fain have lingered, but there were limits even to unconventionality. He departed silently as he had come, leaving the impression behind of a man

who reserves the best of himself for future acquaintance.

The Professor murmured it was late, and remembering they were dining out, suggested going to dress. Dinner parties still held novelty for Jocelyn, and she enjoyed herself most when with her grandfather. She delighted in watching the attention he attracted, while he equally appreciated the admiration her unaffected beauty naturally awakened.

As she moved to the door he called her back, and stood looking into her eyes, reading there a shy new wonder, something deep and different, feeling in her personality a radiance of which she was aware, that tightened his heart strings with a presentiment gladdening while it pained.

He held her hand in both his, with tremulous clinging fingers ; he bent to kiss her of his own free will. The Professor, chary with his kisses, knew well enough why he clung to the little hand, why he pressed the flushing cheek.

That evening Paley-Hyde took Lady Ludlow down to dinner at the house of a mutual friend. She appeared in the best of spirits, and was dressed with notable propriety in black velvet. Only the somewhat careless

arrangement of her hair prevented her from ever competing, even at night, with the fashionable woman whose creed is smartness, be she old or young.

Daniel always dreaded lest he should find himself at dinner next a woman whose thoughts failed to rise above servants and children.

With Lady Ludlow at least he was safe. A good talker, a thorough *femme du monde*, she never jarred upon him ; she also understood his slow manner, realising he always thought before he spoke.

“ You were with Professor Gervalle to-day,” she said. “ Jacobina told me she had left you in the clutches of mystery. He is a very remarkable man.”

“ He has grown old with a good grace,” answered Daniel, “ and so I admire him. Age to the majority is so unwelcome, that resignation to decay is a most difficult task.”

“ His body may fail, but his brain has discovered some mental elixir which prevents decline. I wonder if he greatly astonished you ? He has a habit of startling people by what appears to be an amazing gift of intuition.”

“ I own I was a little surprised,” Daniel confessed.

“ No doubt, for you were in the lion’s den ! Don’t you know what really happens ? Professor Gervalle communicates with beings who hold communication with all our minds.”

She spoke quite naturally and simply as she sipped her soup.

But Paley-Hyde left his untasted. He sat and stared into vacancy, making no reply.

CHAPTER XIV.

She I love is white as milk,
 She I love is red as wine,
 And her cheek is like spun silk,
 And her heart is mine.—*Post Wheeler.*

LADY LUDLOW had talked volubly to Paley-Hyde both during dinner and later when near him in the drawing-room. She showed herself so certain of all her facts in connection with Professor Gervalle that the quiet, silent man required more than the proverbial grain of salt. He figuratively resembled Lot's wife, for in looking back he became like a pillar—still, reserved, unemotional, and uncommunicative.

To Lady Ludlow he appeared singularly phlegmatic. She summed him up, after long acquaintance, as a man who would never be excited, never fall a victim to nerves, despite the demands of a high-pressure age. "His meals as regular as his pulse, and his sleep as his meals," she told herself, in conclusion; and as to love or marriage—well, she had given up thinking about his friendship

with Jacobina, and the possibility of a deeper tie.

Lady Ludlow didn't blame Jacobina for not marrying again, since widowhood had many advantages. Through force of circumstances, unfortunate or otherwise, the present-day widow may be said to have realised the freedom and individuality of the bachelor.

Jacobina evidently preferred to enjoy life without incurring the risk of cares or a contradictory help-mate, and during her widowhood she found herself far more sought after than as maid or matron she had ever been.

Sometimes she argued the point with Lady Ludlow.

“ Why, when I am quite happy, should I copy the folly of the cook, who, acknowledging that she is more comfortable than she will ever be again, ‘ still wishes for a change ’ ? ”

The words had a fateful ring of truth that augured for Jacobina's leaving well alone, and refraining persistently from taking another ticket in the lottery of life.

The summer was yet young ; it would be some time before London wore the haggard and lonely look that bespeaks the end of the season. Still things marched rapidly, and

much had occurred within a few short weeks.

Jocelyn's ball proved a brilliant affair, and the little god Love, with the lustful god Greed, came tripping up the steps of white marble that made the great staircase in Grosvenor Square so singularly summer-like and cool.

Jocelyn began to taste the joys and disadvantages of being an heiress, steering clear of pitfalls with amazing sagacity for one so young. It almost seemed as if the Professor had taught her the mysterious secret of penetration. To him she brought the story of all her new discoveries, discussing with the shrewd old man each fresh friend or acquaintance who threatened to influence her life.

He was careful to nurture her ideals and illusions as far as possible, shielding her from shock or discouragement, though often he put youth upon its guard, providing unseen armour that steeled the girlish heart from fortune-hunters' shafts.

For Tommy Ludlow the Professor showed extreme regard. It often surprised Jocelyn, when the youthful baronet laughed and joked so freely in the patriarchal presence, that her

grandfather never wearied of his company, or seemed to think him frivolous and shallow.

“That boy has his head screwed on the right way, though it is apparently so full of nonsense,” Professor Gervalle remarked. “You can always believe what he says, Jocelyn; there’s plenty of spirit about him, but no vice. He takes the world as a good comrade which means well by him, and so the world, hating to be found out, will generally serve him liberally, and show its best side in his presence. If you make a friend of Sir Thomas Ludlow, I don’t think your faith will be shaken in man, and happiness here as well as hereafter depends greatly on faith; the more we can believe, the happier we shall be.”

Whenever her grandfather spoke of Sir Thomas Ludlow, Jocelyn listened with almost breathless interest.

“He was her best friend, among all these new friends,” she would say, without an idea of concealing her appreciation of him from the Professor. Sir Thomas thought of so many things to please her—the little things that meant so much. He was always near at the right moment; yet she could not say if this were due to tact or chance, but gave the preference to tact.

The London season, for the first time in his life, irked Tommy with its interruptions and demands. Whenever he spoke to Jocelyn he felt the difficulty of indulging sentiment in a crowd, and the alluring thought of a country house, where he could see her every day, lay ahead like a dream full of dazzling possibilities.

In heated rooms whispered words had to be few and emphatic, while *tête-à-têtes* consisted of short, glorious moments, made significant by those dangerous silences which mean so much. How many lives drift into new currents and strange seas all through the power of a pause—those moments when angels hover near.

Jocelyn vaguely realised she moved him in an odd, astonishing way, always a novel experience to the young. She was nearing gradually that emotion of the spirit, so full of wonderful surprises and startling effects, which lifts the mortal high above earth.

The noble passion love, the cement of society, had caught her unawares in its elevating embrace, and the Professor, divining this mystic change, told her, as if unconscious of the fact, to trust Sir Thomas Ludlow. "Love without esteem," the old man warned her, "is volatile and capricious; esteem

without love must be languid and cold. When the two are united, the higher plane is reached."

Tommy, from the first, made no attempt to hide his admiration. He talked of her to the Professor, to Jacobina, to his mother, for, above all things, Tommy was transparent.

"She's so good," he told Lady Ludlow; "it's splendid to see her with the old man. I believe she would give up anything in the world to please him. If he liked to be a martinet, what a life he could lead her!"

Had Tommy fallen in love less discreetly, it is to be feared his delightful theories about women might have received a severe shock. He idealised the sex, believing no woman was capable of being beautiful who was not incapable of being false, and thus the gods, delighting in such an uncommon belief, led him to a worthy shrine with more than usual generosity.

The psychological moment came, as it often does, in an alcove. Love likes no lookers on at his great game; loneliness is his creed, provided two share that sweet retreat.

Tommy made no picturesque speeches, spoke no very telling words, but somehow he

drew nearer without having apparently moved, and subtly crept with tender glances and eager hopes into the heart, which opened like a flower.

He began by saying he should never marry, and, when asked the reason, gave as an explanation the terrible assurance that the woman he loved would not marry him.

“She says she cannot leave her grandfather; she loves him better than anyone, so, of course, there’s little hope for me. Sometimes I think the old man would not grudge her to another; that perhaps she is mistaken in thinking he wants to hold her fast. When people are over eighty, they like to know those near and dear to them are going to be happy. Jocelyn, dear—I must call you Jocelyn—I would take such care of you! I don’t want to be conceited, but I really think I would make a good husband; I’d simply worship you, you dear little darling!”

The last words came with a rush and a burst of feeling, in which boyish ardour mingled with manly passion. He bent his head low to hers; she felt his eyebrow brush her forehead, while hands that were firm and strong clasped her thin, artistic fingers. He was looking down at the small, blue veins on

her wrists, comparing them with his, which were broader and deeper, though possibly less blue. There seemed so much in a hand ; all the romance of life dwelt for those few moments in the touch of little clinging fingers.

Mutual love gives an importance to quite indifferent things—a merit to actions most insignificant.

Jocelyn also looked down ; she dared not meet his gaze, for sudden shyness stole over her, bringing the blood to her cheeks and veiled wonder to her eyes.

“ We could wait a long, long time,” she whispered. “ Perhaps it wouldn’t matter being engaged, if we didn’t marry for years and years.”

Tommy was ready to catch at a straw. He would have promised just then to wait till eternity, for the privilege of holding her hands and leaning his head against hers—such a classic head was Jocelyn’s, with bright, wilful, young-looking hair.

“ Can you imagine us married ? ” he murmured in breathless eagerness, “ you and I, Jocelyn. Can you imagine it ? ”

Her heart fluttered like a bird already caged ; yet, oddly enough, she could quite picture herself and Tommy settled down. The

vision came so naturally, it startled her into thinking all had been predestined, without their having any will or say in the great plan. His lips were pressing her cheek now, trying to induce the flushing face to turn, that lip might answer lip in the sweet language of love.

“ Won’t you kiss me ? ” he pleaded. Already the human instinct demanded some return.

“ Oh, no—no.” The answer came half-fearfully, contradicting the prompting of her heart. There are moments of pride and resistance which enhance the charm of future subjugation. Perhaps Jocelyn remembered the besieged citadel must hunger before it falls.

Tommy’s hand relaxed its pressure. Suddenly she felt far away from him, and the little break in his voice touched the very core of her woman’s heart.

“ You—you don’t love me enough to kiss me ? ”

Not the pathos of the words alone, but their utter lack of truth smote her. How could he think she didn’t love enough ! How could he be so blind !

She turned tenderly, with eyes uplifted ;

she swayed to the warm caress, and let his arms enfold her.

Thus they stole the golden light from the sun, and the fragrance from the flowers, changing the mundane world into a world beautiful, bringing Heaven down to a little sheltered corner in a modern London drawing-room.

CHAPTER XV.

For these be the days of vengeance.

THE announcement of Miss Gervalle's engagement to Sir Thomas Ludlow brought a chorus of congratulation. The Professor declared himself delighted, and humoured Jocelyn by pretending the marriage would be an event in the dim future.

To Tommy he said : " My day is far spent ; you will not have long to wait. But if I am spared, you need not fear I shall be selfish. Young lives must not be sacrificed to old."

Tommy felt terribly upset at the thought of the Professor's great weakness. He perceived, like many others, the speedy approach of a silent angel, sickle in hand.

" We shall meet in a better world," added the kind voice in conclusion ; " a world so good that none who go there ever return."

Jacobina learnt the news of Tommy's first serious love affair from Lady Ludlow herself, and flew like a whirlwind to Grosvenor Square with quite a maternal " Bless you, my

children" manner, slightly disguised by the frivolity of Parisian clothes.

Jocelyn talked over her new-found happiness with such amazing simplicity that Jacobina had cause to chuckle more than once at the beautiful innocence of youth.

"Isn't it wonderful he cares for me when there are so many girls in the world he might have married?" said the radiant *fiancée* of eighteen.

"You have yet to learn," laughed Jacobina, "there are few women in the world who, if they choose, cannot take any man's life and twirl it round their little finger like a blade of straw. Still, I will admit you've got a treasure in that boy. Your life will be turned into a merry jest, and I verily believe he will die laughing! I can't get over it, you know; the idea is so funny. 'Ha! ha!' engaged; our dear butterfly that flitted with such nice social interest from flower to flower, never loving one more than another—always kind, always popular. Yes, Jocelyn, you're passing lucky, but you deserve something good; and, as to Tommy's luck, that goes without saying. He is marrying the prettiest girl in London, and an heiress into the bargain."

Mrs. Winnington (whose husband had gone abroad on some mysterious business which savoured of trade, and was avoided in conversation by his grass widow) made rapid progress in her friendship with Jocelyn.

She expressed such sympathetic interest in the engagement that Jocelyn sought her society for the sheer joy of "talking over Tommy," an occupation that never seemed to pall.

"The Angel," as Jacobina still termed Mrs. Winnington, had robbed her Madonna-like face of its saintliness by suddenly taking to cosmetics.

"When a young woman with a pretty complexion resorts unexpectedly to paint, I always know she has something on her mind," Lady Livingstone said. "She wants to hide from the world the pallor of care, and perhaps she is right. We know the grave is all corruption within; yet we endeavour to make it less repulsive by planting it round with shrubs and flowers."

Jocelyn noticed the unchanging blush, and mourned her friend's appearance, but dared make no comment.

She and Sir Thomas dined quietly one night at Mrs. Winnington's house, and the

silver-decked dinner-table savoured of recent wedding presents, dazzling with a brave display of half-crowns melted into candelabras. Mrs. Winnington showed the engaged couple that her heart was in the right place, by discovering after dinner she must finish an important letter, leaving them in a dimly-lighted room, playfully hoping they would not miss her.

The letter took some time, and really appeared of importance, judging from her troubled, strained expression as she hastily covered a couple of large crested sheets.

“Poor boy!” she murmured; “if I wasn’t so driven, I’d pity him; but a desperate woman has no time for pity, and, as luck will have it, I am hard as nails. Let me see, what was it some great author wrote? ‘If a woman is not ashamed of herself, the devil cannot shame her!’ Great author! You knew much; I respect your clear insight to that sensitive fabric, the feminine conscience.”

She indulged a wicked little laugh, utterly devoid of mirth, and the muscles of her face hardened. When alone and unmasked, it seemed as if “The Angel” had lost all the purity and charm which once made her dear to the heart of man. Something heavy and

base had crept into her soul—a taint of low cunning, associated with those who live by their wits and would not scruple to mar, or even to take, life.

She bit the top of her pen as she signed her letter with a single initial. She thought again of Jocelyn and Sir Thomas. She knew the ways of lovers, the selfishness of body and brain absorbed by one all-engrossing passion. The quotation rang in her mind familiarly :

“ When you are in company with others, behave as if you were absent. Want *me*, dream of *me*, expect *me*, think of *me*, wish for *me*, delight in *me*, be wholly with me. In short, be my very soul, as I am yours.”

The “ Me ” Litany was as old as the hills, and as young as a new-born child wailing without reasoning for its unsought entry to a strange world.

When Mrs. Winnington returned to her guests, she did not offer a mock apology ; she just smiled with unspeakable frankness, as if unaware that with her return the vapid flatness of the situation might grow oppressive.

She still retained a breezy air, looking like a carnation which the wind lifted and let fall.

She talked of ambition, telling Sir Thomas he must rise up and do something for his

country. She couldn't advise the nature of the suggested "doing," but she felt he had great powers lying fallow.

Of course, Jocelyn agreed with her; every woman would fain think the man she loves a hero.

Tommy had a shrewd suspicion that a delicate sarcasm rang in Mrs. Winnington's words, but he was glad they reached Jocelyn without her guessing the presence of hidden cynicism.

"Is ambition absolutely necessary to everyone?" he asked, with silent humour lurking in his eyes.

"Oh, yes," answered Mrs. Winnington emphatically. "I should not like to have a housemaid or a groom without ambition. Were I so unfortunate, I know I should have dusty rooms and lots of spiders, dim bits and stirrup irons, ill-cleaned top boots. I know there are many men who think, if they keep clear of politics and have a good income, they are never likely to be annoyed by anyone who cannot be appeased by a solicitor. They eat the fat of the land, and, of course, grow stout at middle age, for man is an animal that eats and drinks when not hungry or thirsty."

"Not man alone. Most creatures indulge

the habit if they get the chance, notably the pig," answered Tommy blandly. "I am afraid I shall never be a leading light in the political world. The trade of politics is chiefly followed by men who have drifted into it by chance, or else take it up as a sort of hereditary profession."

"Well, you've plenty of time," laughed Mrs. Winnington, with a patronising gesture. "Doesn't he give you the idea, Jocelyn," turning to the girl, "of a man who will never grow old? I can imagine him, when you are grey-haired, remarking to some friend of his youth who has become very infirm, 'Poor old boy! I remember we were once about the same age!'"

The grass-widow rattled on brightly till Jocelyn's carriage was announced.

"I mustn't keep it waiting," she said, "for I have to fetch grandfather. We are going to a reception at the French Embassy. Grandfather is dining with Mr. Paley-Hyde at 'Arthur's.'"

As Jocelyn cloaked herself in Mrs. Winnington's room, her hostess talked ecstatically of Tommy.

"I like him so much," she said, squeezing Jocelyn's hand. "He is what my husband

calls 'a white man.' Good breeding, you know, my dear, is said to be the result of much good sense, some good nature, and a little self denial, with a view to obtain the same indulgence from others. Sir Thomas always strikes me as so particularly well bred and charming, though, naturally, we women see only the best side. When men are dealing with their fellows they are often, sad to say, keen and selfish enough. Whether the game be money or love, each man is for himself; there's no softening or subduing element. But once in the presence of women, all is different. We tame them delicately before marriage; they tame us brutally after!"

Jocelyn looked at her with startled eyes; she had dropped the mask a moment, and her face grew hard.

"Oh," whispered the girl, "I can see you have suffered; I am so sorry."

"Don't be sorry," answered Mrs. Winnington, half sharply, as they passed down the stairs again.

On the landing a maid, hatted and coated, stood back to make room for Miss Gervalle.

The maid held in her hand a letter, newly stamped, which she was taking to the post. Mrs. Winnington's large, bold handwriting,

strikingly black and distinct, caught Jocelyn's eye on the envelope ; it was addressed to Major Chandoss.

Jocelyn said nothing, for she had not intended to look, but she remembered Mrs. Winnington's set lips, and wondered where the trouble lay.

CHAPTER XVI.

Lo ! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone ;
the flowers appear on the earth ; the time of the sing-
ing of birds is come !

IT was nearly a year since Paley-Hyde had called upon Lady Livingstone. Now he made up for his long tarrying, not only by paying her an unsolicited visit, but first writing his intention of coming, in the hope of finding her in.

The object of this small civility lay in the fact that he really wished to thank her for introducing him to Professor Gervalle.

Jacobina, in listening to enthusiastic praise of the Professor from this dry and usually unemotional man, realised that Daniel had for once been struck ! She saw just the faint glimmer of that awakening which she sought in vain when secretly trying to soften his stern heart with the subjugation of her eyes.

Many men told Lady Livingstone of their love, but Paley-Hyde had no love of which to tell, could outward appearances be relied upon ; yet she knew he might win her if he pleased—silently, invisibly, with a sigh.

Just for a moment she felt a little jealous pang, an unseen wound smarted, the heat of the day became suddenly insufferable. There were influences at work which weighed upon her life, small jarring sorrows, yearnings unappeased. She looked straight at Paley-Hyde, and he met her gaze unmoved. Thus poor caged animals ever stare out at human faces on the other side of the bars, where no kind hand opens to them, or soft voice whispers "Liberty!"

"I am glad you like the Professor," she murmured; "glad for many reasons, chiefly, perhaps, the selfish reason that I brought about this friendship. I understand from Jocelyn you and the old man appear to be friends already. The stage of mere acquaintance is always prosaic and tiresome; don't you find it so?"

"It is the stage to which I am most accustomed," he replied. "Friends are rare luxuries with me. Perhaps that is why I appreciate them."

Jacobina's lip quivered ever so slightly; she crossed to another chair with a rustle of tempestuous skirts.

"The Professor," she said, "is extraordinary for his age. Of course, all this going

about will kill him ; he cannot long survive the strain. His strength cannot stand the hurrying, bustling life. One sees him daily wearing out, growing frailer and more weary. It's a pathetic little tragedy, if death can be called a tragedy when the human race has been so fully run. I know he sees the shadows lengthening across the landscape of his life, he realises the lights are paling, yet he watches without a sigh. It's impossible not to admire him."

Jacobina spoke with intense feeling, yet hid beneath a smile the nervous dread she felt of death.

That Professor Gervalle treated its unostentatious approach lightly, almost carelessly, made him an object of deep reverence in her eyes.

"Age," answered Paley-Hyde, "has not dulled the Professor's energy and animation. His eyes are so bright, and his whole attitude so keenly alert, that his years appear incredible. When talking, his voice sounds clear and ringing ; it's only in repose his ethereal look startles one, and the effect of his long, arduous life-work becomes manifest. He is, in my opinion, one of the most wonderful men of the present age."

As Jacobina watched Daniel softening under a mutual interest, she tried to conceal her knowledge of the thawing process, conscious that a false move might produce a frost ; the ice had been so long in breaking.

Accustomed to silence, he did not remark the absence of Lady Livingstone's natural vivacity. She felt like a cat watching a hole, aware of the unsuspecting mouse noiselessly approaching her, conscious also that the cat's purr held no false note.

"I have a confession to make to you," said Paley-Hyde suddenly, breaking the pause with an effort. "If ever I think ill of a person unjustly, I can't rest until I soothe my conscience by an apology. I only wronged you in my thoughts, but the matter has worried me ; I am like that."

Jacobina was sitting straight up in her chair now, her eyes slightly dilated. Her little airs and graces had dropped from her like a mantle ; she inclined her head as if to say, "Go on."

"It is in connection with Jocelyn Gervalle," he continued. "You remember that day last summer when we were driving together ?"

"Yes, perfectly. It was the last time

you drove with me. I am not likely to forget."

"We talked of your niece, the fatherless girl, alone in the world, as I thought. It was evident her position preyed on your mind. You said you disliked young people, and spoke bitterly of relationships necessitating obligations. I offended you slightly by naming that objectionable word "duty," and I believe you informed me the *rôle* of chaperon would be an impossible one, since it jarred with your inclination."

"Jocelyn's future seemed rather a problem," Jacobina acknowledged.

"Yes; and when you told me of her going to Heale Prior, and talked of its delights, I was sceptical. I thought you had ruthlessly sent the girl to live with a grumpy old grandfather, little dreaming you were giving her the best companion a young or old life could desire—the companionship of a great intellect, keenly sympathetic, exquisitely tender, amazingly amiable, tolerant, and discerning. What an education for a young person! To deny her to him would have been positively criminal. You, who knew the Professor, judged wisely. I, who did not know him, judged the matter from a surface standpoint—harshly,

uncharitably. I ask you now to accept my congratulations on the action I once deplored. Will you forgive me for my interfering, unchristian thoughts, and let us shake hands ? ”

Jacobina saw the little outward movement which spontaneously invited the clasp of her fingers, and yet she hesitated, the colour rushing to her cheeks. This man, in whose eyes she most wished to shine, was crediting her with good motives non-existent in the past. By a mere trick of fate she appeared to him in a false light, the limelight that represents the sun, and has no real power of its own, but a light in which she nevertheless desperately longed to bask, if it kept him in a kind and tender mood.

Jacobina struggled with herself. Ever since the Professor's loan, her better nature rose from long apathy to re-assert its claim. Now a mighty battle raged. She hated his praise, yet longed to retain it ; she fought with demons, she communed with angels, all in the passing of a few seconds—the seconds which make history between a woman and a man.

CHAPTER XVII.

Seen of angels.—*Timothy.*

PALEY-HYDE thought she was offended, yet he did not regret his words. He was eminently a just man.

He could never remember Lady Livingstone piquing his interest before. She had appeared vapid, selfish, and unadaptable to his moods, when in the past she forced her friendship upon him because he rested her, and made a change from the men she habitually met in society. Now there was something new in her bearing, and small wonder, for Jacobina had come unexpectedly into conflict with conscience, that unseen force holding sway over heart and convictions, that agent all-powerful if allowed free rein.

Contact with the world gave her, even in moments of dire emotion, a surface serenity. Yet, figuratively speaking, she was out of breath with chasing shadows and hunting after baubles; she "opened her mouth and panted," like the Psalmist, for the best of life's

happiness had been earnestly but fruitlessly sought.

This warfare of spirit came so unexpectedly it took Jacobina some moments before she rallied to the attack. Had she possessed the prophet's eye she might even there, in the West End of London, have discerned afar the chariots and horses of fire, marshalled for her protection.

Paley-Hyde's words struck her like arrows making their way to the very quick of the soul. She realised at last the penal energy there is in conscience, when after a long sleep this principle starts suddenly into strength, pressing down its victim as with a burden, informing the wayward of duties to hand, acting as a monitor, clear in denunciation of wrong.

Jacobina felt a stern gladness in this test of her courage, as she looked up quickly, facing him without reserve.

"You are mistaken," she said, and the musical voice held almost a note of triumph for her mastery over inclination. "I knew nothing of the Professor, when I allowed Jocelyn to go to Heale Prior, that I might be saved the tie of having a girl on my hands. When I say I knew nothing, I mean to his

credit. I had heard from Jocelyn's mother he was 'impossible,' a hermit and a miser, living apart from the world, hoarding his money, seeing no one. I let her go because it offered a convenient way out of my difficulty. But for the old grandfather, whom I had never seen, my niece must have come to me."

Jacobina's lips trembled, but her eyes were bravely bright, as if exulting in her distasteful task of surrendering to the supremacy of conscience, which had risen to rule with such merciless vehemence.

Paley-Hyde lowered his glance uneasily. He was shrewd enough to guess what this confession cost, and it surprised him into sympathy. He knew the martyrdom of a proud woman under the keen light of unvarnished truth. He acknowledged to himself credit lay in this free-will offering of plain, ugly fact, realising that, all mysteriously, angels had been at work seeking a new trophy in the surrender of a cold, calculating heart.

"I daresay you will despise me," Jacobina continued, with a light laugh calculated to dismiss the subject as almost a jest; "but I thought I had better tell you. Undeserved praise is so difficult to bear."

"Despise you!" he said quickly; "my

dear lady, I have never liked you so well as at this minute ! ”

The words were spoken with such candour that involuntarily the hand he had waited for met his in a hearty shake, and some barrier, indescribably broad though invisible, collapsed as if by magic.

“ It’s good of you to feel like that,” answered Jacobina, as he released her willing fingers from the spontaneous clasp. “ A little balm to a wound, you know, for it often haunts me, that hateful thought, I was not always kind to Jocelyn. The girl is very dear to me now. I found out her true worth the first evening she came to London, hers and the Professor’s. Does he bewitch people ? I know I am a different woman since his coming. I tried to hide it from the world, under the mask of my old frivolity, but the change is there all the same. He has effectively stopped my gambling—perhaps you haven’t heard how much I am missed at bridge parties now. The reformed character never speaks of a promise made to an old man, but she would think herself desperately low down in the moral scale if she ever thought of breaking it. When the Professor goes out of our lives, we shall all feel a hopeless blank that can never be re-

filled, all we who love him. Did you hear of the servants who gave notice *en masse* because they imagined Professor Gervalle was a wizard? In less than a fortnight they were every one begging to remain, and ready to go on their knees to their master. I verily believe they would do anything in the world for him, so great is their respect and admiration."

Paley-Hyde kept a curious glance fixed fascinatedly upon Jacobina. He was not admiring her full blooming beauty, the dainty details of her dress, the careful structure of the undulated hair, like a crown of natural glory; he was rather looking for the little touches of human sadness betrayed in her effort to smile, and the quivering of impatient eyelids.

How could he tell that her pulses beat faster for him? Men were to Lady Livingstone mere playthings by report. She had, through thoughtless flirtations, won for herself a terrifying reputation in the male mind of being that hateful creature, half sorceress, half dragon, who collects scalps in the store-room of memory, living upon conquests as the vampire sips blood.

To-day Jacobina made strides towards redemption; she rose momentarily above her

reputation, aided by those unseen angels who, coming to earth, fall into companionship with strange world-ridden natures, and, hovering near these alien souls, learn to weep.

Possibly her longings were known only to "principalities and powers in heavenly places," and Paley-Hyde read nothing of the real suffering within.

Devils, as well as angels, are called in Scripture "principalities and powers," be it remembered.

Jacobina found herself amidst three great forces, human and divine—"angels, and devils, and man." On one side echoes from glorious conclaves; on the other, the lower world, goading to small sins, petty indiscretions, arrogant pretensions, hellish conceits; and straight before her, man, with outstretched hand, saying calmly, "Good-bye, Lady Livingstone."

CHAPTER XVIII.

He thought as a sage, though he felt as a man.

—*James Beattie.*

“GRANDFATHER,” said Jocelyn, “I wonder if you would mind Mrs. Winnington staying with us for a few days?”

The Professor looked up with the slightest possible start, and his eyes were rather hawk-like for the moment.

“To stay?” he queried. “To stay here?”

“Yes. She has workmen in her house, poor woman! Quite a domestic trouble; the place turned upside down just at a most awkward time, when she has so many engagements in London. Otherwise she would go to friends in the country; but, naturally, it is hard to leave while there is so much going on. She hinted to come at first, yet I did not like to ask her, and suggested an hotel; but, finally, in desperation, she invited herself, subject to your approval. She thinks you like her so much!”

“ Does she ? ”

He did not deny the soft impeachment, but sat stroking his sparse beard reflectively. Presently he spoke with rather a cynical smile veiled beneath his white moustache.

“ I should like her to come.”

The gracious concession delighted Jocelyn, who could not bear to see a friend worried and not raise a hand to help her.

The girl's generous nature made her kind to Mrs. Winnington, though lately she noticed flaws in the grass widow's character, and began to feel less surprised at the matrimonial differences which gossip hinted.

Accordingly Mrs. Winnington and her maid arrived at Grosvenor Square on a short visit, which she and Jocelyn agreed should make no difference to any of their previous engagements. Each had a large acquaintance in town, and a long list of invitations, so the compact mutually suited.

Tommy was now at the house every day ; in fact, Lady Ludlow complained she had lost him already. But the complaint held a very tender, unresisting note, and she never really grudged her boy the happy hours he spent with his young *fiancée*.

Mrs. Winnington gave very little trouble, her one idea being apparently to make herself pleasant to everybody.

She pretended to idolise the Professor, and often called him "Grandfather," in imitation of Jocelyn, who, she insisted, should drop the formal "Mrs. Winnington" for the more familiar "Pleasance."

"I am glad my godfather and godmothers gave me that name in my baptism. It has such an amiable sound," she said. "Some names want living up to. My mother always told me I was born to smile."

The Professor really seemed to appreciate the lady with the Madonna-like eyes and cheeks of unfading rose, for he sought her company frequently, as if grudging her to Jocelyn.

His attention flattered Mrs. Winnington not a little, and she made a point of gratifying the old man's evident anxiety for her presence as much as possible.

"I don't want to trouble you to talk," he would say, "but I like to sit and watch you with your embroidery. So few women work now, and the flash of your needle brings back old days. The very fact of using your fingers aids thought, and I am sure the quiet hour

spent over stitching is conducive to many bright ideas."

"Yes," answered Mrs. Winnington, "I always think when I work. My needle inspires me. I am glad you approve, and do not consider it waste of time."

She had particularly pretty hands, and she knew the best way of displaying her jewelled fingers and manicured nails. The embroidery savoured of church work, with its rich colouring and threads of fine gold. She would fain have had the Professor believe these stoles were for sacred vestments, instead of to adorn an Oriental tea-gown.

It surprised Jocelyn to see how often the Professor sat near her when she worked, refraining absolutely from conversation. Mrs. Winnington, pleased that it should be so, smiled whenever she met his eyes riveted on her slim figure. But there were moments when the Professor appeared to doze, and then her lips would tighten, while a frown caught the white forehead in a vice. At such times she invariably made false stitches, which she hastily unpicked with sensitive fingers that had physically suffered from the needle's distraught manners.

"Professor Gervalle is a most staunch

admirer of mine," she merrily boasted to Tommy. "I don't want to make Jocelyn jealous, but I do believe he is going to let me into one of his marvellous secrets."

"The Professor may take you in ; he has a sense of humour," declared Tommy.

She tossed her head with a little chuckle.

"You don't know Pleasance if you think that. Had I been in Jocelyn's shoes at Heale Prior there would not have been a shred of mystery left in or outside the dear old man's laboratory. I have all the curiosity of the child who wanted to know everything, and wished he had watched while God was making him, so that he could remember how to do it. Already I hold one of the Professor's secrets in the hollow of my hand."

They were alone together in the drawing-room, for Tommy had called, to find Jocelyn out, and remained on the strength of a message that she would return shortly.

"What secret ?" he asked, for her mysterious manner and dancing eyes tantalised him.

"The secret of his strength now in old age. Don't you wonder sometimes how he keeps up his energy ? You need not fear he

will fail or go under, since he has discovered the elixir of life."

"Oh, rot!" said Tommy.

He pulled at an imaginary moustache impatiently, for Mrs. Winnington had a knack of annoying him.

"Thank you," she snapped, "for a very polite remark!"

In a moment he was contrite, fearing he had been rude.

"I beg your pardon, but I really thought it was rot, and the word slipped out."

"So in penitence you use it again. Really you are so funny, I must forgive you."

She moved uneasily, and glanced towards the door. Evidently her ears were more than usually alert.

"The Professor has given me some of his life elixir," she whispered, and her face rippled suddenly with smiles. "I've got the bottle upstairs, and because your life is so valuable to Jocelyn, I mean to spare you just one little drop. You mustn't tell the Professor or anyone. I took the first dose not an hour ago, and I feel so amazingly well, as if I could skip over the moon. You look a bit fagged to-day, and tired round the eyes."

"Oh, the heat rather bothers me, being an

energetic person," declared Tommy ; " and I've had too many late nights. Wish we were in the country. If the Professor's elixir can reconcile me to another month of London, I'll drink the whole bottle."

" You greedy thing ! I shall only spare you a very little. Wait here, and I'll fetch the tiny bottle from my room. I keep it under lock and key because it's so wonderfully precious, and the Professor is not very liberal with it. Don't say a word to a soul, or you'll get me into trouble ! I feel rather a brute at betraying my host's confidence, but I thought you seemed run down."

Tommy had a great weakness for medicine ; he always tasted other people's doses, and never minded who prescribed for him. He waited now on the white hearthrug with his hands in his pockets, but scarcely had the door closed, before a strange thing happened.

From the far end of the room, through a narrow opening hidden by a heavy curtain, came the Professor stealthily. He made no sound as he stole cat-like across the thick carpet, one hand upraised to enjoin silence.

Tommy watched wonderingly, thinking for a moment the old man's mind must be giving way. It was a double room, and he

beckoned to him from the pillar where the lofty apartments joined.

“What’s the matter?” whispered Tommy, ignoring, as he often did, the Professor’s supposed deafness.

“She’s stolen a bottle similar to this from a shelf in my study,” Professor Gervalle said quickly. “It’s a damnable plot with Chandoss. That woman is here as his tool to poison you!”

The quavering hand thrust a dark blue bottle into Tommy’s pocket.

“That,” he hastily explained, “contains water, nothing more. Exchange it without her seeing. Take a few sips of the water, then fall heavily and lie quite still, face downwards. Don’t move till I come. If you drink from the one she brings, you’re a dead man!”

A step on the stair warned the Professor he had not a moment to lose before retiring to the shadows behind the massive pillar. Tommy, thoroughly mystified, regained his position on the rug, before he had time to analyse his feelings in the matter.

He turned his back to the door as she entered, and criticised his face in the glass. It would not do to look startled, yet he felt as if his hair must literally be standing on end.

What could this devilish woman want with his life ?

“ Vain boy,” said a laughing voice ; “ I thought only women were caught staring into mirrors. But come, Dr. Pleasance has brought the life elixir very much against her will. She’s not really a generous soul, only I fancy a good many people have a knack of spoiling you.”

“ Take a little first to encourage me,” said Tommy, and, despite his gruesome fancies, he laughed light-heartedly.

“ No, I had my share, as I told you, an hour ago. See the mark on the bottle ! The Professor forbade more than one draught a day.”

She gave it to him, and her hand unmistakably trembled.

He held the phial a moment to the light.

“ The elixir of life ! ” he said. “ How jolly ! By Jove, there’s someone coming ! ”

He slipped it in his pocket, and looked towards the door.

Mrs. Winnington stifled a little cry.

“ False alarm ! ” he laughed. “ Thought I heard Jocelyn.”

“ And I thought it might be the Professor, only Elizabeth told me he was asleep in his

room," she stammered. "I didn't want him to catch me parting with his gift."

"Naturally not."

The blue bottle came forth again from the pocket into which it had vanished.

"To your very good health!" he said, raising it to his lips; then, pausing, asked pleasantly, "I say, doesn't it run to a glass?"

"No, no, nothing so commonplace needed for life-elixir; a glass, indeed! What should we do if the Professor suddenly appeared?"

Mrs. Winnington's face had turned singularly pale under her rouge. It seemed the delay was almost more than she could bear. Her fingers, tightly clenched within the palms, betrayed strained nerves; more than once she half advanced, as if to snatch the fatal potion from those young reckless hands.

"Very well, if you don't mind, it matters little to me," he replied; "but you're awfully generous and good."

He tossed the fluid down his throat, and let the bottle fall. Just for a moment he swayed giddily, then, stretching out both arms, sank heavily forward, a limp, prostrate, inanimate form.

Mrs. Winnington spoke no word. She watched in absolute silence, only bending to

see none of the liquid remained in the fallen bottle, which lay empty on the thick rug that had absorbed the spilt mixture. Without touching him, she crept noiselessly away, stealing unseen to her room.

Seizing hat, gloves, and dainty parasol, she went singing down the staircase, and passed smiling out into the glare of a blazing summer afternoon.

CHAPTER XIX.

The Grave, dread thing !
 Men shiver when thou'rt nam'd : Nature, appall'd,
 Shakes off her wonted firmness.—*Robert Blair.*

THE mechanical smile lasted only until she turned the corner of the Square, then Pleasance Winnington paused and pressed her hand to her heart. Round her lips crept an ominous blue tinge, over her eyes stole a haze which threatened faintness. She pulled herself together with a supreme effort, and weakly motioned to a passing hansom, into which she stumbled giddily.

The voice which told the cabman where to drive sounded husky and far away ; he asked twice before hearing the words correctly.

She leant back, pressing a trembling hand to her forehead, biting her lips, and catching her breath in short, sharp gasps, gazing out helplessly upon a dim, uncertain world. She felt like some panting and terrified beast ; around her already dark shades of fear, and haunting shadows of irremediable remorse gathered like thunder-clouds.

In that first still moment of intense mental agony, Pleasance Winnington knew she had destroyed herself. Shattered, unnerved, paralysed by what she had done, the miserable soul saw black, malignant, insinuating deadly things peering at her from every side, filling her veins with a burning poison, creeping like adders across her path, or swarms of locusts devouring heart and brain.

She made no sound, though her lips parted, only a silent anguish extended her eyes as they stared into impenetrable darkness.

When the cab drew up she alighted, still with the same dizzy sensation, and mounted the steps of tall residential mansions like one who walks in a troubled sleep.

A few moments later Mrs. Winnington entered a luxurious apartment, combining the lack of feminine arrangement with the solid comforts of a bachelor's den.

Major Chandoss rose to greet her with his bland smile. She neither saw the outstretched hand nor heard his words of welcome; she just sank exhausted into a substantial leather-covered chair near a big oak writing-table.

He scanned her keenly, noting the tremulous lips and staring eye, the travesty of a

drawn, haggard face mocking art's worthless roses.

"You've done it?" he said, in a tone of conviction.

She inclined her head with a partially stifled sob.

A light as of victory long sought, a flash of hope revived, stole across the dark countenance of the watching man.

His cherished scheme had reached fulfilment, bribery had won the day. Even death could be bought, the death of a hated rival, through miracles worked by gold.

"Good," he said; "you are a brave woman!"

He drew near and patted her shoulder.

"Come, come," he continued, as she made no reply, "you are not going to break down now?"

His tone savoured of sudden uneasiness, and his gaze became more critical.

Mrs. Winnington shook off his hand with a little moan.

"Tell me the details quickly," he said, his voice commanding and stern.

Pleasance spoke for the first time, keeping her head averted. In a few laboured words she repeated the gruesome story of the after-

noon, while Major Chandoss listened approvingly.

“ I left him,” she gasped, in conclusion, “ just as he fell, just as he fell ! ”

“ And came straight to me ? ”

“ Straight to you.”

“ No one saw you leave the house ? ”

“ I think not, but I sang as I went down the stairs—I sang ! ”

The repetition mingled with a little cry that broke wailing from her lips, the cry of a terrified soul in purgatory.

“ You must go back,” he said ; “ go back quickly to the house as if nothing had occurred. The moment they tell you of the tragedy you can naturally leave.”

His evident excitement had no effect upon Mrs. Winnington. She was stricken down with paralysing fear. Her hands hung nervelessly over the arms of the chair. She looked more dead than alive.

Her lack of response angered him.

“ You must pull yourself together,” he declared. “ You were strung up, and it’s natural you should feel a bit done after the effort ; but the difficult part is over, you have only now to keep cool.”

He knew the words lacked conviction ; his

own manner was momentarily betraying increased concern.

She rose stiffly, and supported her trembling limbs by clinging to the back of the chair.

“ I must have been mad,” she said, under her breath, “ to let you tempt me to do that awful thing for gain. My God! what horror!” Her voice failed her, she struggled a moment with deadly weakness.

“ If you knew,” she continued at last ; “ if you knew the pain here over my heart. I thought it would be easy. I fancied I didn’t care. I had roughed it in the past when I saw that other man die, the man who killed himself for me. I was sorry, but I forgot ; it seemed possible, almost easy, to forget.”

“ Of course, and you will soon get over this. The world is a precious poverty-stricken place for saints ! Go back now and face it out.”

He bit his nails as he spoke, moving to and fro uneasily.

At the mention of “ facing it out ” she seemed to quail and shrink ; her eyes, lit by indignant abhorrence, fixed him with glittering scrutiny. Her physical nature recoiled at the thought ; she gasped out her answer in dry, harsh tones.

“ I can't ; it's impossible ! I swear I'll never enter that house again. It would kill me to go back.”

Major Chandoss sprang forward and gripped her by the elbows.

“ Look to your senses ! ” he said. “ Would you spoil all now, and risk our necks, when the deed is done, for want of a little self-control ? ”

His words held weight ; terrified as she was, and on the verge of a collapse, the thought of exposure brought with it the semblance of a calmer mood.

With the inconsistency of her sex she signalled assent by a voiceless moving of her lips, and the slightest inclination of her head. He breathed more evenly, and snatched up his hat.

“ Come,” he said, “ I will go part of the way with you. We won't talk ; you are a little unhinged, that's all ! ”

He hustled her down the stairs, keeping firm hold of her arm. His face, an ashen grey, bore the furrows of deep anxiety.

“ Plenty of time,” he said, “ to discuss everything later. Get through to-day, and you will recover your strength. Finish the work without confusion, keep a firm grip on

your emotions. You can be strong, I know ; you have proved yourself of iron manufacture, a little more steeling of the heart to complete a great victory."

He hardly knew what he said, for he was momentarily catching her anxiety. It proved a Herculean effort to speak in reassuring tones.

Mrs. Winnington made no answer, but her silence abated rather than increased his alarm. She was gathering strength for the final coup, nurturing what energy remained to brave the last scene, and act her difficult part in the tragic end of a harrowing drama.

* * * * *

"Then it is true ! She did mean to do it ! She slunk away like a thief. How beastly !"

Tommy was standing on the fateful white rug, speaking through his teeth, his boyish face flushed to the temples.

The Professor, concealed by the window curtains, watched Mrs. Winnington's figure down the Square.

"Yes," he replied. "I knew a devilish scheme was brewing some days since. I also foresaw she did not intend raising an alarm. I think I could have told you the events just

as they happened. Elixir of life, indeed ! All her own invention—lies, lies from first to last ! Give me the bottle of poison. I don't like to feel it is even near you."

Tommy drew the deadly draught from his pocket and handed it over submissively.

A strong intuition told him not to question Professor Gervalle just then as to how he had unravelled this almost incredible plot. The aged man showed the effects of excitement only too visibly, and ignoring the awful danger so narrowly escaped, Tommy thought rather of his rescuer than himself.

"You saved my life," he said, with shy gratitude, and the tone rather than the words conveyed what he felt. "But it's been a tax on your strength, I'm afraid."

"No, no." The Professor shook his head. "No, indeed, don't think that for a moment. There is more to be done yet. Mrs. Winnington will be coming back, and we must form a plan of action."

He turned to the window again.

"Here is Jocelyn ; she must be told."

Tommy looked out and saw the loved one stepping lightly from her carriage. By the door stood Paley-Hyde.

"I wonder if Jocelyn's a good actress,"

murmured the Professor. "Hyde is the man to help us too. She's bringing him in."

Already Jocelyn's cheerful voice reached them from the stairs.

"I'm so glad we met. Yes, I feel sure Grandfather is at home."

As the door opened, the very atmosphere of the room breathed mystery and trouble. The faces of both men were a study.

"What is the matter?" asked Jocelyn, going hurriedly towards the Professor. "Something has happened."

CHAPTER XX.

A wretched soul, bruised with adversity.

—*Shakespeare.*

MRS. WINNINGTON appeared amazingly calm as she rang the bell of the big house in Grosvenor Square, but her calmness was the result of a mighty effort that strained every nerve and tissue, like a tortured, mangled body on the rack.

The unconscious manservant informed her that tea was served already in Miss Gervalle's boudoir.

“Is that you, Pleasance?” called a voice over the banisters. “Come up; we have been waiting tea.”

Mrs. Winnington obeyed the summons slowly. More than once she stumbled on the marble stairs, catching her skirt frills in the buckles of her dainty shoes.

So as yet he had not been found! Jocelyn must have gone straight to her boudoir, ordering tea there; the distant, deserted drawing-room still held its gruesome secret.

She felt inclined to scream, and forced her handkerchief against her lips to prevent herself crying out he was dead.

“Why—oh! why—had she returned at Major Chandoss’s command? Surely she might have invented some excuse—a sprained ankle, a sick friend, a pressing engagement at the other end of the world!

With difficulty, having got so far, she rallied her forces, and entered the pretty room so characteristic of Jocelyn. It was here the girl kept her favourite knick-knacks and photographs; here she arranged tastefully the exquisite flowers sent by Sir Thomas; here she loved to sit and talk of her future to a sympathetic listener.

“You know Mr. Paley-Hyde, I think?” said Jocelyn, who now partially concealed herself behind the tea-table, for the heat apparently made her flush and pale with astonishing rapidity, and she seemed anxious to hide her face.

The Professor smiled in his usual welcoming manner, and Paley-Hyde fetched a chair for Mrs. Winnington, which he placed near Jocelyn.

“Thanks,” she murmured. “I would rather sit by the window; it’s so very warm.”

She sank on an Empire couch, really more like a small bed than a sofa—the kind of restful lounge upon which beauties of the First Empire were so often painted.

In one short afternoon Pleasance Winnington had lost her beauty: She looked old as the sunlight played on her, and the lips, habitually busy with bright conversation, remained mute and colourless, while her eyes furtively watched the door.

Every moment she expected the terrible news, the news of death, with all its wild alarm, and the sight of Jocelyn pouring out tea was almost more than her shuddering soul could stand.

“Where is Sir Thomas to-day?” asked Paley-Hyde. “Your shadow has failed you, Miss Gervalle!”

“Yes, and he promised to come.”

Jocelyn’s voice held a slight tremor, which Mrs. Winnington mistook for a sign that the girl felt crushed by his absence.

“Early days to break promises,” declared the Professor chaffingly. “What do you say?” turning to Paley-Hyde. “Bad sign, isn’t it? Your modern young man has none of the petty punctiliousness expected of lovers in my time.”

“ Oh, I daresay Tommy has stayed away for some good reason,” put in Jocelyn hastily.

“ Well, we’ll give the boy a chance anyhow, and not condemn him unheard,” laughed her grandfather good-humouredly. “ Perhaps Mrs. Winnington, having been through the mill herself, will give you a few hints on the training of *fiancés*.”

Pleasance neither moved nor spoke, only she hastily put down the cup Paley-Hyde handed her, for trembling fingers set it rattling with noticeable vigour in the slippery saucer.

“ What was that ? ” asked the Professor, suddenly. He looked towards the door, pointing as he asked the question.

“ The handle turned,” said Paley-Hyde. “ I thought someone was coming in, but I heard no footstep.”

“ I hoped it was Tommy,” said Jocelyn, turning away to cut an elaborate almond cake.

Again the conversation drifted on lazily. Tommy’s absence had evidently affected Jocelyn’s spirits, for she laughed with an effort, and appeared to forget the presence of Mrs. Winnington.

At last Pleasance found her voice—a faint, weak voice certainly.

“Jocelyn dear,” she said, “I’ve got such a headache. I wonder if you would mind my going to lie down. It makes me so stupid.”

She half rose, when simultaneously the door opened, and slowly, noiselessly, Sir Thomas walked in.

With a half-stifled cry, Pleasance sank back on the Empire couch, her eyes glazing as they stared at the pale, unsmiling visage. He stood quite still, apparently unseen by any save herself, while in his outstretched hand he held the small blue bottle she had filled with poison.

“I am sorry your head is so bad,” said Jocelyn, looking as it were right through Tommy, to the lounge upon which the quivering woman sat. “What can we do for you?”

“Sleep would be the best thing possible,” declared the Professor, rising as if to open the door for her, and thus facing the spectral figure. He too, heedless of its presence, moved within an inch of where it stood. One of its fingers touched his sleeve in passing, and pointed to the sofa, but Professor Gervalle paid no sort of heed to the ghostly apparition.

“Don’t you—don’t you see?” gasped Mrs. Winnington, cowering back, a terrible dismay twisting her features.

“See what?”

Paley-Hyde and Jocelyn spoke simultaneously, each looking with undiscerning eyes towards Sir Thomas, who now advanced noiselessly nearer the murderess.

“There,” persisted Pleasance, indicating the silent presence, yet not daring to approach. “Great heavens! you must be blind! It’s Sir Thomas Ludlow, I tell you!—Sir Thomas——”

Mrs. Winnington’s voice failed, her teeth chattered, and her features convulsed with terror.

“Where?” asked Paley-Hyde.

“Before your very eyes!” she gasped. “You must see him.”

Cold drops streamed down her forehead; her blood froze; the little remaining courage ebbed away as she groaned aloud in her agony of mind.

“You are ill,” said Jocelyn, and her voice rang hard.

The certainty that her victim’s spirit had returned to haunt her now threw Mrs. Winnington into a perfect frenzy of fear, as she

gazed, horror-stricken, at the approaching form. In a flash she felt the ministers of vengeance crowding round her. Powerless to escape the scorching flame, to ward off the paralysing terror, she gave herself up to the mental torture of that maddening moment. Leaping with a wild shriek to her feet, she stood, racked by spiritual fears and bodily anguish, facing her silent victim with eyes he would never forget ; then, flinging up her arms fell a senseless heap, bruised and broken, at Jocelyn's feet.

" Good God ! I should be sorry for her," gasped the girl, bending quickly down ; " but she tried to kill you—to take your life ! "

The magnitude of the crime stifled sympathy.

The words were addressed to Tommy, who had already raised the unconscious head, supporting it upon his arm.

" She will come round directly," he said. " Don't be frightened, Jocelyn."

But Paley-Hyde, meeting the Professor's eyes, thought differently.

The older men already perceived their revenge had taken a more serious turn than the startled group of plotters bargained for !

It was long until the death-like figure stirred, and then Mrs. Winnington seemed only partially aware of what had happened.

She knew, indeed, that sorrow lay upon her like a weight of lead, but, on regaining consciousness, the details were mercifully blurred to memory. She only asked to be taken home, vaguely terrified of her present surroundings, though she now accepted Tommy as a human being who could listen to, and even grant, her requests.

“Mr. Paley-Hyde and I will take you back,” said Sir Thomas, and Mrs. Winnington appeared quite content with the arrangement. She was too dazed and weak to collect her scattered thoughts, yet, oddly enough, she shrank from Jocelyn, and appeared on the verge of another collapse if the girl approached.

The Professor she ignored, possibly because he was so very quiet, and looked so ethereal that he really seemed part of the shadows which made twilight in the room.

Paley-Hyde crossed to where Professor Gervalle sat watching the patient from some distance.

“Have you sent the telegram?” he asked.

“Yes,” replied the Professor. “I wired

in her name to Chandoss, asking him to go to her house as soon as possible on urgent business."

"Lucky Sir Thomas knew the address!" muttered Daniel, drawing his brows together, and setting his lips sternly. "He and I will await Major Chandoss there."

"I've ordered the carriage," said Jocelyn, coming quietly between them. "It will be at the door in a few minutes. I have simply told Mrs. Winnington's maid that her mistress is ill, and wishes to return at once. She is going with her, and will fetch the luggage later. I understand the workmen are out of the house. I doubt now if they were ever there."

Mrs. Winnington was too weak to stand, and had to be carried to the conveyance. Jocelyn thought that Tommy and the grave politician looked singularly like warders, as they entered the closed landau.

Paley-Hyde had whispered a last word of warning in the girl's ear.

"Look after Professor Gervalle, or he will be the next to collapse."

As the hall door closed, she and the Professor, who had watched the departure silently, now turned away with an involuntary sigh of relief.

She gave him her arm, noticing he leant upon it heavily, and walked with effort.

“Grandfather,” she said, “I want you to go to bed and rest.”

He made no dissent.

“Rest,” he murmured. “How good it sounds !”

CHAPTER XXI.

Hope, withering, fled ; and Mercy sighed Farewell !

—*Byron.*

MRS. WINNINGTON lay passively on the sofa in her drawing-room ; her lips remained strangely blue, her face looking like that of a corpse. The ghastly effect of previous “make-up” helped to emphasise pitifully the ravages of ill-health.

She had summoned, however, sufficient strength to talk to her strange companions—the man she tried to murder, and the grave, unemotional Paley-Hyde.

Details of the afternoon gradually unfolded themselves to her clouded brain. She realised with intense relief that the awful crime attempted was mercifully a failure, and since that knowledge the deep, unholy fear passed entirely from her eyes.

“ I don’t mind what happens to me,” she murmured (possibly because her weakness made the future a blank and the present vague) ; “ I don’t care for anything since I know you are alive.”

She looked pleadingly at the boyish countenance of Sir Thomas, putting out her hand in feeble supplication, only to grasp the air.

“ We have sent for Major Chandoss,” said Paley-Hyde. “ He will come, expecting to see you alone. Do you think it would be too much for you if we faced him in your presence ? ”

She shook her head.

“ No,” she answered. “ He drove me into a corner ; he tempted me, God knows, with the cleverness of the devil. I will say what you like ; I only know I loathe him ! ”

She covered her face, shuddering.

They sat awhile in silence, till presently the sound of a bell caught Mrs. Winnington’s ear.

She raised herself on her cushions.

“ It may be the doctor,” she said, “ or Major Chandoss. I hope they have not come together.”

Paley-Hyde and the younger man both stood back behind a bank of ferns and flowering plants, so that the newcomer might not perceive them till he was well in the room.

A few moments elapsed—moments marked by still suspense and breathless eagerness ;

then the door opened, and Major Chandoss was announced.

He went quickly to the couch, his back turned towards those silent witnesses.

“ Well,” he asked, “ are you calmer ? What have you to say ? ”

His tone was an unspoken threat, and seemed to convey the injunction, “ No scenes, no reproaches, no exhibitions of remorse, plain business—*et puis bon soir !* ”

For answer she made a sign towards the fern bank and the flowers.

Without a word, but with unflinching resolve on every feature, Sir Thomas and Paley-Hyde advanced relentlessly.

At sight of the supposed dead man alive in the flesh, Major Chandoss literally turned green.

“ Ludlow ! ” he gasped, “ you here ! ”

“ Yes,” said Sir Thomas, folding his arms ; “ here instead of in my coffin, where you intended me to be. The game is up, and you’ve lost ! You will have to reckon now with an earthly judge, instead of my going to a higher tribunal.”

Major Chandoss forced a strained laugh.

“ What the devil are you talking about, or accusing me of ? ” he asked impertinently.

Pleasance gave the answer, her voice sounding stronger than in the past.

“They know all,” she said, with defiance in look and tone—“all!”

He turned on her as if to rend her in pieces.

“You she-fiend!” he hissed, noting the triumphant light which leapt to her failing eyes. “It’s your doing, is it? You have invented a pack of falsehoods to blacken me, for some vile motive of your own. Of what do I stand accused? Tell me, for, in Heaven’s name, I am innocent.”

Pleasance raised herself to a sitting posture. All life’s fire burnt afresh in heart and brain—a feverish flush dyed her face—she looked like a serpent rearing to strike.

“Of what!” she laughed bitterly; “of what, indeed! Inciting to murder—ah! worse than that. You might have killed his body, but you could not touch his soul! It was my soul you destroyed, and laid low in the dust; you cast me down to hell—you—you who would have watched me perish without a regret, so long as your evil will worked its criminal desire! The darkness and horror came near and touched me; I have died a thousand deaths; may you die them also, and be accursed! For such as you there should

be no pity, no help, no salvation here or hereafter. Can't you see the ugly things all round you, the hideous monsters with dark faces and sin-haunted eyes? The black shadows push me back; I can't find my way. Is there no one—no one to give me a hand?"

The horrible throes of delirium had gripped the swaying form; the terrific development of her hatred for the man she cursed held her as in a vice, while she struggled with the last expiring flicker of vitality.

Paley-Hyde went quickly to her. He caught the hands feebly clutching at space, and felt the inanimate head fall back heavily upon his shoulder.

Sir Thomas stood ominously between Major Chandoss and the door; then a great silence fell.

That pause, so brief in reality, so long to the imagination, was broken at last by a step outside. Someone entered noiselessly—a man and a stranger, but that indefinable medical manner which stamps the profession gave him at once a passport to Pleasance Winnington's couch.

Paley-Hyde stepped gladly back, his glance fixing Major Chandoss, who stood with blood-shot eyes, staring in bewilderment, dumb,

dazed, unnerved, between his motionless captors.

“Gentlemen,” said the doctor, “you can do nothing by remaining. Mrs. Winnington is dead !”

CHAPTER XXII.

Be thou the rainbow to the storms of life,
The evening beam that smiles the clouds away
And tints to-morrow with prophetic ray.—*Byron.*

JOCELYN anxiously awaited Tommy's return. When at last he came he was alone, looking very pale and troubled, but his face brightened as he drew her to his arms.

She clung to him with tears in her bright eyes, feeling the full force of the narrowly-averted tragedy, which might have robbed her of love and happiness for ever.

Very gently he told her how Pleasance Winnington had died, cursing the man who drove her to crime.

“It was a fearful end,” he said, “hastened, I fear, by our plot to punish her. It had an awful effect upon Chandoss. He seemed almost out of his mind; such a cringing cur he looked, grovelling on his knees at our feet. I can't forget the sight of him. His one cry was, ‘Let me go!’ He implored to be allowed to clear out of the country, promising never to reappear in England; and

the whole thing had so sickened me, I felt it was, after all, the best and simplest sequel to a hideous affair. Paley-Hyde agreed with me, as we had no real proof, but Chandoss did not know this."

"I think it will come as a relief to grandfather," murmured Jocelyn, shuddering at the recollection of a truly terrible day. "He is not strong enough to endure excitement of such a trying kind, and I dreaded what might be in store. He seemed so very agitated, I wanted to send for a doctor, but, you know, he resents medical interference."

"Do you really think he is ill? Perhaps you had better not tell him Mrs. Winnington is dead."

Tommy spoke with deep concern. He knew how dear the Professor was to Jocelyn; he also felt most affectionately towards the kind, brave nature which had saved him from an untimely end, as it seemed, by a miracle.

"I should never conceal anything from grandfather; he would know at once. His extraordinary insight is certainly bewildering. He must have discovered Mrs. Winnington's wickedness by supernatural means. I believe, if he told the secret of his power to any

living creature, it would be to Mr. Paley-Hyde. Grandfather is deeply attached to him, and felt so grateful for his help to-day. I thought, when that wretched woman lay unconscious here, she was already dead, and afterwards I discovered grandfather thought the same. He told me he felt as if he had already entered into the secrets of eternity, having watched a soul come back from the shadowy brink and seize its body. While you were gone, I cancelled to-night's engagements, and wrote Aunt Jack a long account of what had happened. I knew it would please her to hear Mr. Paley-Hyde happened to be with us at such a dreadful time, for she always seems interested in his doings. Do you think——"

Jocelyn paused, and looked up half-shyly.

"No, I don't think."

Tommy answered with a return of his infectious smile. Even the horror of the last few hours failed to rob him of that natural, bright, spontaneous charm, and Jocelyn loved him for smiling, since it lifted some of the care from her harassed young heart.

"I wish," she said, "Aunt Jack could be happy—I mean, happy in love. I fancy half her cynicism is assumed; she likes to deceive

the world, but to the one person who gains her heart she will be different, and that one person might possibly be Daniel Paley-Hyde."

"You are a dear little romancer!" whispered Tommy. "Your aunt has made fun of him for years; there is not the faintest chance of her falling seriously in love. My mother once prophesied the event, but time proved her a false prophet. By the way, I shall make light of what happened this afternoon to mother, if I tell her at all. She only knew Mrs. Winnington slightly, and the details are better left unrepeatd."

Jocelyn looked admiringly at her boyish lover. How brave he was! How little affected by the danger which compassed him about with deadly intent!

She drew closer, and trembled at the bare recollection.

"Yes," she said; "don't let your mother be haunted by the thought of the treachery, the hatred, the scheming, which so nearly took you from us. I should like her never to know. I bound Aunt Jack to secrecy, and Mr. Paley-Hyde is not likely to talk."

"No; Paley-Hyde repeats nothing. There is some advantage, after all, in knowing a quiet, uncommunicative, almost dull man. He

comes out strong, your silent witness, in the critical moments of life. He stands by a pal in the storm, and creeps away when the sun shines again. I never admired Paley-Hyde until to-day ; now I know he is the best fellow going. Unexpected circumstances are the surest means of revealing character."

CHAPTER XXIII.

And Thought leapt out to wed with Thought
 Ere Thought could wed itself with Speech.

—*Tennyson.*

THE Gervalles created their own atmosphere ; they were a wonderful family. Jacobina, once a Gervalle, of the same clay and the same blue blood, could look upon stirring events and fateful issues with the calmness of patrician equanimity.

Mrs. Winnington, sheltered by the silencing influence of the grave, and Major Chandoss departed for ever from the Gervalle's environment—seemed wiped out as completely as if they had never existed.

The Professor seldom spoke of the strain and excitement, which occasioned a sudden breaking up of his health and strength.

He begged Jocelyn to go out just the same, since her aunt and Lady Ludlow proved willing chaperons. He only asked to be excused himself from the fatigues of society.

In his private room he received many visitors—men of note, who had grown

strangely attached to him ; but all interviews were necessarily short, since he suffered from frequent attacks of overwhelming weakness.

Often when he pictured Jocelyn attending gay festivities, she had remained in an adjoining room too anxious to leave the house.

He always discovered her actions when she reappeared with nothing to tell of outside doings ; but her motives pleased and touched him, though he still begged she would dismiss his indisposition from her mind.

Paley-Hyde was often at the Professor's bedside, either discussing politics, or the intricate study of the beliefs, practices, and organisations of men with reference to a supposed world of spirits.

Professor Gervalle still retained the reticence he had previously manifested, merely whetting Daniel's appetite with vague suggestions, clever theories, and enlightening thoughts upon that branch of philosophy treating of the nature and operations of mind or spirit.

He mentioned various terms which had been suggested to embrace this great subject, such as "daimonology," "spiritology," "comparative mythology."

“ The expressions ‘ psychology ’ and ‘ pneumatology,’ or ‘ pneumatic,’ are not equivalent. The latter word was used for the doctrine of spirit in general, which was sub-divided into three branches, as it treated of three orders of spiritual substances—God, angels, and devils. I am quoting from Sir William Hamilton’s famous treatise on metaphysics.”

Paley-Hyde watched the white figure on the bed curiously, with eyes that were soft with a real, almost devout affection. He felt, when the final hour drew near for this wan, shrunken frame to give up the ghost, it would be a weary and time-worn ghost, that always knew it had inhabited a phantom rather than a man.

“ I am constantly hoping,” said Daniel—and his voice sounded strikingly intense—“ that we are on the verge of a great revelation of the unseen world—a confirmation of the highest hopes of mankind. I wait, without despairing, for some testimony which the most sceptical can admit to be cogent in favour of immortality. My own belief that the end of human existence is only a transition to another state of being, in which all that goes to make up what we call personality, still lives on, meets but too often with the agnostic

suspense of judgment. 'Extra-normal' events tax the carnal mind to so great an extent that they are crushed by scoffers, even when fulfilling all the conditions which would induce a scientific investigator to accept them, if relating to chemistry or electricity."

The Professor bowed an assenting head, and his hollow eyes, bright even in his weakness, had something of sympathy in their depths, the expression which might steal to the face of a father who hears his young child's unsophisticated remarks.

Paley-Hyde, like many of his sex, seldom spoke of what lay nearest his heart. Only to Professor Gervalle could he talk without reserve, lured into unconsciousness of self by the supreme sympathy, and unfailing tact of this spiritual man.

It was not easy to bring intimate feelings or religious theories to the light of common day.

Professor Gervalle had his own bed removed from Heale Prior when first he migrated to Grosvenor Square, and the quaint article of furniture made a fitting frame to his ethereal form. An old-fashioned, elaborately-carved "four-poster," looking like some relic from the state galleries at Hampton Court

Palace. The faded brocade of the hangings, the hearse-like plumes crowning the pillars, all suggested old-world fantasies, and to Jocelyn brought ever the vision of cold, placid grandmamma wrapt in her last long sleep, since Elizabeth informed her it was the bed upon which Mrs. Gervalle had died.

On a table by the time-mellowed curtains, a portrait of Jocelyn in her Court dress, and a very worn Bible, were the only ornaments—the Bible of priceless value from an historical collection.

Professor Gervalle laid his hand on the cover as he answered Paley-Hyde.

“The pneumatology of Ephesians resembles that of St. John,” he said, “as the christology of Colossians resembles the christology of St. John. Reason is that Homeric and golden chain descending from the throne of God even unto man, uniting heaven with earth, and earth with heaven. But the distance between the created and the Creator must be for ever an impassable gulf, unsurmountable, infinite, while time is the most indefinable yet paradoxical of things. Finite beings cannot clearly comprehend space without a limit, or time without an end; yet minute examination into our minds might

show that time which *has* an end, and space which *has* a limit, is of the two much more incomprehensible. Time has been called 'the most subtle, yet the most insatiable, of depredators,' and by appearing to take nothing, is permitted to take all ; nor can it be satisfied until it has stolen the world from us, and us from the world."

His voice trembled, and the transparent eyelids flickered.

"And us from the world," he murmured again, with just the softest suspicion of a regretful sigh, which seemed to acknowledge the approach of the end—for him, at least.

Paley-Hyde felt his heart-strings tighten ; he could not speak, but his mind cried inwardly, "Not yet, not yet !"

So little told ; all mystery still ; a precious friendship, but no unbending, no raising of the veil.

Would he never speak—this white-lipped yet beauteous old man, with eyes of fire, glowing in a mask-like countenance, all soul triumphant over matter—never speak of the mysterious science which bound him to Heale Prior, of that sudden awakening bringing the hermit in failing health face to face with the storm, the stress, the glare of modern life ?

The cry of thought shook Paley-Hyde with a deep, overwhelming emotion.

No mere curiosity this, but a burning desire for knowledge which would pass into the unknown with the final closing of those purple lids, the last sad folding of the frail, wasted hands.

Professor Gervalle stirred ; he removed his ear trumpet from the pillow, and laid it before him on the crimson satin coverlet. How white the crimson made his fingers ! What splendour it caught from the afternoon sun !

“ My friend,” he said, and his face looked exaltedly kind, “ why do you want to intrude into things not seen ? ”

Paley-Hyde knew the words answered his thoughts ; for a moment he appeared confused.

The Professor went on quickly, without waiting for a reply.

“ I know,” he murmured, “ how eagerly you hope I may take you into my confidence. I have long thought that before I die I should like to tell you alone, of all my friends, the nature of my discovery. I know you are to be trusted. How I know, you will realise presently.”

His listener thrilled with a sudden shock

of hope unexpectedly fulfilled. He spoke hurried words that only partially expressed his feelings—words of gratitude and tremulous excitement, rare in such an unemotional man.

Then he waited in breathless silence for the Professor's story.

“At an early age,” said the clear, magnetic voice, “my mind was attracted to the engrossing subject of pneumatology. In my analogical reasonings of the physiological and intellectual branches of human nature, I found its philosophy continually disclosing views of the ‘World of Mind.’ I devoted many years vainly endeavouring to intrude into the realm of spirits, emboldened by St. Paul’s argument of the Resurrection, in which he asserts that spirits have a body, declaring there is a spiritual body as well as a natural body, and therefore the dissolution of the animal structure leaves the life untouched. I brought all the known resources of science to bear upon communication with this life through its second body without avail!”

A sharp, quivering sigh escaped Daniel.

“Without avail,” he whispered, and his tone held the saddest of all questions—
“Failure?”

The Professor passed his hand over his

forehead. He hardly appeared to catch the startled ejaculation, but spoke forcibly, in slow, measured accents.

“Despairing of success, but feeling convinced that neither the animal body nor the spiritual body are life itself, or the cause of life, but only the instruments of the mind, I determined to devote myself to attempting communication between mind and mind without the intervention of that third essence, or middle nature, the body, that necessary means of bringing mind into relationship with space.”

He fingered the odd instrument supposed to assist his hearing, and gazed lovingly upon it. The opening of confidence had brought a flood of sunlight to his soul. Paley-Hyde made no further interruption; he was too riveted, he hardly seemed to breathe.

“Mind, though an unknown element, is brought into conscious connection with matter, rendering it sensible of light, colour, heat, sound, taste, smell, solidity, motion, and all their variations of intensity. The five senses, limiting the percipient faculty to the kinds of sensation which the mind was capable of admitting, were surely capable of increase. On the basis that intellectual process must be

carried on concurrently with evolution of the cerebral organs, and that the mind cannot act but by the body's aid, I set myself the task of discovering an element capable of receiving the brain vibrations, and transferring them to another brain. A lifetime has been spent on this research, and success has come—too late ! ”

A pathetic break in the Professor's voice alone betrayed how keenly he felt the words.

Otherwise he showed no sign of suffering ; the spirit of courage was strong in him still.

“ How often,” he continued, “ have I wished that my mental operations had been effected by the involuntary functions of my body, which, without any fatigue, and with constant regularity, perform arduous duties of circulation and digestion. A small change might perhaps effect this important enhancement of our own mental economy. Imagine the vast results ! The mind, free from the chain of the brain, which quickly tires, would work unsparingly day and night. The result on the economy of the world is doubtful. I believe the good would be much better than at present, and the bad far worse, which is probably the reason we are as we are. If one such man were created with ordinary endow-

ments, he would, in the first years of manhood, be master of all sciences. Such a one might even discover the means of communicating with the vibration of sounds from another world, hear the harmonies break upon his soul, reaching far beyond the boundary of our sensitive existence. But alas! the present construction of the universe is plainly marked with the intention to prohibit intercourse, even in this world. The principle of insulation must, however, give way to communion here, and is doing so rapidly. Science is devoting all energy to accomplish this end. Steam and electricity are followed by the discovery of the filings-tube 'coherer' for utilising Hertzian waves. This" (pointing to the queerly shaped ear-trumpet which lay between his hands) "is my 'receiver,' but you would no more understand the vibrations it transmits than I could read, without long study, an unknown language. If I revealed my discovery of the method of reading the mind and opening the heart of man to his fellow, should I not stop the march of the world? Such secrets—God knows—are better in His Almighty hands! The temptation grips me fast, makes sport of me at times, holding before my eyes a laurel wreath of fame that

would blossom through all ages, and transform posterity! I've fought the temptation day and night, night and day—fought it with fear, with bitter dread, for the demon Ambition made a grand imposing foe. Look at me—a poor, weak, old man—and yet” (with the flicker of a cynical smile) “there's bone and muscle enough left to lay a demon low—mental muscle and moral fibre, thank God! to strengthen the weary pilgrim in the grey evening of his age!”

CHAPTER XXIV.

I am forbid to tell the secrets of my prison-house.
—*Shakespeare.*

WHEN Paley-Hyde left the Professor there was that which the world had never seen before on the dry countenance of this self-contained man. His eyes held unfathomable thoughts, eyes made soft by some mystic charm ; his face glowed as if touched by sunset rays.

Storms of passion had passed over him since his entry to the quiet room where Professor Gervalle's frail figure lay beneath the rich crimson coverlet, a form ethereal in its white spirituality.

The old brocade draping the great four-posted bed made a suitable canopy over and around that weak yet radiant personality, and the soothing picture remained clearly before the mind's vision long after Paley-Hyde had returned to his busy outside life.

It was some time before he actually grasped the startling outlines even of Professor Gervalle's story.

For awhile he stumbled towards a clear

understanding, like a blind man dazed by the sudden return of sight, and in his wondering amazement the Professor held out a supporting hand, guiding him gently, a smile on his wan white lips.

By degrees the facts one by one came to be explained. In discovering scientifically how to read the thoughts of the human mind, the Professor had involuntarily won for himself the reputation of invoking supernatural aid, whereas, in reality, there was nothing ghostly about him.

It all appeared now in a new light ; the encouraged intervals of silence when this man of genius, with his marvellous instrument, eagerly read the workings of a fellow-creature's brain ; his discovery of the plot against Sir Thomas, gleaned from Mrs. Winnington's musings, and its origin of love, jealousy, and gold, which the Professor had subsequently explained to his bewildered grandchild.

Now Paley-Hyde could fully appreciate the sudden, keen delight shown by the hermit for society, and his desire to mix with numerous minds, in order to practise and prove the efficiency of his hardly-earned triumph.

Pneumatology, by the Professor's own confession, failed to reveal any satisfactory

results, but in concealing his real discovery, he had used the physical theory of spiritual corporeity gladly enough as a shield, a means of putting people off the scent.

His fixed determination to die in possession of his great secret staggered Paley-Hyde. To hold back a revelation affecting all future ages, needed an iron will and strength of purpose which surpassed belief.

The motives actuating such a resolve held weight and reason. Paley-Hyde, suddenly taking the side of the tempter, argued without result.

The Professor had battled with all that was human in his aloof, exalted nature, and having made the final decision, no word of man could influence his judgment, or sway his decision founded upon conviction.

But Paley-Hyde (of necessity upon a lower scale, through lifelong contact with the world) fiercely resented the Professor's choice.

Silence was more than he could bear with resignation, and so the cry had arisen: "If not to the world, then to me—to me—at least!" Any vow Professor Gervalle demanded he was prepared to take, and swear himself to secrecy, might this vast power only be given into his hands.

“Not to the world! Not to the world!” The words poured forth in a volume of intense, almost frantic, petition. “Only trust me with this Godlike force, and I will guard it sacredly till my dying day. May my soul lose eternity if I break my oath, if I abuse your confidence!”

Strong man as he was, he shook like a reed, and the Professor, interpreting the exact workings of his fevered mind, knew precisely how best to treat the vehement outburst.

With magnetic sympathy he soothed the disappointment which a blank refusal brought, calmed the storm, pacified the tumult, speaking words of unanswerable wisdom, which hardly seemed to come from human lips.

It was rather as if some spirit overpowered the material composition, illuminating a human frame with temporary divinity.

Could Lady Livingstone have seen the trembling figure kneeling by the bed, her long-delayed desire for the awakening of emotion in Daniel Paley-Hyde would have feasted on a very pronounced fulfilment.

Strange to say that even then, the Professor had not exhausted his revelations.

“I will tell you at least a truth that may or may not affect your future,” he murmured. “Deep down in her soul Jacobina Livingstone

loves you as few men are loved. The best of her is yours for always, the highest, purest, most spiritual attributes of what appears an evanescent shallow nature have long since been given into your unconscious keeping. For both your sakes I tell you this, though she must never know I spoke. Use the information as you will, I give it with complete confidence in your honour as a gentleman."

Paley-Hyde, for this same reason, went forth with glowing face and softened eyes, dispersing around him the atmosphere of early spring gladness, and April sunshine, after a tearing hurricane of March wind fury.

CHAPTER XXV.

To know, to esteem, to love.—*Coleridge.*

GREAT was Lady Livingstone's surprise on receiving the following note from Daniel :—

“ My dear Friend,—Some day when you are driving alone, send word to me.—Yours, in all sincerity, “ D. P. H.”

She answered as briefly :—

“ Some day will be this afternoon at 5.30.”

As Lady Livingstone's piebalds turned into the Park, she could hardly realise Daniel was again seated at her side.

She remembered painfully his martyred expression when last summer she forced her company upon him, partly in jest, partly in earnest. Now, for the first time since that fateful day, Jacobina and Paley-Hyde again appeared in public together.

He no longer seemed to her “ the severe sour-complexioned man ” whose cynicism sharpened her wit, making her recklessly ironical.

There was something new in his tone and manner. Once more she traced the elevating influence of Professor Gervalle. Had not these two men been together yesterday, alone ?

They talked of Jocelyn and Sir Thomas, touching lightly on the happiness of love.

“Tommy so worships her,” said Lady Livingstone smilingly. “I believe he would let any thousand women burn, sooner than a finger of Jocelyn’s should be singed. Nothing is too good for the loved one. Such is youth ! He used to rush as thoughtlessly into his little flirtations as a fly into spiders’ nets ; but he found good nature a profitable investment, and so the spiders never resented his fluttering escape. You see, he seldom went further than the very edge of the web ! ”

“I wonder,” said Paley-Hyde, “if good nature is really profitable or rather over-rated ? ”

Jacobina considered a moment. To-day she was giving her deepest attention to the smallest matters, her eyes never strayed once across the gay crowd.

Her old humour, however, bubbled spontaneously to the surface, as she replied :

“Even a readiness to help a stout friend

on with his overcoat, or give him theatre tickets you cannot use, may procure not only a name for good nature, but occasionally substantial returns. Good nature, I find, can be practised with the least possible amount of personal inconvenience, and is the greatest imposition on the face of the earth ! I called on Lady Ludlow yesterday ; she gave me tea, good advice, and sisterly scoldings. She has the peculiar faculty of making every human object with whom she comes into domestic contact part and parcel of herself. She talked again of the late Sir Thomas. How she adored him ! The love of women is more intense than that of men, simply because it is narrower in its range."

"I wonder," he said, "when Tommy is married, if she will be tempted to console herself."

"Never. Elderly as she is, she fascinated a millionaire only the other day, and gave me a most amusing description of the banished suitor. One can dine nowhere without meeting his prototype. A man enormously rich, yet birth, instinct, taste, everything about him would render him happier in the butler's pantry ; but by some misfortune he has bought endless patent saucepans at 5s. 4d.

each, and found people willing to take them off his hands at 8s. 3d., and here he is ! There seems nothing for it but to smile and endure."

Paley-Hyde listened, as she rattled on, with an expression of contentment. He saw now only too plainly that her quick talk concealed the deeper moods, that were not revealed unsought. He felt glad it should be so.

"Usually," he replied, "people of limited income are the most generous, yet money always gives influence. Positively, in the mythological ages, a sinner could not even get to hell without feeing the boatman."

Jacobina sighed. She thought suddenly of Major Chandoss, of the debt she had once owed him, and of Mrs. Winnington's passion for money, which lowered her to the very depths of degradation and despair.

"Straitened circumstances are terrible," acknowledged Lady Livingstone, with eyes downcast ; "that abominable 'splendid misery' which consists in keeping up great appearances with small means. To some families utter ruin would be a great boon, since anyone able to do a good day's work for a good day's pay can laugh at ruin as a joke. Most people, in our set at least, look upon society simply as a market, and those who do

not vend their wares at the highest possible price are considered nothing but fools. I sometimes long to get quite away out of my accustomed environment. There are moments when I see the Professor lying so calmly, so serenely, on that dignified old oak bed, I find it in my heart to envy him, to wish he could simply take me by the hand and lead me where he is going."

All the playful insouciance had departed from Lady Livingstone's expressive face; at the very mention of the Professor she seemed to detach herself from present surroundings. Paley-Hyde let his hand close over hers beneath the light dust rug.

"No, no," he said, under his breath, as if the words hurt him.

She stole a glance in his direction, and a speck of colour shone in her cheeks, which a moment ago were strangely white.

"Why not?" she whispered, and added in her thoughts: "It could not matter to you."

"I was picturing," he replied, making no excuse for retaining her hand, "the terrible rapidity with which the narrow stream of life rushes towards the broad ocean of eternity. Don't wish to hasten the current, while you

can be of use to those who are trying to swim."

"I am of no use to anyone," answered Jacobina quickly, a passionate note in her voice—the low, beautiful voice, like music, which Paley Hyde had never trusted before. "Jocelyn has her lover, and the rest of the world matters little when the Professor goes. The old order of things is changing. I am not satisfied with an empty life. He has made me look for something better, something I may never find."

So strong at that moment was the Professor's influence over both their lives that the vague, shadowy figure seemed near them in the carriage—an indefinable presence, a controller of destiny.

"You could be of use to me," said Daniel, "if you cared."

He crushed her fingers now with a certain violence, his face worked with undisguised emotion. She leant back faintly, for a few brief seconds her eyes grew dim.

Then she became suddenly aware that the man at her side was a tall, imposing personage, with a dignity of manner alien to him, and a glow of tenderness that mingled quaintly with the dignity. He carried his head high, thrown

slightly backwards as though tired of bending under dull care, he had taken to rearing. In a glad mad moment he had given the pent-up torrent of love free course.

All through her life Jacobina contrived to do, as far as possible, the right thing at the right time, neither saying what she ought not to say, or leaving unsaid what she ought to have voiced.

Hitherto her love had resembled a mirage mocking the thirsty wayfarer, for even the late Lord Livingstone received at her hands duty rather than affection.

To Paley-Hyde she was ready to offer great gifts, the deep stirring love of the soul which had never been frittered.

All the surface sparkle which, like quicksilver, darted hither and thither, served well enough to satisfy the gaping crowd, but to him alone the sacred portals opened, the secret doors unfolded.

The passing carriages, the moving forms under the shade of dust-laden trees, all appeared phantom-like in that dream of realisation.

“ If she cared ! Could she in a thousand years tell one half of all her full heart held ? ”

Her cynical maxims and morals flew to the

four winds. Some wiseacre had said, " If you care for a man never let him see it. A worm turns if you tread upon it, but the worm would like to tread upon you and see you turn if it could, and then laugh at you for turning in your helplessness ! "

What did anything matter ? She had kept the curtains drawn too long, now she would open them and let in the air. Strange how emotion attacks different natures. A wife may be a delightful friend if nothing more ; but she, Jacobina Livingstone, would be so much more, the very " most " of all the world could give.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Would you be young again, so would not I ;
 One tear to memory given, onward I'd hie.
 Life's dark flood forded over, all but at rest on shore,
 Say—would you plunge once more, with Home so nigh ?

WHEN Professor Gervalle showed Jocelyn a letter from her aunt telling the good news, the girl expressed great satisfaction.

From the first she had liked Mr. Paley-Hyde, and a fellow feeling made her young heart swell with sympathy as she read Jacobina's ecstatic praise of the man she was going to marry.

Weak as the Professor was, he wrote a separate letter to each, but the effort caused him great fatigue, and afterwards he consented to see a doctor.

One of the leading lights of the medical profession came as a forerunner of death, quietly, unobtrusively into that solemn room.

He spoke cheerful words to Professor Gervalle, and encouraged him to think he would shortly recover.

“ I was afraid to tell your grandfather the

truth," this great man acknowledged to Jocelyn privately. "When people are so very old and weak it is dangerous to alarm them, but he can only last a little while."

Tears rushed unbidden to the pathetic violet eyes, and Jocelyn's heart stood still as the fatal words fell upon her ear.

The ground seemed slipping away from under her feet, yet she had long known the end was approaching.

"Death is not terrible to him," she faltered; "he would not have been afraid. He says it is not more than the lifting of a latch. He calls it only 'a step into the open air.'"

The great man went away puzzled. The mysterious house in Grosvenor Square made a certain impression on his mind, despite the multitude of business crowding his day.

He could not forget the expression of his patient's piercing eyes when the word "recovery" had been spoken glibly by lips which knew they lied. The quaint instrument on the pillow against which the Professor laid his ear looked singularly unlike the usual aid to hearing adopted by deaf people.

Also, Elizabeth's face as she stood at the foot of the bed proved a study in itself. Seldom before had the celebrated doctor seen

so fine an exhibition of scorn as that worthy old servant manifested at the mention of a trained nurse, a suggestion quickly vetoed by Professor Gervalle.

The stranger carried with him for the rest of the day a vivid sense of uneasiness at his lack of candour. How many a life he had seen take fearfully and tremulously that "step into the open air" !

Few dying men wore such radiancy of approaching light, the smile as of eternal joy, when dismaying struggles cease, and storms of passion faint into deathless slumber. Surely the little thread of life remaining caught already distant symphonies, and saw azure heavens ! An exile hearing the call home, the gradual breaking of a slender chain, the glad reflection dawning on all that lies beyond.

When Jocelyn returned to her grandfather, he noted her agitation, and took her hand.

"Don't fret, little one," he said. "It is the will of God."

She saw at once he knew the worst, and marvelled afresh at his intuition, hanging breathlessly upon his every word.

"The doctor communicated to me involuntarily that I have not long to live. It may

be a few days or a few hours. I want to be left quite alone for a short time. Presently I am going to try and get up. Don't look so startled, my child. I have a little time left, and I wish to use it. Please write or telegraph immediately to Paley-Hyde and Jacobina, asking them to dine with us to-night ; also send for Tommy. We shall have a little family dinner in the room adjoining this, quiet but not sad. I only want to see smiling faces round me, the faces of four lovers."

Jocelyn obeyed as she always did, and for more than an hour the Professor was left in solitude.

When evening came he walked, supported on either side by Jocelyn and Elizabeth, to the room where a dainty dinner-table for five had been improvised. His hands were empty, and he appeared to hear without the smallest effort.

Jocelyn looked especially young and tender in the simplest white teagown, while the table bore a profusion of exquisite pink roses, long-stemmed, brown-thorned, russet-leaved.

Jacobina and Daniel arrived together, and while the former uncloaked in Jocelyn's room, Paley-Hyde went unannounced to the cool,

fragrant compartment of roses and shaded lights.

There, to his surprise, he found the Professor faultlessly attired in evening dress, seated near the open window. Only the fact that he tried to rise and sank back quickly portrayed the intense weakness he suffered.

“ You see, I am up again,” he said with a smile.

His visitor looked quickly inquiringly for something he saw not, and the Professor quite naturally interpreted the look.

“ Destroyed,” he said simply, waving Daniel to a chair with a flourish of skeleton-like fingers.

“ Destroyed ! ”

The word broke in almost a wail from the listening man.

“ Yes. I was left alone this afternoon, and not without regret I bade good-bye to what seemed like a friend. You will never see again the poor old ear-trumpet, the joy, the pride, the very life of a poor old man. It was a hard wrench, that parting, but I dared not let it live after me, for to advanced scientists it would have held the key of my life’s discovery. The secret and I die together. You see, I put the secret first.”

A flash of humour in his eyes made the words less redolent of tragedy, yet Paley-Hyde sat as if stunned by an overwhelming misfortune.

He had hoped on, still clinging to the thought that possibly, before the end, Professor Gervalle would relent and leave him the legacy of a final revelation. Now the desire sank into shattered oblivion, the final blow had fallen !

“ Be of good courage, my friend,” said the kindly voice. “ These matters, which seemed so great to me in the past, pale now before the prospect of a vast field where the soul shall soar secure from earthly burdens, and your turn will come. Wait but a little longer time enough for the thoughts of all hearts to be disclosed—time enough, my dear Daniel.”

He called him Daniel for the first time, in recognition of his claim upon the family.

Paley-Hyde struggled to free himself from a crushed sensation.

“ That you should tell me to ‘ be of good courage ’ at such a time ! ” he muttered, as he gazed admiringly on the dying face, and reddened for very shame at his own weakness.

“ Ah ! ” came the swift reply, “ it is easier to face death than disappointment. I have

known sorrow like yours, time after time, throughout my eighty years. Success came to me only after a life of perpetual disappointment, fraught continuously with wretchedness and pain. Remember when I am gone, if you think of me sometimes, that

' Nothing is dead—but that which wished to die ;
 Nothing is dead—but what, encumber'd, gall'd,
 Block'd up the pass, and barr'd from real life.' 22

He quoted in faint, far-away accents, with folded hands and half-closed eyes.

The sound of swishing skirts brought Lady Livingstone to his side. She glanced with looks of love from Daniel to her aged relative.

Then she knelt at the Professor's knee, and kissed him tenderly.

He was well accustomed now to Jocelyn's soft caresses, and Jacobina's unusual action brought not the faintest flush of surprise to the marble face ; only his glance brightened as he stroked her hair.

Behind him stood Jocelyn with Tommy, who had been in and out all day. They watched with fast-beating pulses and hearts too full for speech.

The short light meal was a strange one to remember.

Silent-footed servants stole in and out, seemingly fearful lest the slightest sound should jar on their beloved master.

Conversation never flagged, and low, rippling laughter, terribly akin to tears, greeted many a cheerful jest from the white lips of their spectral host.

Jocelyn and Jacobina remained, contrary to custom, long after dessert ; they felt they could not leave him.

In that quiet confidential hour, when the servants had gone, and the small family party sat undisturbed, the weak but clear voice spoke of serious matters.

He told them how, after bequeathing various legacies to servants and charities, he had divided his fortune between Jocelyn and Jacobina. He asked that the latter should see Jocelyn married from her house before she took upon herself fresh ties, charging the young people to banish conventional ideas of mourning, and not delay their wedding on his account.

“ The worst errors we commit,” he said, “ we are led into by force of fashion, such as representing grief for the loss of our dead by delaying what makes for happiness. God has been generous in giving you love. Do not let

those holy fires burn apart because a long life has been called to rest. I shall have sailed so willingly to shore, tired, weather-beaten, but content, and especially blessed in the knowledge that those dear to me are not left alone."

Jacobina drew Jocelyn protectingly under her wing, linking a loving arm round the slim, trembling figure in its soft white gown.

Her promise was given without faltering, though she never quite knew how she prevented herself bursting into tears. She dared not look at Daniel, but Jocelyn kept her eyes fixed steadfastly on Tommy, as if the subdued, boyish face gave her courage.

The Professor soon dismissed his guests, for his voice grew very faint.

He held each separately by the hand a long time in silence, riveting their features on his mind, as if he might carry the image of earthly friends through the deep waters that were so soon to flow over his soul.

Already his spirit seemed in fancy soaring from earth.

They went quietly away, walking in silent reverence as worshippers from a shrine, leaving Jocelyn at his side, like a guardian angel, with drenched violet eyes.

Tommy, the last to leave, looked back as he closed the door. The sight of her standing there alone by the silent figure in the great chair haunted him throughout the night.

"Bend down," whispered the Professor.

She slipped to the floor in a half-sitting posture, and leaned her head against his arm.

He moved his weak hand once or twice, then let it fall nervelessly to his side.

"What were you trying to do?" she asked in a choked voice.

"I wanted to dry your eyes," he murmured, with a sad smile.

She dashed away her tears.

"I am not crying, grandfather."

"Stay here by me for a little," he faltered.

"I am too tired to move, and it is not yet ten o'clock."

She remained passive, her soft hair brushing his sleeve.

"You have been so much to me, Jocelyn," he continued, and the words came with difficulty.

She made no answer, only her fingers stroked his wrist.

She felt there must be three forms peopling that quiet room. The third had curly hair and a quaint, old-fashioned dress. She won-

dered if grandmamma grudged her a share of his love.

“Have I?” she answered at length. She longed to say in return all he had been to her, but it was so difficult to speak with that choking sensation in her throat, and she felt he must know with his keen, unfailing intuition.

“Little one,” he whispered, “don’t be frightened when you find me slumbering, for the pillow on which I rest is the arm of a mighty Protector. You must not feel you have lost me; death cannot sever or estrange fond hearts. Little heart of mine, come closer. I can’t see you.”

She bent in tremulous wonder nearer the failing eyes.

“Grandfather! Oh, grandfather!” she sobbed.

“Child! child!”

His voice grew strong suddenly with distress.

Jocelyn fought for self-control.

“I am not crying, grandfather,” she said again.

For the first and last time in that great year of their close communion she deceived him.

“Not crying,” he murmured, and a joyful light flashed across the weary features. “I am glad! Good night, little girl! Rest well.”

“Good night,” she moaned in strangled agony; but he smiled, not hearing.

“Heaven,” he whispered, “breaks on me!”

And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

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