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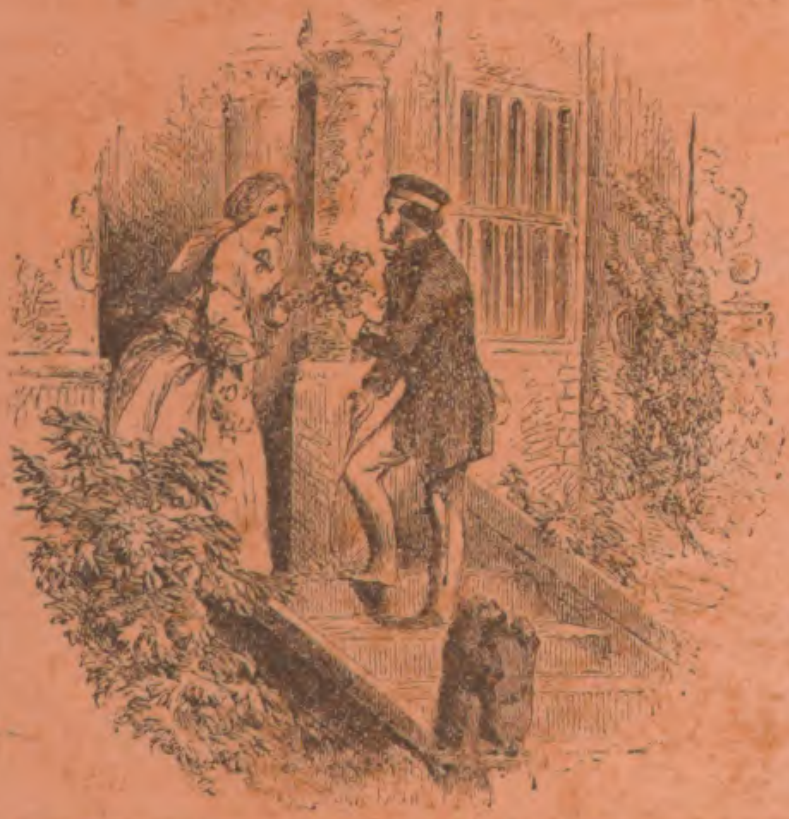
AND HOW SHE BECAME

AN OLD MAID.

BY

CATHERINE SINCLAIR.



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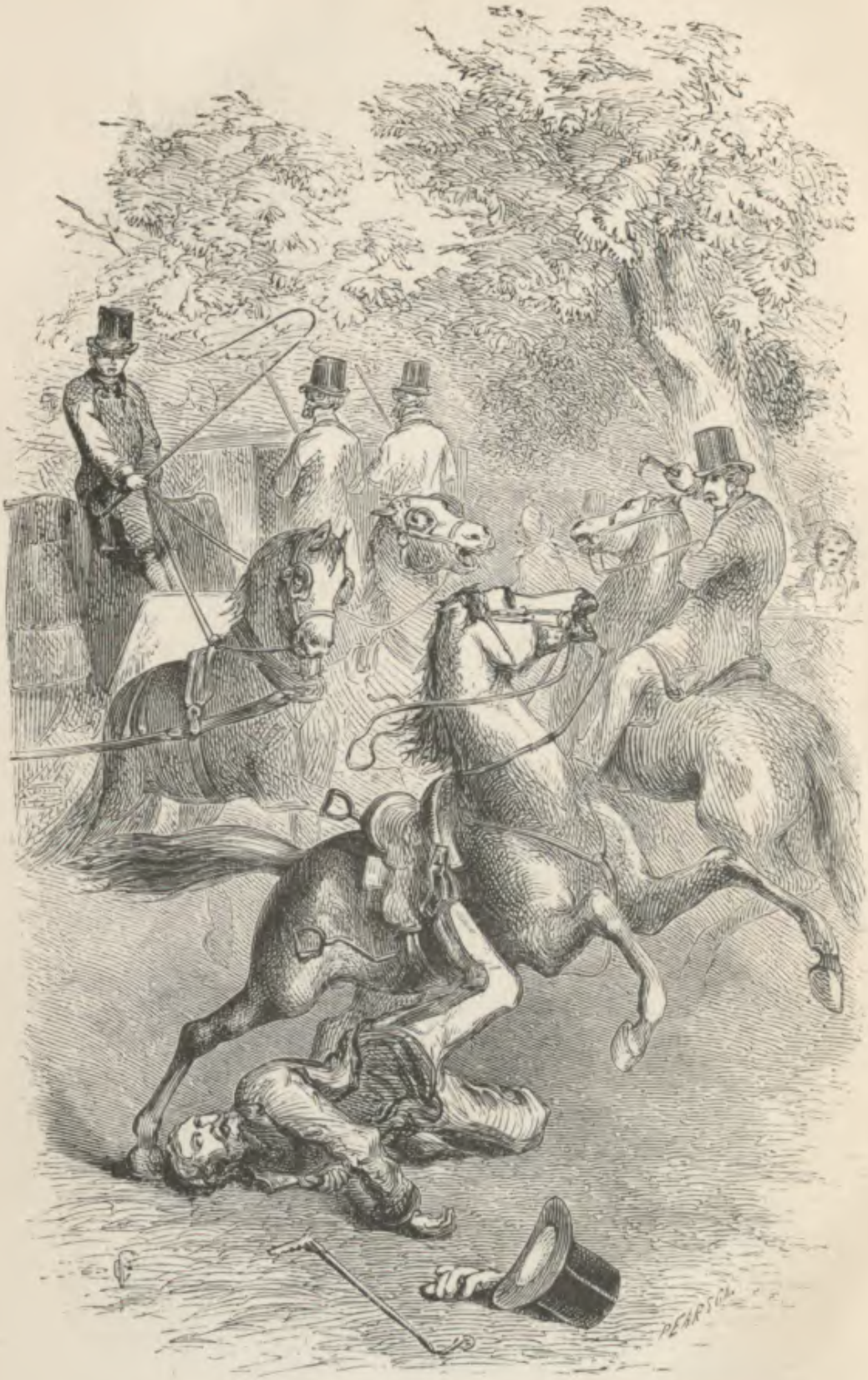

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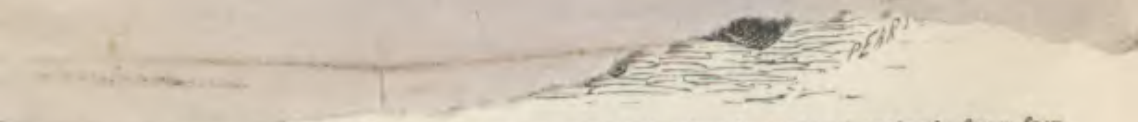

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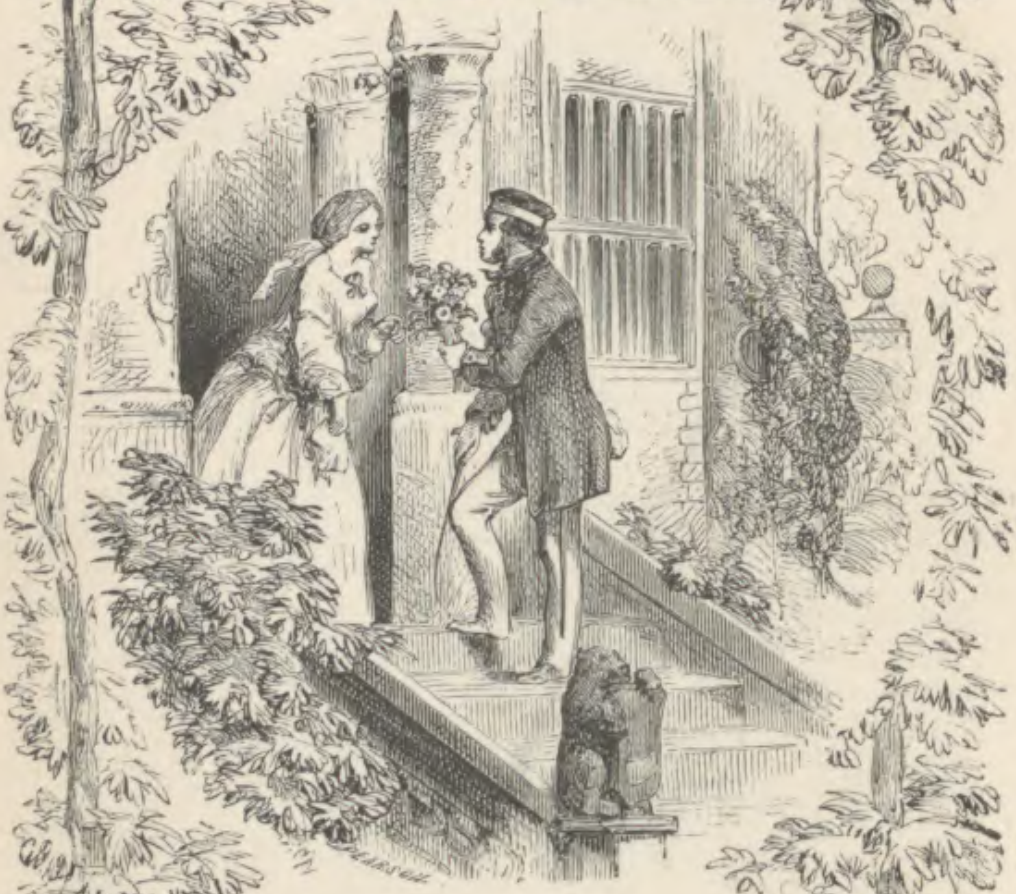

By Catherine Sinclair

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JANE BOUVERIE;

AND

HOW SHE BECAME AN OLD MAID:

DETAILING THE HOPES, LOVES, SORROWS, AND ANXIETIES OF ONE OF THAT HITHERTO NEGLECTED CLASS, THE 'SINGLE LADIES' OF ENGLAND.

BY

CATHERINE SINCLAIR,

AUTHOR OF

'MODERN ACCOMPLISHMENTS;' 'THE MYSTERIOUS MARRIAGE;' 'POPISH LEGENDS;' 'BEATRICE;' 'THE JOURNEY OF LIFE;' 'LONDON HOMES;' ETC.

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Our own felicity we make or find.—GOLDSMITH.

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PREFACE.

'In the day of adversity consider.'

ECCLE. vii, 14.

IF the sympathy and approval of one friendly mind be an object of legitimate ambition, how deeply gratifying must it be to the Author of this narrative, that the feelings and characters it is intended to describe, should excite so much interest among many. Two thousand copies of this volume have been circulated within a year, and a most encouraging demand has already been made for a new edition, to meet the wishes of those who have taken a friendly interest in the thoughts and feelings of Jane Bouverie.

It was a favorite suggestion of the late much-lamented Basil Hall, frequently urged with characteristic eagerness on the Author's consideration, that, as crowds of excellent books have already been addressed to wives, mothers, and daughters, a useful and interesting volume might now be devoted to that hitherto neglected class, the single ladies, or, *par excellence*, "The Sisters of England."

The proposed pages were not to contain a long tissue of sententious advice—which every lady would give away, magnificently bound, to her friends, and which no one would read herself—but to develope, through the more attractive medium of a story, the gradual progress of Christian excellence, amidst the trials, the duties, and the pleasures of domestic life. The difficulty, however, of doing justice to such an undertaking, appeared so much more prominently before the Author's mind than the hope of success, that, with a well-founded diffidence of her own ability, she laid aside the project entirely.

It is, as she then considered, an acknowledged fact, that in a story, merely good-sort-of-people are the most unmanageable of all, and, as the rarest achievement in portrait-painting is to represent the feminine loveliness of a graceful woman—so in fiction, to sketch an unexaggerated outline of a truly graceful female character, without formality, and without any romantic impossibilities of perfection, is an almost hopeless enterprise. The idea, too, of a novel not ending in marriage, with perfect happiness, and at least £1500 a-year, is, to all concerned, as unsatisfactory and disappointing as a nut without a kernel. After many exhortations, therefore, from the partial friend, who continued impregnable in his belief that such a volume might be made popular, the subject was for a time entirely forgotten.

Recent circumstances having unhappily thrown much of the Author's time vacant, once far more pleasingly occupied, she has been tempted at length to venture upon that field of enterprise formerly pointed out with so much encouragement by the friendly hand of one who lives not to

witness her success or failure. Other friends, and yet dearer relatives, whom to please was the Author's chief motive in exertion, and her best reward in success, having since departed, she feels that, however grateful to a most indulgent public for past favors, any approbation or censure now can but add a pang to her own grief for those who are never more to sympathize with her in joy or in sorrow.

Should the more serious part of these pages render them unpalatable to the young and gay, might the Author be permitted to mention, that when her pen is thus resumed once again—and perhaps once too often—it is with a most single-hearted desire of usefulness, at a time when no other motive could have fitted her for exertion, and no other hope could have excited any interest. As the Author yields to no one living in her desire for the happiness of all, she would not unnecessarily cast a cloud upon the cheerfulness of young or old, but she has, amidst recent sorrow, become deeply conscious, that while joy and grief have each a solace peculiar to itself, the serious part of

our nature is the best and greatest. Those who seek enjoyment only in the daylight and sunshine, lose a different, but far more sublime delight, which might be found in contemplating, even though surrounded by midnight darkness, the distant glories of heaven.

The sad uncertainty of human life has been peculiarly forced upon the Author's mind of late, when during one melancholy fortnight she was doomed to lament, amidst three generations of her own family, the loss in each of its brightest ornament. The promising young heir of her brother's house, who grew up, in talents, appearance, and disposition, all that his fond parents had hoped —a sister, to whose enlightened piety, cultivated understanding, and uninterrupted confidence she owed her happiest hours—and a mother, who sunk unexpectedly into the grave, heart-broken for the death of so dutiful and affectionate a daughter. Long since, in the bloom of youth and beauty, that mother, a model of every domestic excellence, devoted her time, talents, and accomplishments, with ceaseless diligence, to the

education of her family, who owe to her exemplary care the acquirements of their early youth, the happiness of their maturer years, and the principles which support them now, after the grief of witnessing her departure to another and better world.

May the memory of every such mother be consecrated with equally reverential gratitude in the hearts of all she leaves behind, and may every family, as mournfully bereft of such a parent, be enabled to say, with the sorrowful but heartfelt submission which she would herself have enjoined, 'The Lord gave the best of mothers, the Lord hath taken her away, and for all the happy hours we once passed together, God's holy name be praised!'

JANE BOUVERIE.

CHAPTER I.

'None remember thee,
Save one.'

'BOUVERIE!' exclaimed an officer of Hussars, seizing the arm of a handsome young man, who evidently wished to be incog., and was gliding along the road at a rapid pace near Knightsbridge Barracks, 'you are difficult to overtake!'

'Pierrepoint, my good fellow! the very man, in the whole world, I am always most happy to see.'

'Not very like that now! Why! you were hedging off, as if I had been one of your numerous creditors. Let me say the real truth, Bouverie! you are the greatest humbug in London!'

'So I am, there is no denying it! The fact is, Pierrepoint, my popularity with everybody increases to such an excess, that I find it impossible sufficiently

to divide my civilities. Not a candle is ever lighted in London without my being asked. I have had to refuse five-and-forty invitations to dinner this month!'

'I must not doubt your word of course, but I'll bet fifty to one against that being true. Tell me, Bouverie, what salary do you allow yourself for being your own trumpeter? It ought to be handsome, seeing you do it so well! How does this happen to-day? You are in very deep mourning. I hope nothing of a distressing nature——'

'No, no! make your mind easy, Pierrepoint! I am only going to the funeral of an old aunt, who used, I believe, in my babyhood, to give me rattles and sugar-plums. I scarcely recollect her, but she is said to have been a good old soul as ever lived or died. There exists a tradition in the family that she once was a blazing beauty, surrounded by crowds of the most romantic lovers, but "all that's bright must fade." Aged people always seem to me like an old card shuffled by mistake into the wrong pack, or a dismantled wreck in the midst of a regatta. This old thing lived once in the world, but has been buried for ages, and died last week. She was the sort of person, I believe, latterly, who wore beaver gloves and cotton pocket handkerchiefs, knitted an interminable succession of stockings, and probably died in a fit of absence.'

'But old aunts are very convenient people sometimes, Bouverie; and it may be not at all amiss for you if a small succession——'

'Nothing of the kind, I assure you, except a few religious tracts and an old family Bible. Her income scarcely amounted to a straw a-day, and she vegetated through a life of seventy years with scarcely excitement enough to keep her from stagnation. If cats have nine lives, old women have nineteen! I wish she had bequeathed me her excellent constitution.'

'Well! the only relation I ever acknowledged was that very old country-gentleman uncle of mine, who died last year in Northumberland. I arrived only in time to see his last wink, and, after the funeral, took a final leave of all my northern relatives. I candidly told them that I did not mean to attend any of their funerals, and requested them not to take the trouble of coming to mine. I hate such melancholy festivities, and almost wonder you did not contrive to escape going to-day.'

'I might perhaps, but Dr. Andrews wrote to say that my worthy relative had particularly wished me to attend, and that there would be no relation whatever to do chief mourner, when she is laid in our old family vault at Marylebone, unless I undertook the duty. You know the word "duty" acts as a talisman in my well-disciplined mind: It is all

in the day's work! Meanwhile, tell me where I shall meet you afterwards.'

'At Tattersall's, any time before five o'clock.'

'If you go there, Pierrepoint, allow me to trouble you with a small commission. I wonder if you are capable of executing it?'

'To be sure I am! During my whole natural life I have succeeded in all I ever undertook, except in playing on the violin, and that I never attempted. The fact is, Bouverie, that as owls never can see the sunshine, you have never yet been able fully to appreciate me.'

'No! yet allow me to say you are more wide awake than any man I know! Observe, therefore, Pierrepoint, if you can secure me a good first-rate hunter, worth two hundred guineas, for about fifty pounds, I shall be really obliged to you. My favorite, Sultan, is hopelessly lamed; he was the handsomest creature in the world — except his owner who rode him. I never shall look upon his like again, especially as my banker's book dropped me a strenuous hint lately, not to give such long prices often.'

'Poverty is a bore! No doubt of that, Bouverie! I have serious thoughts of setting up soon as a ballad-singer, that my compassionate friends may relieve my embarrassments by throwing me sixpence out of the window occasionally.'

'You pretend to sing, Pierrepoint! you will be trying next to persuade me that you can read and write! It is an alarming fact, however, and quite certain, that I have already squandered, of my five hundred a-year income, no less than four hundred and ninety-nine pounds nineteen and elevenpence farthing. The rest I really must keep for contingencies.'

'I hate contingencies! You never carry about a wooden leg, Bouverie, in case one of your own should be broken! Never anticipate beyond the day after to-morrow. Those who have the spirit to spend always find the means. It has been the result of my long and very deep observation on human life, that if the most penniless of younger brothers will only set himself up on a certain scale of expense, it goes flourishingly on to the end of time, by some magical process, quite of itself.'

'Yes! By that mysterious art which is commonly called "living, nobody knows how!"'

'Exactly. Fortune favors those who defy her. Some secret is evidently imparted to men who boldly spend their last shilling, which we who timidly hover on the mere brink of ruin, are never worthy to learn. Poverty is like a nettle, which stings when apprehensively touched, but only take a good bold grasp of it, and the danger vanishes.'

'I am sorry to interrupt your improving

dissertation, Pierrepoint, but here is the house where my poor old aunt burrowed all her life. Adieu, *au revoir!* I am sadly afraid poor Bustle, my Skye terrier, is dying. I would sooner have lost ten thousand of my nearest relations.'

Several windows in Baker Street were peopled with gossiping maid-servants, watching to see the procession move off, and a hearse, attended by three mourning coaches, had drawn up before the house where Captain Bouverie entered. It was with a feeling of very considerable condescension that he gracefully advanced into the half-dark sitting-room, a perfect model of neatness, where the party had already assembled who were to attend the dead to her final resting-place. It consisted of the doctor, an attorney, and a clergyman, all wearing a suitable gravity of dress and demeanor. The lawyer was discussing, in a melancholy under-tone, the probable value of the premises, and glanced at the furniture with the eye of an appraiser. The doctor looked impatiently at his watch, grudging, evidently, to waste that time on a deceased patient which might have been more advantageously bestowed on a living sufferer: and the clergyman silently glanced over the title pages of several books, all religious, which were ranged on a shelf beside him.

After Captain Bouverie arrived, the ceremony

was instantly commenced, as all were in haste to have it concluded. When the body was about to be borne into the street, and to pass for the last time over the threshold of a human dwelling, one countenance, and one only, wore an aspect of real heart-felt sorrow. It was a very humble friend, whose tears consecrated the memory of her now slowly carried to her last retreat. An aged maid-servant, clad in homely black, but of singularly respectable appearance, stood silently gazing at the final progress of her deceased mistress, with a look of grief so desolate and forlorn, that Captain Bouverie, thoughtless and indifferent as he had hitherto been, suddenly paused. The pallid face and quivering lip, the averted eye, and the speechless anguish of her whole aspect, touched his heart with momentary compassion, and for an instant he felt a sentiment of awe. It seemed to him as if he had, for the first time, become conscious how solemn a thing it is to attend the dead towards that place whence none can return, and to lay one of his own kindred with his mouldering forefathers, where he must himself hereafter finally sleep until the last trumpet shall summon a buried world from the grave.

While the simple unadorned coffin of his deceased relative was about to be placed in the hearse, Captain Bouverie paused beside the deeply afflicted

old servant, and, fancying she seemed anxious to address him, he said, in a tone almost approaching to kindness—

'You were long in the service of my aunt, I suppose?'

'Yes, sir,' she said, in a voice both solemn and respectful—'long enough to remember you, when you had no other home but this house, and no other friend but her. It was indeed long, long ago! You would never have lived to see this day, but for her care. Many a dreary hour, by night as well as by day, did she watch over you formerly, when no other had a hope that you could survive. My good, kind mistress! How gentle, how liberal, how pious, none but myself can now remember, and none were here to close her eyes but me!—oh! it was sad—sad—sad. But she has taken the wings of the morning, and got away to a happier world. Her last wish was, sir, that if we ever met, I should give this parcel into your own hands. Take it, then. It comes from one who loved you to the last, who thought of you often, and whose dying prayers may yet bring a blessing on your head.'

As the old woman hurried away, Captain Bouverie glanced with surprise at the small packet so unexpectedly placed in his possession, and then thrust it hastily into his pocket. The whole

circumstance afterwards escaped his recollection, till, sitting alone in his barrack-room at night, he drew the parcel forth by mistake for his cigar case, and with a momentary impulse of curiosity broke the seals.

How many lines or pages of the following narrative Captain Bouverie read, no one need inquire; but he was found long after midnight comfortably asleep in his arm-chair, and the manuscript, which had evidently dropped from his hand, lay prostrate on the floor.

Who can tell what a day may bring forth, and still less what the events of a week may be! The horse which Captain Bouverie purchased at Tattersall's on the day of his aunt's interment having proved restive, and having shied at one of the carriages in Hyde Park on the following Sunday, reared and fell. The accident was but the work of a moment, and yet most fatal in its result. Captain Bouverie being thrown on the head, his skull was fractured, and after lingering hopelessly for a few hours, without regaining his consciousness, he expired.

Nothing could exceed the grief and consternation of Captain Bouverie's numerous friends and brother officers on this most melancholy occasion, for he had been universally beloved, and was allowed, by all who knew him, to be 'the best fellow upon earth.'

Captain Pierrepoint frequently declared that he never was more 'cut up' than by this very sad affair of 'poor Bouverie'; and he neither hunted nor went to the opera until after the funeral, which was attended by a mournful concourse of intimate friends. Thus, a week had scarcely elapsed after the interment of the venerable Mrs. Jane Bouverie before her promising young nephew was most unexpectedly laid by her side; and the private papers of both, with all their most secret thoughts and feelings, having been committed to the discretion of an enterprising executor, they are now, according to modern custom, presented, in the strictest confidence, to the public. It is expected that no reader will examine them through the spectacles of criticism, as all that indulgence is of course due from the world to the memoirs of Jane Bouverie, which authors usually claim from friends in general, and the public in particular, on behalf of the autobiographies now so frequently written by modest individuals 'for no eye but their own,' and which, by some singular mischance, invariably escape, as these pages are now about to do, from the private writing-desk, into the public press.

CHAPTER II.

The Autobiography of Jane Bonnerie.

'All pages of human life are worth studying. The wise to instruct, the gay to divert us, the imprudent teach us what to shun, the absurd cure the spleen.' MRS. MONTAGUE.

How often is nature most lovely in decay. The brightest and most prosperous aspect of spring cannot be compared, for interest and beauty, to the sadder tints of autumn; nor is the pale cold dawn of morning comparable to the richer glow of a setting sun. Even in the moment of dissolution, who does not admire the many-colored leaves of the forest, quivering as they drop from the parent stem, the mists on the mountain-side, melting into light as they vanish away, or the curly-headed waves of ocean rushing tumultuously to the shore, and perishing in a wreath of foam. The works of art also become embellished by age. The ruined tower, mantled with ivy, acquires an added grace with every passing year—the sculptured marble excites a deeper interest when it tells a tale of days

gone by—and the painted canvass becomes mellowed into rarer beauty by the touch of time. While thus all that wants the breath of life may last unnumbered years, and still improve, it is not so with man—'age is dark and unlovely.' The autumn of human life becomes more gloomy as it advances; and in this world no following spring succeeds—yet a revival, which man in his mortal state never can witness, shall at last awaken him to life, and shall yet adorn him with unexampled glory, when the whole fabric of inanimate nature has finally perished.

Were the order of human life reversed—were man to begin existence as he now ends it, blemished with a thousand infirmities, which year by year, instead of increasing, he threw off, so that in strength and beauty he daily improved, the change would, no doubt, be pleasing to himself. Then, even in this life, there would exist for him a source of ever-increasing hope, and of agreeable anticipation. It has, however, been otherwise and better ordained by Him who consults not our wishes, but our real interests, and who created us much more for another world than for this.

'Through sorrow's night, and danger's path,
Amid the deepening gloom,
We, soldiers of an injured king,
Are marching to the tomb.'

As the path of life grows more arduous and rugged, the Christian traveller finds himself daily more solitary and infirm, more needing repose, and less able to find it. In every step of his laborious progress towards the portals of eternity, he is thus reminded that his home is not here, and that from his hourly increasing burden death alone can finally relieve him. Yet as the ivy, which has in itself no strength, gains support by clinging to the solid wall, so does the Christian achieve a mighty energy in the midst of weakness, by cleaving to God. The joys of life would satiate the most worldly of men at last, and its sorrows would be insupportable, but for the certainty that they must soon have an end. 'It is the privilege of mortals to die.' By a guide who himself trod every step of the weary path, may the Christian—even though sense, and sight, and memory itself, shall fail—be conducted onwards in safety and peace to the end of time; and if envy could arise in a pious mind, it might perhaps be felt, by those who are struggling and wrestling through the difficulties of life, for the time-worn veteran who has safely reached its close. Nothing in the whole range of creation is more to be reverenced than the aged disciple, overshadowed already by the near approach of death, and gathering his cloak around him to fall with dignity, willing and ready to obey that

final mandate which summons him through death into life everlasting.

During the hourly progress of our existence, each individual may be considered as reading his own memoirs—the most interesting to him, certainly, of all. Every day represents a page fraught with those events which are gradually to develope the end; and, as the volume approaches a final close, the aged may look back perhaps with wonder at the agitating suspense and immoderate interest with which they watched over the most trifling vicissitudes of hope and fear, so soon to be with them for ever at an end.

The young, inexperienced and full of eagerness, carry their emotions on the surface of their minds, and express them in bursts of joy or in agonies of grief, which find no echo in the aged heart tamed down to composure, though not to indifference, by long suffering and frequent discipline.

As all the letters of all the Bouverie family, now deceased, have been carefully preserved and left to me, the last and only survivor of my own generation, I now seem, when reading or transcribing their minute details, like one returned from the dead, to review those records of scenes and conversations in which I formerly took a part, and in which I then felt an interest so keen as to seem at present almost incredible. The vehement exclamations of delight,

and the passionate expressions of affection with which the letters and conversation of the young abound, and which are often in maturer years affected by those who wish still to seem juvenile, are moderated at length by years and experience to more measured serenity.

That eagerness of language is no test of actual feeling those letters give abundant proof; and truly do they testify that the deepest chords of the heart vibrate with increasing harmony to the touch, after the feebler notes in a sprightlier key are heard no more. The feelings, very easily excited in our own home, proved always in the end most wanting in depth; and a caressing manner was never that of the most lasting affection. I cannot but smile yet, though the smile be a mournful one, to read those letters in the 'dearest dear, dear, dear' style of composition, which were never afterwards verified by the actual warmth of such a generous attachment as others expressed less vividly, but followed out with more consistency in the rational tone of sober truth.

During my own youth I was apt to believe in no feelings which were not exhibited, to consider that grief cannot exist without tears, nor affection without endearment, nor religion without enthusiasm; and my ideas were then more suited to a tragedy on the stage than to the solemn tragedy

of real life; but time tries truth, and brings us also to the knowledge of it. As a great divine once most justly remarked, 'All outward demonstrations of emotion show, not the greatness of the feelings, but the smallness of the mind'; and where the affections of this life and the hopes of another are founded as much on principle as on feeling, they have a root deeper than the eye of man can perceive—a shelter which wards off or moderates the passing storm, and an existence which depends not for its best enjoyments or its severest trials on the sunshine or shadows of this lovely but changeable world.

All the old have once been young; and the young, if they live, must live to grow old. None were ever younger or happier than Jane Bouverie remembers to have been, and few will live to be as old. If my years have been many, my afflictions also have been multiplied; but, looking back upon them as I do now, with a consciousness as pleasing as it once was melancholy, that all has been necessary for my good, and that all soon shall end well, I would willingly address the result of my own solitary reflections and long experience, with the best wishes of my heart, to those who are entering life as joyously as I did. Should their hearts be riven asunder like mine with unexpected sorrows, a record is left of the consolations which

were sufficient for one who, whatever their trials may be, has grieved as they do; and should the evening of their days threaten to close without leaving one earthly hope to cheer, or even an earthly wish to agitate them, still some comfort may be found in these pages from my sympathy and companionship. To all who suffer, let me bequeath the final evidence of an aged and nearly dying Christian, who has known, with the utmost intensity of emotion, the brightest and the saddest feelings of human nature, and is ready to declare, with her latest breath, that ''Tis better in all to be resigned than blessed.'

> 'Who finds not Providence both good and wise,
> Alike in what he gives and what denies?'
>
> POPE.

CHAPTER III.

> 'Where'er my foot can tread
> The earth rings hollow from below,
> And warns me of her dead.'
>
> J. MONTGOMERY.

I WAS born seventy years ago in Baker Street, London, within the walls of this very room, where, before the lapse of many hours and days, I feel assured that I shall exchange time for eternity; and the language of my heart is, in truth and sincerity, like that of the patriarch Job, 'I would not live alway.'

With a mind at length raised above the storms of hope and fear that have hitherto agitated me, and resting safely in the calm regions of unalterable peace, it has become my earnest desire, before the world and I shake hands to part for ever, that I might be enabled to review, for the last time, those scenes and circumstances, those joys and sorrows, which form the history of so long a life. Let me ask others now, as I have so frequently, in hours

of solitary self-examination, asked myself—in what respect I could or should have acted otherwise than I did, so as to find in the busy scenes of life a better, a happier, or a more useful lot. I am already dead to every worldly interest. The friends who loved and the enemies who injured me are no more; every sorrow is subdued, every joy at an end; most events are forgotten; and the few recollections not yet faded entirely away flit before my mind like the broken shadows of an agitating dream.

How well do I remember when the old seemed like beings of a different planet from myself; and who would believe that the faded worn-out being I am now could ever have claimed kindred with the sanguine, joyous, happy girl, once surrounded, within these very walls, by parents, friends, companions, and even by lovers—all, all now crowded into their silent graves! How many faces, remembered by none but myself, are yet present to me, vivid, as they were in bygone times, with life and gaiety! I have lived to be the last depository of their memories, the last on this visible earth who remembered their countenances, who had shared in their thoughts, or would drop a tear over their graves. Yes! of all who rejoiced with me in joy, or mourned with me in sorrow, I alone remain. Oh! how I sometimes long to behold but one

living being who could remember the days that I remember!

Not as the leaves of autumn, all at once, have the generations of man fallen and disappeared from my sight; but one by one they steal away, and others fill their places, till the last survivor, like myself, withering amidst his fresh and vigorous successors, falls alone, as I shall do, unlamented and almost unobserved. Could a vision be seen of the many who formerly loved me, of all with whom I was once intimately associated, how numberless would they appear! but now, like a vast field of battle strewed over with the dead, the world lies desolate around me. In a home once peopled with brothers, sisters, friends, and parents, I hear only the echo of my own solitary footstep; no outstretched hand or smiling countenance welcomes my return, no familiar voice greets my ear; but my generation has passed away, my blighted spirit has not linked itself to another, and all that remains to cheer me is the light of Christian truth, which, like a summer sun, sheds its brightest hues on the darkest cloud. Obliterating the gloomy desolation of past and present years, it has for me stretched over the long, the unknown future, the rainbow hope, 'a bridge of glory reaching to the skies.'

My father, Lord Charles Bouverie, and Lady Laura Meredith, my mother, among many rich and

noble connections, belonged to that very unpopular species denominated 'poor relations.' They were considered to have married imprudently on nothing, or at least on what the lord-and-lady world call nothing, meaning rather less than £1,000 a-year, with which moderate but rational income they succeeded in persuading each other that the mere want of money could not make them poor. They were convinced that it might be quite possible to rough it comfortably through life on little, believing, as they did then, and as they always afterwards continued to experience, that happiness depends much less on having a great fortune than on rightly enjoying a small one.

It is always most prudent for rich relations to disapprove of a doubtfully eligible marriage, by which they save a great expenditure in wedding presents and settlements. My mother's connections vied with my father's in loudly expressing their total disapprobation of a mere love-match, as both had been expected to marry so advantageously, that it would have been difficult to say which was thought to have sacrificed the most brilliant prospects in the matrimonial world.

To those who live a life of ostentation and magnificence, mere happiness seems a very poor object to marry for; and my grandfather, Lord Barnfield, long threatened his daughter to withhold

his countenance from her marriage before it took place, and never to pardon it afterwards; but Lady Laura's earnest entreaties at last prevailed so far that he gave his consent, protesting at the same time that he would give nothing else. Without it neither of my parents would have married, but with it they asked no more; and often has my mother smiled when she enumerated the unheard-of sacrifices she was considered by her sisters and cousins to have made, in taking only a pony-carriage with her to the country and a semi-grand piano. Nothing rivets the attachment of generous minds more securely than the many opportunities afforded by a narrow income, for those who share it in common, to relinquish their own wishes, and to relinquish them clandestinely, if possible, for the comfort or happiness of the partner they love; and none of these occasions were ever overlooked in after life by either of my parents, each of whom seemed anxious to monopolise all the little privations of a narrow purse, and only to regret the infliction of those that did not fall exclusively to their own individual share.

My father, Lord Charles, having long experienced that his commission in the Guards gave him scarcely a tenth of the income that it took away, at once sold out, and retired with his bride, to kindle 'sober joy's domestic flame,' in one of the most romantic

cottages that ever adorned the Wye, where, as Lady Laura used frequently to remark, 'mere existence was a luxury.' How often have I heard both my parents discuss, with rapturous remembrance, the first ten years of their married life, spent at Rosemount Lodge, where, as my father used laughingly to say, all that thatch, woodbine, or roses could contribute to the happiness of life was to be enjoyed, and where they were blessed with the sunshine of an attachment that knew no change! Lord Charles possessed through life that happily constituted genius which caused him to think everything of his own better than anything belonging to another—his wife, his children, his house, and his garden, he always considered as unrivalled throughout the world; and he made it a duty, as much as it was a pleasure, to cultivate happiness in every unobjectionable form in which it fell to his share, taking the best possible view of persons, places, and circumstances.

'God gives us the sunshine,' he would sometimes say, 'and man himself causes the shade. If all would live to make the very best they can of such materials as are given for rendering themselves happy, and conscientiously endeavor, at the same time, to make every individual around them equally so—to feel answerable if any one with whom they are associated for a single hour has

been rendered less happy during that hour than he might have been; how much better would all be fitted for that world where mutual good-will shall perpetually and universally reign!'

My father, with nearly a poet's ecstacy, delighted in all the works of nature, and tried to impress on the hearts of his children that fervent admiration which he felt himself for the glories of creation. How often has he led us out with him to observe the moon-lit sky, the starry firmament, the morning and the evening sun, and with what exquisite taste did he direct our attention to the noblest objects around us—the river rushing along its rocky bed, the trees bending before the wind, or the hills tossing their heads on high, and wrestling through a wilderness of clouds.

> 'God! who can tread upon the breathing ground,
> Nor feel thy presence where thy works abound!'

To Lady Laura's mind the minuter beanties of creation were yet more congenial, and the melodies of nature added an additional enjoyment to the charm of her plants and her flowers. The bee, murmuring as it wandered from leaf to leaf, the flow and fall of the tumbling stream, the song of birds, the lowing of cattle, and even the howling of the tempest, were to her the very enchantment of rural life. Though she could, with a most accomplished pencil, imitate the forms and the hues

of nature; though I have seen her gazing long with intensest interest into the structure of the very smallest wild-flower; yet the life-giving sounds, and the busy stir of animal life, were, to a mind full of sympathy as hers, the greatest of pleasures. The familiar association of birds and animals with man, and the opportunity of observing their habits, is one of the enjoyments peculiar to country life, of which none who are accustomed to it ever tire; and to the poetical mind of Cowper, his domesticated hares were not a more pleasing resource than the deer and the wild goats, which were tamed by my mother, and became the joy and delight of our childhood, as well as the rough, shagged pony, which carried my brothers by turns, or sometimes both at once, to the fields.

Lord Charles, who never after his marriage kept horses for himself, used good-humoredly to say sometimes, when alluding to the necessity he had found of parting with his stud, that only the eldest son in a family should be allowed to acquire a taste for hunting, and all the younger brothers might prudently limit their genius for sport to fishing—an amusement of which he became passionately fond; and he used often to summon Lady Laura with her 'books and work,' to share with him in that 'healthful play.'

Amidst all the simple pleasures by which their

tastes were elevated, none supplied so inexhaustible a harvest of reflection and of enjoyment to my parents as their beautiful garden, to the decoration of which they jointly devoted many a leisure hour. That one acre might have passed for the work of a fairy's wand, so successfully had it been adorned with rare and splendid plants. The whole looked, in summer, like one brilliant bouquet; and my father, in the exultation of exhibiting his success to visitors, used to boast that 'not a thimbleful of earth was without a leaf, and that if he planted weeds they would come up flowers.'

'Of all the occupations in life,' said he one day, more seriously, 'without satiety at the time, or self-reproach afterwards, none is so natural or so attractive as gardening—the first employment appointed to man by his Maker, and almost the only one of which the reward is certain and lasting. Nature, as you see here, is not niggardly in the return she makes for any labor we bestow on her.'

'Yes,' added Lady Laura, 'and to poets, philosophers, or Christians, what so fertile in thought as a scene like this! It was in a garden that man first saw the light—in a garden that the fall of man took place—in a garden that the Saviour prayed in agony for our redemption—and there that the loveliest type is daily exhibited of our death and resurrection.'

'All nature dies, and lives again:
  The flow'r that paints the field,
The trees that crown the mountain's brow,
  And boughs and blossoms yield,

Resign the honors of their form
  At winter's stormy blast,
And leave the naked, leafless plain
  A desolated waste.

Yet soon reviving plants and flow'rs
  Anew shall deck the plain,
The woods shall hear the voice of spring,
  And flourish green again.

But man forsakes this earthly scene,
  Ah! never to return!
Shall any following spring revive
  The ashes of the urn?'

CHAPTER IV.

'To such I render more than mere respect,
Whose actions say that they respect themselves.'

COWPER.

To the indignation and annoyance of their titled sisters and flourishing brothers, my father and mother, being poor, had of course a numerous family, who were each and all as joyfully welcomed into the world, as if large estates had been entailed on every child they possessed.

Lord Barnfield, being a great political economist, and a private economist besides, afraid of our at last becoming a burden to him, declared, that he thought no marriages should be allowed by law, unless the parties could give security to government for being able suitably to maintain a family; and by all our rich relations we were looked upon from our infancy as suspicious characters, likely, by our poverty, to become a family reproach, and in all probability an intolerable bore. With an independence of mind amounting almost to extrava-

gance, my father omitted to ask any of his more prosperous relatives to become godfathers and godmothers to his unwelcome children: but forfeiting every prospect of our being presented with silver cups or christening frocks, he named us all, without reference to mercenary considerations, after those whom he most esteemed, or who had, he thought, the most single-hearted regard for himself.

Among those, none ranked so high as a worthy good old uncle, Lord Robert, the benefactor of his own boyhood, who lived in London on a small annuity, the greater part of which he expended in acts of kindness and charity, leaving little for himself but the barest necessaries of life.

He was a cheerful old man; for whatever might be wanting to his own happiness, he could usually borrow by sympathising in the enjoyments of all around, and especially in the joys of my father's children, whom he looked upon and loved as his own. Most of us were born in his house, and in after years I still delight to remember his kind old countenance, his humorous jests, his gold-headed cane with which he pretended to threaten us, the sights he took us to enjoy, the mountain of bonbons and cakes with which he regaled us, and the perpetual holiday which continued by his desire as long as we visited him in Baker Street. Lord Robert's theories of diet and education were most

popular with his juvenile visitors, as he thought it impossible for children either to eat too much or to learn too little. If any of us were ill in his house, he never could be persuaded that it was not from getting too much study in the school-room, rather than too much trash in the dining-room, and he continued to the end of his days firm in the belief that we were all too precocious to live, and required the rein in our education rather than the spur.

Those who wish to be remembered for countless years with affectionate gratitude, should be kind to children. It was my earliest sorrow when we lost Lord Robert, and I yet remember the heart-felt grief with which my father announced his death, and desired us all, while we lived, to remember his kind old uncle with respect. Lord Robert's venerable picture, with the white hair and benevolent smile, that I remember so well, has hung on these walls ever since; but who will value it now? As I look, it seems to have grown younger, for, aged beyond reckoning as he appeared to me formerly, and venerable as the countenance is, I am older this day myself than he was when he died.

My parents, being in their ideas and habits of the ancient school, found that, among all their enjoyments, none excited so much interest and pleasure as the educating their young family, and performing

towards us all those duties which devolve in modern days on tutors and governesses. In the present time, children are weaned from all real association with their own parents, as early and as entirely as the animals are from their offspring; yet, if the pleasures derived from our affections and our duties be the deepest and truest in human nature, what can be compared to that of an intelligent mother, training up, in virtue, grace, and accomplishments, her own much-loved child? The strongest instinct of children is their desire to be useful, and the greatest pleasure in manhood is to become so. To women one supreme opportunity of usefulness is given, in the cultivation of their young families; and if it be comfort for a dying bed not to have lived in vain, what tribute could be more gratifying to the heart of a mother, in her last hour of consciousness, than the tears of her children, who owe to her early tuition their best principles and feelings, as much as they owe their greatest happiness to her judicious affection?

In the wealthier ranks few mothers now seem ever to imagine the possibility of teaching their children anything, or to suppose that a gleam of satisfaction could be found in doing so; and in the middle classes every shop-keeper sends his sons from their very infancy to school, and every farmer's wife thinks it necessary to engage a governess

for her daughters. Even the most exemplary clergymen's wives, who might be expected to have time and inclination for so sacred a duty, though admirably occupied sometimes in teaching at charity schools, or in superintending benevolent societies, most unaccountably consign to another the instruction of their own children, and those sometimes who were governesses themselves in other families, lay aside entirely the practice of tuition when they have families of their own. The little nursery prodigies of the present day never can know what it once was to my sisters, Caroline and Eliza, and myself, when we first rehearsed the alphabet, and stammered through the catechism, amidst the encouragement and the endearments of maternal kindness. Other children of our rank were drilled with dry and heartless diligence by a governess, while their mothers preferred counting stitches in a pattern of worsted work, or taking their dogs out an airing in the carriage, lending their sensibilities to the fictitious woes of a novel, or out-glittering the sun with their diamonds at an evening party, when they might have been adorning the minds of their children with the brightest gems of knowledge and virtue.

The best feelings of nature and the best gifts of divine grace were mingled into one by such diligent and judicious mothers as we read of in former

ages, who knew less and taught more than those of the present day. All reverence and admire the mother of St. Augustine, to whose early instruction the church owed its brightest ornament; and Doddridge records that in all the devotions of his after-life, he never ceased to remember how his mother's hand had rested on his head, while he lisped his childhood's prayer to that Divine Being whom she first taught him to know and to adore. If there still were such mothers in the world, might there not still be such sons?

Lord Charles and Lady Laura Bouverie were thought, by all our titled relatives, to be rather eccentric, and very much in error, for attempting to educate their five children at home, and many were the prophecies, propagated by their friends, of failure, which they hoped and endeavored by ceaseless attention to frustrate. Whatever we were, our parents resolved we should become like the flowers in their garden, planted, cultivated, and trained by their own care, and who does not know how superior is the interest felt by man in any work of his own, however deficient, compared with that experienced in the work of another, however perfect. To them our natural dispositions were the subject of continual study, our fancied or real perfections the pride of their secret thoughts, our faults the object of their indulgent correction, our

precocious talents a source of continual wonder, our remarks a treasury of amusement, and our mistakes the very delight of their hearts. At no hour of any day did either of our parents find a want of occupation; while my father scanned over our exercises and corrected our calculations, my mother planned with him little excursions as the reward of a diligent day's labor, and tried by her conversation to instruct, to amuse, or to correct our minds, while still they anxiously consulted, again and again, whether more could be done to promote our happiness and improvement.

For piety and intelligence Lord Charles and Lady Laura were truly in the highest style of human nature. While instructing us in Holy Scripture, how carefully did they warn us all against that too common error of reading the Bible as if it were a mere group of unconnected texts, instead of seeking out, as they endeavored to do with us, and for us, the general outline and intention of the whole, particularly impressing at the same time on our minds, that the truest evidence of our deriving benefit from so sacred an occupation would always be, if we left off our daily studies with a humbler estimate of ourselves, and with a higher sense of God's glory and goodness. In respect to our general reading, my father, while storing our memories with all that is written by

the most enlightened authors, and especially the standard works of English literature, carefully impressed upon us that, if we merely learned by rote the thoughts and opinions of others, without weaving them into our minds by reflection, our heads would be little better than the book-shelves in a library. By a judicious choice of authors, Lord Charles succeeded in making it our favorite relaxation to read, not for display but for knowledge, and he often repeated to us the remark of Lady Mary Wortley Montague: 'No entertainment is so cheap as reading, and no pleasure so lasting.'

How often have I seen my father in deep and delighted discussion with Lady Laura, of little characteristic traits in us, which to any eye but that of a parent would have been lost in its own insignificance; and his fine countenance would light up with intelligent satisfaction when told of some occasion in which the pride or selfishness natural to all children had been conquered by the principles they instilled, or when some little act of generous self-sacrifice had indicated a disposition on which their partial affection might lavish its tenderness.

By many parents, their own children are merely treated like ornamental volumes for the drawing-room, to amuse an idle hour, by their external decorations of beauty and accomplishments, without

reference to the far deeper interest they might, as intelligent and immortal beings, create; but my father read our characters with an absorbing attention, which no other subject could rival. He still took an enlightened interest in questions of philosophical inquiry, or of political importance, and he did not even entirely forget that world of fashion in which he yet had so many connexions; but all these concerns seemed to him and to Lady Laura as nothing compared with the improvement of their offspring, born to an existence which, good or bad, must be eternal. It was the fervent daily prayer of our parents, when they called us around them every night, that the life which we had received from them might indeed be, both here and hereafter, a blessing; and well do I remember my father's deep-toned solemn voice, as he spoke to my brothers, who were the eldest, of the hard struggle in life which awaited them, and of his hope that we should have but one interest, one purse, and one heart. I still have his countenance before me, lighted up, as it was, with affection and feeling, when he laid his hand on the head of each in succession, and prayed for the pardon of every sin we had committed during that day, telling us, as he often did, that if we persevered in that practice, we should, on our death-beds, have only the work of one day to do.

We were indeed happy children! Our spirits had never been flattened by unnecessary control; and the fearless laughter-loving buoyancy of our conversation delighted my father, who was an amateur of happiness. We played on each other's credulity, jested on each other's failings, ridiculed each other's caprices, concealed not a thought as it came uppermost, and seldom had the remotest shadow of a difference. I, being youngest, had to run all the messages of my brothers and sisters, to stand the brunt of all their family jokes, and to be, in short, a companion-of-all-work to all, the pet and the drudge of the whole party. It was happiness enough to share in their amusements, and happiness beyond expression when an opportunity occurred of becoming useful. I still remember the glow of heart with which I received my brother Edward's roughly-expressed thanks when I had succeeded in manufacturing some miserably bad flies for his first fishing excursion, and the exquisite joy of being told by my youngest sister, Caroline, that a necklace I had laboriously executed for her, in imitation of coral, was mistaken by a nearly blind old lady for a real one.

My brothers used to assert, that, if any one merely looked as if he wanted any thing, I started off to fetch it; and, if I could do an act of kindness for any of them clandestinely, I was indifferent

whether they knew of it or not. I bore the blame of their faults often rather than see them punished, and the greater the sacrifice was, the more it pleased myself. Nothing, in my estimation, then as well as now, deserved the name of friendship, if either party would hesitate to give up any thing or every thing for those they love. No selfish gratification bestows a feeling so delightful, certainly, as the consciousness of having relinquished our own wishes for others. It is a triumph of the mind and heart over natural inclination, which proves that we are not limited to the instinct of animals, but that we have souls capable of rising above the sin of selfishness, and acting on principle rather than on impulse.

No jealousies were excited in our juvenile minds by partiality, no caprice deprived us of a single innocent pleasure, and we were restrained much more by affection than by authority. Thus educated together by the same parents, reading in the same books, sleeping in the same nursery, enjoying the same hard-earned holidays, sitting in the same pew at church, listening to the same stories, and playing at the same games, we learned cheerfully to accommodate ourselves to each other, and thus we insensibly rubbed off all the little asperities of temper, or peculiarities of disposition, which are apt in subsequent years to produce more serious

alienation. The quarrels of childhood are but summer clouds, rendering the warmth that succeeds more delightful. While young, our estrangements can never be permanent, so long as a parent's judicious influence may at once command a cessation of hostilities, punishing, if necessary, both parties, till they gladly bury all animosity in that entire oblivion which ought to end all discord in every Christian family.

In whatever we did, thought, or suffered, our parents had a share, giving, by their presence, an additional motive to our good conduct, and an additional zest to every pleasure. They seemed to us like beings of a superior nature, who could resolve our difficulties, reconcile our disputes, animate our amusements, and give us that consciousness of being observed and noticed essential to the happiness of all children. How early does that craving for sympathy begin, which exists most keenly in the best natures, and never leaves the heart of man, from his earliest dawn of consciousness to the latest moment of his existence! Even then, the eye, closing in death, gives its last fond look on the mourning circle around, and gathers comfort in the very act of death, from those tears that tell how fondly he has been loved—how deeply he shall be lamented.

CHAPTER V.

> In love of nature jealousy is not,
> Nor cold return, nor broken faith, nor dull
> Forgetfulness. Sickness and sorrow, age,
> Weakness—add but fresh vigor to its balm.'
>
> LORD ROBERTSON'S POEMS.

OF all the people who ever liked their own way, and who preferred it to any other person's, no one had that peculiarity so powerfully developed as my grandfather, the Duke of Dartmoor, whose will had been seldom disputed by any one, and least of all by Lord Charles, or any of his own family. He had become old and solitary, for his two eldest sons were recently gone with their families to travel on the Continent, and all his grand-children, except ourselves, were grown up, being, as he often boasted, with much exultation, brilliantly established in life. Hitherto the Duke had sent us annually a Christmas box filled with splendid toys; but his gifts were to us like those of an invisible fairy, as, in respect to him personally, we were all 'alike

unknowing and unknown.' At length, most unexpectedly, an invitation came for us to pay him a short visit in London, as he felt lonely and dull in the absence of those to whom he had been hitherto accustomed; and some of Lord Charles's letters admirably describe the scene of animation and excitement on that occasion, of which I was scarcely yet old enough to retain a very vivid recollection.

From the moment our grandfather saw how very beautiful my two elder sisters had become—and both were as lovely at fourteen and fifteen as any poet's dream could fancy—it was the fixed purpose of his soul that we should all three be sent to the same school at Paris, where his own daughters and several of his grand-daughters, who afterwards became peeresses by marriage, had acquired their fascinations and accomplishments. If my sisters had been plain or plebeian-looking, he would probably have hurried them back to Herefordshire, thankful that they should blush unseen; but old as he then was, and not very far from blind, the Duke yet idolised beauty, and often remarked, that, if it be one of the greatest pleasures in life to see the portrait of a lovely woman, how much better it is to behold the reality. He wished the youngest and prettiest girl in the room always to be placed beside him at dinner in his own house, and when he could no longer see what her features

were like, he had a pleasure in hearing them described. His enthusiastic admiration of Eliza and Caroline, when they were first taken to visit him in Grosvenor Square, my father in vain endeavored to conceal, but even to his daughters and grand-daughters the Duke was accustomed to pay the homage he thought due to beauty, 'the fairest work of creation,' as he said, 'and its greatest ornament.'

My sisters were excessively amused, and certainly not a little flattered, by this unexpected reception from their aged grandfather, and by the flowery compliments, quite of the old school, that he paid them. Caroline he compared to a water-lily, so fresh, fair, and colorless; and Eliza he named the variegated rose, from the flitting tints that came and went, with gratified surprise, when, for the first time, she heard that beauty praised, of which she had scarcely before dared to fancy herself possessed. The impression thus made upon her mind was neither slight nor transient, and in her presence the Duke frequently urged on my father the shocking injustice and improvidence he committed by giving such girls 'a mere provincial education.'

'The three girls must go to Paris,' he exclaimed, looking at us admiringly. 'It might make all the difference of their being promoted to the peerage

or not. I see in my mind's eye Eliza's strawberry leaves budding on her brow already. Charles, she must and shall be finished at Mde. Tourbillon's.'

'Pray urge me no more,' said my father, in a tone of agitation. 'We cannot put a child in the fire and not expect her to be burned. If I were obliged to put a daughter of mine to school at Paris, I would rather put her to death.'

'Phoo! Phoo!' replied the Duke, who delighted in the excitement of conquering any opposition in his own family, 'you were always obstinate, Charles! Your daughters, with a country bumpkin education from Herefordshire, will be fit only to marry attorneys, with a pen behind their ears. You must have them all three polished. Nature has done much, but art must do more. Let them go to Mde. Tourbillon's at Christmas, and send all their bills for the next few years to me. The boys shall be placed at school also, and I must give you, as a residence for yourself, my brother Robert's house in Baker Street. Break up your little country dovecot, where you have been long enough now, pinching the greengages to see if they are ripe, and doing all the other rural felicities of life. Be one of us again. I miss you often, now that my limbs have become so feeble. I cannot think what ails me of late! It is very unaccountable!

I never used to be invalided; but I need somebody to talk to often, and, Charles, I need you.'

There was a mixture of command and entreaty in my grandfather's voice which shook Lord Charles's resolution. The Duke, who saw this, would take no denial, and he would listen to no compromise. It had been always one of his chief delights to order other people's affairs; he felt that now he had acted generously, and the slightest appearance of hesitation or of opposition filled him with anger and disappointment. Before my father could make up his mind what to say or do, the Duke had already fixed the exact day and hour when we must be all settled in Baker Street; conjectured how many servants it would be necessary to engage; named the clubs Lord Charles should belong to; and said, with the consciousness of conferring an additional favor, that it would be a comfort now to have the support of my father's arm occasionally to Whyte's, and Lady Laura's society in his solitary airings.

There was an appeal in all this to the kind feelings of my parents which they found it difficult to resist. They had evidently no choice between implicit submission or a sudden rupture with one who meant kindly, and to whom my father owed the utmost consideration. Lord Charles felt doubtful also whether it would be right and prudent to

refuse the offer, now made most opportunely to his sons, of placing them at school. The Bank of Hereford, in which my parents had placed a part of their fortune, and the whole of their savings, failed most unexpectedly about this time, which rendered it almost impossible for us longer to reside at Rosemount Lodge, or for my brothers to be provided in any other way with a liberal education; and my father himself candidly acknowledged that he had already given them all the classical instruction to which he was competent.

'What everybody says must be true'; and a perfect outcry of approbation arose among all our relations when they heard of the Duke's offer. All the usual jargon was made use of against a domestic education—that it would be a perfect disgrace if so promising a family were allowed to be any longer of mere home manufacture. 'Charles,' said the Duke one day, 'your girls, like Warren's blacking, require polishing, and the boys emulation. Ned and Robert must be early trained in the world, or they never can be fit for it! Those who are intended hereafter to be public men must begin by being public boys.'

If these were truths, they were very unwelcome, but our parents, fearful of being guided by inclination rather than by duty, listened, argued, and at last yielded.

As no substance in nature is at the same time both hard and soft, so there are very seldom united in the same character strong principle and tender sensibility. In no one were these qualities more exquisitely tempered, the one by the other, than in the well balanced disposition of our admirable mother, who resisted the change as long as resistance was possible, and at last gained over the Duke's consent, that, as I was yet young, she should for the present retain me.

After much anxious discussion, during which it became more and more evident that their own pecuniary affairs might soon become irretrievably embarrassed, and that my parents must accept all or nothing from the Duke, as no middle course was allowed, Lady Laura at length sorrowfully consented to a revolution in all her life and occupations, which prudence and gratitude dictated, but from which her whole heart recoiled.

'The Duke has been most kind in his own way,' she said, 'and I thank him with my whole heart; yet to break up all my school-room happiness, and become almost childless—to be hemmed in for ever by the walls of a street, with all nature shut out, and nothing visible but man and his works—what a change! It seems to me as if religion, happiness, and all good were nearer to my children in the country, and vice farther off, than ever they can

be amidst the artificial life of a great and boundless world like London.

'It is, after all,' replied my father cheeringly, 'a mere libel on the little village of London, to fancy that we cannot be as domestic, as happy, and even as pious there as elsewhere. Let us show the world that it is so. We must consider our small home, wherever it be, as the universe. The happiness of our lives and their temptations are within our own hearts, and you cannot hope to avoid all trials, even if we had remained in retirement. As St. Jerome said: "Hide myself as I may, still old Jerome is with me."'

I was but thirteen when we emigrated to London, yet never shall I forget that day, when our parents, from a deliberate conviction of their duty to us, forsook the little paradise in which they had so long delighted.

The only home I had ever yet known looked on that morning more like the vision of a dream than a solid reality. 'You scarce could see the grass for flowers.' The wild rose flung its graceful sprays across the path; our one lilac tree, weighed down with a load of flowers, almost dipped its head into the stream, and the jessamine, nailed to the house with gay shreds of my father's old uniform, grew in garlands around every latticed window. Many a bird had its song, and the sun-

shine gave not only light and warmth, but, like a smile of affection from those we love, it cheered the very heart.

We were all at play in the little bowling-green while my mother's eye lighted up at the sound of our ringing laughter. For the last time she scattered crumbs among her tame robins, and gathered a bouquet of her favorite flowers: but when she gazed on their fading hues, and thought that these were all she could retain of her happy home—when she remembered, that, before they were withered, it would be deserted and desolate, she sat down on the stairs leading from the porch, and burst into tears.

My father's own lip quivered with emotion, but he sat down and took her hand in silence. It was long before either spoke, but at last he said, in a voice broken with emotion, 'While we are all together, no grief is unbearable. It is not of importance where one lives, but with whom, and I take my best gifts and greatest enjoyments in life wherever I take you and my children. Our first object should certainly be rather to see them, than any of our other plants, properly cultivated.'

'True, but what a blessing when both could be trained together. You know it broke a Dutchman's heart to lose a single tulip root, so what should I feel when every tree and shrub here seems

like a near relation and old friend,' said Lady Laura sadly, 'and that beautiful stream, my long-loved and cheerful companion. What an emblem its rapid course is of time, as the ocean is of eternity.'

Children are always delighted with any change, and when my father looked around on our faces, sparkling with excitement, which we were vainly seeking to moderate or conceal, his own spirits rose with ready sympathy for ours, and he added to us, in his good-humored rallying tone, 'We shall thrive very well in the smoke of London, I have no doubt, and may have our throats swept, like our chimneys, once a month. After all, what do we leave here to break our hearts about? A farm containing one cow, two hens, and a gooseberry bush. We shall still have, wherever we go, a rousing fire on the dark winter nights, and a merry circle around it.'

'Not if our children are dispersed like a hive upset; but I shall cease, my dear husband, to repine at what all the world, for their advantage, recommends, yet as long as you could do them justice at home, how happy we all were!'

'Yes; but hereafter I shall be quite at a loss how to conceal my own ignorance from my own children. If they have any headpiece at all, they have it from you, Lady Laura, but I believe, in all cases, the talents of children are inherited from

their mothers. If ours are not all wonders of the world, they are next thing to it, and we must cease to regret any sacrifice that will make them quite so.'

'Whatever most tends to render the existence we have given them a blessing in both worlds, shall certainly be my choice,' replied my mother, with serious earnestness. 'I look for the last time now on the scene we have loved so long, and enjoyed so much. It is beautiful in whatever nature can bestow, and in whatever we could add to adorn it; and it is dearest of all for the associations and remembrances with which every little corner is crowded; but I can look in the faces of my children, and forget it all.'

'Yes! what we see is of little importance compared with what we feel. I often think it an impressive reflection for a parent, conscious of his own responsibility, that the most splendid landscape which ever astonished the eye of man is utterly insignificant compared with the immortal soul of the obscurest child on earth. The beggar-girl who asked your alms to-day is a "possible angel," and her salvation is, in the eye of God, more important than all that wide world we see around. You and I are entrusted with the care of those five immortal beings, so dear to ourselves, whose fitness for life here or hereafter must depend in a great

measure on our prayers and instructions; therefore let us set them an example now of cheerful conformity to our almost inevitable destiny.'

My mother silently rose, and took her husband's offered arm. They walked slowly towards the margin of the river without pausing or trusting themselves to look back, and in a few minutes we were all seated in the boat and drifting rapidly down the tide. As we skirted round the margin of her favorite walk, Lady Laura raised her beautiful eyes, and gave one long, tearful glance at the vanishing scene, while I heard her repeat these lines in a low tone of mournful regret—

> 'A hundred suns will stream on thee,
> A thousand moons will quiver;
> But not by thee my steps shall be
> For ever and for ever.'

CHAPTER VI.

'Les esprits legers disent plus qu'ils ne pensent, et le esprits profonds pensent plus qu'ils ne disent.'

SCARCELY had we arrived in our London home, before my mother began to exercise her own remarkable genius for diffusing comfort and cheerfulness around her, so that the house in Baker Street at last scarcely looked either small or dark, but assumed that aspect of elegance and grace which may, with good taste, be produced on the smallest means, and without taste is not attainable on the greatest.

It became the fashion among our noble connexions, now that we were countenanced by the Duke, to show us a great deal of patronising attention. My father's hilarity and good humor rendered him an acquisition in every company; my mother's manner was grace and intelligence personified, and my two elder sisters, during the intervals of their return from Paris, adorned any society, and in the earliest bloom of their girlhood,

excelled the utmost hopes of our grandfather. He survived till they had completed the three years which were to give them the highest polish that can be added by art to natural beauty, and died more than satisfied with the result of his experiment.

The game of life played between rich and poor, great and small, is as hopeless a rivalship as that of the frog and the ox, leading often to equally calamitous results. My father used laughingly to say that, for the poor to compete with the rich in society, was as disastrous a case as it would be to enter a donkey for a horse-race at Ascot; and my mother had no ambition to push herself on in any circle to which her income was incompetent; therefore they both rather shrunk from being patronised.

It is a noticeable fact that the less anxious people are about the world, and especially the great world, the more it courts them, and no weakness meets with less indulgence there than being over anxious to please. No sooner was it obvious that Lord Charles and Lady Laura were really and unaffectedly indifferent to any notice, except from those they truly liked, than all the prosperous relations to whom we had the honor of being cousins became rather more than civil. We received boxes of game at a consider-

able cost by coach from the country, which had frequently to be buried, on account of the time they had lingered on the journey; haunches of fly-blown venison, and baskets of far-travelled fruit, which had to be consumed in a day or lost. Then followed invitations to spend a day or two, fifty and sixty miles off, when we had no carriage to convey us, or to join in pic-nic parties to Richmond and Greenwich, or to dine at the farthest antipodes of London, to which the expense of a conveyance was not quite ruinous, but very nearly so.

As the most costly presents are generally made by the poor to the rich, our cousin Lady Clanalpine, having sent my sisters occasionally some half-withered bouquets of geranium from her conservatory, requested them in return to assist in working a set of chairs for her saloon, with the Clanalpine arms and coronet in Berlin wool, which they were five months in completing; and Lady Grenard, who had presented my mother with a box of apples from her garden in Herefordshire, which cost more than their value in travelling expenses, hinted to me that the new folding-screen she had begun was to be a pic nic of work given by all her young friends, and that one vacant place yet remained. I nearly wore out a pair of eyes in her service to accomplish embroid-

ering the pattern she wished, which was received with a paroxysm of admiring exclamations at the time of its presentation; but I never was afterwards invited within her drawing room to see how it looked, and visitors generally understood, I was told, that she had worked it herself.

Lord Charles's frank, easy, soldier-like manners, with great fluency of conversation and a lively vein of humor, rendered him the most desirable of companions. There was a hearty sincerity in his kindness, which none could distrust, and a genuine cheerfulness without effort, which never degenerated into ill-nature. He dealt not in startling witticisms, which, among those who cannot follow them up in a style equally sparkling, are usually followed by a pause of wonder and perplexity, but he caught the subject of the moment, whatever it might be, with ready vivacity, and was never at a loss for a lively and acute reply. He jested often with graceful humor about the difficulty of providing for his 'pauper family,' but frequently warned us among all our great and titled relatives to avoid, more than any degradation in life, ever to become the mere toadying hangers-on among our high connections. 'Better to live on your own independent crust of bread,' he one day observed to my brothers, 'than to spend your juvenile days in watching

for "a nod from a lord," only venturing to speak when you are spoken to, submitting to be the butt of any jest that may be levelled at you, and obliged to agree with every body's opinion on every subject.'

'You are excessively in the right,' added Lady Laura. 'I am convinced that the essence of friendship consists in perfect equality. None of my children, poor as we are, could derive any real advantage from a long array of titled acquaintances; and as for people merely rich, there is nothing I can less understand than the adulation paid to vulgar wealth. If I sit next to a clever man at dinner, his richly endowed mind enriches mine, he shares his store with me, and my intellect gains something; but sitting beside a man with a million of money, there is not the slightest chance that £1,000 can find its way from his purse to mine; therefore, I measure the value of an acquaintance much more by the depth of his mind than by the depth of his pocket.'

'I only wish,' added Lord Charles laughing, 'that all the friendship expressed for me by fifty people could be concentrated into six, and then we might cultivate them thoroughly; but at present, if I asked any one of the multitude to give a son of ours so much as a drummership in a regiment, he would probably drop my acquaintance. If there

is a hole in the mill-stone, I can see as far through it as any one, and there are some of our friendships here that I should be sorry to ride the water on. I am not quite so ill off, however, as the gentleman who complained that his acquaintances would fill a church, but his real friends might all be contained in the pulpit.'

My father was soon reconciled, in a great measure, to the separation from his auriculas and pansies, by the amusement he found in society, for, like all good talkers, he thought no pleasure in life comparable to conversation, and his hospitality was the only point in which, after his restoration to London habits, he found any real difficulty in conforming to circumstances. He used to say that, if any good-natured friend left him £5,000 a-year, he would establish a daily omnibus to Baker Street, and the first friends who put down their names for places should be brought there and welcomed.

Nothing ever could fully convince Lord Charles that it cost an expenditure worth mentioning, if he brought any one or two friends, with whom about seven o'clock he happened to be walking—stray generals, admirals, peers, or poets—to partake with us of 'that excellent dish, pot-luck.' I have heard my mother earnestly and repeatedly impressing on him, with untiring good humor, the obvious fact, that since he had adopted this habit, she was obliged

to order every day a dinner suitable to any such impromptu guests, but this consciousness of her being prepared encouraged him only the more, day after day, to transgress, by proposing to Lord Barnfield, Lord Ashcourt, or his cousin-german, the Marquis of Plinlimmon, that they should divide his last mutton chop with him.'

Thus meeting in so sociable a style with many agreeable relations and friends, we all acquired my father's love of society, and from the peculiarly easy agreeable way in which we met with company at home, it became not only a luxury, but, at last, almost a necessary of life to all my brothers and sisters, who were encouraged to take their part in the general conversation, and to whom our father jestingly gave the name of 'the small talk club.' He remarked one day that it cramped the genius of young people often to be corrected or found fault with for what they said, and that we ought to have a perfect confidence of our opinions being received with the same attention as those of older people, and of our stories being as well appreciated.

'But,' replied Lady Laura, smiling, 'it is notorious that very great people become exceedingly prosing because of this certain assurance, that they must be listened to without interruption. If you treat our children like princes and royal dukes, they will become equally prolix. Their

best friends will soon wish to banish them, like Indian Parsees, to a Tower of Silence. It is better to be admonished by meeting with a less obsequious attention.

> "When much he speaks, he finds that ears are clos'd,
> And certain signs inform him when he's pros'd,
> No humble cousin to his bidding bows." '

'Be that as it may, nothing assists conversation so much as the good-humored audacity acquired by those who feel assured that they can neither speak nor think amiss. I hate to see the intellects of children on a mental tight-rope. Let everything they utter pass current, for it embarrasses them to find all they say weighed and examined, as if it were a light guinea.'

'I compare conversation to a duet on the pianoforte,' observed Lady Laura. 'Some people can set out brilliantly, but have not the ability long to accompany well. Some drown their partner by too much noise and velocity; others know a few trifles by rote, and play altogether by book, without originating a new idea, and the very few who have deep and scientific powers are seldom fully appreciated, but give the more pleasure to those who can justly estimate their skill and success. As conversation cannot be a solo, the pleasure consists less in display and preëminence than in mutual adaptation—

"——or half the company are teased
That met together to be pleased."'

'There are many rocks and quicksands in conversation, but I have met with nothing worse lately than my tedious cousin Plinlimmon, who related forty-two stories during dinner yesterday.'

'To do him justice, however, three were perfectly new,' observed Lady Laura. 'Nothing should be related in society now that occurred longer ago than the day before yesterday.'

'True,' replied Lord Charles, 'the last *bon-mot* in London takes little more than five days to travel as far as John o' Groat's house, and really Plinlimmon should give bail that he shall limit his narratives to the present year, and he should speak always with a stop watch in his hand.'

'Conversation, when devoted to its highest uses, might be twice blessed, enriching both parties without impoverishing either,' remarked Lady Laura, turning towards us. 'We should compare our thoughts and feelings on subjects mutually interesting, recall entertaining facts in history and science, establish each other's religious impressions, clear up each other's doubts, and give more vividness to our hopes of a Great Hereafter; but how seldom is it so, and what cause of confusion should we have, if our Divine Saviour were to appear at any time to us, as he once did to the disciples,

asking "What manner of communication is this that ye hold one with another?"'

'My chief enjoyment in society is when my friends frankly and freely turn their minds inside out to me,' said Lord Charles, jestingly. 'Not like Talleyrand, who thought language was given to conceal our thoughts. Let them tell me all the pleasures and perplexities of their hearts, and let them at the same time live as much within their wit as within their income. Madame de Stael used to say, that if she were going to the gallows her whole mind would be occupied in scrutinising the feelings of her fellow-sufferers; and so much do I delight in reading the minds of others, that if I possessed the faculty enjoyed by that merchant in Arabia, who understood the language of birds, I should like to know all they think and feel.'

'Perhaps upon trial you might find them not very inferior to many who call themselves rational beings. Some men seem to fancy the chief use of language is to discuss eating, drinking, and personal comfort, sources of interest which the animals can appreciate as well as ourselves.'

'Whatever men say, I like to see them completely at ease in conversation. The slightest effort, and immediately a restraint communicates itself, by a sort of magnetic sympathy, to those who

listen. To live with people who are overstraining themselves to shine, is as fatiguing as it would be to see a little man standing on tiptoe continually, in hopes of looking taller than nature intended.'

'Ah! if people would only feel satisfied to be what they really ought, instead of trying to seem what they wish, it would add much to the general enjoyment. For mere happiness, I believe that the middle-classes of intellect, as well as of fortune, are the happiest.'

'I am quite satisfied to think so,' replied Lord Charles. 'When I saw my brother the Duke to-day, bowling along the high-road to Dartmoor in his solitary carriage and four, he seemed to me a far less enviable traveller than Dr. Smith, our pedestrian visitor at Rosemount, who carried his knapsack on a stick, and used to tell us how he entered into temporary companionship with all the passers-by, how he paused to admire the landscapes that delighted him most, picked the wild flowers that pleased his fancy, and mingled heart and soul in the rural happiness of every cottage home into which he wandered.'

'There can be no doubt that the greater a man is, the more he becomes raised above those best blessings of life, companionship and sympathy. Society is like a pyramid that tapers at the top, and he who stands highest obtains much the same

chilly preëminence as a statue on a lofty pillar. Beneath are the charities and affections of life, but he is raised conspicuous and alone, far removed from all familiar associations. Your brother, in his journey to-day, will arrive at the George Hotel alone, and be ushered by a multitude of bowing waiters into his solitary apartment, to sit down in private with his "Morning Post," and dine alone; but his valet, in vulgar life, makes a friend of the landlord, and becomes domesticated at once, with a whole circle of chance visitors in the servants' hall. Certainly Agur was a wise man, when he wished for neither poverty nor riches. I no more desire to be among those whose minds are enervated by the luxurious profusion of the tropics, than to be among those who shiver in the arctic regions of hopeless poverty, but we have in our own little worldly affairs enough of hope and fear to induce continual exertion, and also to reward it.'

'How natural it is,' observed Lord Charles, 'that the poor should frequently measure the happiness of their superiors by those gaudy trifles obvious to their sight, which yet add nothing to the depth or reality of rational felicity. Minds of intrinsic vulgarity, or those who have never had an opportunity to experience their emptiness, could alone attach the idea of permanent happiness to the mere enjoyment of equipages, jewels, fine furniture,

or splendid entertainments. A man born to them, like my brother, considers all these things as much a matter of course as the hair upon his head, and thinks quite as little about them. If we had a carte-blanche given us to-morrow, for all that luxury could add to our own comfort, how soon the novelty would cease! and such trifles, compared to the solid happiness within the reach of every one in the exercise of his intellect and affections, is little better than gilt upon gingerbread.'

'When we lived upon the Wye,' said Lady Laura, 'I used often to take a lesson of contentment from observing that the broad, smooth, massy stream flowing easily over every impediment, after being replenished by a shower, looked much less cheerful and attractive than in a shallower state, when I could gaze through its inmost depths to the pebbly bottom, and hear it singing, leaping, and dancing over a hundred obstructions, every one of which caused it to curl and sparkle with fresh life, energy, and beauty.

> "Few note the pleasures which from view retire,
> Or prize the joy which ev'ry moment secs—
> We mark the river's rage, the comet's fire—
> Forget the show'r, the sunshine, and the breeze."'

CHAPTER VII.

'Not to our wish but to our want
Do Thou thy gifts supply;
The good unasked, in mercy grant,
The ill, though ask'd, deny.'

POVERTY, like a strong cord, binds families together by the ties of both convenience and sympathy, but the effect of prosperity is to scatter them. As men disperse themselves over the streets and suburbs of a city in fine weather, but crowd altogether under any roof in the rain; or, as bees, which find a common shelter during the storm, come forth from the hive and desert it in sunshine; so the natural effect of success in life is to squander those brothers and sisters widely over the face of the earth, who would, in more adverse circumstances, have remained united at home. It is incumbent on parents, however, to be supremely desirous, *coute qui coute,* that their sons shall mount to the summit of their various professions

in the army and navy, in the church or in the diplomatic service, and that their daughters also shall be trained to rise, possibly as my grandfather the Duke of Dartmoor suggested, to the peerage, or at least that they shall vanish from home in a carriage and four. Thus it is considered the height of prosperity for a father and mother in old age to sit beside their cheerless and forsaken fire-side, receiving letters occasionally from their absent children, announcing births, marriages, deaths, and promotions, of which it must be sufficient for them to hear the distant report.

Our family circle, as long as we remained under the shade of comparative adversity at Rosemount, continued unbroken; but from the moment that my grandfather the Duke took a kind interest in our fortunes, we were floated away, in different directions, on a tide of prosperity. My brothers each received an appointment to a different presidency in India, for which they were sent off to college to prepare, and my sisters remained at Paris, except once a-year, when they returned home for the holidays. Nothing but a promise, which the Duke before his death had wrung from my unwilling father, that their education should be completed according to his own plan, and for which he had liberally supplied the funds, could have induced my parents to allow of their

daughters becoming such absentees; and, had they fully known how great the change already was, they would at once have recalled them.

Much as my sisters improved in external graces —and none could have now excelled Eliza and Caroline on that score—their acquirements were all, as my father mournfully remarked, mere Palais Royal jewellery, of no intrinsic worth. When they at last returned home 'for good,' Caroline excelled in every sort of employment which requires no mind or exertion. She had an excessive love of drawing and worsted work. She collected poetry and charades in a neatly bound album, copied manuscript music, had a sort of mechanical dictionary-knowledge of several languages—their vocabulary, but not their literature; and, in respect to English authors, she scarcely saw much difference between a street ballad and the 'Pleasures of Hope,' and never could discriminate between Mrs. Montagu's Letters and Lady Mary Wortley Montague's. Eliza was a brilliant musician of the new school, singing the most astonishing bravuras, and performing long pieces full of chromatic difficulties and wonderful effects, with frequent changes in the key. 'Nonsense music,' my father called it, when he saw how astonished and un-delighted our un-scientific guests were. To the generality of visitors, such frantic pieces

were an unknown tongue, and no more interested or affected their sensibilities than if a hail-storm had beat on the windows, or the senior wrangler of Cambridge had been proving a mathematical problem.

Handel and Beethoven, who had been looked upon as the classical authors of my father's day, were scarcely now, even at his request, to be tolerated by my sisters, who considered it a waste of talent to play their compositions, to be 'Mozartists,' or to sing to Lord Charles any of the simple ballads which were, when I attempted them, like a dream to my father of his childhood and youth. Lady Laura, who taught me herself, took pains to impress on my mind that music, like language, is meant to convey ideas and emotions. She said it ought always so distinctly to express some feeling, that the attentive listener might be able to tell himself a tale suited to its progress, and my father laughingly added, that, as I would speak in a different tone when asking for a cup of tea, from what I would do if begging not to be assassinated, he recommended me to adopt a similar variety of expression in singing, that every emotion might be distinctly defined and suitably expressed.

My two very beautiful sisters came finally home at last, with that perfect confidence in their own knowledge of the world, usual with girls under

twenty, and a supreme contempt for everything in the dress or conversation of others to which they were not accustomed. They seemed to feel as if the names of all our high connections had been written on their foreheads, and looked down upon those not so well-born as outcasts; and Eliza had a genius for the most vehement friendships or the most violent antipathies. No one was viewed by her with good humored indifference; but, in respect to her dislikings, she would have charmed Dr. Johnson, being decidedly 'a good hater,' and for attachments she showed a most enthusiastic devotion, by mysterious whisperings in company, to the general exclusion of all ordinary mortals, by sitting hand in hand with those she preferred, and by keeping an album in which she placed locks of hair from all those she most admired or loved. The precious memorials—red, black, brown, and grey—were all carefully stitched into each page, with autographs and appropriate verses, sometimes shown in the strictest confidence to those who were honored with her intimacy, and most carefully hoarded from all whom it was Eliza's whim to despise or dislike.

Before our parents my sister did not venture to show her real manners or sentiments, but whenever we visited away from home, and it became possible, Eliza delighted in looking exclusive to

all such strangers around as were merely respectable, and in retiring with Caroline, as if fearful of infection, to some distant corner of the room, where they kept up a tittering dialogue, inaudible to all but themselves. It is the peculiarity of such asides between two isolated talkers, that each individual in the most crowded room imagines their satirical glances and remarks are levelled at him; and in respect to my young and lively sisters, truth to say, very few escaped. Edward, one day, provoked at the long continuation of their 'whispering gallery,' as he called it, told Eliza that he had no curiosity to hear the million of nothings they were discussing. 'But,' added he, 'you should certainly be sent to a school at Portsmouth which I have heard of, where "them as learns manners pays a penny a-quarter extra."'

'In fact you and Caroline seem to me often in the sort of humor,' added Robert, 'that if I held up my finger you would giggle, if I held up two you would laugh outright, and if I held up three you would split your sides.'

Like many girls when they first begin to dress well, Eliza and Caroline appreciated all other ladies by their millinery, and I often thought how vexed and mortified our parents would have been at their strictures. Lady Ashcourt, one of our mother's most estimable friends, was talking to

me at a tea-party one night about a kind plan she had of asking us all to spend a week with her at Ashcourt Abbey, and being fortunately rather deaf, did not hear the criticisms at a distance which reached my ears, and brought the color into my cheeks with apprehension and annoyance.

'How very ridiculous the world is becoming!' exclaimed Eliza. 'I shall perfectly die of old Lady Ashcourt's cap! I wonder where she got that red thunder and lightning dress. It is evidently an old window-curtain. People should be examined by some person of competent taste before they are admitted into our company.'

'She always carries out to parties, I observe,' added Caroline, 'a dignity pocket-handkerchief, never to be unfolded or used. I mistook it at first for a beggar's petition.'

'Do you know,' continued Eliza, 'in Lady Ashcourt's drawing-room at the Abbey, I am credibly assured, she nails the chairs into their places that the guests may be well grouped; and she has her dining-room fire in an iron basket, which can be carried about the house to warm all the rooms in succession.'

Though my sisters carefully concealed their sentiments from our parents, I could plainly see that they were entirely spoiled for home, with all its rational pleasures and all its rigid economy.

Their birth and education having been beyond their fortune, was a source of continual mortification, and the society of our nearest connections was the first circle in London to which their beauty rendered them a welcome ornament, but for which their income daily proved most inadequate.

It was, indeed, a dazzling gift to possess a countenance so strikingly lovely, that Eliza, in order to give pleasure, had only to appear. She acquired at Paris the most perfect taste in dress, and an art in putting it on with grace not to be excelled, besides a perfect passion for perfumes and many other trivialities, on which both my sisters could willingly have squandered as large an income as our father could allow them for dress; they sighed in vain for jewellery; they abhorred the only equipage we could afford, a hackney coach, and became almost prisoners to the house, because their beauty really was so unsurpassable that to walk, except with Lord Charles, was out of the question; and neither Caroline nor Eliza cared for that, as he generally made a point of taking them very early, for a quiet domestic stroll, to the Park or Kensington Gardens.

'Really, life is not worth having on such terms,' said Eliza laughingly to Caroline one day; 'I

must positively marry! The holiday of life to most girls is from the time they leave the school-room till they are married, but I shall be obliged to shorten mine. If I had an allowance fit to dress better than a governess on, I might put up with our home-brewed happiness a little longer, especially as I have never seen the man yet that I could willingly accept; but fancy the degradation of going to Ashcourt Abbey to-morrow in "a glass coach," and equipped in that silk dress which all my friends would bow to as an old acquaintance, even if I were not in it. This bonnet, too, is so hideous that I asked myself yesterday who I was. This will never do! It would be an admirable opportunity for any one of my victims to propose with a tolerable hope of success.'

'The time, however, would suit better than the place,' replied Caroline. 'Who ever heard of a love-scene in Baker Street? One can scarcely conceive it possible! Philip Meredith says he is quite a disbeliever in Baker Street. He will not be convinced that such a place exists in the known world!'

My father jested with so much good-humor about his poverty that he appeared almost proud of it. If he seemed ostentatious in alluding to his 'mere nothing of an income,' it afforded a

pleasant contrast to the prosing, purse-proud boasting of Lord Plinlimmon. The Marquis was willing often, however, to leave his own gold plate, ragouts, and fricassees at home, for an unceremonious beef and mutton dinner in our merry family circle, where all was social ease and comfort, and where my beautiful sisters entertained him with Italian music and very lively conversation; but they declared he was so ugly, that Eliza said she must become accustomed to his face before she could even bow to him.

At my mother's table, everything, though plain, was good of its kind, hot, well-served, and abundant. What little plate we possessed was brilliantly clean, and the home-spun damask beautifully white; therefore our pot-luck was by no means despicable. Few companions came amiss to Lord Charles, for I never saw the man with whom he could not hold a conversation of four or five hours, and it often seemed to me as if he might have drawn ideas out of a stone statue. Though Lord Plinlimmon might well have been considered a blank page in the volume of conversation, and in the exchange of thoughts with Lord Charles, seemed to give only the value of copper for gold, still, as the sun shining on a bit of ordinary glass makes it seem bright as a diamond, so did our guest often appear to shine in the society of my

father, who was by no means a fastidious epicure as to conversation, but seemed ever ready to view the best side of all men, especially of relations, and to extract some amusement from the most empty. My sister Eliza's large brilliant eyes seemed to grow large and brighter as she listened to the pompous tone in which our noble cousin dropped apparently accidental and unconscious hints of the splendor in which he lived at home, but his voice was so tedious, and so very monotonous, that it often seemed to me as if, when he spoke long, there must be an invisible book before his eyes, from which he was reading aloud.

'Old Plinlimmon,' as Lord Charles had been in the habit, from their earliest boyhood, of calling him, though scarcely yet forty, had lived a life of turtle and champagne, which did not tend to make him look more juvenile, and nothing but my father's unlimited toleration for old friends and relations could have made him continue an intimacy so unsuitable, and which Lady Laura by no means liked. The Marquis of Plinlimmon was a noted bon-vivant, and delighted to boast that even his second table would exceed the utmost wishes of most gentlemen for their own.

'My servants are actually surfeited with fish and game,' he said one day when dining at our house. 'Toulon, my new man-cook, has lately been passing

off partridges on them for chickens, and he sometimes disguises venison for mutton. My people really wish to live like aldermen, and to dress like courtiers.'

'Well, Plinlimmon!' said Lord Charles, wearied of his long-winded boasting, 'if your powdered footmen are troubled with visions of silk stockings and pots of porter, I can't help it! Take some of this mock-turtle, and if you wish it to pass for real, put on a pair of green spectacles.'

'This is very good; but the soup I meet with in most houses now is never served up hot enough. At your brother Dartmoor's everything is cold, except the ice, and the soup there is always either like toast-and-water or glue.'

'I am not much in the habit of tasting glue, Plinlimmon, but it must certainly be what the Americans call "a fix."'

'I wonder,' continued the Marquis pompously, 'how other people manage with their servants; mine are more like masters! My rascal of a butler will break his arm some day with drawing corks. He actually applied to me yesterday for larger wine-glasses at the second table!'

'And they were already, I have no doubt, twice the size of mine,' said Lord Charles, good-humoredly holding up a very small one. 'Plinlimmon, join me in *two* glasses of this old sherry, or take a

tumbler if you prefer it. We must bring in a glass-extension bill next session of Parliament.'

'That port at your brother the Duke's yesterday was execrable, Bouverie! A mere burlesque upon wine, and much more like hare-soup or coffee. How greatly preferable if he had circulated a decanter of good honest spring water, though that element is not much in my line generally.'

'All the water you ever use, Plinlimmon, is hot, with a little soap, before dinner,' said Lord Charles; 'I suspect you have seldom tasted it genuine.'

'No; but I am tasting a much better thing, for this ham is exquisite; it makes a capital ramrod to finish off dinner with, and fills up the chinks. As you cut it thin, Bouverie, send me five-and-thirty slices.'

CHAPTER VIII.

'Her bloom was like the springing flow'r
That sips the silver dew;
The rose was budded in her cheek,
Just opening to the view.'

THE world might long ago have ceased to take the trouble of being surprised at extraordinary marriages, as people have been in the habit, for centuries back, of astonishing their friends by engagements the most unforeseen and unsuitable; but never did a thunderbolt occasion more startling amazement than was felt by Lord Charles and Lady Laura, when first it reached the ears of our assembled circle that my young and lovely sister, Eliza, had consented to marry Lord Plinlimmon. My mother hazarded a passing conjecture one morning, whether it might be possible for the eldest sister of Lord Ashcourt, a young lady on the shady side of thirty, to accept a man almost forty, and so worn-looking as Lord Plinlimmon, when Eliza, with a deep glow on her lovely countenance, like the first

blush of morning, replied, but in a tone of pertness evidently assumed to conceal her confusion: 'Indeed, mama, I believe Lady Mary has long been building Marquises in the air for herself; but she has not a chance!' Eliza paused, colored, and added in a low voice, which she vainly tried to steady, 'Lord Plinlimmon yesterday proposed to me.'

'And of course you refused him!' exclaimed Lord Charles in a tone of hasty indignation; but a long pause ensued. Eliza's beautiful color became deeper and deeper still, she vainly endeavored to speak or to look up, and by degrees the truth dawned upon us all that she had accepted him.

When Eliza at last found words to speak, she protested, though none of us had ever guessed the fact before, that she had always preferred the society of rather elderly gentlemen, and always particularly liked Lord Plinlimmon's. His magnificent family diamonds, which he had some time before most elaborately described to us, had of course no effect on her imagination, nor the splendid representation she had been shown of Plinlimmon Castle, the architect of which must have been Aladdin himself, as it seemed as magnificent, with its lofty towers, its stained glass windows, and Gothic entrance, as any palace in a pantomime; nor may it be conjectured that her ambition was awakened by

the prospect of going ambassadress to Florence, where the Marquis had been recently appointed to reside as envoy.

All Eliza's protestations to my father, that Lord Plinlimmon really was the object of her choice, fell on ears perfectly incredulous; a great deal of romance yet remained fresh in his own mind, and he felt unwilling, as he was unable, to believe in any motive for Eliza's unaccountable acceptance of Lord Plinlimmon, but that she had been over-persuaded by his urgent solicitations. My kind and high-spirited father was resolute to persuade Eliza against a step, which appeared to him so hasty and unadvised; he therefore spoke much and long to her against it, though without more effect than if he had been writing on water.

'My dear girl,' said he, with all the dignified authority of a parent, and all the kindness of a brother, 'I can neither conceal nor ornament the naked truth. With Lord Plinlimmon you will be utterly miserable; and the most cruel father in a romance could scarcely have asked you to make such a marriage of splendid wretchedness. Only fancy yourself burdened every hour of every day with a most unsuitable and very arbitrary companion, wanting in the two chief requisites of a husband, temper and principle. What would the mere vulgar finery of sparkling jewels and

gilded furniture contribute to your happiness, with a man it is impossible for you to like?'

'Eliza,' added Lady Laura, 'you have been accustomed only to our domestic happiness at home, where nothing has been wanting but fortune; and you perhaps fancy that with wealth every annoyance would vanish, while you forget that many you have never known would arise. The Scylla and Charybdis of human happiness are the ennui of abundance, and the cares of want; but I shall regret our poverty in a way I never expected to do, if it cause you to try the experiment of this ill starred engagement.'

'Remember you are not merely taking the honeymoon for a month,' continued Lord Charles earnestly, 'but every moment of your existence may, if you persevere in this most preposterous plan, be occupied by an unsuitable husband, for twenty or thirty years to come.'

'If a life time be devoted to one you love,' added Lady Laura, 'none can tell more truly from experience than I how great the blessing is. To belong in every thought, word, and deed, to a husband in whose society you delight, adds a zest and interest to all events; but unless your entire affection and confidence be given with your hand, it leads to endless wretchedness. The last words of the marriage service, Eliza, contain

a very solemn memento, "until death do us part."'

'But,' exclaimed Edward, laughing, 'you forget the magnificent gold plate which has been so long in his family, and three state carriages, at least, sprinkled all over with coronets. I would take the leap into matrimony myself on such terms! It would be a pleasure worth living for, Eliza, only once to set off in your own carriage and four. If ever I possess a five-pound note, which seems doubtful, I shall try the experiment for one stage.'

'It would be harmless enough to make an exploit of this kind, if, like Cinderella's equipage, your carriage might shrink again into a pumpkin and your horses into mice,' replied my father, in his usual good-humored rallying tone. 'But Eliza must reflect that Lord Plinlimmon's four horses would carry her away from all she has ever known or loved, with a stranger she has scarcely seen. I know enough, more than enough, of Plinlimmon, to tell her that he is as ignorant as a butterfly, and there is not a mule in Spain as obstinate. He has neither the refinement of mind, nor the very rudiments of such principles, as the man must have that I would willingly give a daughter to. This would be a match, Eliza, on which I could not even allow myself to be con-

gratulated; but if, upon mature deliberation for some months, you think it essential to your own happiness, little as I think so myself, I have no right to withhold my consent, and certainly shall not.'

There was a tone of dignified seriousness in Lord Charles's voice and manner when he spoke, which deeply impressed me at the moment, but on Eliza the effect seemed very transient. To her, wealth, rank, and splendor were irresistible novelties, her estimate of which was not diminished by the flood of congratulations which poured in on every side, from friends, relations, and mere acquaintances, as soon as she had announced her engagement.

It seemed as nothing in the estimation of any one who wrote or spoke on the subject, that Eliza must immediately go abroad for years, that Lord Plinlimmon's principal residence was situated in the most distant extremity of Wales, that he was proverbially inhospitable, and that in all probability we should rarely, if ever, see her again. Still it rung in our ears that Eliza was going to be 'well married.' Visitors seemed to consider it a talisman of perfect felicity to our whole family, that Eliza should be so splendidly established. Lady Clanalpine even asked Lady Laura 'how she had managed it so well'; and I could not but

wonder then to perceive how general the opinion was, that the surest way of rendering both our parents perfectly happy and successful was thus to leave them for ever. After a life-time of care and labor, spent in bringing up a family well, it was expected that their first object in life should be, like the parents of Tom Thumb, to scatter us away from home, no matter where, provided only we were creditably disposed of.

It soon became evident that in Eliza's mind not a pang was felt for the happy past, but her whole mind and heart were engrossed with sketching out for herself a magnificent futurity. Never were more pride and happiness expressed in any countenance than lighted up my sister's very lovely features, when one day, surrounded by all her companions, she exhibited the magnificent family jewels of Lord Plinlimmon, while her own eyes looked like the brightest diamonds that ever came from Golconda. I was then but sixteen, and I yet remember her gratified look when I remarked that the jewels were so brilliant we must all put on green shades to keep our eyes from being dazzled by the glare.

'Lord Plinlimmon has lately been carried in an eagle's beak to Sinbad's valley of diamonds,' said Edward. 'I suppose, Eliza, you have a better and

a worse set? An undress tiara for family parties, of course.'

'If happiness can be bought in a jeweller's shop,' said Robert, laughing, 'I am sure, Eliza, you have a brilliant lot!'

'Allow me to remark,' added Edward, 'that now, when about to hide your head in a coronet, Eliza, you seem to have become proud of everything. You will soon be proud of having two arms and two eyes! If I were Lord Plinlimmon, I should be very jealous of the Maltese crosses and diamond ear-rings. Even the coronets on the corners of those pocket handkerchiefs occupy much more of your thoughts than the fascinating Marquis himself.'

It was forced upon our conviction at last, that when my sister took herself out of the family circle, she would take all that she had ever very much cared about. Eliza made it her business now to adopt all the fine-ladyisms she had ever seen or heard of in aristocratic life, and among the rest she professed having been seized with a perfect passion for dogs, though a month before, if the whole canine race had disappeared from the earth, she never would have missed them. An Italian greyhound, a white poodle, and a black one, were accordingly introduced into the house, on whom she lavished every term of endearment that a mother could have bestowed on her children. They became a source

of continual anxiety to herself and every one else, being always either lost or very nearly so, and either too noisy, in which case they required to be scolded, or too quiet and must be enlivened, or in no extreme at all, and then they were coaxed and petted, and remonstrated with, and asked what ailed them, 'darlings.'

One way or other, Eliza now occupied a large share of her time, thoughts, and affections with her canine favorites, to whom she addressed a great portion of her conversation, as if they really understood every word she said. Eliza evidently preferred a wag of Bijou's tail to the remarks of any more rational being, and often interrupted Lord Plinlimmon's best stories, to point out what her dogs were about, or to laugh at their tricks instead of his wit. A dark cloud lowered sometimes on the countenance of the Marquis when this occurred; but Eliza heeded it not, nor cared half so much as if Bijou had growled. I scarcely wondered so much at the good-humored patience with which my father bore it all, as at Eliza's intrepidity in making so absurd a display before a parent so preëminent for good sense and good feeling.

One day, at length, Lord Charles, who had dined out generally for some time past, happened to be at home entertaining Lord Plinlimmon,

when the same scene was reäcted which had so frequently taken place already. The three dogs were all present, begging and barking with ceaseless vociferation, till at length, three plates, similar to those off which we were to dine ourselves, were supplied to the dogs before any of the company. Eliza cut up the portions intended for her favorites previous to tasting a morsel herself; and when she laid the plates on the floor, her white poodle smelled his dish all over, but would not taste it. 'How very unlucky!' exclaimed Eliza, turning to Lord Plinlimmon, after anxiously watching the pampered animal, 'I forgot that Bijou cannot eat mutton! What shall we do? I wonder if there is any cold beef below?'

'If there were an ox roasted whole, he should not have a mouthful,' replied my father energetically; 'any carrion is good enough to feed a dog. You are so partial to the society of those animals now, Eliza, that if there were any transmigration of souls, yours ought to become a poodle.'

'It is a common saying in the Highlands,' said Edward, slyly glancing at Lord Plinlimmon, 'that ladies who are fond of dogs never make good wives.'

'I shall take my chance,' replied the bridegroom, looking admiringly at Eliza; 'there is one person in the world who would be more charming, even

when in the wrong, than any one else in the right.'

'That may be the case hereafter with your wife, but not with my daughter at present,' replied Lord Charles. 'There is no actual harm, perhaps, in being fond of dogs, they have been the companions of man during 6000 years. There were very eminent and meritorious dogs in their day, from the time of Tobit's to Homer's, and in more modern days, the dog of Montargis; but what I object to is when they are put on a level with human beings, or rather raised above them. Our old gardener called here to-day asking alms for a numerous and starving family, any one of whom would have been grateful for the food which that pampered animal rejects; the old man's face of suffering haunts me yet; and can it be justifiable that these canine favorites should have the luxuries of life, when human beings are vainly seeking for the necessaries? I know it is the fashion. I know that it is almost as essential for a lady of any calibre to have a retinue of dogs as to have a retinue of servants; but I had hoped that the tastes and pursuits of my children were better directed.'

Over me Eliza had always, of course, exercised the petty tyranny which elder brothers and sisters will maintain over their juniors to the end of time; but though I saw all the affection bestowed on her

dogs that once belonged to me, I loved her with my whole heart, and deeply felt the sorrow of our approaching separation.

The presents given to the bride she estimated evidently, not according to the worth and excellence of those who gave them, but exactly in proportion as they would have been valued at the counter of a jeweller's shop; and I well remember yet my own burning mortification at the off-hand almost contemptuous carelessness with which my sister received a purse which I had most elaborately and laboriously worked for her.

'Pray accept this, Eliza,' said I, in a voice of trembling emotion, 'and though the real value be nothing, my gift represents as much affection as any. You and I can scarcely ever be happier than we have been; indeed, without you I never can be equally so; but I hope we shall hear that your new home is comfortable, and——'

'Comfortable! my dear Jane, what a miserable word! It does not exist in my vocabulary! Any vulgar farmer's wife can be comfortable; but I shall be satisfied with nothing short of felicity! I expect every degree of impossible happiness!'

'Then I trust you will find it, and enjoy it long. For any of us to discard all ideas of economy will be something new. If Lord Plinlimmon is liberal,

his income seems enormous. I am told he has thousands——'

'Thousands! *millions!*—and Jane, he can deny me nothing. He never enters the room without a present! Only think of nine bracelets already! At Florence I am to have a box at the Opera every night, and not a care on earth but how to dress and amuse myself. When will you be so well off as that! Papa talks as if it were possible not to be happy, but I scarcely see how one could avoid feeling perfect felicity with the world like a ball at my foot.'

'Your life will be as grand and as useless as that of a gold fish in a glass globe,' observed Edward. 'How I should like to see you performing dignity at Florence!'

'One thing let me assure you of, Eliza,' said Lady Laura, who had overheard the last sentence as she entered the room, 'sober happiness wears better than a delirious excess of joy. An amateur gardener, for instance, rearing his plants with hourly care, has a surer enjoyment than an amateur of fashion, who labors to raise his own head in society. A student enjoys increasing happiness with increasing knowledge; but a votary of mere amusement finds the work of killing time grow harder every day; and I am perfectly convinced that any old lady who hurries night after night to the

theatre, will tire much sooner of her resources than I shall of quietly knitting my stocking at home.'

'I have been assured,' added Edward, 'that not half the ladies who used to be dying long ago of disappointments in love, have time to feel them at all now, since worsted work came into fashion. Their brains are all wool-gathering perpetually, and they would scarcely stop counting their stitches even to glance at a billet-doux.'

'I seriously think,' observed Caroline, 'that the real happiness of life is known only to those who are fond of worsted work. I used once to pity Queen Mary, being at a loss to guess how she could survive her nineteen years' imprisonment at Fotheringay, where she had few books and no society; but from the moment I saw her worsted tapestry, I actually envied her. I could enjoy nineteen years of it myself; and if my gaoler came to liberate me when in the middle of a pattern, I would beg for a few months more.'

The day of Eliza's marriage at length came and passed away. We had lived in a perfect Elysium of wedding-cake favors and bijouterie, but they all disappeared after the bride, and we felt in our quiet home-circle no other change but the irreparable loss of one who had always hitherto enlivened and adorned it. All was soon restored to the mere common-place of every day life; and I evidently

saw that to our parents the blank was but scantily supplied by the occasional appearance of a short, hurried line from the bride at Florence, containing every variety of apology that could be invented for not writing oftener, or at greater length. Truth to say, Eliza's very brief letters were so filled with thrice-repeated protestations of affection, and so utterly destitute of intelligence, that I could not but often think how much more acceptably she would have evidenced her love to Lord Charles by entertaining him with a few public or domestic incidents, in which his heart might have sympathised with hers, than by the mere recapitulation of every phrase to represent an attachment, of which none had ever entertained a doubt, and of which the best proof would have been contained in making us partakers with her, in the interesting realities of her own daily life.

Eliza referred us chiefly to the newspapers for foreign intelligence, and became so diplomatically uncommunicative, that had she been dead we could scarcely have more entirely lost all real connection. Our attachment to her continued, however, unaltered, and we heard with regret, that, in health, looks, and spirits, she was thought very soon to have become so greatly impaired, that she did not long appear too juvenile for Lord Plinlimmon himself; and, generally, whatever be the disparity of years

and of looks between those who marry, it is seldom long before they appear perfectly suitable.

Time fled away, and the four following years were a whole life-time to many of my sister's companions, some of whom went through the whole events of their existence—married, had families, and died in the interval. Still most of our acquaintances continued to think and speak of Eliza's marriage as a most propitious event, and of Lady Laura as the most fortunate of mothers, in seeing her so brilliantly established. My father used then laughingly to say that he scarcely got his share of the credit, but he wondered how long a period of time would elapse till his friends should cease to make it their first question, wherever they met him, whether in a mail-coach, at church, in the club, or in the park, 'When did you hear last from Lady Plinlimmon?'

'Poor Eliza!' sighed Lord Charles. 'There are many who will envy her the exchange of giving up old family friends, hereditary intimacies, and near relations, to associate with a few ex-Kings, Serene Highnesses, and foreign ambassadors, who can scarcely pronounce her name. Instead of her garden on the Wye, she frequents the *parterre* at the opera—instead of our lovely landscapes, she admires the side-scenes of the theatre, and the birds in our English groves are nothing to one

who cares only for an Italian prima donna. Such merely artificial pleasures are like blazing torches compared with the sun; but give me the sympathies and affections of home, rather than a fantastic life of Tomfoolery amidst the dissipations of continental idleness.'

'To absentees,' observed Lady Laura, 'it must appear like the ravings of delirium when they read of our patriotic ancestors long ago, who were ready to die for their country. Who would die now for a country in which he cannot endure to live!'

'Every individual can of course give excellent reasons for both going and staying abroad, but where there is a will there is always a way to come home. Travellers would soon discover that, if a foreign war endangered their lives and liberties. Then, indeed, the undutiful sons of Great Britain would fly for shelter to their mother country and their father land, which in prosperity they now desert, though the country that gives them support requires their support in return, or its most sacred institutions may perish.'

'Those who contribute nothing to the welfare of their country, to the expenses of its government, to the encouragement of its manufactures, or to the maintenance of its poor, would little deserve to be pitied should any sudden revolution throw them on the bounty of those countries which they have

long preferred to their own,' added Lady Laura. 'There should be a tax on all absentees, and one especially of ten per cent. for the exportation of an heiress like Miss Manwaring. Indeed, I almost think that no girl with above £10,000 should ever be allowed to learn French, as she almost inevitably becomes fascinated by some foreigner, who wanders with her among ruins, criticises pictures, sings Italian songs, and devours pic-nics in the Coliseum, or on the top of Mount Vesuvius.'

'I should like to know,' said I, 'suppose all the wonders of art and nature on the continent could be brought by steam to England, and dotted round within a mile of London, whether we should spend much of our time in visiting the Vatican, the Tribune, the Falls of Niagara, and the Dresden Gallery.'

'If a shilling had to be given every time—the sum we pay for every sight in England, from a dwarf in a caravan to St. Paul's itself, or the Coliseum—I doubt whether many would frequent them,' replied Lord Charles. 'A perfect craze for perpetual motion has seized the present generation, who run every where to borrow spirits, and forget themselves. They ought to remember that in Holy Scripture the first traveller who "went to and fro on the earth" was Satan. The next, I think, was Cain. To punish

any one in the present day, we must "not force him to wander, but confine him at home."'

'We consider it a great misfortune,' observed Lady Laura, 'if any person loses either of his five senses, but there is one sense worth all the five, which is apt to be paralysed abroad—a sense of duty and of religion. There, all is pageantry—the mere pageantry of devotion, as well as the pageantry of happiness, but where is the reality of either! Not certainly in forgetfulness of that country and of those ties to which God appointed each individual, and which none could frivolously abandon, if they felt, as they ought, that the duties of life are more than life itself.'

'No young lady now thinks her education finished, or her happiness begun, till she has been abroad,' added Lord Charles. 'But a Continental education seems an experiment how much the feelings of nature can be superseded by the acquirements of art—how, by a few filigree accomplishments, she can add to the gaiety of our gayest hours, rather than how to soothe the inevitable trials of a probationary life—trials which men are to suffer in order that they may be disciplined for eternity—trials in which man's power of endurance shall be tested to the utmost, and in which his best earthly support should be derived from the Christian sympathy of those he loves.'

CHAPTER IX.

'It is not the tear at this moment shed,
When the turf is but newly laid o'er her,
That can tell how beloved was the soul that's fled,
Nor how deep in our hearts we deplore her.

'Tis the tear thro' many a long day wept,
Thro' a life by her loss all shaded,
'Tis the sad remembrance fondly kept,
When all lighter griefs have faded.'

MOORE.

NEVER was any event in life more sudden, more unlooked-for, more deeply to be deplored, by our father, and all whose chief happiness was derived from her, than the death, in her fiftieth year, of our beloved and inestimable mother. It fell like a thunder-bolt on the happiest of homes. Lady Laura was one of the first victims to an epidemic fever, then raging most fatally in London, which swept whole families to the grave, and her constitution, never robust, had lately been much undermined by feverish attacks, though the idea of real illness or serious danger never intruded

on our thoughts, till the delirium, which lasted many days, rendered her insensible.

My grief, great as it was, continued as fresh and vivid when years had passed over me as in its earliest anguish, for every subsequent hour of life has been clouded by that sorrow which never can be exceeded, and never forgotten. Truly, indeed, is it said, that we can but once lose a mother; and such a mother few ever had to lose. Time itself has only served to deepen my grief, not to destroy it. Our parents and relatives of an older generation feel for us with an affection far more indulgent than that which any one may afterwards expect from his contemporaries and successors. Yes! there is unspeakable tenderness in the sympathy of the old for the young, and who can express that of a mother for her children? She remembers, when all others have forgotten, the days of our helpless infancy, the years of our joyous childhood, and she has anxiously foreseen the stormy clouds that gather over our maturer years. The old, with all the experience of a lifetime, look upon themselves and each other as nearly done with the trials of life; they have learned to 'battle with their agony'; they have been taught, perhaps, to seek help from God; and it seems to all around a matter of course that they must suffer, and sorrow, and even die; but to a mother her children

seem always young, and when they are overtaken by untimely affliction, it is from her that they can rely on that unbounded sympathy, which in after life they must never more expect.

In all my subsequent existence, when the little nothings of our daily life too keenly interested me, when I have felt too much excited with joy, or depressed with sorrow, I could always bring back a solemn composure to my spirit by repeating to myself these mournful words, 'My mother is no more.' Yes! she had perished from the earth; but, for my comfort, it was from the earth only, and every day since has lessened the period of our separation; every vanishing hour diminishes the value of time, and increases that of eternity! She, during that interval, awaits in blessedness and peace our approaching reünion, while I struggle onwards, through thorns and briers, through temptations and trials, willing to suffer all things as they come, provided only I reach the same goal at last that she did then—the way matters little, if the end be blessed.

Overpowering as the grief was of that memorable hour, still a feeling paramount to all others arose even then in my heart, and influenced my whole subsequent life. It was a fervent wish to become the comfort and support of my broken-hearted father, who seemed to grow old in a day,

and was prostrated by this unexpected sorrow, like a field of grain laid by the storm. For the first time in my life I beheld him utterly bewildered and helpless. It shook my very soul with grief to see one, always till now so strong-minded, so equal to every emergency in life, bowed down beneath the weight of his calamity, and reduced to the very weakness of a child. His was that silent, tearless agony, which dries up the very heart. He scarcely spoke, but every feature of his face, and, I might say, every limb of his body, was enervated with grief. When I first spoke to my father, in words of heartfelt affection, and of religious consolation, he took my hand in his own, and answered me in a voice of indescribable anguish, yet of the deepest solemnity, saying, 'Jane, my dear child, I am willing to take any comfort that God may send. The best I have remaining in this world is from your affection. I should be unworthy of this life, and unfit for another, if I were to repine; yet this blow has so stunned my senses, that I cannot collect them. My mind is like a broken cistern—the very rudiments of thought have left me. Say all that occurs to you. The commonest reflections seem new to my scattered senses, and the very sound of your voice is soothing.'

From this time there was an entire change in

Lord Charles's habits, for it was long indeed before he felt able to encounter even the kindness and sympathy of our best friends, and therefore he shunned all society, instead of, as formerly, enjoying it. My father had often expressed the opinion which he now acted upon, that those who enter into general company are bound to control all extremes of emotion, and to take in some degree the tone of those with whom they associate; therefore, till he felt sure of being able to do so, he would not be visible. He dreaded anything in the nature of a scene, for there is a modesty in real grief that forbids display, and cannot bear the gaze of a stranger. As those who are suffering from pain of body, retire from the sight of all but their immediate family, my father withdrew his own wounded spirit within the sanctuary of home, where it became the chief object of life, with both Caroline and myself, to shield him from every trial, and to cause him all the comfort in our power.

We made ourselves alternately the companions of his walks, and every time he opened the door of our sitting-room to enter, we had an object of interest in trying to think of any resource by which a countenance so beloved and so touchingly expressive of mournful resignation might yet be cheered. No moroseness lurked in his nature to discourage our efforts. Though his smile had for ever lost all

its cheerfulness, yet there was a beneficent expression of kindness in my father's look and manner, which told me as plainly as words could have done, that, while his own earthly happiness was ended, he could not willingly cast a cloud upon ours. He spoke often, very often, to us of our mother. It was his greatest solace and delight to do so. My father said one day that, after he had himself departed this life, he wished and desired to be remembered and talked of by us all as an absent but still attached friend, who would have rejoiced in our joy and mourned in our sorrow. He truly remarked that, if it be an object with those who live for the public to gain public fame, there is also a domestic fame due to those who have deserved our affectionate remembrance—not the morbid feeling fit only for a heathen, that shuns the very name of those who are gone, or mentions it only as a source of anguish, but that Christian remembrance which associates the past with the future, and can speak of the dead as of those 'not lost but gone before.'

'Where true excellence is the subject of regret, there is justice in affliction, there is duty in lamentation, there is luxury in woe.' With what depth of emotion have I heard my father repeat to himself, in his beautifully modulated voice, which quivered with emotion, those touching and appropriate lines,

'We have liv'd and lov'd together
Thro' many changing years,
We have shared each other's gladness
And wept each other's tears.

'I have never known a sorrow
That was long unsooth'd by thee,
For thy smile could make a summer,
Where darkness else would be.'

All our plans in life having been long postponed by the death of our mother, two years elapsed during which my mind, naturally cheerful and full of hope, at length regained some of its former elasticity, so that we became once more a band of happy brothers and sisters, united heart and hand in every project of happiness. Edward, Robert, and Caroline were full of plans and expectations of future aggrandisement, every brighter anticipation of which my sanguine spirit assisted to paint and decorate. Each of their young and aspiring minds was then filled with a sketch of some brilliant futurity in which he was to act the principal part, and of which my father and I were to be the delighted spectators, when the curtain which had hitherto veiled their merits from the public eye should at last be raised. Caroline gradually mingled herself again with the great world, and from the vortex of fashionable society in every difficulty flew to me for comfort, as I had an unlimited fund of sympathy to answer her greatest

demand. In the strictest confidence she imparted to me all the vicissitudes of life and feeling which must inevitably fall to the share of a young girl whose birth and beauty were so far above most of those with whom she associated, and her fortune as far beneath them.

Caroline's endless perplexity about getting invitations to parties, or tickets to concerts, borrowing a friend's carriage, and fastening herself upon an unwilling chaperon, might have damped the energy of any young lady; and I have seen her often with a face of as much care and sorrow, about the loss of an escort to some place of entertainment, as might have done for the most serious misfortune. Truly, a life of amusement is no sinecure, and the share I took in all Caroline's wearing anxieties and burning mortifications considerably cooled the ardor with which I might otherwise have wished to accompany her into those brilliant scenes. I was glad to be trusted so confidentially, and happy, indeed, if my utmost ingenuity could suggest any source of gratification to her, or to any of those I loved and lived for; but she gave me an early insight into the rougher side of great society, which showed what a struggle it is to all, and what a life-and-death affair it is to those who place their happiness on rising in it to eminence.

My own gayest holiday hours were spent at

Ashcourt Abbey, a fine old place, about five miles from town, and beautifully situated on the Thames, where my mother's old friend and cousin, Lady Ashcourt, often invited us, having fortunately for me seen or fancied that I resembled a daughter of her own, recently deceased. When the heart is filled with the cherished image of one we have loved and lost, how often do we trace a likeness which others cannot see, and how dear is every association that restores that countenance to our memory! Lord Ashcourt never could perceive the resemblance, but was as kind as if he had, and in his splendid place I seemed, for many years afterwards, to have two fathers and two homes. Esteemed as he was for his worth, and admired for his talents, Lord Ashcourt's chief delight in life consisted in the most unbounded hospitality, of which I often now had the happiness to partake; and Lord Charles laughingly alleged that in one season he had invited to his house 'all England, part of Scotland, several from Ireland, and a few from the colonies.'

Ashcourt Abbey had always been a showhouse, and one of the most magnificent near London. It was, indeed, as the Russian monarch said, when he first saw Ashcourt Abbey, 'like a dream in stone,' and all that I ever knew of earthly grandeur was within those walls. There strangers flocked

with delighted curiosity to recall the old historical associations with which it is connected, and to wander for hours amidst its noble old trees and ancestral halls. Like a vision of fairy land to me was my first introduction to that gigantic park and those noble trees, the splendid rooms surrounded with mirrors, the blazing lights reflected on every side, the troops of servants, and the rapid succession of gay animated visitors who arrived in hordes, and who seemed to live only for luxury and amusement. The very word 'econōmy,' which I had been accustomed to mingle with every enjoyment, and even with every occupation of my frugal life, seemed here utterly extinguished, and I who had been taught conscientiously to employ every hour of every day, discovered that here time was as little valued as money, and wasted as if it were given only, like the toys of childhood, merely for diversion.

When I saw so many people living as if their hours were as unlimited as their gold, and a much heavier weight upon their hands, I could not but think what a desirable plan it might be, if a sinking fund could be established of all the long hours men do not know what to do with, and the surplus divided among those who could well employ forty-eight hours a-day if they had them. What a saving of good useful time it would make. If men

could buy time, what a price some would give for it, and how cheaply others would let it go!

How strange and unnatural it seemed to me when first I heard in the forenoon, for hours together, the striking of the balls at a billiard-table. In the morning, Lord Ashcourt played at chess, while his more juvenile guests amused themselves with battledoor and shuttlecock, bagatelle or billiards; and in the evening, with our spirits well worn, though not quite exhausted, we were summoned to round games of every description, or to cards. My young fancy was dazzled for but a short time by the glare of so much gaiety and magnificence. It was, while the novelty lasted, but an imitation of happiness, wanting reality: it played round the head, but came not to the heart. My own real existence, my joys and my sorrows, were nothing to those with whom I associated, and it was an unspeakable rest to both body and mind, after some of my longest and gayest visits at Ashcourt Abbey, where I had, like all visitors, to adopt the ways, the hours, and the amusements of others, to return home, where I could feel that I really belonged to myself, and where I shared not merely in the amusements but also in the affections of all around me.

CHAPTER X.

'Oh! cast thou not
Affection from thee—in this bitter world,
Hold to thy heart this only treasure fast,
Watch—guard it—suffer not a breath to dim
The bright gem's purity.'

TIME wore away, and one by one my merry joyous companions were transplanted to other homes. Edward and Robert obtained, with much difficulty, and as a prodigious concession from some of our great relations, strong recommendations to the authorities in India, where Lord Charles, having no better prospects for them at home, or rather, no prospects at all, felt obliged, in obedience to our grandfather's intention, to send them.

The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and the grief suffered by my father at parting with both his 'boys,' was known only to himself. He would not damp the ardor of their ambition by the betrayal of his own feelings, when he saw them full of high

anticipation and sanguine hope, but to me he opened his heart, confessing with what bitter regret he listened to the congratulations of his friends on the good fortune of providing so easily for both my brothers.

'It must be, and this is all I can do for them,' he said. 'I would be wrong to repine, even if I am left alone, provided my children be prosperous; yet how sad does it appear that, after spending so much of my own life in preparing them for the world, all their experience of it must begin so far from myself. The greater events of their career will of course be communicated to me, but the lesser details of every-day life, which make up the sum of human happiness or misery, must be for ever unknown to their father. Yes! they are now to suffer and to enjoy, without my participation. The sorrows they shall mourn over, and the pleasures they shall rejoice in, are no longer mine as well as theirs, and the evening of my days shall be uncheered by their presence, but I must quench all sorrow, and resign myself to the total rupture of our once cheerful circle: let them only be happy, and I ask no more.'

When Lord Charles took leave of my brothers, his countenance was pale as death, but his manner perfectly calm; and never can I forget the earnestness with which he spoke to them, saying, 'I have endeavored, my dear boys, to fit you for the

enjoyment of life, here and hereafter—whatever has been wanting on my part, may God forgive, and make it up to you by his own far better teaching. I am thoroughly convinced that the great secret of happiness consists in laying a foundation of solid religion, and in choosing some distinct object to be pursued during life with ceaseless diligence. Whether it be knowledge, usefulness, influence, or any other allowable pursuit, let it be actively sought; yet no man in life is more to be pitied than he, who, having attained his utmost wishes, has nothing more to seek, who desires nothing, who attempts nothing, who cares for nothing, and at last becomes good for nothing.'

'Well do I remember,' answered Edward, 'how eager I was, when a boy, to obtain my first watch, but not long after the prize had been secured, I scarcely cared to take the trouble of winding it up.'

'True,' replied Lord Charles, 'and you see Sir Adam Harcourt, after spending time and money in building himself a house, no sooner saw it completed than he has gone abroad, the enjoyment being over when the progress ceased. I trust that you will see much of the best society, and make the best use of it. A solitary man is toadied and flattered by his own imagination into over-estimating himself, and under-estimating all others. Take every opportunity of gaining new information, and of imparting

it, of studying mankind and of benefiting them. No man has a right to live entirely to himself, or to withdraw a link from the chain of mankind; and men keep their faculties much longer bright and active in society than in solitude. Those who live like a shell-fish alone become in general very positive and very indifferent to the feelings of others, great eaters and sleepers, and talk or think of little else but their own health or affairs. Believe me, no life can be pleasing to God that is not useful to man; therefore the most insignificant of human beings must never for a moment imagine he may live in vain. The very weeds of the field have their uses; and each of you should ask himself often for what purpose he was created, and whether he fulfils the true end of his being, to the glory of God and the good of all men. In parting with you both, my own work on earth seems nearly done. Whether we meet again in this world or not, I appoint you, my sons, to that meeting in the presence of our Maker, for which I trust we are all preparing. May God's blessing go with you where you go, and remain with us where we stay.' He held out his hand to each, and struggled for some moments with his feelings, but unable any longer to control them, he burst into tears, and hurried out of the room. That day we saw him no more.

The ever ready congratulations of our friends

were soon again ringing in my father's ears. Caroline had gained the affections of Philip Meredith, a rising young barrister at Dublin, to whom she was, on a short acquaintance, about to be united, and though, in their straitened circumstances, Lord Charles felt some cause of anxiety, yet on this occasion his consent was given more cordially, because much more hopefully, than to Lord Plinlimmon.

'The wide world is before you, and a very narrow purse,' observed my father, with a look of parental anxiety, to Caroline. 'I long experienced with your mother that we could be happy on very little; and you might be, as I greatly fear Eliza could testify, miserable on a great deal.'

'We shall see,' replied my sister, with her usual joyous laugh. 'Two poor people marrying should become rich, as you know two negatives make an affirmative. People always contrive to scramble on somehow. At every wedding you see a carriage-and-four in readiness, a trousseau invariably forthcoming, and a wedding-cake. An oat cake is perhaps all that I can afford! Some good-natured friend has generally an old half-furnished country-house to lend for the honey-moon, and, after that, I never hear of any worse fate to a happy couple, who marry on nothing, than their shrinking into rather a small house in some side street off Portman Square, or, at the

very worst, they go abroad and are heard of no more; therefore we may hope that they exist, ever afterwards, in perfect happiness under an Italian sky.'

'Well, dear Caroline,' replied Lord Charles, cheerfully, 'since your choice is made, keep up a good heart upon it always, and a good temper will be not amiss. I often think, if a young man were told, when selecting his companion for life, that he might choose a certain proportion of either beauty or good temper, how much he might naturally prefer that the first should predominate; but as time wore on, after the honey-moon closed, or, perhaps, long before then, he would willingly allow much of the good looks to vanish in exchange for a larger allowance of good temper. Few men,' he added, with a sigh, 'ever met with so large a proportion of both united as I did; and if my Caroline imitates her mother, Philip Meredith will not have to regret for a single day or hour his choice.'

I alone remained now the cherished object of interest and affection to the best of parents—the only drawback, in the estimation of Lady Ashcourt and our many friends, to his success in becoming emancipated from the burden of family cares. With deep emotion, my father, after he had led Caroline as a bride to the carriage, returned, and clasped me, his last remaining child, in his arms, saying, in

accents broken with emotion, 'You are my only comfort now. Stay with me, Jane! and yet, whatever is for your good shall be for mine. I desire only to see you happy; and if ever you can be happier with another than with me, you shall not hear of one selfish regret.'

My heart swelled with a new emotion of gratified affection, when I thought that on me now devolved the power and the duty of making my father happy, and that all the responsibility which had once been shared by so many willing assistants, fell for the future upon me alone. Never was a parent more fondly, more devotedly, and more deservedly loved than my venerated father, to whom I resolved from henceforth to dedicate my whole existence, and with this object in view, I had a motive for every action, an occupation for every moment. When I passed at night the door of his room, I frequently paused and offered up a prayer to God, that I might be made a blessing to him, returning fervent thanks at the same time that his life and health were yet prolonged; but when I reached my own apartment, how sad and solitary did it now appear, and how carefully did I avert my eyes from the two little white beds in which my sisters had formerly slept.

It was long, indeed, before, in our silent and deserted home, I ceased to fancy the gay laugh of

my brothers yet resounding in the entrance-hall, or Caroline's light footstep on the stair while she carolled a song, or called me by name to execute some of the hundred and one errands perpetually invented by those who have a willing messenger always at hand. My occupations, however, were now rapidly increasing at home, as Lord Charles's sight had become greatly impaired, so that he could scarcely read, and it became my duty to enliven him with music and conversation, or to let him hear the letters of his absent children. The deep interest which he felt in their contents rendered the task a delightful one, and I used sometimes to amuse myself with thinking, if a shop could be opened in which the customers might buy letters from those they love, what a price would sometimes be given, and how extravagant on that point our kind father would have been.

It seemed still an established fact in the conviction of our friend, Lady Ashcourt, that I must be a heavy care on the hands of my father, while the distant prosperity of my absent sisters must, of course, be to him a subject of incessant enjoyment; therefore she pressed me constantly to visit her at the Abbey. In the estimation of Lady Ashcourt any person unmarried was only the half of a whole. She gloried in her own extraordinary skill as a matchmaker, and was evidently convinced

that the best way of rendering my father happy for life would be, if, through her instrumentality, I left it in a carriage-and-four, perhaps, like my sisters, never, or very seldom, to return.

'But,' said I, in answer to her very kind entreaties, one day, that my visit to Ashcourt Abbey might be prolonged, which she accompanied by a dissertation on the eligibility of whatever match might first be offered, 'much as I like to come here, and to stay while you so kindly wish it, yet I have no wish altogether to leave my own happy home and my kindest of parents. If I am not of very great use to him, I can at least pick up his spectacles when they fall.'

Lord Ashcourt was equally partial to me, and unwilling to let me go. With him I had become an established favorite, on account of my buoyant spirits, and keen delight in all his favorite old stories. He called me his 'receiver-general,' on account of the ready laugh with which I welcomed his jests; and many of his visitors were surprised that the aged peer, who was in general a man of proud and stately manner, should so frequently relax with me from the almost repulsive dignity of his habitual address.

I was myself astonished sometimes to find how, unchecked by the consciousness of Lord Ashcourt's age and rank, or of the awe and reverence which

he inspired in all others, I used to jest with him in these my juvenile days; but the certainty of his regard, and long experience of his kindness, gave me perfect confidence that with him and Lady Ashcourt I could neither say nor do wrong. There are persons of a jealous and suspicious temper, whose utmost experience of past kindness never leads them to trust implicity in the continued good intentions of their friends; but I felt assured that my own gratitude was not more permanently established than their regard. Lord Ashcourt seemed to consider it a personal injury one day when he found that I was discussing with Lady Ashcourt a project for my returning home. 'What do you want there?' he asked me in a tone of good-humored jocularity. 'Have you not beaux enough or amusements enough here? Why have you tired of us all so soon?'

'Perhaps I am afraid of being too happy—of becoming quite spoiled for my own quiet little *tête-à-tête* home.'

'Then wait till you find a better home for yourself; and, to judge from appearances, that will not be very long.'

Lord Ashcourt contracted his features into a sly expression of comic humor, and placed his finger on his lips as an intimation that he would keep the secret, adding, in an under tone, 'I know of at

least one in this room who is dying for you to remain.'

'Then he must die! If I cannot stay to please you, no one else could have a chance.'

I smiled when his eye became directed to Sir Ernest Gordon, an unconscious object of Lady Ashcourt's manœuvres for me, who stood at some distance preparing his flute to perform our usual duet. He had been very adroitly placed next me at dinner during several previous days, when we had kept up a laughing lively dialogue, without our having apparently a feeling or a sentiment in common, and we were about to part as we had met, I believed, with total indifference. To my kind old friend's little gossipping hint, therefore, I lent an inattentive ear, and left him to prepare for returning to the duties of home.

> 'Sweet Memory, wafted by thy gentle gale,
> Oft up the stream of Time I turn my sail,
> To view the fairy-haunts of long-lost hours,
> Blest with far greener shades, far sweeter flowers.'
>
> ROGERS.

CHAPTER XI.

> ''Tis sweet to know there is an eye will mark
> Our coming, and look brighter when we come.'
>
> BYRON.

IF my honored father ever allowed himself to have a favorite in his family, it had always been myself, and there seemed no bounds now to his indulgent affection. He saw in me the happiest and most light-hearted being on the earth, who felt no care but to fulfil, or rather to anticipate, all his wishes, and he was amused as well as pleased, in bygone days, at my transports when first promoted from the school-room to that very small drawing-room, where hitherto it had always been one of my happiest privileges to spend an hour.

In spite of Lady Ashcourt's whispered remark, that it would be a great relief and comfort when I was finally disposed of, I still persisted in obstinately believing that I should be an actual loss at home, and an irreparable blank to my father. Often has

my heart been melted with emotion, when I have imagined him in solitary infirmity, with not one companion, if I were removed by death or marriage, to watch over his declining years. My pillow has been drenched with actual tears sometimes, when an imaginary picture appeared before my fancy of my kind-hearted parent in age and in lonely desolation without me. No such fears intruded, however, into the thoughts of my friend Lady Ashcourt, who considered that parents should live and feel only for the prosperity of their children. 'It is their duty,' she remarked, 'and even a pleasing one, to forward, as I myself have done, *coute qui coute*, the fortunes of my family, and with Spartan firmness to sacrifice, without reserve or regret, my own domestic ties, dear and precious as they may be, for the promotion of my children's worldly interests.'

As both Eliza and Caroline had been strikingly beautiful, Lord Charles was much in the habit of lecturing us all indiscriminately on the perils of beauty. He was anxiously desirous that our minds should be fortified in good time, against the inroads of vanity; but the experience of one ball did more to ward off any access of conceit than all he could say. I soon became convinced, from lamentable experience, that nothing but parental partiality could suggest an apprehension that, in a London season, any young girl, with neither fortune nor

introductions, could become greatly dazzled by her own position. In all my father's well-intended warnings, not to be spoiled by the admiration which must inevitably fall to my share, his own civilities on the subject were greater than any I was likely to encounter elsewhere.

It makes me smile now, with indulgent pity for my former self, to remember how important then seemed such trifles, now but as bubbles on the rushing stream, which has long since swept away on its tide, into almost utter oblivion, scenes, and thoughts, and feelings, once so engrossing. How vividly do I now recollect my first ball! The new dress presented to me for the occasion, by Lord Ashcourt; Lady Ashcourt's last touches to the drapery before I left the drawing-room; Lord Charles's injunctions to Mrs. Howard, my chaperon, not to let me dance too much nor stay too late; and the jesting anticipations of all three respecting my *debut*, which they had not a doubt would be brilliant!

Yes! I recall that scene as if it had been but yesterday—my own undoubting confidence of perfect felicity, the dazzling glare of lights as I entered, the confusion of sounds, the deafening music, the clamor of a hundred tongues, the vociferation of my own name at the door, and my almost mortified surprise at the matter-of-course

reception given me by our hostess, Lady Clifford, who neither knew nor cared that this was my first and only ball. Amidst the swelling tide of arrivals, Lady Clifford became immediately afterwards unconscious of my presence, and I, who had almost fancied that those around would be aware of the novelty of my emotions, and ready to sympathise in them—I, who had been assured that my white dress, ornamented with water-lilies, would fascinate all eyes, and that the multitude of my partners would be my only perplexity—I soon found myself jostled with Mrs. Howard into the obscurest recess of the ball-room, alike unnoticed and unknown. No conflicting partners were impatiently desirous to offer themselves, but there I had ample leisure to observe, as if from a side-box at the theatre, the whirling mass of strangers around. Everybody seemed intimate with everybody; all happy to meet and not very sorry to part; greetings were exchanged, civilities paid, partners changed, in rapid succession; and gradually, as the novelty of my surprise wore off, a sense of solitary insignificance began to oppress my mind.

A ball is a miniature of life itself, with its prosperities and adversities, its successes and disappointments, its short-lived joys, and its much more frequent mortifications. If the care-worn hearts

of all could be as unveiled as the smiling faces, how ill-matched would they seem! and if there were a visible thermometer to disclose the actual degree of cheerfulness in each person's mind, how unexpected would be the general disclosure, for there are in a ball-room, sometimes, tragedies as deep as any on the stage, but they are acted under a veil of cheerfulness, which no eye ever penetrates.

It is one great secret of happiness, not to be exclusively occupied with ourselves and our own affairs, as a proof of which I found, while admiring others, perfect contentment in the consciousness of being unadmired myself, and experienced the greatest delight while cheerfully witnessing, as a mere looker-on, so gay a scene. I felt that my mind had been formed for better things than to envy others their more brilliant enjoyments, yet my feelings were far different indeed from those that sparkled within me on entering the room, till at length they became gradually sobered down almost into sadness.

I smiled then, and could smile yet to remember how my sense of humiliation was completed when our very good-humored host, Sir Henry Clifford, who had evidently compassionated for some minutes my state of suspended animation, led up to me a shy unwilling boy, in a jacket, with whom he

proposed that I should dance. Sir Henry at the same time explained that he would gladly have become my partner himself, had he not unfortunately attempted a reel the week before, and broken the tendon Achillis, an accident which I believe invariably occurs to elderly gentlemen, when, after a long interval, they relapse into dancing. When I perceived the bald head and snow-white whiskers of that very good-natured Sir Henry, it seemed that I should have been most unreasonable to expect any explanation whatever of his unwillingness or inability to dance, but I received his apology as gravely as it was made.

Such little incidents seemed then to have an importance which appears to me now almost incredible. How true it is that we do indeed 'die daily.' The events, once all in all to our happiness, become indifferent; the friends formerly dearest to our affections are gone; the amusements which filled up the measure of our enjoyment become tedious; the mortifications which seemed like death itself are only laughed at; the hopes we lived for are extinct; and everything changes around and within us, till we seem strangers even to our former selves. Yesterday and last year are now no more mine to spend again, but I am as much dead to them as I shall be to my whole past life when I am laid in the grave. An old fable relates that

there is a paradise in which the spirits of departed men exist only so long as they are remembered and lamented on earth. The good and great, who immortalised themselves in the memories of mankind, are supposed to enjoy there a perpetual youth, and even those who survive in the recollection of only a single individual have a precarious existence while that one recollection lasts; but in such a case, how many, like that kind old Sir Henry Clifford, would now have been indebted to my memory for their last lingering glimpse of existence.

I now mingled very generally, for some time, in society, chiefly at Ashcourt Abbey, where my reception was always more than kind. With good-humor and unbroken spirits, I became generally popular, and though there were acknowledged beauties, and richly endowed heiresses, who seemed to possess a more brilliant position, yet I would very unwillingly have exchanged with any one of the number. Their time and attention were divided by too many competitors, among whom they found little time for any extended conversation which could reach either to the head or heart, but I had a deeper and more lasting enjoyment with the few who knew me well, and devoted themselves to me frequently. It soon became well known that I felt really indifferent about dancing, being so well amused with conversation, that, though perfectly

willing to make up a set if required, I much preferred looking on, and the natural vivacity of my disposition never failed to gather a circle round one so evidently unsophisticated, and so very ready to be pleased.

An old author remarks that the worst book is better than the best conversation; but who that has experienced the pleasure of enlightened intercourse would agree with him, or would not rather testify that it is the highest and best source of social enjoyment, and of mental improvement? While placing myself mind to mind, as well as face to face with others, and listening to their sentiments and feelings, my own were drawn out; and when thus brought to light, the novelty of expressing my opinions made them often seem as new to me as if they had been those of a stranger. For teaching humility, no school can be more efficacious than candidly to study the intellects of others, as that almost invariably lowers our appreciation of ourselves, by proving that every individual excels us in something. Those who go much into society are soon taught their own level, and learn that moderate estimate of themselves which it is one of our chief Christian duties to cultivate, and one of the chief objects in Scripture to inculcate; but in solitude men acquire almost invariably an overgrown opinion of their own talents and importance.

They have no standard with which to compare themselves, and, undoubtedly, if a dwarf were to believe himself a giant, he might consider himself the tallest man of the age, till he came into contact with those above him.

To me, society was like a rattle to a child, full of the most joyous and ceaseless diversion. All the feelings and sensibilities of my heart were as yet reserved for home, and I was unconscious of any attachment deeper or stronger than that which would have made me ready, willing, and happy to lay down every enjoyment of existence for my best of parents. Often did Lord and Lady Ashcourt complain of the hesitation with which I still accepted their invitations to the Abbey, and of the difficulty with which they induced me to prolong my visits. My father, lonely as he was, and nearly blind, evidently guessed the motive which constantly hurried me home, and he facilitated my frequent departures, or encouraged the prolongation of my absence, with an indulgent kindness which rendered me only the more bound to be considerate for him. How frequently, in the splendid circle of Ashcourt Abbey, surrounded as I was by the glitter and gaiety of that most brilliant and fascinating society, my own imagination has been turned to the picture of my honored father, seated at home in his solitary arm-chair, his fire unstirred, his newspaper unread,

and his tea prepared by a servant. I seemed almost to hear his sigh of melancholy weariness, as he withdrew at length from the ghastly dulness of his silent fireside, and retired to bed, while none were near to bid him a cheerful 'good night.'

Thoughts such as these haunted me in hours which would have been otherwise full of heedless enjoyment, but even then no sorrow moved my sympathy more than a dreary and solitary old age. While strangers saw in me only a light-hearted laughter-loving girl, and Lord Ashcourt, whose partiality was like that of a parent, surrounded me with every enjoyment that his kind heart could suggest, none knew or guessed that, the more I was indulged and amused, the more did my heart reproach me with the contrast of my father's silent evenings at home; therefore, again and again, not many days after being received with the kindest of welcomes at Ashcourt, did I break the enticing spell, to hurry away amidst the half angry remonstrances of my very kind friends.

If Lady Ashcourt had been my mother twice over she could not have acted more affectionately; and as she had, besides, an amateur love of match-making in general, she amused herself with many plans for me. To her active mind it supplied excitement like gambling itself, to project matrimonial schemes, and then, suitable or unsuitable, by

every means in her power, to bring them about. Many a well-laid plot she devised for me, which amused for a time and then disappointed her; but still, as the architect of my fortunes, she began the edifice again, with fresh hopes and fresh materials. Though never what Lord Ashcourt called 'flirtatious,' yet I had lively spirits and an inexhaustible fund of nonsense to supply the place of conversation, most of which was addressed to the good old Lord himself, in whose eyes it seemed impossible for me to say or do wrong, as he appeared really to forget I was not his daughter.

I had always the agreeable task awarded to me of entertaining any young ladies who visited at the Abbey, and this was an easy duty, as few things came amiss to me that pleased my associates; yet nothing surprised me more than the very different styles of life chosen by those who have no one to control their tastes. If every living person were obliged, for one day in the year, to change his own mode of life with some other person of equal independence, how miserable they all would be. The active man, who delights in despatching twenty letters a-day, would tire intolerably, if he were forced to exchange with the idle man, who prefers playing twenty games at backgammon in a morning; and the early six-in-the-morning man, who walks out to see the sun

rise, would be miserable if obliged to change with a man of fashion who scarcely rises before sunset.

In riding, walking, billiards, music, or conversation, I was partner-of-all-work to all, since each amusement in turn became the object of my preference according to the taste or whim of others; and as Lord and Lady Ashcourt retired during most of the morning, the house and visitors seemed all my own. Brilliant as my position was thought at Ashcourt, and exuberant as my spirits became there, still a truer and a deeper pleasure was mine, when, returning to the home of my father, he would hurry to meet me, clasp me in his arms, and thank God that I was again restored to him.

Lady Ashcourt warned me strenuously sometimes against making myself too necessary, remarking that nothing was more inconvenient than to be the first and sole object of any old person's affections, as they are apt to become intolerably *exigeante,* and she admonished me to make the servants do for my father's personal comfort much of what I now did myself. Lady Ashcourt was in the habit of descanting largely on the advantage of clubs, in relieving ladies from the tedious task of amusing those who are not amusable, the idle gentlemen of a drawing-room, and she advised me, if possible, to throw Lord Charles more and more on his own resources.

'Really, my dear Jane, you are spoiling him,' she said one day in a tone of good-humored remonstrance, when I had declined accompanying her to an evening concert. 'Your fire-side life at home is like that of an old woman at eighty. We have but one life to live upon the earth, and no duty can bind you to sacrifice, in this way, all your youth, and the beauty of your girlhood. Could not Lord Charles's valet read aloud to him in the newspapers?'

'Yes! but who is to discuss all the news with my father? Who would know what are the events which give him pleasure or pain? He can live, but he cannot enjoy life without me. Dear Lady Ashcourt, my kindest of all friends, if you could remember my father as I do!—brilliant spirits within, and a joyous circle around him, my mother anticipating his every want, and his children watching his every look—you would cease to wonder that now, when I see him helpless and alone, struggling to bear with cheerfulness the remembrance of what has been, and the reality of what is, no pleasure seems to me worth the name compared to that of giving him consolation.'

'Well, my dear! live like a parrot chained to its perch if you please, but be assured the old are much better when forced to exert themselves, and not to hang like a dead weight on the shoulders

of the young. I see many old people now who have nothing earthly to do but to sit all day wondering what o'clock it is! If you accustom Lord Charles to be read to, and walked with, and thought for so assiduously, what is he to do when you marry, as of course you must? With so many admirers, do you mean to refuse them all?'

'In truth, Lady Ashcourt, I may refuse all who have ever proposed to me without once having to say, no; but if any gentleman were so forward as to make me an offer, perhaps that would be the safest plan! I see many married people who had much better have let it alone. It is said, you know, that married people should be happy if they can, and single people can be happy if they will.'

'No, no! think better of it, and go with me to the concert to-night,' pursued Lady Ashcourt. 'People, who shall be nameless, are anxious for you to enliven our party, and I shall arrange the plan with Lord Charles, who can make no difficulty.'

'He certainly would not, but that is the very reason why I must consider him. My father's spirits were evidently low this morning, though he did his best to conceal that from me. No, my dear Lady Ashcourt, cost what it may, and it costs me a great deal, I cannot and must not go. You offer me inducements that might overcome a

stronger head or heart than mine, but I ought to be obstinate, and I am. There is but one obvious duty in life for me, and most thankful I am for every day it lasts. The greatest compliment paid to woman-kind was by that French author who says, "*Sans les femmes, les deux extremités de la vie seraient sans aide, et le milieu sans joie.*" I am satisfied, perfectly satisfied, with the part assigned to me.'

'But you have duties to yourself that should not be overlooked, and pleasures too that need not be given up.'

'Lady Ashcourt, you know as well as I, and you act upon it too, that wherever duty and inclination are at variance, it becomes evident which ought to carry the day, and I do not even wish my father to know that I had the invitation you so kindly give me.'

'Well! well! you may be right and I wrong, but you will tire and repent at last, though not, I hope, too late,' replied Lady Ashcourt good-humoredly, '*C'est la mer à boire.*'

That night my father and I drank tea tête-a-tête. I sung to him his favorite ballads, listened with interest to the often-repeated stories of his youth, assisted his imagination when looking far into the futurity of my brothers' and sisters' prosperity, palliated all the deficiencies of attention which hurt

him in Lady Plinlimmon, and placed everything in the happiest light to cheer him. If my sister wrote from abroad, her letter always seemed to be penned when she was dull or unwell, or busy, anything in short but at leisure to amuse, and if ever a long letter did come to Lord Charles, it was sure to be when matters were going amiss with her. When she had been ill, or when some mortification or annoyance had given her a temporary disgust with the great world, she then sometimes claimed the sympathy of those who in every vicissitude of life were unchangeably her well-wishers and friends. In perplexity or apprehension she always therefore wrote to us, but forgot generally to write again after her mind had been relieved. How very often has my kind old father continued to be full of anxiety about illnesses she had long since recovered, or about difficulties which had long ago been surmounted. In life there are always 'two sides of the shield.' Those who are selfish keep the brightest to themselves, while to others they paint all things in the blackest colors; but a generous mind will constantly seek out what is most cheering for the benefit of his friends, smile when the heart is sad, and help the old especially to as much sunshine as can honestly be given, keeping back the shadows as considerately as truth will allow.

'As a beam o'er the face of the water may glow,
While the stream runs in darkness and coldness below,
So the cheek may be tinged with a warm sunny smile,
Though the cold heart to ruin runs darkly the while.'

I read to my father as usual that evening some chapters of the Bible, on which he gave me some of his own admirable remarks, the impression of which remains with me yet. In reading Holy Scripture the mind of Lord Charles was like a web of cloth which receives a deeper dye every time it is dipped, and that evening was one of the truest enjoyment which intellect and piety could afford. My father at length heard a ceaseless succession of carriages thundering past our windows, from the Hanover Square concert, and he held out his hand to me with a smile of the most heartfelt satisfaction, saying—

'Well! my dear Jane! you and I have spent a happier evening than any of those gay people, who are paying a guinea to be amused.'

Thus I was more than rewarded for staying at home, thankful he did not guess that it had been a sacrifice, and only ashamed that for a moment I had ever allowed myself to think it one.

CHAPTER XII.

'The heart that bleeds
From any stroke of fate, or human wrongs,
Loves to disclose itself, that listening pity
May drop a healing tear upon the wound.'

MASON.

IT seems the inevitable destiny of mortals that, in all imprudent attachments between two young persons, the beginning shall never be observed till too late by those who might have prevented the mischief; so that, like a fire in a dwelling-house, it secretly gains vigor and strength, until at last the whole family is roused to use every desperate remedy that might extinguish the flame, even though nothing but a miserable wreck be left behind.

Now that the triumphs and sorrows, the interests, and even the affections of my life are all ended, may it not be recorded without vanity that, little as I concurred in my kind friend Lady Ashcourt's general love of match-making, yet I had reason to

be deeply gratified at the preference testified for me by many whose partiality was indeed an honor.

Little as the deeper emotions of life have contributed to my subsequent happiness, yet would I not willingly part with the consciousness of having become first in the attachment of one who was then, and has ever since been, first in mine.

The only match that Lady Ashcourt never projected for me was with her own nephew, the son and heir of Sir William Crofton, who came to the Abbey on his return from commanding a frigate in the Mediterranean, and met me there. He appeared to those who merely saw him for a short time, the most lively and heedless of sailors, from whom a transient expression of thought or of feeling would have seemed almost misplaced. He one day maintained to me that cheerfulness was a sign of wisdom, seeing that the gravest animal is an ass, the gravest bird an owl, the gravest fish an oyster, and, certainly, the gravest man a fool; but, as Lady Ashcourt told him, whether he displayed wisdom or not by merriment, he certainly laughed often till he displayed his wisdom teeth.

Captain Crofton's presence in the room was enlivening as a sunbeam; for, possessing brilliant, almost ungovernable spirits, he pleased all and offended none. With him every joy amounted to rapture, while sorrow itself appeared to grow

light. Yet beneath that sparkling surface of vivacity, which seemed without end or limit, there lay, like the treasures of the deep, concealed, an extreme of sensibility which gave the most effective variety to Captain Crofton's character. He had indeed a world of thought and feeling, known to few, and known in its whole intensity to none but myself. It was with surprise as well as pleasure I first learned that, with all his vivacity, he had a strong sense of devotion, and could

'Look through earth's gladness to the gladder skies.'

How true it is that where the brightest lights appear the strongest shadows are contrasted! We had kept up a laughing, lively, brother-and-sister intimacy for many months, before I began in the remotest degree to understand the real power and depth of his character, or even of my own; still less did I suspect that his happiness depended at all on myself; especially, considering that I had always been told he was to marry his cousin Miss Manwaring, a great Devonshire heiress. My first suspicion of its being otherwise was occasioned by his saying to me one day, in a tone of much emotion, that his affections had been for some time irretrievably engaged.

'Yes,' replied I, in a lively bantering tone, 'I am not quite unprepared to hear the confession!'

'Indeed! then I may tell you that there is one, and only one, young lady who could make me happy, and on whom every hope of my existence depends.'

'Ah! that is what every gentleman says in this house, with his eyes of course turned towards Devonshire. How could any one suppose you insensible to what every one else admires—such accomplishments, such wit, humor——'

'Stop! stop! Miss Bouverie! where are you running to? You are evidently inventing an imaginary young lady for me. Whom do you mean?'

'Whom could any one mean but Miss Manwaring?'

'Pshaw! How can you be so absurd? I should die of Beethoven and Mozart in a week. I should fall into a crotchet fever, and expire in a demi-semiquaver. No!—look everywhere else and you will be nearer the truth—look at home, and you will be nearest of all.'

He hurried out of the room in evident agitation, and I remained panic-struck with astonishment. As the almost adopted daughter of Lord and Lady Ashcourt, I had become accustomed to receive so much attention from all their guests, that for many months nothing in Captain Crofton's assiduities had appeared to me more than the common

custom of the house. At first he devoted half his time, and latterly the whole of it, whenever that was possible, to conversing with me. In our riding and walking parties he became always my escort, but he contrived to give that so accidental an aspect, and rallied himself so humorously on his own singular good fortune in being with me, that I could scarcely have suspected the trouble he afterwards told me he took to arrange it all to his wishes. Week after week, Henry Crofton established his place next to me at dinner, read all the books I recommended, repeated in a beautifully modulated voice the most touching poetry, sung the songs I liked, called incessantly at my father's house when I was there, or even when I was absent, and fascinated Lord Charles as much as myself by his peculiar powers of entertainment.

Like most sailors, Henry had seen all round the world, and, unlike many, he had read and thought much. We compared our thoughts upon happiness, our opinions on religion, our verdict on books, our likings and dislikings to individuals. Every subject was then discussed between us but love, which seemed never for a moment to suggest itself to either of us. So at least I then thought, and so I thought for many months afterwards; but time had at length disclosed to me how much I was mistaken in his feelings, as well as in my own.

Lady Ashcourt maintained that no single lady and unmarried gentleman are ever in company with each other, without each privately considering, and fully making up their minds, whether they would suit or not suit; but, till now, the idea of Henry Crofton becoming attached to me had never entered my head. The days and hours we then enjoyed seemed scarcely to be reckoned in the vulgar current of life. I was but twenty-one, and Henry Crofton twenty-five, the very age of romance; and with youth, opportunity, and the consciousness that our growing attachment was unsuspected, as well as the hope that it could not be disapproved of, we became every day more essential to each other's happiness, the mutual objects of a first and an unalterable affection, which he at last, with his usual sailor-hearted frankness, declared, and I, with deep emotion, as frankly accepted.

We anticipated no difficulties, as Henry was an only son, and his father possessed of enormous wealth, while my own connections were equal to his; and for a short time it was his delight to add something of romance to the interest of our engagement, by letting it be known only to ourselves; therefore I delayed announcing it to Lord Charles till we were together. Like Henry himself, I never enjoyed and suffered by halves; and when he

confessed to me how long his attachment had lasted, the world itself seemed a new world to me. I even regretted, like a miser who had squandered his gold, that, before being aware of the happiness which awaited me, so many weeks and months had elapsed in a common-place way—they were gone for ever, without having been embellished with the consciousness of mutual attachment which might have belonged to them. In doubt and uncertainty they had passed away never to return; and I thought how every future day of my life would now be of more value than any which, before I felt assured of Henry's sentiments, had fled.

I had a thorough conviction, which remains unaltered, of the happiness attendant on a well-founded attachment. Unconscious, therefore, of any probable obstacle to our mutual felicity, I allowed my heart to dwell on the pleasing anticipation of making a happy home for one who loved, and trusted, and preferred me before all others; and in every plan of future happiness my dear father was included as cordially by Henry as by myself.

It should be a frequent question of those who gain the affections, or even if it be merely the friendship, of another, 'Is he the happier for having loved me?' From the moment that Henry committed his heart to my keeping, I felt how sacred was the trust, and prayed that, through life as well

as now, he might never have cause to regret, even in the most trifling instance, that to my care his happiness had been confided.

It pleased me to think of the duties I was about to fulfil, among which my delight would hereafter be to consider Henry's feelings more than my own, to cultivate for his sake the pursuits he loved best, to make his chosen friends my own, to sympathise in all his wishes, to fulfil all his desires, to promote his interests, to pray for him and cherish him, as my duty and affection should hereafter combine to dictate. Yes! if I could have divided into two portions the joys from the sorrows of life, and taken all the last to myself, I should have done so and been satisfied. I yet remember the glow of heart with which I wished his sentiments might always continue the same, when Lady Ashcourt once congratulated Henry on having been well amused and happy at a boat-race which he had won, and he gracefully approached me to whisper in accents audible to myself alone, 'I can be amused anywhere, but happy only with you, and happy then beyond expression. I trust my Jane has no doubt of that, unless you are one of those who doubt everything.'

'I am but too happy to believe you,' I replied; 'and I doubt nothing but my own merits to deserve your affection.'

'Throw that doubt into the fire, then, or give it

to me, as I should be glad merely to doubt whether I am deserving of you, being at present quite certain that I am not. I read an advertisement of a book once, called the Sorrows of somebody, in nine volumes; but they would be nothing to mine, if you were to treat me no better than I deserve, and refuse me. In that case, I shall sit regularly down to be miserable. How should I look, like Patience on a monument?'

'You would certainly be smiling at grief, being so *rieuse par constitution*, that I suspect your heart would take a great deal of breaking.'

'If you tried, it would not; but to all others it is adamantine!'

CHAPTER XIII.

'But pleasures are like poppies spread;
We snatch the flower, the bloom is fled;
Or like the snow-falls on the river,
A moment white, then melts for ever;
Or like the Borealis race,
That flit ere you can point their place;
Or like the rainbow's lovely form
Evanishing amidst the storm.'

BURNS.

LADY ASHCOURT seemed to awaken suddenly, as from a dream, to the consciousness that Captain Crofton's assiduities were of no ordinary nature, and having observed him one day return from his ride, with a beautiful bouquet of the rarest flowers, which he presented to me, and some of which I wore as a wreath in my hair at dinner, she took an opportunity, some time after the ladies had retired to the drawing-room, of good-humoredly rallying me on wasting so much of my time and attention with her lively care-for-nobody nephew.

'He is the very essence of humor, and of good-humor too, I acknowledge, and I never before saw him prefer one young lady to another,' she remarked. 'For your sake, Jane, I wish greatly he had an independent £10,000 a-year; but his father, Sir William, is very difficult to deal with, and extremely arbitrary. As partners for a dance you are admirably suited to each other, but not as partners for life, seeing that, unless Henry marries to please my brother, the only estate he will ever inherit lies in the moon.'

'Pray what ill-conditioned young gentleman is this you are discussing?' asked Captain Crofton, having strolled into the room unobserved, and reached the back of our sofa, over which he leaned in time to overhear the emphatic conclusion of his aunt's remark. 'It cannot possibly be your very promising nephew, though people have an odd inconvenient habit of appearing very unexpectedly when their names are mentioned.'

'Speak of the sun,' said Lady Ashcourt, smiling, 'and his rays immediately shine.'

'If I were as ill off, my dear aunt, as the gentleman you so feelingly alluded to, I should try this very brilliant experiment: As fortunes seem always whimsically bequeathed to those who are already rich, I should borrow an enormous sum of money for one year, and so pass myself off as being

immensely wealthy. In consequence, a number of wills would immediately be executed in my favor, and I should speedily become a perfect Crœsus.'

'Very ingenious!' said I; 'and then, as a natural consequence, you would begin to save! Nothing in life is more perplexing than to observe that most rich men live as if they were poor, and the poor as if they were rich. Some bountiful fairy evidently presides over the indulgences of those who, throwing aside the vulgar trammels of an income, boldly launch into a boundless ocean of extravagance.'

'I quite agree with the last speaker!' added Captain Crofton, laughing. 'Is there any man living who has not, from his earliest childhood, a traditionary remembrance of persons who were always pointed out as being perfectly ruined. Such people carry their ruin so gracefully, that no mortal can perceive any trace of it! In their establishments, their tables, their cellars, or their wardrobes, the word retrenchment is unknown; and their lavish expenditure continues to shine triumphantly from year to year before the wondering eyes of an ordinary beholder like myself, not in the secret, and quite perplexed to imagine by what invisible cork jacket such persons keep their heads above water.'

'Yes!' added I; 'we are alarmed very often with rumors of embarrassment impending over the Darringtons and Sir Samuel Bridgeport, which are

put to silence at their utmost height by the apparition of Mrs. Darrington in a new carriage, or by new wings and a new lodge being added to Sir Samuel's house in the country. My father's rich neighbor in Herefordshire, Sir Francis Peterborough, told us that he had been grumbling over his taxes lately, and meditating whether to dismiss half his establishment, that he might be well within his income, when Sir Samuel, with no income at all, started a pack of harriers, and invited him to spend some weeks at Bridgeport House, where he found a large party living on turtle, venison, and champagne.'

'Such people remind me,' said Lady Ashcourt, 'of a celebrated Hindoo conjuror, who contrived, after long practice, to sit in the air upon nothing. The mysterious art of living well without an income is known only to the initiated. Should any one of those ingenious individuals ever fall into poverty —a catastrophe which seems impossible—we must persuade him to give a popular course of lectures on the science of producing spontaneous wealth. He must add, also, a short and easy method altogether to supersede the use of money, and hints on the best mode of dealing with shop-keepers, duns, and creditors.'

'Some author wisely remarks that the greatest service a man can do his country is to pay his own

debts, and in that respect, I have always been a most conscientious patriot,' observed Henry. 'It is lucky for Sir Samuel, however, that the same law does not exist in this free country which I encountered once in Russia. There no man can leave any town in which he has resided, without advertising, three days previously, his intended departure, or leaving security to his creditors; but here a man may drown himself in debt, and not be one whit the worse.'

'Wait a little and the tables do turn,' said I, 'or what use would there be for the King's Bench? Sheridan, the greatest adept of the day, galloped at length over his last shilling.'

'Yes! yet in his case we perceive that, though bankruptcy be considered in the first instance an awful catastrophe, people after one or two repetitions, and coming forth every time enriched, seem to resemble equestrians who are said never to be thoroughly good riders till they have suffered a fall or two. Though Sheridan spent, as many others do, ten times the fortune he ever possessed, yet his last public appearance confirms all I say, as no one had a more magnificent funeral.

"Yes, bailiffs may seize his last blanket to-day.
Whose pall shall be held up by nobles to-morrow."'

'There can be no doubt,' added Lady Ashcourt,

'that the good-humored sympathy of mankind is much at the service of those whose self-indulgence cannot be restrained within the bounds of common prudence, while it is entirely withheld from the man of affluence who holds his well-filled purse with an iron grasp, and neither asks money nor gives it.'

'I often think,' observed I, 'what a prolonged and daily torture it would be to all rich misers, if an act of Parliament were passed that every man must live according to his means, and that, if he will not engage an establishment suited to his fortune, a committee shall be appointed to do it for him. There is Sir Adam Harcourt, who, with his £14,000 a year, owes the public a liberal expenditure, and scarcely has a servant or a living thing belonging to him; suppose this new law obliged him to maintain a man-cook, a butler, half-a-dozen powdered footmen, and a stableful of grooms, what a number of people would be made happy and comfortable at his expense, and really ought to be! It would quite enliven the street to see the splendid carriage he would then be obliged to keep.'

'Sir Adam would suffer less torture if he lost the half of his income than if he were obliged to spend the whole,' replied Captain Crofton; 'but the rarest instance of what people call common

sense—the most uncommon sense of all—is for men to live exactly in proportion to what they have.'

'I wonder,' added Lady Ashcourt, 'whether there is most money saved now that ought to be spent, or spent that ought to be saved. In my younger days poor people were expected to make hay when the sun shone, and to save for a rainy day, but no such duty seems inculcated now. It is considered a reproach to human nature, for instance, if a retired actor or author be reduced to indigence in his declining years; but no one seems to imagine, that, if the one had previously received a hundred pounds a-night, or the other a thousand pounds a-volume, for his labors, he ought to have provided for his own old age more than for any other person's. Indeed, if he had saved a handsome fortune, as he might have done, it would then be thought his duty to assist those who had not.'

Henry watched with humorous enjoyment the kindling eye of Lady Ashcourt, as she warmed upon one of her favorite subjects, and often afterwards, when the animation of her mind became suspended, and she seemed falling into irretrievable silence, he slyly resumed a topic on which, in jest or in earnest, he could talk a great deal of sensible nonsense, and she was always ready to reply.

'How much the average of worldly felicity might be increased!' observed he, one day, drawing

in his chair beside us with a look of assumed gravity, if the large fortunes that some rich men will not and cannot spend, were, by some magical contrivance, secretly transferred into the pockets of those who could and would make wealth contribute to the general happiness. Let the figures in Sir Adam Harcourt's banking book continue the same; and as he never, at any rate, sees his gold, there would be no diminution of his own enjoyment, while a willing substitute, such as I should be, would with the old miser's million, employ hundreds of people, and enrich thousands, besides making myself and another, two very deserving people, as rich as we wish and deserve to be.'

'My dear Henry,' replied Lady Ashcourt, 'nothing can be more impossible than for good worthy Sir Adam Harcourt, now that every body knows he has an actual million, to satisfy any body by this way of spending it. The world becomes perfectly delirious in its ideas of what any one individual can do, ought to do, and in short must do, with a million of money.'

'Certainly,' observed Henry, 'I would much rather possess all that Sir Adam is asked for, than twice what he has. Are you condescending enough to agree with me, aunt?'

'Yes,' replied Lady Ashcourt, looking up from her knitting. 'Sir Adam is beset with poor

relations, distressed artists, unsuccessful authors, deserving families, public charities, and private schemes. Every man who has a hobby, hopes to mount him on it, and thinks himself ill-used if Sir Adam hesitates about undertaking the entire expense. My good old friend could not answer the demands made upon him, unless he at once distributed his whole fortune, and then, of course, an outcry would be raised against his unjustifiable extravagance, for which people would loudly declare that they could feel no pity.'

'Yes,' said I, 'everybody believes that Sir Ernest Gordon has exactly £5000 a-year, therefore we measure his liberality by that of others who enjoy a similar income, and they all feel bound to stand by him when too much is expected. If Sir Ernest purchases a commission in the army for his younger brother, or doubles the marriage portion of his sister, such liberality contrasted with that of others is loudly appreciated, but a millionaire stands conspicuous and alone. As scarcely any precedents exist in society by which to measure his liberality, we who are spectators set no bounds to our estimate of what Sir Adam should do for his famliy, his dependants, his neighbors, and the public.'

'True!' continued Lady Ashcourt, rising to leave the room, 'those who are least capable themselves of a generous action give out by far the most

generous notions for others. If each person might dictate how his neighbor's income should be expended, this world would become a scene of universal benevolence; but the meanest minds, comparing their own mere theories to the practical liberality of others, live in the mistaken conviction that with the same income they would do as well, or better. The shabbiest people are the readiest to say, when any generous action is mentioned as done by another, "That is the very least he could do."'

'The pleasantest situation of all would perhaps be,' observed I, 'to possess a considerable fortune, without a living mortal being aware of it. A whole neighborhood is indignant at any one with an ascertained income, if he keep a servant less or a carriage more than is thought expedient; but I would baffle curiosity, by letting nobody know my fortune, any more than my age.'

'The fortune of ladies is but seldom known! I suppose every girl has £10,000,' said Captain Crofton, resuming, when we were alone, his usual rallying manner. 'I wonder nobody ever left me any money! What a good use I should make of it. Tell me what you think would be the very best purpose to which one could devote a million sterling.'

'A most benevolent plan it might be,' answered I, in the same jesting tone, 'to leave a large endowment for all those unfortunate lovers who

have been very long engaged, but are not rich enough to marry. When it can be proved that they really are devotedly attached, and romantically poor, let them be immediately received into the institution, secured in every comfort or luxury to which they ever were accustomed, and settled there for life.'

'That would be the very place for you and me,' said Henry, in a tone half in jest, and more than half in earnest. 'I have been talking in a most mercenary manner to-day; but it is only for your sake, Jane, I should ever care to be rich, that my affection for you might be testified, not in words only, but in deeds. I scarcely even care for my own happiness, except that I might contribute to yours. When you accepted my hand, you knew that a most devoted heart was all I had to offer besides, and there is one little present you must give me in return to-day. It shall be more prized than all the treasures I ever possessed, and kept until I part with life itself.'

He seized the scissors which Lady Ashcourt had left on her table, and almost before I was aware of his felonious intention, had cut off a lock of my hair. It was a brown and glossy ringlet, reaching almost to my waist, which he hastily severed and then pressed to his lips. My hair is now white as the driven snow, but that one ringlet yet remains

glossy and brown. The perished hours of my life too have swiftly gone into oblivion, yet that hour is still fresh as ever in my memory—a green spot in the wide desert of my subsequent life, a flashing meteor that vanished away leaving the darkness more visible than before. I was a happy being then! Let me pause a minute to assure myself that it is not all a dream. No! I see again the brilliant circle at Ashcourt Abbey! the kind friends of those days, the devoted lover, and the venerated father, who all combined to make me happy. I seem yet to hear the ringing laugh of my merry companions, the deep-toned accents of my father, and the melody of Henry's voice, when he sung that evening a favorite song, the words of which he addressed, in as marked a manner as he could venture, to me—

'Tho' wild woods grow, and rivers row, wi' mony a hill between,
Both day and night, my fancy's flight, is ever wi' my Jean.
I see her in the dewy flow'rs, so lovely, sweet, and fair,
I hear her voice in ilka bird, wi' music charm the air;
There's not a bonny flower that springs, by fountain, shaw, or green,
Nor yet a bonny bird that sings, but minds me o' my Jean.'

Lady Ashcourt, in her match-making zeal, had long since decided that her nephew must of course fall in love with, and marry, Miss Manwaring, a cousin of his own, who had very evidently a

preference for him; but to an independent mind like his the mere consciousness of her enormous wealth would have been a barrier between them, had no other existed; and his father, Sir William, had, if possible, increased his previous antipathy by accidentally mentioning that a marriage had been planned by their families between them from childhood, and still more by threatening to disinherit him if he did not make it good.

Often had I formerly rallied Henry on his unaccountable indifference to one so universally courted as Miss Manwaring, little dreaming then, that a secret attachment to myself was the cause; but he jestingly told Lady Ashcourt, that he hoped the heiress would be able to buy a much better husband with her countless thousands.

'The young lady has a monied look, which withers up in my mind every lover-like feeling. Her very shadow is of gold, and the sight of her calls up to my mind the image of the rum-puncheons and sugar-hogsheads on which her large income depends! How could one ever propose! Shall I say, "Miss Manwaring! I have no money, and you have half a million: let us go shares!" No! no! like a true aunt you wish me to marry "advantageously," as the phrase is,' continued Henry, taking up an argumentative position on the hearth-rug, when Lady Ashcourt was making some general reflections

on the imprudence of imprudent marriages. 'But my likings and dislikings depend not on what people have, but on what they are. I hate money! I never could make any, and shall certainly not begin now by selling myself.'

'You should choose a wife,' said Lady Ashcourt, jestingly, 'as Bonaparte chose his generals, for their good fortune.'

'No! no! if I could be rich beyond the dreams of avarice, I would much rather share my poverty with the one—the only one I love. If she be willing, as I am, to live on a straw a-day, she shall be rewarded with the romantic devotion of a lifetime.'

'Very chivalric indeed; and such feelings, Henry, might last throughout the honey-moon, but, take the word of an aunt, not an hour longer,' said Lady Ashcourt, who had evidently perceived that, when Henry spoke thus energetically, his eye rested on me. 'Are you to coin money, or how are you to exist? There are such vulgar things as the necessaries of life that it would be rather awkward to subsist without.'

'Pshaw, my dear aunt! nobody starves! One can always get beef and mutton.'

'But the knives and forks might be wanting!'

'Then we shall eat with our fingers. I could live like an air-plant on nothing.'

'Quite easily, I dare say. But, my dear Harry, you never could lead that life of three-halfpences and twopences, which must be the fate of those who rush into matrimony upon an income of considerably less than nothing. You have, I do say, a generous spirit, which would feel more for the privations of those you love than for your own: and, at the same time, too much prudence to begin spending half-a-crown upon sixpence a-day.'

'You grow quite complimentary, aunt! I shall become parsimonious to please you. Some wise man once observed most truly, "*que le ciel fait rarement naitre ensemble l' homme qui veut, et l' homme qui peut.*" Set your mind at rest, however, that I am no unworthy nephew of yours, for I certainly do hope and intend to marry soon. I shall advertise for a wife immediately.'

'Well, Henry, every advertisement stipulates for a lady with "competent fortune," or "a handsome independence."'

'My dear aunt,' he said, with his own vivid smile, and glancing at me, 'I cannot perhaps afford in the common acceptation of the word to be very generous, yet a generously disinterested attachment is the only one I could ever form; and there is in this world one for whom I would live,

starve, or die, aud think it happiness to do all or either, as may be best for her. On her my fate for life shall depend.'

Henry hurried out of the room after these words in evident agitation, which he vainly endeavored to conceal; and Lady Ashcourt, with an expression of gradually increasing surprise and regret, fixed her eyes upon my agitated countenance. The whole truth had at once unveiled itself to her; and she took my hand in her own with a look of kindness which I never shall forget; but it shocked me to perceive that the tears had started into her eyes.

'I see, dear Jane,' she said, 'what I ought long since to have anticipated, and for both your sakes prevented; but it always happens that on such occasions the eyes of old people are blinded. I now understand why you refused so positively to marry Sir Ernest Gordon, which before seemed unaccountable, and why Henry would not dine at his father's yesterday to meet Agnes Manwaring.'

Lady Ashcourt's countenance assumed an aspect of great perplexity, and she continued, in her kindest manner, while I seemed as if turned into stone, and listened in painful silence—

'Were Henry my own son, I should think him happy in having secured your affection, but I foresee endless difficulties and distress now among all who are dearest to me. My brother, Sir

William, being justly proud of Henry, entertains very high expectations for him; and I know that we might as well attempt to stop the falls of Niagara with an umbrella, as to conquer his opposition. He is the most positive of men, and will be like the flinty-hearted father of any old comedy. Lord Charles, too, has a noble spirit, and would never allow a daughter of his to enter any family in which she is not cordially welcomed. I shall be blamed, and most deservedly so, for having encouraged this most unfortunate intimacy. It is ruin to both!'

'No! that it never shall be,' said I, with mournful decision; 'you have been my best friend on earth, Lady Ashcourt, and you shall not repent it. Tell me what you think best to do for Henry Crofton's happiness; my own is not worth a thought.'

'Yours shall be considered as much as his, dear Jane,' added she, kindly pressing my hand, which had become perfectly cold and powerless. 'Whatever I do—and something must be done—it shall be equally for the sake of both. Harry should speak to his father immediately. I shall use any influence in my power with Sir William, and in the meanwhile you must part.'

'Or, rather, let us meet no more,' said I, vainly endeavoring to check my tears; 'Henry must not

see the grief it costs me. I might betray it; and why should he ever know more of that affection which would ruin his worldly prospects? No, Lady Ashcourt, let me suffer in silence. There is nothing selfish in my attachment to Henry; and if he can be happy without me, I could even rejoice to see him so. Let me return immediately to my father, and try, among the duties of home, to forget that ever a brighter lot awaited me.'

All turned out as Lady Ashcourt had but too truly foretold. Sir William Crofton, old, rich, and peremptory, put a period at once to all hope of his consent, by telling his son, that if all the perfections of all the young ladies on earth were united in any one girl, without rank or fortune, she should never enter his house, as a member of the family, until he had first been carried out of it himself. He refused Henry's often-repeated entreaty that only once he would meet me, and forbade my name ever to be mentioned in his presence.

'There!' exclaimed he, angrily, throwing down a shilling on the table. 'There, Henry, is the very shilling with which I shall cut you off in my will to-morrow, if you persist in marrying that penniless girl.'

'It is not,' replied Henry respectfully, 'any pecuniary loss which could deter me from securing my own happiness in the only way that it can

be done, but your authority and opinion are sacred in the estimation of Jane Bouverie and her father, as in my own.'

Though Sir William thus blasted and withered up all my hopes of earthly happiness, yet I forgave him all, for he knew nothing of me but that I was portionless, that I had marred his long-indulged hopes of the Manwaring property, and had caused the first breach which ever took place between himself and his son; therefore, who could wonder that he bitterly disliked me. Yes! I forgave him that, and even more; for, with a degree of harshness quite unforeseen, when Sir William found that Henry was resolutely determined to see me again, he called on Lord Charles, and expressed in most arbitrary terms to him the impossibility of his consent ever being granted.

Nothing could exceed my father's astonishment when he thus became, for the first time, aware of Henry's attachment to me. For Lord Charles's sake, burdened as he already was with griefs and infirmities of his own, I had carefully concealed from him all my sorrow and anxiety. I had felt as if no affliction could utterly break my heart while it belonged only to myself. I knew how entirely my father's happiness rested on mine, and my spirit had shrunk from revealing all or any of my distress; but I had resolved that, if ever it

must be told, his sorrow should not be aggravated by knowing the extent and the depth of mine. While it was possible for me to preserve a cheerful manner, his dim sight could not perceive the paleness of my cheek, nor the depression of my broken spirit, and, with the motive of saving his feelings, I could always, in his presence, postpone mine; yet, while struggling to shield my aged father from suspense and mortification, I felt stunned and utterly bewildered by so sudden a change in my own prospects. Sometimes I could not, and dared not, contemplate it; but, so long as the storm beat only on my own head, I could bear the worst. When I found, however, that all had been revealed —that there was no longer a necessity nor a possibility of concealment—only then did my fortitude give way, and for the first time my father discovered the heart-broken sorrow of his much-loved child. With his usual candor he appreciated at once the whole effort of self-denial which it had cost me to go through so much anguish of spirit without claiming his sympathy, and never shall I forget the look of commiseration with which he folded me in his arms when I attempted to explain all the past, and, unable to proceed, burst into an agony of tears.

Let no one think herself utterly desolate, while a living parent can bless her with his sympathy.

There are no eyes now but my own to weep for my sorrows, and, before long, mine shall weep no more—but then, even in that moment of anguish, though it aggravated my emotion to think that he shared it, still there was verdure and life in those feelings watered with the tears of a father who loved me. Yes! I wept that day, but they were tears that melted, and did not wither up, the heart.

'My Jane! I have been an imprudent guardian of your happiness,' said he, in a tone of the tenderest emotion. 'But for your old father's sake bear up. My great need of comfort will be your strongest motive to exertion.'

I silently embraced him, and hurried to my room, where I remained for many an hour afterwards sunk in thought, till thought itself was lost. My mind became like a broken mirror, unable to reflect any connected image, yet still one prevailing feeling supported me then as in every subsequent vicissitude of life. It is all that remains to me now!—an implicit and unquestioning submission to the will of God. I felt that the task of resignation was hard and difficult, but not impossible, and I resolved, if that might be, to attain it. I told myself that it was an imperative duty now, to blot out every picture I had ever drawn of a bright futurity, every glowing anticipation that had visited my heart of earthly happiness, and I did so. I resolved

if possible, to build up the fabric of my hopes again, on a better and surer foundation than anything in this world could supply, conscious that, though the will of God was different from my own, it was best. The arrows of the Almighty are never shot at a venture, but always with some great object to serve, and I would not, if I could, have accepted the dangerous privilege of ordering or altering a single event ordained in my life, not even that which wrung my heart with anguish. I reminded myself what a good use many Christians were making of that very hour, now passing away, which I ought not to waste in despondency; and, kneeling down, as had always been my custom in every sorrow, long before I had realised its extent or at all reconciled my heart to the blow, I returned thanks to God that his will was done rather than my own, and prayed that I might at last derive from it the good which was certainly intended me.

CHAPTER XIV.

'There's not a dream of starry night
But that lost form again I see;
There's not an hour of day's pure light,
But whispers to my heart of thee.
Ah, no! though every hope be gone,
I feel I still must love thee on.'

SIR WILLIAM CROFTON having obtained an appointment for his son, to command a seventy-four on the Indian station, Henry said he must visit me once, to take a long, perhaps a last farewell, and we met for an hour, under the sanction of Lady Ashcourt, at the Abbey. I dare not even now recall that period to my recollection. When we parted, life seemed to have done its worst, and death alone to remain for me. Henry's grief was great as my own, greater it could not be. With all the eloquence of fervent love, he asked me to engage myself to him irrevocably, or even to marry him without any consent but our own. He urged

upon me that no justifiable objection had been made to our union, that he was entitled to judge and act for himself, and with the ardor of a long and devoted attachment he urged me to consent. 'You are all the world to me, and more!' he exclaimed. 'Say but the word, and it is not too late. Tell me, if but an hour before I sail, that you will be mine, Jane, and let us at once exchange the vows that shall bind us to each other for ever.'

I felt and knew what duty and principle dictated, and it was done. Even now, I can thank God that it was so. If my heart must break, it were better, as I told him, to suffer the greatest of sorrow, than a feeling of self-reproach, and better even to lose him than to forfeit his esteem. Often had my father inculcated on me his own strong and well-considered objections to a long indissoluble engagement, which only corrodes love. He truly observed that, if Henry and I both continued constant in our attachment, no promise was requisite to bind us to each other: If either of us changed, then certainly it was best that both should be at liberty; for miserable indeed is the fate of him who feels bound by a sense of honor to fulfil a rash promise, or of her who may too late discover that it has been so. No! I told Henry that while I existed his image would live alone in my memory and my affections; but I could not, in opposition to the wishes of all

those we ought to reverence, become his affianced bride, though, should circumstances ever change for the better, my own attachment to him was already, for better or for worse, unchangeable.

In sorrow, yet almost in anger, Henry listened to me, but he at length saw the depth of my feelings, and respected them. The brightness of his smile had become shaded with grief, and his voice was subdued to a tone of the deepest melancholy, when he said in an accent of mingled reproach and affection, 'I could have lived for you, Jane, but for my profession I could die. During three years then, I shall devote myself to the sea, and if, at the close of that long probation, I still find you unengaged, then let me once more offer you a heart that never can be another's. Long absence may plead for me more than my presence has done. Farewell then, if we must part!'

'Indeed we must, Henry, but not in anger. Let us meet again in future years; and to that prospect I commit all my hope of earthly happiness.'

We separated, and his last words were, as he clasped my hand in his, and placed a ring on my finger, 'Wear this—while I live, for love of me—and when I die, in memory of me.'

That ring yet retains its place, and shall go with me to the grave, but it is all that remains of him, except the remembrance of his affection, and of

happy hours never to return. Who can measure the extent of our capacity to suffer and live on! No one surely can die of grief, when I survived the hour it first became known to me that Henry was no more—he perished in a foreign land. He died in battle on the deck of his ship, and his last words were a message to myself, in which he desired me to be comforted, with the prospect of meeting where sorrow and separation are ended.

If hope deferred makes the heart sick, how much worse is hope destroyed! It was long before I realised the dreadful truth. It is long indeed before a sudden grief makes itself fully known. The agony of that hour none need attempt to describe or to imagine; but if I did not bear the stroke so well as I ought, I did at least bear it as well as I could; stunned as I was, the whole seemed to me a feverish dream which could not be real.

As Job, in his misfortunes, sat seven days and seven nights in silence; and as Milton describes the fallen angels for nine days in a trance of wonder at their own destruction, so did I feel bewildered, amazed, and almost unconscious. I would not, and did not, repine, however, though the sunshine of my life was over, and there remained for me only years of duty, but none of happiness.

The higher the pinnacle of my former felicity,

the greater seemed my fall into adversity, but still there was one bright halo cast over the surrounding darkness. Though he was gone, for ever gone, yet Henry had died a Christian. These were words of comfort, and whatever consolation God pleased to send me, I was willing to receive. There is a strange pleasure in cherishing grief, but I would not indulge it. If happiness had been granted me, I should have endeavored to be grateful; but as it was not, I resolved to be resigned, to see that in actions and feelings, as well as in words, I could say to my Maker, 'Thy will be done.' 'Yes!' thought I, with deep and almost heart-broken resignation, 'in this world my affections are to have no resting-place, and in depriving me of all others, it may be, perhaps, that God has marked me for his own. The place now vacant in my heart must be filled with love to God, and to Him only. Then let life become what it may, I can look peacefully to the end. Afflictions add wings to the soul. May they raise my spirit above all that is of this world, and restore it to God. I shall not follow Henry in a long course of hopeless and sinful lamentation, but in active, as well as passive, submission to the Divine will.'

I still had duties; and those I owed to my father were first both in interest and importance. He never knew what his daughter suffered; for the

mere sight of his venerable countenance instantly roused all my powers of exertion, to entertain and to please him; but when he retired, the strong impulse of my grief could not be controlled; and who can describe the relief it was to be sometimes alone with my sorrow. Often, but for the fear of rendering myself unfit to attend on my father, I could gladly have remained up and engaged in thought till morning; and I could not wonder at the instances recorded in Scripture and elsewhere, of those who have remained a whole night in prayer, when I felt the holy calm diffused over my spirit during the lonely hours I spent in sacred exercises.

> 'There is a grief beyond all griefs, when fate
> First leaves the young heart lone and desolate,
> Lone as the hung-up lute which ne'er has spoken
> Since that dark day its master-chord was broken.'

When the traveller is lost in darkness, he looks upwards to the starry heavens for direction, and he looks around next for any distant light which may direct his steps to a human dwelling. Thus, in the wide desolation of grief, my own first thoughts were pointed upwards to heaven, and yet, nature requiring some earthly object of interest, I was most unexpectedly supplied with one every way suited to my present disconsolate feelings.

Sir William Crofton, the stern old father of Henry, had said, as parents so often in a moment of anger do, that he would rather lay his son's head in the grave than see him marry a nameless and portionless girl; yet when the news reached him that the young hero had fallen in battle, that his bright career was ended, and that he himself had become childless, his aged spirit at once gave way, and in a paroxysm of grief and repentance he sent for me. Lady Ashcourt brought me Sir William's message, that now it was his first wish to see one whom his son had so loved to the last, one who mourned with a sorrow more intense even than his own, and to receive my forgiveness of all the misery he had caused me. We met at Ashcourt Abbey. Alas! what a meeting that was! For the first time I saw the father of my Henry, the man whose will might have placed me at the summit of human happiness—him, whose ill-timed severity had consigned me to a life of cheerless sorrow, and hurried his only son to a premature grave; yet the feeling in my heart, when I saw him, that swallowed up all others, was one of overwhelming pity. Never can I forget the look of helpless, hopeless agony in that old man's face! His strength seemed reduced to the weakness of a child, his mind to be feeble as his body, and the sight of that strong stern man brought down at a stroke, and seeking comfort from

me, was insupportably affecting. How different from the sympathy we give to mere bodily suffering is the much more intense commiseration we bestow on that which is mental. The superior nature of the mind gives a depth and power to its agony that the heart of man cannot express, and yet trembles to behold. Pain of body must end at last, but the spirit can suffer without limit and without end.

If any one who had in the remotest degree belonged to Henry was dear to me for his sake, if his very dog would have been precious in my sight, how much more the father who had brought him up, and who had wished, even by the part he took against me, to benefit him. I pitied him 'even to anguish,' and could not hesitate to remain at the Abbey, though there the memory of past happiness was more bitter than elsewhere. There my most joyous hours had been spent—never, except in the darkest coloring of grief, to be recalled—yet I forgave Sir William from the very bottom of my heart, and felt comforted by the hope of consoling him.

> '——— to those who suffer from the sting
> Of sorrow, sorrow is a sacred thing.'

Lady Ashcourt had become dearer to me, now that our sorrow was in common, than in the hour of her brightest prosperity, when I shared all her

enjoyments; and Sir William, confined entirely to his room with grief, was to me an object of the warmest solicitude. He held out his hand to me in mournful silence, when for the first time I entered, and the color on his cheek went and came like waves of the sea. I saw his whole features quiver, his eyes filled with tears, he turned his head away, and sobbed aloud—I stood beside him speechless and trembling. For worlds I would not have added a momentary pang to his almost frenzied grief, but on the contrary, I felt that, if anything could more than another restore me to myself, it would be the hope of giving consolation to Henry's father. No sentiment remained in my mind towards Sir William but sympathy in the grief which had fallen so heavily on us both, and it was evident that he felt and saw the sincerity of my heart when I told him so. He was soothed by my attention, but he appeared like one who had been roughly awakened from a pleasant dream—to have felt till now as if the hand of adversity never could reach him, as if he were born to have his own way invariably, as if fortune itself always had obeyed him and always should.

A man so accustomed to sunshine had been unprepared for a storm, and in this dark hour he was utterly prostrated both in heart and spirit. One only comfort he had, in talking of his lost son.

He poured into my willing ear a thousand reminiscences of his boyhood, many a cherished anecdote of his maturer years, and all the high anticipations he had once indulged from his great talents and noble spirit. We were hours together, and he talked with the garrulity of age, till at length a pang would suddenly shoot through his memory—a spasm of intolerable suffering distort his features, and then he would close his eyes unable to proceed.

'By the sadness of the countenance, the heart is made better,' but in this case, Sir William would listen to none of the consolation that religion could have imparted—he hated its very name. In the thoughts of Lady Ashcourt and myself, Henry was a glorified being, still existing and now happy, whom we were to meet again in that world where the Saviour has revealed that there are MANY mansions, but Sir William's thought followed him only to the coffin and to the grave. One indelible image was stamped upon his mind, and seemed burned into his very brain—that of his brave and affectionate son stretched lifeless on the deck of his ship. The strength of his language and of his feelings, instead of being addressed to God who could have comforted him, were addressed to us, who could only grieve like himself.

'If Henry had been threatened with any single misfortune, with the loss of a limb, with the loss of

his rank, or his health, how ill could I have borne it; but to lose all, to be at once torn from every tie that bound him to life, and wrapped in the cold grave,' he said, in a tone of indescribable anguish, 'Jane Bouverie, it would be worth a whole hecatomb of worlds to me, if I could blot out from my memory the thought that, but for my interference, Henry might have been alive now and happy. Who can ever console me? Who can reconcile me even to live out my days? I have wound up my accounts with the world, and to me the interests of this life are no more. Nothing can hurt me now, for my heart has become stone. Public and private sorrows are alike indifferent; I am deprived of my all.'

Sir William usually spoke afterwards as if no one had ever suffered grief but himself—as if he were the only man living to be pitied, and the sorrow that fell to me seemed very soon almost to have escaped from his recollection. All was dark and cheerless lamentation; and if we attempted a word of comfort, he would say, 'Teach me, if you can, how to forget, and till then I must mourn. In all the world, what can I enjoy or desire? All my earthly possessions seem wrapped now in a winding-sheet! We have in this life much indeed to fear, and little to hope hereafter.'

'Or rather,' I said, 'might you not still have something to hope here in doing good to others, and

much to enjoy hereafter in meeting Henry again, and all who are lost to you now? Bitter as the cup is, which has been placed in our hands, yet we must drink it; and if we do not ask for God's blessing on our sorrows, its worst ingredients will be thrown in by ourselves.'

Sir William was in that unhappy state, so common in old age, of seeking now to view all things in their worst light, and of hugging to himself the bitterest thoughts that his wounded heart could suggest. He turned with loathing from every topic of comfort, and exhibited a painful ingenuity in fancying evils that existed not, or in exaggerating those that did. I sat beside him, often in wondering regret, to hear his distorted views of all around, blaming himself, blaming others, and repining unceasingly in a voice that quivered with age, grief, and irritability.

The peevishness that made others avoid Sir William called forth my sympathy the more, and brought me oftener to meet him at Ashcourt Abbey, where at length he felt injured whenever I left him, even for the far dearer duty of attending my kind and patient father. Sir William, surrounded by every comfort that wealth could purchase, or luxury suggest, had not, like my venerated parent, the lamp within, which burns most brightly in the darkest hours, which lights us cheeringly on to the

very verge of the grave, and which death itself cannot extinguish. As our lamented Henry was never more to be seen on the visible earth, Lord Charles, who had been brought early into the improving school of adversity, continually directed me by his conversation to follow the dead in thought, where, even now, our souls could hold communion before the throne of God; but with Sir William, when his spirit seemed so torn to pieces with grief, that he would impatiently express a wish for death itself, the most distant allusion to religion annoyed him. He looked as amazed at its being introduced in conversation as if the church bells had been rung in his ear, and always imagined, when I began the subject, that he was supposed to be at the point of death.

Though he often made an irritable exclamation, wishing he were dead, yet Sir William always talked as if he were to live for ever. He anticipated the most distant periods of time with evident certainty, and spoke as if any preparations which were necessary might be begun years hence, and completed on the shortest notice.

During our conversations together, Sir William harped incessantly upon grievances, real or imaginary. He fancied slights from his old friends which they never intended; resented injuries which, in other times, he would probably have despised;

and actually persuaded himself, after he had for some time avoided society, that society avoided him. 'My former friends,' he said, in a tone of melancholy pique, 'seem, like the mourners round a grave, to have taken their hats off with a farewell bow, and left me. The chief feature in human life is disappointment, and what disappointment is greater than to be forgotten by those one has served and liked.'

'I am sure you are mistaken,' I replied, 'and that if your friends had any way in which to testify their attachment, it would most gladly be done. I look upon the regard of those who love me with the same feeling of security as on a sum of money lodged in the Bank of England. I know that the full amount is there and ready for use, but I do not needlessly test it, by drawing frequent or unnecessary drafts on my credit; yet, when a period comes like this, Sir William, when so much is needed, then is the time for you to make a demand on the store of friendship which belongs to you, and to feel confident that your utmost desires will be gratified.'

My feelings had always shrunk with dislike from listening to angry invectives, but an attempt to defend any of his absent friends from accusation or reproach only drew the tide of anger on myself, and he exclaimed in accents of bitterness, 'Well, well

I must no longer say what I think. I may not open my heart with confidence to any one now living. None are left to care for my feelings! I speak little in general, but I must speak less in future than ever.'

It was a remark of Bishop Warburton's, that there is sort of 'devil's memory' with which men are furnished, to remember all the affronts, mortifications, and annoyances which it would be so much for their best happiness to forget; and it became a subject of daily increasing astonishment to me, how carefully Sir William stored up the recollection of a careless word that he had misinterpreted, of some trifling forgetfulness that he had taken amiss, or of benefits he had conferred which were ungratefully requited, and he cherished every thought that could revive the painful images of the past, or paint a yet more painful future. As Lady Ashcourt remarked, Sir William had been always accustomed to excite much notice, and he had a craving for it; therefore, now that he could be preëminent in nothing else, he had even a strange satisfaction in becoming conspicuous for the greatness of his calamity, for the inconsolable, almost unapproachable, extremity of his grief. Those who can no longer be envied, would rather be pitied than cease to occupy a considerable space in the eye of others; and Sir William had come to experience a sort of joy in grief, a feeling

that would have caused him to prefer, in his progress through life hereafter, the most thorny part of the road for his own footsteps, rather than the easiest, and to place a stone under his head rather than a pillow.

It was strange certainly that I had become the person to comfort Sir William for the misfortune which his prejudice against myself had occasioned, but I considered it the best tribute I could pay to Henry's memory if I succeeded in bearing with and in comforting his afflicted father, who had become already accustomed to look for support to me, when I needed more to receive it than give it. With every desire to bear my grief, as duty to my father, to myself, and above all, to my God, directed, yet the task seemed to become from day to day a more heavy and difficult one. I could not but often indulge myself in tracing over my remembrance of all Henry's opinions, in recalling his favorite anecdotes, and in looking back on many of the gay, humorous dialogues we had enjoyed together; but all these were 'like withered flowers upon a last year's tomb.' There were yet more pleasing associations with Henry, however, in my Bible, where I frequently opened on pages in which he had written explanations, with a pencil on the margin, or I read over the sermons he had liked, and the religious books he had given me. Such recollections were

sacredly precious to me, holding out hope, as they did, for the future, yet in the meanwhile, like snow-flakes at night, they rendered the surrounding darkness more intense.

To talk of sorrow is undoubtedly a safety-valve, which keeps the burdened heart from bursting; therefore, as grief thus naturally relieves itself, all should be encouraged to take the comfort afforded by opening their minds; but such consolation I was obliged, in a great measure, to deny myself. The sympathy of my father was so tender and affectionate, that I endeavored to lead his thoughts away from the affliction that occupied my own, and with Sir William my task of conversation became every day more trying. Deaf as he was, and difficult as every one found it to make him hear, he constantly put a wrong construction on what we said, and the perverse ingenuity with which he distorted the most inoffensive remarks into something at which he might have a right to be irritated, was truly surprising. If I spoke too low, he complained that I would not accommodate myself to his infirmities; and yet, if in my anxiety to please, I pitched my voice louder than the exact degree which was necessary, that also became an offence, and still he lived in the belief that his deafness was no annoyance to any but himself.

If ever, wearied or vexed, almost beyond en-

durance, by a temper so unlike any which had hitherto been known to me, I felt almost inclined to abandon my self-appointed task—the name of Henry, whispered in my most secret thoughts, acted as a talisman, and restored to my mind the impulse of kindness and of sympathy that brought me to visit Sir William; and when I looked in the old man's face, worn and withered as it was, yet I still traced in the features a resemblance that endeared him to me, and that filled my heart with the deepest emotions of interest and pity.

When a man has once established a reputation for bad temper, it becomes a favor whenever he chooses to be in good humor. Sir William, who judged of others by himself, had a strange belief that when I became silent, I must of course be sulky, and he generally imagined on these occasions that I was angry at the last thing he said. One day, when I broke a long pause by some casual remark, he said, in a tone of stern reproach, 'So Miss Bouverie has at last found her voice again. It is a pity that you should take the trouble of speaking to me when your own thoughts seem so much more agreeable. I must be allowed to remark that your temper is none of the best, if you are so irritated, merely because I said, half-an-hour since, that the picture you admire of Lord Ashcourt is a mere daub—and I say so still!'

'I was not angry, Sir William! I merely thought—'

'Pray don't explain what you thought. Nothing, I am sure, it could be very agreeable for me to know. I am old and nervous now—very unfit for contention; but you have been angry ever since I spoke last.'

'Only silent, but so far from being angry, Sir William, I really had forgotten what we were talking about. I was thinking of something entirely different.'

'There! You are not irritated now! not at all, of course, with your voice quivering and your face flushed; but no matter. I feel unwell, and quite unfit to contend with any one.'

'Then,' said I cheerfully, 'suppose we call another subject?'

'Speak of what you please! all topics are alike to me, if I give offence by merely expressing my own opinion.'

'You really are under an entire mistake, Sir William. I am most anxious always to hear your opinions.'

'Yes, when they agree with your own.'

'And I am quite as well pleased when they differ.'

Such scenes occurred often now at Ashcourt, after which, Sir William would continue in a

ground-swell of ill humor, and remain for hours inaccessible to all my assiduities, or else agree to everything I said, in the tone of a martyr who dared not do otherwise. If I proposed a walk, he professed to feel unwell, and unable to enjoy anything, yet if I then prepared to go out myself, he would complain of nervous headache, and broadly hint that it was owing to his being so much left alone and neglected.

These were perplexing days, and often did I wish that any one with a good head and heart could direct me how to act. It seemed strange sometimes how much more highly Sir William estimated the slightest attention from strangers, on whom he had no claim, than the greatest from any one whom he considered bound to show it. The one he received as a gift, and the other as a debt. He felt ten times more gratified if a neighbor sent to inquire for his health, than by the daily assiduities of his own sister and myself. If she performed the most arduous offices of kindness for him, he merely returned a careless matter-of-course 'Thank you!' —but if any casual visitor only reached him his spectacles, or offered him a newspaper, his thanks were profuse and reiterated.

The easiest and safest resource for diverting his mind, when I saw Sir William's temper becoming dangerous, was, to produce the backgammon board,

at which he liked to play an endless succession of games—not that they could excite much interest, but they enabled him, for an hour or more, to escape from himself. It roused him from the dull stagnation of mind and feeling into which he was sinking, and that was in itself so great a relief, that, even in the morning at last, he would often challenge me to the contest, and in the Abbey Sir William was accustomed to exact a sort of military obedience, without hesitation or remonstrance. Never shall I forget the loathing with which I first listened by daylight to the rattle of dice, yet who could refuse the old man's request, or deny him any amusement that might afford a cheering relaxation to his mind and thoughts?

Grief cannot last more nights than mornings, and where most turbulent at first, it is soonest laid at rest. Sir William now devoted much of his leisure to the most assiduous care of his own health, and beguiled his time during the next few months by becoming an amateur of all the medical systems which whim or fancy suggested. By degrees his spirits were most wonderfully restored. He had always hated a black dress, and soon left off every semblance of mourning, which common civility to the memory of his son should have prolonged. Before a year had elapsed, he returned to his town house, his clubs, and his dinner parties. All his old

champagne-and-turtle habits being resumed, Sir William was again, to my very great astonishment, the man of ambition, and the man of the world, as before. By degrees he reconciled himself to the prospect of his nephew representing the family hereafter, and said it was useless any longer to lament what could not now be helped—'What cannot be cured must be endured, and life is so short that we should all make the best we can of its passing events.'

When I expressed to my father how much I had been surprised at Sir William's rapid recovery, the effect of whose grief seemed no more likely to leave a permanent impression than a stroke given to water, he replied, 'My dear Jane! I have known people receive such heavy and successive blows, that they seemed, as it were, pounded in a mortar with adversity, and yet they came forth unchanged. It is only God's blessing on affliction that makes it efficacious to improve us, and with that, the bitter draught has a pleasing flavor in the end. We all have a heavy burden to carry, and a man may either for a short period postpone the evil hour when we must bear its whole weight, by forgetting it, or he may obtain that strength from God which shall enable him to carry it always with ease. Let us face the events of life as they come, not driving reflection from us, but with thoughtful submission

welcoming that which, if we could see the end from the beginning, is undoubtedly best, and consider that, during our mortal existence, the rule is that we must suffer, the exception is, when we do not. The patience of Christians must be exercised, and it never would be so, if all events were to be ordered according to our wishes.'

> 'God of our fathers! here, as they,
> We, walk the pilgrims of a day;
> As transient guests our works admire,
> And instant to our home retire.

CHAPTER XV.

'I feel existence only which I once enjoyed.'

How universally is it the language of society to maintain that no lady willingly remains single! Who does not frequently hear such remarks as these: 'I wonder nobody ever married Miss Smith, or Miss Campbell,' as if anybody might at any time have done so? On scarcely any subject whatever is the actual truth known in this world, and least of all in such affairs of the heart, one party being anxious, of course, for secrecy, and the other bound to it by the most sacred obligations of confidence and gratitude. From the hour of Henry's death, which caused me all the grief of widowhood, I felt that, for myself, the die was cast, and my own history closed. His memory could never be blotted out by another. Great was my surprise, therefore, when, after I had attained the mature age of thirty, a letter reached me from one of my old Ashcourt

friends, Sir Ernest Gordon, requesting permission to renew his addresses, which had before been unsuccessful, and assuring me of the sacred respect he should always pay to those feelings of preference for another which had influenced my former rejection, but could not, after the calamitous event which had ended my engagement, be an impediment now.

Tears filled my eyes while reading the generous sentiments in which Sir Ernest expressed his unchangeable attachment, and his hope, if opportunity were allowed him, that he might succeed at last in replacing my unexpected loss. Such a letter could not be received without emotion, coming, as it did, from one whose high literary reputation, large fortune, and personal worth, would have rendered him acceptable to almost any lady he had honored with his preference. Had I been ten years younger, and possessed of ten times the fortune and accomplishments which I could ever pretend to, even then I should scarcely have thought myself worthy of him; but now, broken in heart and in health, shrunk and withered with early sorrow, my very mind, as it were, darkened by a perpetual cloud, how could I hope ever to make Sir Ernest as happy as he deserved! He had known me ten years before, in the bloom of youth, of happiness, and—shall I say it?—of beauty; but now I was not the same being he had loved and known formerly, and for his own sake, in

replying to his letter, I told him so. I gratefully thanked him for his preference, but as the shock of Henry's death, and all my subsequent grief, had rendered me prematurely old in mind, in spirits, and even in appearance, I would not inflict myself on any one now, and least of all on Sir Ernest, who deserved a fate so much happier than being united to the mere wreck of Jane Bouverie. If I knew nothing else, I at least knew myself, and the more highly I thought of him, the more my sense of justice forbade me to enter on an engagement which he must sooner or later regret.

We never met again; but five years afterwards I read in the newspapers a casual announcement of Sir Ernest Gordon's death by the plague, at Constantinople, and most truly did I lament his fate. He deserved all the gratitude and regard with which he has ever since retained a place in my memory, and I grieved that apparently no other had obtained that share of his affections which he once bestowed on me.

How Sir Ernest died, and all the circumstances in which even a stranger might be interested, I never was to know, nor ever to hear in what light he had viewed my answer to his letter. All was buried in oblivion, and the curtain had fallen between us for ever. There is an unknown history of our own lives concealed from us in this world, but which it

may be our privilege in another existence to learn, and a very curious revelation it would be! Shall we then know in what degree we have really been loved by others, or disliked; why various events which seemed about to take place never did occur; what influence we have ourselves had over the destiny of others; what unimagined effect has followed on some casual remarks, what joy or what sorrow we have unknowingly caused; what hours, days, or years have been occupied by others in thinking of us; what place we held in the conversation of those who knew us; and even what good or what evil we have unconsciously done?

There is said to be an awkward corner in every person's life, at which the keen interest once felt amidst the busy scenes of this feverish life, in our own prospects, becomes greatly diminished, and to fill up the blank, we must endeavor to identify ourselves more with the hopes and feelings of others. I had long felt that the romance of my own history was ended, and my subsequent endeavor was, amidst a vortex of employments, to make them all useful, as the surest means to render them interesting. It touched me deeply to observe the care and the tact with which my aged father suggested or encouraged many little undertakings, at which, under happier circumstances, he would only have smiled. If our duties are at all times our best pleasures, they were

especially so for me in all that related to my father; but, besides these, I renewed my visits to many solitary old ladies, whom, in the hurry of life, I had formerly neglected. I redoubled my attendance at a clothing society recently established by our parish clergyman, and I taught a few neglected orphans to read. The comfort I derived myself from the Holy Scriptures made me more anxious that others might be enabled to enjoy them, and I studied the Bible, on my own account, more closely than ever. From this time I forced myself to persevere in a systematic course of reading, such as appeared most conducive to the strengthening of my mind, and the confirming of those religious principles which were now to be more than ever my resource in life, as well as my support in death. The gay effervescence of my spirits was extinct; but still, as long as my father lived to be an object of continual solicitude, I had a motive to be cheerful in trying to keep him so.

It is not more the natural tendency of a ball when thrown in the air to fall again on the ground, than it is the usual inclination of the old to sink into habits of retirement. By a vigorous effort some keep up their taste for society to the last, but the exertion is laborious, and as soon as the aged begin to indulge their humor by withdrawing from strangers, the habit grows rapidly into an aversion for frequent or even occasional intercourse with any

one to whom they are not daily accustomed. My father, with impaired health and broken spirits, had long since wearied of all society except my own. He felt an increasing indifference to the greetings of such old friends as occasionally beset us in our walks, and hastily glided past them in the crowded streets and parks, where we usually strolled.

Had I removed entirely away from the world of our familiar friends, they might all, in after years, have gladly welcomed me back, but in the midst of them all to avoid any intercourse caused an almost total cessation of our acquaintance. It takes not an hour to destroy those intimacies which we have been years in forming; and, after exchanging a mere passing acknowledgment with those whom it would have annoyed Lord Charles to stop and speak to, even that superficial ceremony was dropped by most of our friends, who cared not to keep up an acquaintance we had ceased to improve, and which my father seemed almost anxious to relinquish. This gradually led to the total cessation of many old and valued friendships, as the companions with whom I had been most intimate passed me at last with averted eyes, or with a hurried matter-of-course salutation, and I could feel no surprise, though some regret, at their becoming thus inevitably alienated.

Still did my heart cling to the thought of social happiness; and as we passed many a gay family

group on their way through the park, I pictured to myself their happy fireside circle at home, and the joyous friends that would welcome them back. The smoke of every chimney raised in my mind ideas of domestic society, and even the passing of a carriage, as it travelled along the road, made me think of a rapturous arrival at the journey's end. How blessed are such ties to life and to home! Often, in strolling along the road with my father, I caught glimpses of bright glowing hearths, encompassed by faces that looked as bright, or of a well arranged table, surrounded by smiling countenances. How gladly would I then have paused to contemplate with pleasing sympathy scenes so like those of which I once had formed a part. It seemed to me a dream that I had ever been one among the gay and happy, when sometimes visions of Ashcourt Abbey flitted before my memory, vivid to agony with the image of Henry Crofton, and all the gay companions of my youth. Even these remembrances, sad as they were, became darkened by increase of sorrow, when we received an announcement that my good kind old friend, Lord Ashcourt, had suddenly died.

His heart-broken widow retired to her jointure-house in Cornwall, and that much-loved place became the property of Lord Ashcourt's brother, a man said by the world in general to be in every respect

his superior, but, 'oh! the difference to me!' Lady Ashcourt kindly sent me a ring containing one precious lock of her husband's snow-white hair, the only part of mortal man that decays not when he dies. It was a gift most dearly prized, a monument to his memory always in my sight, and yet, when I first received that relic, and thought how kind a friend it represented, that this was all which remained to me of one whose eye had so often kindled with pleasure when I entered his house, and whose heart had so often dictated acts of indulgent kindness to me, my eyes became blinded with tears till I could see it no more.

Meanwhile, nothing could be more brilliant than the prosperity of my brothers and sisters, the written report of which cast a cheerful gleam often over our benighted fire-side, and my father lived from day to day on the distant rumor of that success and happiness, the actual reality of which he never seemed destined to witness.

Lord Plinlimmon, when he died, left Eliza a very richly endowed widow, and I anticipated that her first use of liberty and independence would be to visit her kind old father, in his age and infirmity, but this was far from being her intention. My sister looked back upon the 'unsunned land of her birth,' as on a gloomy cavern, in which her youth had been wasted, and in all her letters, Lady Plin-

limmon seemed to recollect our early home with contemptuous indifference. It became evident to me, in many subsequent instances, that the Bouveries are not a strong minded family, which could stand prosperity without being dazzled or intoxicated by it; and let me acknowledge here, with gratitude, the wisdom that withheld it from myself.

My honored father had often enumerated to us formerly what he considered to be the gradations of happiness. He felt thoroughly convinced that the truest and best enjoyment is derived from religion —the next degree is gained in the exercise of our affections—the next springs from being useful to others—but as last of all and least of all, he ranked that which attended on mere amusement. Eliza, to judge by her conduct, seemed to have read his opinion backwards, for, setting aside every natural tie of attachment, every desire to render her wealth a blessing to others, or a real benefit to herself, she plunged into a career of continental gaiety, which seemed to leave her no time either for thought or for feeling.

'It sometimes occurs to me, Jane,' observed my father one day, in concluding a long conversation, 'what a remarkable contrast there is between the lot in life of my two children, yourself and Eliza. She possesses every good that relates to her bodily

comfort—fortune, luxury, prosperity, and amusement—but each successive day brings the time nearer when she must part with them all; and each day brings the time nearer when you shall fully enjoy those benefits to your soul which have been gained to you in adversity. It is hard to bear, but blessed in the end. When eternity opens to us all,' he added, in an accent of solemnity never to be forgotten, 'may my prayers for you both be remembered and answered.'

Caroline was detained constantly at Dublin, her husband being in great practice as a barrister there, and unable to spare time, more precious to him than gold, for visiting us. My favorite brother, Robert, was far up the country in India, with his regiment, where the promotion was rapid, owing to the climate being unhealthy; and Edward having, as he wrote to my father, most profitably shaken the pagoda tree at Calcutta, enjoyed the highest appointments, and had acquired an almost countless income. His letters were in a vein of triumphant success. He became in the end Secretary to the Governor-General, whose daughter, Lady Alice Temple, he ultimately married, by whom he had several daughters, and one only very precious son.

The news at length most unexpectedly reached us, that Edward, being charged with despatches to Government, had set out on his way home, and,

coming overland, he might be expected almost as soon as the letter which announced his return.

The joy of such a prospect, and its sudden approach, were too much for my father's debilitated frame. How well do I remember the look of tearful joy in his aged face, and the convulsive quivering of his mouth, when he silently, with a tremulous hand, reached me Edward's letter, but could not speak. I had never till that moment been aware how feeble my father was, but he leaned back in his arm chair, overcome by his feelings, with the tears running down his face, the very image of bodily weakness and of strong emotion. 'Oh that I could but live to behold him!' were his first words, in a tone of earnest supplication to God. 'Let not the grave close over me till I have seen my son. I would but give him my blessing and die. Yet not my will be done, but Thine.'

The warmth of his heart had indeed exhausted itself. Long had it glowed with fervent love to his children. Long had he been the centre and keystone of all our attachment, and if devoted affection could have averted death, mine might have shielded him from its approach; but when I entered his room early the following morning, I found, to my grief and consternation, that he had sunk into a collapse of extreme weakness, from which the doctor thought at first it would be impossible to rouse him.

Great skill and active measures had soon, however, so beneficial an effect, that hopes were entertained of his surviving some months, though none of his ultimate recovery. I wrote to my sisters and Edward, mentioning our father's sole remaining wish—that he might live to see them—but he sunk so visibly and so rapidly, that my hopes were very faint and fluctuating of any one but myself being present to close his eyes.

How frequently is the death-bed of a parent the last scene in which a large and prosperous family is ever gathered all together under the roof which sheltered their infancy! Thus it was now. With the rapidity of thought, my sisters and Edward obeyed the call of nature, and hurried to assemble round the dying-pillow of our last, our much-honored parent. My father seemed as if he had clung to the last remnant of existence till he could once more behold them. They came, the brother and the sisters for whom I had prayed every day, whom I had so longed once more to embrace. They were the same beings, and yet how changed!—Their names and their features were as before, but in character and manner, in circumstances and prospects, in hopes and fears, they were not the brother and sisters of my own early youth. How altered were our relative situations since the time when one heart and one spirit actuated as all; but

still, different as they all were, they seemed evidently shocked and grieved, to the utmost degree, at the first sight of our father's kind benignant countenance, shrunk, disfigured, and fading into the hue of death.

It has often occurred to me, when attending on a scene of sickness and extreme suffering, where all the mourning members of a family assemble to give their sympathy, that if the pain could be divided amongst them, and each individual permitted to endure for his friend a part of the agony, some generous hearts would offer to undergo the greater share, while others, apparently in equal grief, might probably undertake none. Some would perhaps volunteer to endure a hundredth part of the anguish, some a third—a mother for her child would gladly relieve the young sufferer of all—and what a daughter would do for such a parent as mine, is known only to myself.

Truly it seemed to me like the rehearsal of my own death, when I saw him who had shared every thought and emotion of my heart, now on the verge of another world; but, for my comfort, he was as near to heaven as any one could be on earth, and as nearly perfect as any one can be who still has a mortal nature. Such a scene was new indeed to Eliza, who gave way to a burst of hysterical grief when she first beheld our father, which it shook his aged frame

with sorrowful agitation to witness, but he kissed her with a look of the deepest tenderness, saying, in solemn but most affectionate accents, 'The will of God, Eliza, should be our will. If it were entirely so, there would be no grief.'

How high is the station attained by any one on the point of death—his every word is precious, his every look observed, and each sentence from dying lips is recorded in every heart. It is a blessed opportunity of usefulness to those we love, and my father exerted himself to his utmost strength, and beyond it for our sakes, to give us comfort, and to do us good.

My sisters, both feeling the agonies of a fresh and vigorous grief, evidently wondered at the subdued and almost death-like composure with which I was enabled to go through the daily and nightly routine of my duties. Emotion with me had long been exhausted. That comes only with a new grief, but sorrow loses its leaven in time, and falls at last with a heavy lifeless weight upon the hearts of those who endure it permanently. It seems in general but little understood, that those who suffer under an overpowering weight of sorrow, become like persons living constantly in a darkened room, the darkness is to them so habitual, that they feel equally oppressed by it always. New persons who approach the afflicted, expect a fresh access of sorrow, for to

them the gloom is new and startling when contrasted with the cheerfulness from which they come, but the sufferer himself has the weight constantly present with him, and the very circumstances that would bring back a forgotten grief to those who can forget, produce no emotion in those whose sad remembrances are never absent, and cannot therefore be more vivid at any one time than another. A note of music, a fancied resemblance, an accidental visitor, may bring back the sting of a sorrow long forgotten; but that which lives and rankles incessantly in the heart, nothing either visibly increases or diminishes—

> 'A sorrow that throws
> It's bleak shade alike o'er our joys and our woes,
> O'er which life nothing brighter nor darker can fling,
> For which joy hath no balm, nor affliction no sting.'

I stood beside my sisters and my brother like a spectre, in whom the strength and the energy of mortal sorrow were extinguished. The broken chords could sound no more, for with my father were bound up all my earthly hopes and affections, and with him they must soon be buried in the grave. None could venture to doubt that his days, his hours, his very moments were numbered, and each instant was valued by him as a means of consoling me, or of preparing himself. Night and day he delighted in the privilege of praying, and it is a

beautiful peculiarity of religious exercises that we need never depend on time, place, or circumstances for their enjoyment—a piously disposed Christian, if blind, deaf, lonely, in darkness and poverty, has access to God as freely as in all the vigor of his mind and body.

There is an implicit acquiescence in the inevitable will of God, common to all men, which renders them, with few exceptions, perfectly resigned when they know themselves to be actually and undoubtedly dying; but a devoted Christian, like my father, is enabled to testify more than a mere instinctive submission to absolute necessity, as he can willingly, and in some cases gladly, obey the Divine mandate. It was strange, indeed, to see my father conversing so intelligently with me, and yet to know that not only was he at the point of death, but perfectly aware also of his impending fate, perfectly conscious that it was both near and certain, yet entirely, though very solemnly resigned.

> 'Our hands in one, we did not shrink
> From life's severest due:
> Our hands in one, we did not blink
> The terrible and true.'

The finest minds are those that feel the greatest awe of death, for in proportion as men have intellect, feeling, or piety, it will always be seen that their estimate of our final dissolution rises in sublimity;

and far from the fear of death being a degradation to man, it elevates him. To a mere animal, death is but the extinction of animal life, and the loss of animal enjoyment, but to the Christian, who believes that the removal of his body from his soul shall be like the removal of a shade from a lamp, to display before his sight the glories of the invisible world, the more he considers it, and the more he is capable of reflection, the more solemnly impressive does the anticipation become.

'There are,' said my father one day to me, 'three states in which a man may be placed—we have life and we have death; but besides there is for me now an intermediate state, when, poised on the shaking plank between both, I am yet in the world, though not of it—when I know that for me every earthly concern is wound up and ended, but still I have not yet attained my heavenly inheritance. Even to a Christian who has long contemplated this change, how different appears every object when the sentence of immediate death is upon me, when the solid world is shrinking from my grasp, and the spiritual world is becoming my all; but as our Saviour descended into the tomb, he has given us the comfort of knowing that his grave is already empty, and that ours also shall be vacant when we rise to meet him.'

'Yes, my dear father,' replied I, sadly, 'it appears

to me that to a Christian the sting of death is scarcely so severe as the sting of life.'

'The chief sting in both is caused by our sins, and how often do I now with thankfulness reflect on that text in which it is promised that we shall at last be "presented *faultless*" before God. After struggling through a long life of temptation, that promise is indeed a joyful one. Life resembles a long voyage on which we must at last suffer shipwreck; and who would not desire to provide, in the safety of religion, a plank to which he might cling in the fathomless and boundless ocean of eternity? Death is not an extinction of my being, but a continuation; and were it not for anxiety about you, my dear Jane, I could leave this world now, and not cast a look behind.'

Most gratefully let me record that, great as my father's joy was in beholding again the more prosperous among his children, the deepest of his emotions, and the most ardent of his prayers, were for the companion of his aged years. Never shall I forget the effort he made to impress his last worldly care on the minds and hearts of my sisters and of my brother, when he solemnly committed me to their tenderest affection, and they, willing at the moment to relieve their own hearts from witnessing his solicitude, promised anything and everything according to his wishes.

'In aught that tries the heart, how few withstand the proof.' There was a look of feeble earnestness in his expression, and of doubtful hope, as my father tried evidently to satisfy himself that they were not only sincere at present but to be trusted hereafter; yet I was deeply touched by the appearance of sympathising perplexity with which he again turned to me. It was plain that he did not yet feel satisfied; but, with his few ebbing moments more, what could be done? There was a melting tenderness in his voice and manner, remembered yet, after the lapse of years, with emotion, but impossible to be described, when he called me to him some hours afterwards, and said, with a look of anxious interest—

'Jane, my much-loved daughter! the last testimony of my long experience in life is, that great indeed are the benefits of adversity. A broken heart may be the happiest of all, and surely it was a privilege to spend so many of my latter years in sorrow, as that alone could have estranged a disposition such as mine from the shadows of time, and disciplined me for this sad and very solemn hour. A Christian, without affliction, is only like a soldier on parade; but let us hope that I have now fought a good fight, as well as finished my course. Our salvation is not a work to be done, but a gift to be accepted; and I can pass into another world with a

perfect unhesitating confidence in the work of our blessed Saviour. If I only felt assured that there shall be comfort for your future years, I should close these eyes in peace.'

'My dear kind father, cast that care upon God, and think of it no more. If the uses of adversity to yourself are so great, why feel anxious that I should be spared it?'

'True! my Jane; I shall trust as a Christian; but I feel, too, as a parent. No doubt, experience proves that it is well the joys and sorrows of our children should not be of our own choosing. We see in holy Scripture that Jacob would not have submitted to Joseph's residence in Egypt, nor would the Virgin Mary have consented to the death of her Son and Saviour; yet from both these events, afflicting as they were at the time, the most precious of our blessings arose.'

'Be comforted, then, on my behalf, and believe me, my dear father, when you are gone, I shall in future look upon life as the sailor looks through his telescope, for the prospect beyond. Any good that comes, let me receive as an unexpected blessing, with thankfulness; and every sorrow shall seem to come from a hand that leads me on to follow you. There is a limit to human suffering, my father, but that limit is death. I have suffered, and deeply do I suffer now; but my tears shall not be tears of

despondency while a merciful God is willing to hear and to answer prayer. Time is not eternal; at last it will be ended; and then ties dearer than any that I can ever now have upon earth shall again be reunited.'

'Jane, if your anchorage be firmly fixed on the rock of Christ's redemption, it need matter little whether your intermediate hours be passed in sunshine or in storm—not more than it matters to a traveller at an inn whether he be made comfortable for the hours he stays there or not; and yet I cannot divest myself of anxiety for your welfare in time to come. It is a trial of my faith and submission, thus to leave you alone. How strange a world this is, in which we are surrounded by a thousand conflicting wishes, hopes, and duties, in which, too, we must discover the right path and follow it, or perish! My dear Jane, your father's last prayer for you is, that the holy Scriptures may be your compass through life, and the Holy Spirit your guide until death.'

While his mind and memory seemed thus bright as ever, and his heart as warm, while all that constitutes the better part of man shone in its brightest vigor, and the body alone decayed; how did it startle me anew sometimes, as if I had never heard of death before, when a realizing consciousness burst upon my mind of what death actually is.

My father, my friend, companion, and counsellor, without whom I had never yet known one hour of existence, was now about to vanish for ever from the scenes with which his presence had always hitherto been associated—that very countenance which now expressed so much affection was soon to be incapable of emotion; the hand that grasped mine so affectionately, to drop insensible from my hold; and the eyes that gazed on me so kindly, to be closed in the iron sleep of death.

How thankful may we feel while anything yet remains to be done for those we love! The time comes but too soon when we dare not even pray for them, and then our grief seems only to begin. While our friends suffer, then every feeling for ourselves is obliterated by sympathy; and deeply though we mourn, yet the sorrow is mingled with social consolation; but when all is over, when not a word more of comfort can be uttered, nor an act of usefulness done, then affliction does indeed burst every boundary, and overwhelm us.

How turbulent and uncontrollable is the grief, as well as the joy, of those to whom this world is all in all! My sister Eliza, who always mistook emotion for feeling, had a hysterical fit of crying, which she called sensibility, ready for every emergency; but hasty showers are soon over. With her foreign habits of constant amusement and

recreation, she had not yet learned that to look every trying event of life in the face renders it much more possible to be borne, than to fly in terror from its dread realities.

The better instincts which had been awakened by the first shock of seeing our afflicted father, soon passed away; Eliza adopted that easy method of escaping the arduous attentions and melancholy sympathy due to the dying, by declaring that she positively believed our father would recover, and that she thought it wonderful how I could bear to contemplate any other termination to his illness. She had heard some instance from somebody somewhere, in which an old gentleman equally ill had once recovered. She protested that now, being accustomed to my father's looks, he really seemed very little altered; he was not entirely helpless; his memory continued perfect; and, by dint of cross-questioning or prompting the complaisant doctor, she extracted from him an opinion that there was no immediate danger. Leaving out the one word *immediate*, she interpreted the verdict into there being no danger at all, as it was evident, from what Dr. Hartwell said, that Lord Charles might recover, which she translated into an assurance that he probably would. On the strength of all this evidence, Lady Plinlimmon began an active course of visiting, renewed many former intimacies,

and entered into a succession of engagements which were, she repeatedly declared, a perfect bore. To hear Eliza talk, any one might have supposed it the greatest misfortune in life to be asked out to dinner, and yet she always ended by submitting to her fate, and attending the party, because, for some unanswerable reason, it was quite impossible to refuse.

Never before had I witnessed the full effect of continental dissipation in chilling the domestic affections. Eliza had become so undisguisedly, so unaffectedly selfish, that she did not even attempt to wear a veil over it. Far from imagining that she could be expected to make sacrifices for her friends, she scarcely fancied it possible willingly to suffer an inconvenience for them. The death of an acquaintance seemed scarcely to excite with her any more emotion than a traveller feels in the mail, when one passenger gets out, and another fills the vacant place. If any one of her inferiors met with a severe misfortune, the utmost stretch of her sympathy was to exclaim, in a tone of mingled pity and contempt, 'Poor wretch!' And when the accidental death of Lord Plinlimmon's successor, by a fall from his carriage, was announced, she having taken a temporary pique at him, seemed to feel no more commiseration than if a wasp had been killed on a window-pane. Her view of any event in life

and of any plan, great or small, good or evil, was very clear and concise, as she simply asked herself, 'How does it suit me?'

Now that Lady Plinlimmon had embarked heart and soul in a routine of London gaieties, it was not any suffering of Lord Charles, in body or in mind, that deterred her occasionally from scenes of festivity, nor any internal promptings of sympathy for a suffering and probably dying parent; but her social amusements must in some degree be regulated by the opinion of others. There are decencies exacted by society which people for their own sakes are obliged to pay, therefore, if our father's danger suddenly appeared more imminent, so that propriety might have made it necessary to remain at home, I have seen Lady Plinlimmon waylay the doctor, and seem as if she could willingly count every beat of the patient's pulse herself, to ascertain whether it would be 'safe' for her to attend a concert that morning, and whether she must absolutely give up her box at the opera at night; and she excused herself one day by saying to me—

'Jane! you and I, though sisters, are as opposite in every respect as the black and white queens on a chess-board! The world is divided into two classes, those who are gifted, like you, with a twenty sick-nurse power, and others, like me, who are not. I never had any genius that way; and I really do as I

would be done by, in leaving my father chiefly to a nurse who attends him much better than mere amateurs of physic like us. No doubt, you are a good Jane, and I am a naughty Eliza, being, as the old Duke used to say, too ornamental to be useful. I cannot sit still, and never could. As water requires to be in constant agitation to preserve it from stagnation, so does my mind require a continual excitement. To me amusement is a necessary of life, but there is in every human being a mysterious love of tragical excitement which you indulge now, by making out our father to be so much worse than he is.'

My heart was chilled by the sight of so much indifference; and I could not but think how little would be the worth of human friendship, if that were all. Edward found it convenient to adopt Eliza's tone respecting the probability of my father's recovery; and after having ascertained in the morning that he was still alive, and exchanging a few sentences with him, he vanished to the Oriental Club for the day.

No one ever had a more eloquent style of expressing sensibility than Edward, but sometimes it was rather overdone; and when telling my father that he hoped his life would yet be prolonged many years, it sounded always too like the tone of a host asking his guest to remain longer, when his welcome

was doubtful. Edward, when he saw me alarmed, declared that I had become quite hipped with remaining so much in a dark room, that by thinking consntatly on one subject I had got an exaggerated view of the danger, and for his own part he felt so unwilling to harbor the idea of our father being hopelessly ill, that he was resolved not on any account to entertain the apprehension. If my father expressed a sentiment or a thought suitable to his very solemn situation, my brother observed how sad it was to see him so hipped or low-spirited; and Lord Charles, to save the feelings of his son, defrauded himself often of the sympathy which was his due, by concealing how much he suffered.

Edward's wife, Lady Alice, was a mere piece of pretty bijouterie—very affected, very consequential, and exceedingly sensible of the honor she had done us, by accepting my brother's hand. Accomplished in every drawing-room acquirement, her music and painting were exquisite; she had a perfect knowledge of all languages, and was in short a complete caricature of modern education, with everything cultivated except the heart and understanding. She had an utter abhorrence of all the more melancholy realities of life—as the sight of great suffering appalled her, and all the lesser details of a sick-room disgusted her, therefore the visits she paid us were few indeed, and very far between. It was long, very

long, before my good kind father allowed himself to suspect that any one of his family, Edward, Eliza, or Lady Alice, could be otherwise than kind; and he evidently wished to hide it from me, even when he could no longer hide it from himself.

If Lady Alice entered the house, there was no extremity I could be in, of agitation, which made her overlook for a moment the minutest punctilios of dress; and when she called to inquire for Lord Charles, I have frequently observed her, while listening to a report of the doctor's opinion, examining the lace on my cap, or counting the flounces on my skirt. I still remember my first surprise when, conversing with Lady Alice, and giving her a few interesting and very affecting particulars of the peaceful state of mind which my father had lately enjoyed, she looked absently at me for some time, and then said, 'How very pleasing! but do you know Jane your collar is all on one side!'

It has been said, that the last pitch of human desolation is when a lady neglects her dress, and certainly no circumstance should ever betray any one into a slovenly indifference as to its proprieties. I never was in danger of falling into that error, because it had been one of my mother's most frequently inculcated opinions, that to be attired suitably to our age and station, is among the lesser virtues, and one not very frequently attained in

perfection. My father used to tell us too, that, as it is the business of life to dress our minds in every grace and virtue for eternity, so also the self-respect indicated by appropriate dress should never certainly be dispensed with; and the more the natural appearance becomes disfigured by age and infirmity, the more occasion there is to use every allowable means not to become repulsive.

Eliza used often laughingly to say, that, if she wanted a profession, she thought it would be a good plan to become 'A renovator of old ladies.' So few ever did themselves justice in their toilettes, that she could make this world a much better-looking place, if Government would entrust her with arbitrary power to seize all old girls above fifty, and force them to wear wigs, teeth, and rouge, caps made in the modern fashion, and dresses not defrauded of above half their materials.

In contrasting the reverence paid long since to the mere accumulation of years, with the lamentable indifference, and even the ridicule, which too often attends now on the infirmities of the old, some part of the blame may perhaps be attributed to the extraordinary ingenuity with which nearly all the ravages of time can in the present day be disguised. These can never be rendered ridiculous, except by the attempt to conceal them; but the young, seeing an aspect of artificial youth continued long after

nature would, in its usual course, have destroyed it, they look at last upon the old as so many detected impostors, whose intended deceit deserves no forbearance. Those in advancing years, who have once begun the repairs of art, can never leave off, but are led on, more and more, to continue them, as it would be an effort which few could ever find the moral courage to make, for any one to appear, perhaps in a single day, twenty years older than the night before, with the snow-white hair and other defects that have been long so carefully concealed.

Lady Alice estimated people exactly according as their appearance pleased or their conversation amused her. Even those who had foibles to be laughed at, she delighted in; and her utmost condemnation of any one was when she said of him, 'He does not entertain me.' To her the warmth of affection with which my father and I welcomed Edward's wife was a matter of perfect indifference; and never shall I forget the smiling condescension of her manner when first we met.

Condescending kindness is perhaps more difficult to bear than even actual rudeness, which we know exactly how to meet, and can afterwards avoid; but being naturally timid and diffident, I was at once and completely abashed, by the scrutinising gaze with which she surveyed me, the haste with

which she seemed to read all I had to say before it was uttered, and the coolness with which she substituted the most polished politeness, for all the confidence and affection I had anticipated.

Lady Alice's visits became daily more rare, more hurried, and more supercilious, till I scarcely knew, at last, whether most to dread the annoyance it caused to my father when she came, or the disappointment it occasioned him when she did not. Edward, who lived habitually on the any-thing-for-a-quiet-life-system—the most selfish of all—never interfered with Lady Alice, or accompanied her to the house, and his children were sent once or twice to call on us, but for so short a time, and with so many restrictions about their dress, their conduct, their food, and the time they might remain, that their coming at all seemed nearly a stolen pleasure.

Scarcely had my kind old father succeeded in rousing himself to narrate some favorite story of his military adventures, before the little boy was called away under marching orders with his tutor, to take exercise in the park, and the girls, all flounces and curls, were summoned to the carriage by their Swiss Bonne. The over-educated children of the present day have no time for invalid old grandfathers, and find too many important avocations with their music and dancing masters, to

visit a sick-room, or to cheer the old by their youthful vivacity and playful endearments. Even under every disadvantage, Lord Charles made some progress in the affections of my peculiarly amiable young nephew, whose yet unsophisticated heart was touched by the language and looks of kindness so genuine as ours, and I could not but think, in this case, that the mutual attachment of relations being the birth-right of both parties, Lady Alice, in keeping her son so much away, deprived us unjustly of a right which we had done nothing to forfeit, and her child of a blessing which Providence had intended him, in the enlightened and never-to-be-forgotten conversation of his venerable and dying grandfather.

> 'But life's short circuit wander'd o'er,
> He perish'd, and is heard no more.'

CHAPTER XVI.

'That eye no longer at my presence stirs,
'Which was the mirror to my joy, my grief, my love.'

For a very short period the light of other days again revisited the mind and heart of my father, but it was transient as a sun-beam, and a sudden relapse having brought him to the brink of the grave, he summoned us all around him, and, supported in my arms, he held out his hand in succession to each, gazed on the countenances of all, and feebly, but most solemnly, addressed us, in words still to the latest moment of my life dear and precious.

'My children! the last hour has struck that I can ever hear on earth; before another comes your father will be in eternity. How truly can I testify now, that the things of time are the shadows, and the things of eternity the realities. Whatever kind thoughts you have ever had of a parent who loved you, let them now be shown, not in fruitless

sorrow, but in your affection to each other, and especially to my Jane. She has laid you each under an obligation by sacrificing her whole youthful existence for me, and now is your time to remember it. Remember, too, her ready sympathy with you all; her constant attention in writing to you; her warm and disinterested attachment always. God only knows the value her care has been of to me, and he only can reward her. Jane's is a heart that would break with none on whom to bestow her affection; and oh! that I could express half what it has been worth to me.'

Often since that day, when my spirit has been oppressed with a sense of my loneliness and uselessness on earth, these words have come back as a soothing balm to my soul, reminding me how I once was loved, and once contributed to the happiness of another. Even then, though it seemed as if the hearts of all around me must ring true to such an appeal, yet a sensation of inexpressible desertion sunk upon my heart as I stood tremblingly beside my father in the chamber of death, and saw the best and the dearest link of my existence finally severed. Had I been the only created being in the wide world, I could scarcely have felt more entirely alone. Not a wish I had ever framed, nor a plan I had ever devised of earthly joy, in which he was not to have parti-

cipated. Whatever I had ever loved or feared—whatever had given me pleasure or sorrow—spoke of the father who had been associated with all. Without him I felt as if my heart would become a stone—as if it had died with him.

As it is one of the chief terrors of death that we must encounter it alone, so it is a heavy aggravation of sorrow when—as I did for the first time in my life now—we endure it alone. My father's parting spirit had looked with compassionate sympathy on my agonised grief, but he was now translated to that state of glory in which nothing could distress him, where his own work on earth, too, was finished; and could I even wish to bring him back?

To my brother and sisters, who had many other ties to life, this was only the loss of one, but to me it was the loss of all. The intensity of my feelings must have seemed to them almost a reproach, as they comforted themselves, and tried to console me, by repeating the usual customary phrase, 'This is a happy release!'

For any living being it is a solemn event to see the last who belong to a previous generation cut down by the scythe of time. We seem barricaded from the grave by those who should, in the course of nature, go there before us; but when we are ourselves brought forward to the front ranks, then

are we next in the order of succession to be thrust into the tomb, and to mingle our ashes with our buried forefathers. As I gazed on the fixed and pallid countenance of my father, soon to be for ever lost to my mortal sight, how near at hand seemed the time when he and I, and all I have ever known or heard of, shall stand together to receive the judgment of God.

Who that has visited the chamber of death can ever afterwards forget its solemn aspect, and who that has not can imagine the impression it makes? As I sat beside my father's remains, and looked on his much-loved countenance, the one only expression of which was that unalterable repose which hovers around the dead, I felt that in such a presence every emotion was commanded into silence. I thought of the vivid and intellectual expression with which those features had hitherto so constantly been lighted up. How solemn had been their aspect often, as he spoke to me of this very hour, when we were now together and yet separate—when his soul was with its Maker, and his body stretched lifeless beside me. How many subjects of religious thought which we had discussed together—how many which had agitated our minds or oppressed our spirits— crowded into my mind. They were still a mystery to me, but with a strange surprise I reflected, that now nothing was hid from

him. He had changed worlds, and he knew all. The difficulties which had perplexed him were solved; the fears which had overawed him were ended; death, which had been to him as it is to all, in proportion as they have intellect or feeling, a subject of solemn apprehension, was over.

None who go before can tell us what it is to die. The most confidential and beloved friends, who never had a thought apart from each other, can reveal nothing to those they leave behind. My father had not ceased to exist, yet the whole manner of his existence was changed, and I, who had shared in all his inquiries after truth, and in his prayers for the Divine teaching, even I could hear no word of instruction from him, now that he knew more than he had ever known before; but I must think and pray alone. I saw only through a glass darkly, but he face to face.

> They tell their joys and pains to none,
> That man may live by faith alone.

When the last trace of his mortal existence had vanished from my sight, with a pang not to be described, I sat down on my father's own deserted chair, and tried, in my solitude, to find comfort from that large old Bible, in which I had hitherto daily read to him, but when I attempted to look into it alone, my eyes became blinded with tears.

From the earliest period that I had in my infancy

lisped a prayer till the present hour, my father's name had never been omitted; but now for the first time it was to be mentioned no more. If there be a doctrine of the Roman Catholics that a Protestant could wish to believe, it would be, that we are still permitted to serve, by our prayers, those for whom every office of affection upon earth is at an end; but the account is wound up and sealed by death—the warm affections that live in the survivor may no longer avail the dead.

Who can tell or imagine the pang I now felt when first, in church, that commandment was read, to honor my father and mother,—a commandment imposing the duties which had once been my chief earthly joy, duties which now existed for me no more. Father and mother were names of endearment never more to pass my lips—never more to to be heard without sadness, and from that day never have I seen an aged parent leaning for support on his own daughter without the tears starting to my eyes. How often, too, in my devotions did the old habitual words hover on my lips never more to be uttered—those words not a day in my life forgotten, wherein it once was my delight to implore that every earthly blessing might rest on the head of my honored father. Still, even yet, I could change those words of supplication into the language of unutterable

thankfulness, that, in his utmost extremity, all spiritual comfort had been given to my father, and left to me.

'The churchyard bears an added stone,
The fire-side shows a vacant chair,
Here sadness dwells and weeps alone,
And death displays his banner there.
The life is gone, the breath is fled,
And what has been no more shall be,
The well-known form, the welcome tread,
Oh! where are they, and where is he?'

Mine was the solitude of a heart which had lost the only engrossing object, in all the wide world, to which it had been devoted; and now there seemed to fall upon me a total collapse of feeling and even of thought. Vague recollections of the past, and vague anticipations of the future, passed listlessly through my mind. Accustomed always to energetic action, I felt that now life had become a scene of objectless and most oppressive solitude. How general is that feeling, described by Madame de Stael, and experienced occasionally by me, and by almost every one in times like this, of great and startling agitation, as if the whole scene had been witnessed before, as if we had only to think a moment, and our memories would serve to bring back the details of that which we nevertheless know to be new.

'Oft o'er my brain does that strange fancy roll,
Which makes the present (while the flash doth last)

Seem a mere semblance of some unknown past
Mixed with such feelings as perplex the soul.'

COLERIDGE.

Grief and solitude gave me, after a time, an opportunity most deeply to examine myself, to look my own character in the face, and to know myself thoroughly. Hitherto my attention had been divided by more pleasing duties, but now I saw only myself—my own defects, my own resources, my own sorrows. I not only surveyed my mind, but I explored its inmost recesses. My heart was now, indeed, naked and bare before me, as I had never previously seen it, and many more thoughts arose in my mind in a single hour than would have been there, under ordinary circumstances, in a month.

While the dead are one by one buried out of sight, life still goes on, and as all the generations of departed men are closed up in the grave, the living only appear on the surface of the world. Lady Plinlimmon, dressed in most exemplary mourning, went, on the following Sunday, to a fashionable chapel, after which she admitted, as a mark of her special regard for each, every visitor who called. Thus Eliza became very soon engaged in a scene of solemn dissipation, surrounded by a perpetual circle of confidential friends, with whom she incessantly conversed, sometimes in real grief; yet sometimes, truth to say, I have seen her enlivened

to laughter by sudden sallies of humor, while the tears yet remained undried on her cheek.

There is a certain degree of vanity and of family pride in talking much to strangers respecting the merits and virtues of our deceased relatives, in which they can take but little interest; and, when carried to excess, it amounts almost to the Roman Catholic extreme of canonising the dead. Lady Plinlimmon spoke well and most fluently of our father's many virtues, his dignified appearance, his graceful manner, even his very dress and tone of voice became the theme of her panegyric, while her friends listened, admired, and spoke volumes of extremely well-expressed consolation, the chief feature in which was that those who are too good for this world deserve to be called to a better, and are certain to go there. How anxiously and earnestly would my dear father have implored them to understand that, if from his birth to his death he had lived as perfect as mortal man can do, yet to every living being pardon is an unmerited gift, and as well might he attempt to reach the sun by ascending on a sunbeam, as to reach the mansions of everlasting glory by any other means than the finished work of Christ our Saviour.

Those who have not yet experienced the utmost extreme of mortal grief, and draw the portrait only from imagination, picture it as being obvious always

to every eye in the vehemence of uncontrolled emotion, but few can conceive, till they know it the utter prostration of mind and heart which it causes. The vulgar notion of great affliction has in it generally something almost theatrical; but where sorrow is genuine, the presence of any stranger may almost be said to act as a strait waistcoat, in preventing all external demonstrations. My sister's foreign maid, with the exaggeration of an abigail aiming at the picturesque, gave out that when Lady Plinlimmon was told of our father's death, her screams could be heard all over the house—but no! even by those least prepared that could not be. There is an awful dignity in death, and its presence overawes all human agitation. Any silence we have ever before known seems as nothing compared with the solemn stillness that reigns uninterrupted in the chamber of death. Few can gaze upon a countenance for ever at rest, and not be calmed by the mournful anticipation of that day when his own tale shall be told—his own earthly affections all severed—his hopes and his fears be ended, and nothing remaining to him on the visible earth, but the hopes laid up in futurity.

> 'Eternity, by all or hop'd or fear'd,
> Must be by all or suffer'd or enjoy'd.'

CHAPTER XVII.

> 'The rolling seasons, day and night,
> Sun, moon, and stars, the earth and main,
> Erewhile his portion, life, and light,
> To him exist in vain.'

The little competence which my father's anxious care had provided for me, seemed to my brother and sisters so insignificant, that, though neither of them offered me any assistance, they gave me abundance of advice, the leading feature in which was, to dispose of my house in Baker Street, and shrink into a yet smaller lodging elsewhere. They all keenly urged this plan, but it could not be! If I were to live on a crust of bread, let it still be under the roof that had sheltered my parents, which was hallowed by the recollection of their presence, and surrounded by the associations of a life-time. At any sacrifice, I wished to pass my remaining days within the walls which had so long echoed the voices of those I had loved there and

lost. Other voices will soon—very soon, be heard here now—strangers to me and mine shall inhabit these unconscious rooms, and not a trace remain of us. Why should it appear so strange and so sad, that those who never knew me shall be here—that joy and sorrow, and laughter and tears, with which I have no concern, shall resound in my old beloved home—that in one single week the change might be made of others being domesticated here, as much at home as I am now, and as unconscious of my former existence here, as I, in the grave, shall be of theirs.

In church I see the pews occupied by a new generation, and how little can the children and grandchildren of my contemporaries imagine the interest with which I sometimes trace in their features, voice, and manner, a resemblance to those who, in my own time, peopled the earth, and shall be seen there no more. It is strange that in our dreams, though we see often the faces of those long since vanished, yet never do we dream that we are ourselves restored to childhood or youth. That seems to intimate, that though time past shall never be restored, yet the friends we have loved and lost shall again be ours. Once only are we children in the world; but Christian friendship and affection are eternal.

From the time when I became at length resigned

to the belief that there is no happiness for me on earth, from that hour I have attained to perfect peace. I am free now from agitations or apprehensions, for what can be feared by one to whom the pleasures of life and life itself are ended? Few of my days or hours are in futurity, but all are added to the past; and if my existence had been the most fortunate that ever crowned the hopes of a mortal being, it would have been over either may now. As hope was so long my staff in life, let it now be more than ever my staff in death, while I support myself by meditating even more on God's mercies than on my own sins, not looking down, but looking up—not looking back, but looking forward.

Edward, like all those who return from India with a fortune, was completely at a loss what to do both with it and with himself. He had already, on his way home, wearied of the Continent; he had wearied now of London; and, in a paroxysm of *ennui*, he at last bought a Yorkshire estate, where he wearied again.

It was much against the will of the brilliant and beautiful Lady Alice, that my brother remained there to cultivate a taste, which he never was able to acquire, for agricultural pursuits and rural sports; but with his fishing-rod and double-barrelled gun, if he succeeded in killing nothing else, he endeavored at least to kill time.

Caroline was very soon summoned back to Ireland, where a million of duties awaited her at home. The income of Philip Meredith, her husband, was beneath the notice of arithmetic, yet he had turned his great talents to domestic uses, and I gladly heard from my sister that they contrived, by excellent management, to have every comfort and many luxuries. The greatest of all, the luxury of doing dood, he had the heart to appreciate; and their numerous children were not only brought up, but well brought up too, on the very smallest of means. After we parted, Caroline's family increased rapidly, and so did her exertions for their advantage, till she sunk beneath the multiplicity of her cares, and never found rest till she found it in the grave.

Never did any one become more prematurely old than my sister Eliza. There seemed to have been no interval between her spring and her autumn, for in health, in spirits, and in looks, she had faded at once; and Edward told her one day, that, if a caravan were not so expensive, he would advise her to hire one, and exhibit herself as the *anatomie vivante*. Already she seemed to me older than our mother had ever done; yet, with many infirmities to which I was a stranger, Eliza lived in the belief that to me she must of course be an object of envy. The gifts of nature are so unspeak-

ably preferable to the gifts of art and of fortune, that I would no more have exchanged with her, than would the country girl in the fable with the paralytic old queen. Though Lady Plinlimmon's nights were sleepless, she showed me, with evident elation, a multitude of little French watches, clocks, and repeaters, by the help of which she could observe the weary progress of her darkest hours. She had all the most expensive new books, especially novels, which she read in her sleepless moments; and she likewise beguiled her time with a magnificent silver urn and lamp, which boiled a cup of chocolate sometimes, or prepared the most exquisite coffee; but I preferred a good homely night's rest, without any of those expensive accompaniments. I felt by no means so sure either as she did that her solitary airings round and round Hyde Park, for two hours every day, in her splendid state-carriage, with a hammercloth and two footmen, were at all more agreeable than my own quiet morning ramble on foot, in the really beautiful precincts of Kensington Gardens.

Certainly few people were ever more spoiled by early prosperity than my sister Eliza, who had, as Caroline used laughingly to say, 'an insufferably prosperous look,' and her chief delight was to blazon it all before us, that we might appear at an immeasurable distance in the shade. I say

it now without resentment. None was ever felt by me then, even when she most triumphantly contrasted our situations, and none exists now, when every emotion of life is nearly extinct, and every trial remembered only as a child might recollect those corrections of his infancy which were to fit him for manhood. It had always been a maxim with my father, that it is better to have a little to spend than a great deal to hoard; but Lady Plinlimmon hoarded much and spent little. She had become purse-proud without being generous, and the power to do good, or to show kindness, which Eliza's income might have given her, was the only advantage of wealth I might have been tempted to envy her, but it seemed the sole privilege of which she felt quite unconscious, and which she had no inclination to display.

It is one evil among many of a continental life, that there the heart seems to become closed against every appeal to benevolence. Absentees removed from those who have a natural claim on their charity, wander from place to place abroad, seeing in those who solicit their alms only the most disgusting indolence and vice. Thus accustomed to behold the poverty of those who had no claim to her compassion, and absent from the country of those who had, Lady Plinlimmon habitually evaded every appeal to her liberality. She read picturesque

descriptions of cottage-life in England, and believed every house in every village, with a few rose-bushes round it, to be a scene of vulgar felicity, and she had never endured those wants and privations, hopes, griefs, and fears, which implant a feeling of unity in affliction with all who suffer.

It is singular, that very many people feel, as Eliza did, the chief part of their enjoyment arising from an observation of the contrast between their own advantages, and the less agreeable condition of their associates. It was surprising to see one who could emerge, like Lady Plinlimmon, unchanged from a scene so impressive as our father's death, and with sorrowful regret I now look back on my remembrance, how soon the little prosperities of life became again sufficient for her without any of its affections or its duties. Truly her mind seemed to have become affliction-proof, and how often, as in her case, may the greatest worldly prosperity be considered the greatest spiritual adversity! In all the earth, there is scarcely perhaps any happiness so precarious as that derived from preëminence in fashion, which depends on the whim of the most whimsical persons in the creation; but I listened to Eliza's stately descriptions of the happy-to-see-you reception she had from Royal Dukes, ex-Kings, and every other gradation of precedence, as if her pleasures had

been my own; and whatever happiness she could derive from such things, I was glad to see her enjoy. If her appearance had been as juvenile as her dress and ideas, Eliza, in the afternoon of life, would certainly have been a wonder of the world for wearing well; but when ladies grow elderly, they seem, as a natural consequence, to dress younger, and her toilette became the only expense she did not appear anxious very strictly to limit.

It is strange that the most selfish people, when money is their passion, become the most self-denying! If I were to choose my own lot and live over again, either poor or covetous, much rather, of the two, would I suffer an extreme of poverty, than the self-inflicted privations of parsimony. Both produce the result of penurious living, but indigence only narrows the purse, and parsimony narrows the heart. A poor man, if his circumstances enlarge, increases his enjoyments proportionably, but a miser never can. The heavier his purse becomes, the tighter the strings are drawn, 'his soul lives in an alley,' he is born in mind a beggar, and he dies like a beggar, without even having the advantage of its being marked on his tombstone how much he died worth. When a man has existed for no other object, but to secure himself a large income to live upon after death, it would be fair that his success should be handsomely com-

memorated. Instead of emblazoning in marble a host of imaginary virtues which he ought to have practised, and did not, it should merely be recorded, of a deceased miser, on marble, as cold and hard as his own heart, 'Here lies the owner of £50,000, from which neither he nor any one else ever, while he lived, derived the smallest enjoyment, and of which none now will envy him the responsibilities.'

Though Lady Plinlimmon talked extravagantly, and broached theories of the most magnificent expenditure for others, yet she was, in all things not admitting of ostentation, most marvellously frugal. As I had requested that our father's house might never be less a home to any of his family because it had become mine, Eliza, for some months, most literally took possession of it, and I felt myself, while she remained, treated almost like her guest.

It seemed so great a condescension, in Lady Plinlimmon's estimation, that she remained at all in 'dear gloomy old Baker Street,' as she called my house, that I often felt sadly tempted to say, if the honour to me was so very great, it had much better not again be repeated; but we were sisters, and whatever she did for the short time we were together, I resolved that as sisters we should if possible continue, without, on my

part, the smallest hazard of discord. Family affection is a debt of nature between brothers and sisters, of which none should be deprived. It is as much a provision of Providence for the preservation of their happiness, as the family estate is a provision for their maintenance. Each is a guardian of that portion which belongs to the rest, and none can be justified, without very strong reasons, for withdrawing it, therefore I gave Eliza her due, whether she returned me mine or not.

Lady Plinlimmon professed to be perfectly martyrised every day that her residence in England must be prolonged, though I never found out exactly why she remained, as it was evidently for no pleasure she derived from my society. In her association with others, Eliza always required some source of interest beyond the mere pleasure of their conversation. If the dullest old lady in the world had a box at the opera, to which an invitation would be acceptable, or a prosing old Peer gave parties which it was the fashion to attend, there was a charm given to their presence, which deceived Eliza herself into really fancying them agreeable, though the true cause of her gratification in their society she scarcely knew, and would not have acknowledged. I often smiled to think that if my own

discourse had grown even more insipid, but if I had at the same time become endowed with the power to confer, when I chose, some great benefit on her, then Eliza, who never searched into her own motives, would have found a most unaccountable improvement in me, and thought my conversation much more spirited and interesting, though the change would have been only in herself.

If anything could have amused me at so sad a period as this, it would have been the condescension Lady Plinlimmon evidently felt herself to be guilty of, in tolerating the climate and customs of her native country. To accommodate her mind to the system of rigid economy which my straitened income imposed upon me, she seemed to find not quite impossible, but very nearly so; yet, while with her almost boundless income, she denied herself nothing of personal indulgence, I could not but be aware, that whatever expense could be thrown off herself upon me, she amused herself by ingeniously transferring the charge to my account.

Lady Plinlimmon had, like many rich people, an inconvenient habit of borrowing small sums of money, trifles of so little importance in her eyes, that they afterwards entirely escaped her recollection; and though in general it was merely a

few shillings for a turnpike or a hackney coachman, yet her memory never served to make her repay the debt till I reminded her; and even then I seldom received it again on the first time of asking, or without a look of slight contempt at my being so anxious about such a mite.

It is a remarkable fact in natural history, but undoubtedly true, that if any guest at a friend's house be more than others profuse in his demands for the luxuries of the table, the invariable rule is, that he keeps a remarkably scanty table for himself and his own guests at home! Eliza was so perfectly aware how narrow my income must be, that it was beneath me to remind her of the strict limit within which, if I would live according to my means, which I was resolute always to do, my expenses must be kept; and I felt surprised, therefore, as well as almost amused, that she took the trouble of being consequential on a scale so very insignificant as the utmost dignity of a *tête à tête* dinner in Baker Street could ever be; but she invariably began the scene by keeping me waiting till the dinner, such as it was, had become nearly cold—a piece of dignity in almost universal use among great people, and which probably confers some secret pleasure known only to the initiated.

'Excuse me, Jane,' said she with a slight laugh one day, 'but in this house I of course make myself quite at home, and, judging by our plain, very *sans ceremonie* style here, you make me so too. If we had but a little fish or game now and then, to vary the perpetual roast mutton, what a relief to the eyes it would be; and you cannot think how much better Burton bottled ale is than what comes from the draught—do try it to-morrow. Your cook's receipt for soup must be like that for Grantham gruel, ten grits to three gallons of water! We travellers get so sadly spoiled abroad! If you will believe me, a dinner hardly costs me ten francs, dressed by such a cook as probably, in this benighted country, you never knew.'

'Then, if he will come to me on such terms as I can offer, I give you a *carte blanche*, Eliza, to engage him for me, at a salary not exceeding £20.'

'Ah, Jane! to live well, people must live abroad! My prescription for perfect happiness is, a healthy state of body, a healthy state of mind, and £10,000 a-year with which to settle at Florence; but to vegetate in this dull country, with good respectable people, who have few ideas and no conversation, is, begging your pardon, Jane, quite insufferable. I should go deranged in

a month. Such a climate too! The sun for ever absent! The contrast between the two countries, of warmth and cheerfulness, is like that between a room in winter with a fire lighted or without one. *Apropos*, what cold, economical fires your servants put on here!'

When Lady Plinlimmon took me a drive in her carriage, she omitted often to mention particularly where we were going, and as we were generally engaged in conversation, all places being then nearly alike to a mind oppressed like mine, I forgot frequently to ask our destination; but the day before she was to leave me and return to Florence, we had driven so much farther than usual, that I inquired at last whither she was proceeding.

'Did I not tell you?' answered Eliza, carelessly. 'I have always intended a pilgrimage to revisit my old haunts at Ashcourt Abbey. I like that old house! "Though lost to sight, to memory dear," as the old man said when he looked at his toothless jaw. Being quite an uninhabited place now, it is shown to visitors, and this brilliant day has tempted me to the exploit. I shall enjoy recalling the many merry hours I spent there once, fancying myself happy before I knew anything better. I wish also to take a glance at those lovely China vases of Lady Ashcourt's,

which represent the four elements. There are not many in the manufactories at Dresden to compare with them.'

It was a sharp and bitter pang for the moment, when all rushed at once into my memory which belonged to the recollection of Ashcourt Abbey! —to feel that the kind sympathy of many, and the deep devoted attachment of one, which formerly awaited me there, were now for ever extinct, and by all but myself forgotten. Yet I, who have experienced every attachment of life, and suffered deeply from all, even I, would not give up the affections of this world for all its amusements, nor relinquish on any terms, those pleasures of the soul derived from the intellect and feelings, without which we may personate happiness, but never can truly experience it. Eliza's ideas of enjoyment seemed to me like the mere contents of a bazaar—Dresden china, French toys, perfumes, carriages, and bon-bons; but when I saw her unattended by the affection of any one who truly loved her, she seemed, in all which really constitutes happiness, poor as myself. Hers were not the treasures of the heart—that kindness which repays itself with the delight of doing good or of giving pleasure. She knew not that to bless is to be blessed.

My sister, occupied with her own reminiscences,

scarcely remembered what I had endured or enjoyed at Ashcourt Abbey; and I, who had always thought, like Pope, that it was sad to see even a mere post pulled up that he had remembered long, now came to witness the uprooting of all my own youthful associations and dearest attachments.

When we arrived at Ashcourt Abbey, I was a stranger among strangers. No joyous group now gathered round the entrance to welcome our arrival; but new servants, ignorant of our very names, ushered us through the well-remembered hall, and into that long-loved sitting-room in which I once was at home. All seemed externally the same, yet to me how changed! Yes! 'the remembrance of youth is a sigh!' With feelings of bewildered sorrow, I gazed around in each successive room, crowded with the recollection of scenes and persons once familiar to those walls, but already obliterated from the memory of man.

There stood the chess-table at which Henry Crofton and I had once spent so many happy hours; the harp which I had often strung; the piano at which I had daily presided; and the large old arm-chair in which my venerable friend, Lord Ashcourt, used nightly to sit with his cheerful smile, and listen to our jests and our music. I

looked out, and could perceive from the drawing-room window the tower of that church in which he lay interred. How short then seemed the distance of space that divided us, yet how endless the time till we should meet again. I could willingly have stood there for hours, but the talkative housekeeper claimed my attention by carelessly pointing out the portrait of Lord Ashcourt. How little did she guess, that formerly all the time he sat for that picture, it had been my pleasing duty to entertain him, and that the very shawl I wore had been his gift on that occasion.

When we behold our departed friends ranged around in almost living portraits on the silent wall of that very room wherein we once associated with them, it calls up a strange and mysterious feeling! A thousand thoughts we once exchanged, and hopes and fears we once shared together, live in our own hearts, and seem as if they should yet find an echo in the long-loved and long-familiar features before us! They rankle now with painful remembrance in our minds, and the very jests we enjoyed in common are remembered only with a sigh. Will laughter as well as tears be no more in the world to come? It is related of Dr. Johnson, that he one day exclaimed, 'An odd thought strikes me! we shall have no letters in the grave'; and I sometimes look around me with a strange recollec-

tion how soon I shall need no more those little comforts and conveniences of home which human ingenuity has invented, and to which I have so long been accustomed—the blazing hearth; the window lighted with those sunny beams; the very Bible in which I daily trace out the path to eternal life.

Not the most trifling of Lord Ashcourt's earthly possessions had been taken from him; but he was at once and for ever torn from them. Never was I more forcibly reminded than at this hour, that we are travellers, not settlers on earth! Here the most trumpery toy had lasted longer than the mortal frame of man—trifles that seemed as if they would break if we but looked at them, still kept their places, while many of the blooming, gay, and noble friends I had known there, were swept into oblivion. Even a little sketch I once did of Lady Ashcourt in pencil, which Henry had suspended by a pin over the chimney-piece in her dressing-room, still kept its place where he had jestingly hung it; but where were those who had smilingly stood beside us then! That laughter-loving countenance appeared with vivid reality before my mind; but I alone remained of all that merry group. I was, even at Ashcourt Abbey, a stranger! 'Another and the same—myself how altered, not the scene.'

It is the decree of Providence that while inanimate things remain stationary, all that has life must make incessant progress. The grain which grows up in the blade advances hourly to maturity, till it ripens in the ear and falls; the river begins its course an insignificant streamlet, but enlarges and deepens in its long career till swallowed up in the shoreless ocean; the trees of the forest increase in size and beauty, till they turn to decay; the sun itself advances every moment, from dawn till dark, and as well might we expect to see it fixed immoveably in the horizon, as that we shall remain the same. As surely as our bodies improve or decay every hour they exist—as surely as the fruit begins to wither when it ceases to advance—as surely do our souls either improve or decline, either ripen for glory or prepare for destruction.

When I felt and thought how the friends I loved best on the earth had become extinct, and that, much as I had valued sympathy, which was life itself to me, it would now have been more precious than ever, then—yes, then, like a soothing balm to my agitated spirit—the consciousness flowed into my mind that in death I shall 'sleep the sounder that I wept before,' and that in life we have an ever-present Saviour, who pities the most desolate, who has suffered

like ourselves, and, who, when father and mother forsake us, will yet be an ever-present help in all time of trouble.

'But ah! when low is laid my head,
And death the vital thread shall sever;
Will the sad heart then mourn me dead,
Will friendship's tear for me be shed,
And will it with a sigh be said
That I am gone for ever?'

CHAPTER XVIII.

'To curb our grief when sorrow's cup runs o'er,
Lest those who see us weep should weep no more.'

'No snow falls lighter than the snow of age,' and I had now reached my fiftieth year, an event which ought to be commemorated as our entrance into old age, like the day when a young man enters at twenty-one into manhood. I was grieved but not much surprised, at this period, to hear that my sister Eliza, at the age of fifty-two, had bestowed herself and her large jointure on a young German Baron, of doubtful rank, and yet more doubtful character, at Florence. There she lived, and maintained herself afterwards on the refuse of that income which had once been her own—what a gambler could be prevailed on to spare for the wife he despised and disliked. She suffered, I was told, a degree of penury at last, that in her earliest home Eliza never had even imagined. Her whole jewels, plate, and even books,

were sold, and the proceeds disreputably squandered on others who had no claim to them, and who scarcely knew of her existence.

Two years afterwards, I received the melancholy accounts of Eliza's death. The particulars were transmitted to me by an English lady, who heard accidentally that she had a surviving sister, and wrote to communicate the painful details. She had lingered long and suffered much, vainly seeking among foreigners for the kindness which her own sister would so gladly have shown her, and to the last she banished every thought of death. She who could not face its most distant image had encountered the awful reality! That mystery was known to her now which she would not look into before. Eliza clung to every amusement while she could, and said that if death came, she was at least determined not to see him approaching; therefore, to the last, like the well-known Lydia White, she was 'rouged, and jesting, and dying!' Her husband employed himself in taking possession of all her remaining effects, and her only servant seemed to have neglected the common decencies of attention, whilst the whole house was a scene of pillage and disorder.

At her birth Eliza had been welcomed into life by the tenderest of parents, and in her native

language, and on her native soil, she had been reared amidst the ties of affection which God had bestowed on her. All these she willingly tore asunder; and now, at her death in a foreign land, among foreigners, who neither understood nor loved her, far from the tombs of her own kindred, or the sympathy of those who loved her, she sunk into a foreign grave. Tears streamed from my eyes, when thus informed that the very beggar who lived on alms had scarcely needed attention more than my own once-loved and once-prosperous sister, and that to her the words of Job had become so sadly applicable, 'My familiar friends have forgotten me. They that dwell in my house, and my maids, count me for a stranger. I called my servant, and he gave me no answer.' Yes! Eliza had indeed mistaken her own happiness, when she considered it merely as a gaudy butterfly to be pursued in the sunshine, rather than as a gem of everlasting worth, the lustre of which was to shine not merely in time, but throughout eternity.

> 'No further seek her merits to disclose,
> Nor draw her frailties from their dread abode.'

Mine was not a nature to sink entirely while a wreck of happiness remained to which I could cling, and remembering how often my father had remarked that the selfish only can ever be

utterly miserable, I resolved not to sit down hopelessly and gaze at my grief, nor peevishly to anticipate the very worst, but I set my face to the blast, resolving, with all the courage I could attain, to look around for such resources as Providence yet granted me. In a spirit of humble prayer, but of perfect submission, it had become my duty to make the very best I could of all that remained to me of life, and to break the tide of affliction by throwing it into different channels.

Dr. Johnson truly remarked, that, 'in proportion as we seek ease, we part with happiness,' and, though, in religion, it is of more importance what we are than what we do, yet I determined not to remain inert, if there were a hope of rescuing myself from a life of selfish indolence, by living for others, now that I had nothing left to live for myself. I was unaccustomed to feel that responsibility for the use of my whole time which now fell upon me. Hitherto my hours had been all employed in association with my father, and thus they were occupied in a way that my heart and conscience approved, but now the want of motive in all I did was difficult indeed to supply. My reading had lost its interest, when the books I studied were no longer to form a subject of discussion with Lord Charles. When

I wrote, it had been hitherto for his use; my needle-work had invariably been done while we conversed together; and my music!—what is there on earth that recalls to our heart the loved and lost like the music they once enjoyed! It had been a heart-breaking effort, when first, after Henry's death, I played and sung to my father—but then I had a motive, strong as affection could make it, to conquer my feelings, and I did; but now, it mattered not to any one that my spirit recoiled from the sound of harmony, and that even the itinerant musicians who paused beneath my window to play the old familiar tunes brought tears to my eyes. Oh! the memory of former days, how dear and yet how sad you are! but never, never more have I called forth the tones of harmony, once a source of pleasure to those who loved me.

> 'Sweet music, when thy notes we hear,
> Some dear remembrance oft they bring
> Of friends beloved no longer near—
> Of days that flew on rapture's wing:
> Hours of delight that long are past,
> And dreams of joy too bright to last.'

Well do I remember my astonishment, when a child, to hear an old lady complaining that she 'felt alone in the world.' There were multitudes of people around us; and how

could she be alone? But I understand now the full meaning of her words; and many may yet live to understand them hereafter who little expect it now.

I have often heard the world's loud laugh, and joined in it too, at an unexpected and extraordinary marriage made late in life by those who live alone; but I am slow now to join in the almost incredulous wonder and ridicule with which such an announcement is received. Who can tell, that does not experience it, the gloomy desolation which attends on those who have no domestic ties, no constant associate to confide in for affection and companionship—no smiling welcome to the social board—no friend to sympathize in their sorrows, to be trusted in their difficulties, to be summoned in their hours of sickness, to shed a tear for their death, or to feel a blank when they are laid in their last silent resting-place? Let none whose spirits are buoyant with the cheerfulness of a kind and joyous family circle, look with ridicule or contempt on the resources of those who live alone.

It is a common saying, that no woman who is extravagantly fond of dogs, cats, or parrots, is amiable, or would make a good wife; but where human affections are blighted, there may be comfort, such as I never discovered, in the companion-

ship even of a mere animal. Byron, who quarrelled with all social attachments, found the most permanent resource for his morbid feelings in the society of a favorite dog. He records his opinion, that no one need want a friend who can attach a spaniel; and any pleasure that is innocent, however frivolous, is better than none. 'If a straw can add to our happiness in life, he is a wise man who does not neglect it.'

My father used to tell me, that when he laid his head on his pillow every night, he always asked himself whether any one had been the better or the happier during that day for his having existed on the earth, and that he felt as if some opportunity must have been neglected if it were not so. To share the trials of others, even where we 'want the power to heal,' is a great social duty as well as a pleasure; and my first endeavor now was to occupy myself in doing offices of charity or usefulness. The very beggar asking for alms in the street restored to me the consciousness that I was still a link in the chain of social life, and had my place to take there, as well as my part to act. Little kindnesses, or even transient civilities, which, in the prosperity of my happy home, I might scarcely have perceived, now brought tears into my eyes; but never was the dull, cold chill at my heart so relieved by a glow of warmth as when

I could bestow a pleasure on others, and feel that still I did not live in vain.

In London, it is next to impossible for ladies personally to inspect the cases of distress they relieve, and before long I found myself beset by a mass of the grossest impositions. I was willing, most willing, to distribute money to the very utmost of my ability, or beyond, for to me there was no self-denial in parting with it, as I had enough for all my moderate wants, but frequently, when I denied myself necessaries to supply the apparent wants of those who excited commiseration, it became evident that I had been flagrantly imposed upon, till at length, desirous to render my alms as far as possible useful, I subscribed all my funds to the best charitable societies, or sent them to the rector; and thus benevolence, as a source of occupation to my time and feelings, was no more. It rejoiced my heart that good should be done, even though it were not done by my own personal instrumentality; and most gladly did I send my pecuniary aid to those more skilled, though not more willing, to do real and undoubted good; but it disappointed me greatly that my time could not be spent as usefully as my money for others.

How seldom do the wealthy give of their abundance in any proportion to what the poor give of their penury; but generosity is the only thing in

this world which is as great on a small scale as on a large one, and often, in fact, much greater. The scale of a man's charity should be measured, not by what he gives, but by what he keeps; and when we read with admiration of £10 or £5 being contributed to charity by the owner of £10,000 a-year, and with secret contempt of a shilling from the owner of £500 per annum, it might be well to remind ourselves that both have parted with exactly the same share of their income.

The poor, in distributing money, give what they require for the necessaries of life, and the rich part only with what would be used for mere luxuries. If the rich gave away as much of their means as, on their very smallest of fortunes, the poor do, there would be donations that might fill every mind with astonishment, and every newspaper with panegyrics. Though, for the love of God and man, many, with only £100 per annum, give away £10 a-year, yet does a single individual, whose income amounts to £10,000 per annum, ever bestow anything like £1,000 a-year in alms? Posthumous charity is only spending the money of our heirs instead of our own. The most self-deceiving folly in the world is that of the man who leaves his fortune, under the pretext of benevolence, to build his own monument in the form of a splendid hospital in which for old people to be miserable,

or for young people to acquire habits, ideas, and education far above their circumstances; but the object plainly is, at whatever expense of moral evil, to make his own insignificant name be commemorated.

CHAPTER XIX.

'"Whom the gods love, die young," was said of yore,
And many deaths do they escape by this:
The death of friends, and that which slays even more,
The death of friendship, love, youth, all that is
Except mere breath; and since the silent shore
Awaits at last even those whom longest miss
The old archer's shafts, perhaps the early grave
Which men weep over, may be meant to save.' BYRON.

IN the voyage of life we must go forward, acting on circumstances as they successively arise; for we sail in fact under sealed orders, and our duty is to obey these as they become known. After the sad experience of many years, I was at last scarcely as much surprised to hear that any one I had loved was dead, as to hear that any were yet alive; and as all must die alone, it is perhaps a good preparation when we are left in the world to live alone.

The numbers in whom I felt an interest did not cause me the less to feel or lament the loss of any

one who had shown me kindness or deserved my affection; yet I had fancied myself prepared now for every vicissitude of life. It were vain to describe, however, the grief with which I heard that my gallant brother Robert, the most kind-hearted of all my family, had been killed when bravely leading on his regiment to victory in the Burmese war. His wife having died some years before, their orphan boy, then scarcely six years old, and quite unprovided for, had been immediately embarked in a homeward-bound Indiaman, which was daily expected at Portsmouth. Edward wrote to announce this, and added, that, being in Yorkshire, it would be quite impossible for him to meet the child when he landed, or, indeed, to take much charge of him afterwards, as the boy was in very delicate health, which would render him too great a charge for Lady Alice; and, besides, he was in pecuniary respects so destitute, that if he lived, which the doctors thought unlikely, it was impossible to guess what plan would be best for him in future.

I had no difficulty in guessing what would please me best, and set off immediately for Portsmouth, there to welcome my brother's child, to adopt him into my house and heart, and to be all to him that my own mother had once been to me. Again I had a link to existence; again my affections had

an object to rest on, and my heart glowed with the hope that my remaining years might be usefully and happily devoted to the culture of that young child's mind and disposition. There was a buoyancy yet in my heart, which had not been utterly crushed; but, amidst the deep waters of many a sorrow, the prospect that now revived me was, to live for that boy, and not to live in vain. Already I seemed to hear his infant prayer; his often-repeated hymn; his toilsome progress in reading; and to see his mind and feelings expanding under the most affectionate care. I felt a pleasing certainty of making him happy; and he was more welcome to me as a penniless orphan whom I could benefit than in the most prosperous circumstances under which he could have been consigned to my care.

As it is acknowledged that no animals are so grateful as children, I thought how much more than rewarded I should be for the self-denial I must practice, in order to place him at school, by the affection and confidence of my brother's little orphan boy, and for the first time I seemed in danger of becoming avaricious in my anxiety that he should have a liberal education, and be advantageously placed hereafter in a good profession.

Now I had something to live for; something

to do; something to love; something on which to rest my feelings, and on which to lavish all the attention and interest that nature dictated. It was a bright moment in my almost aimless existence, when that lovely boy first entered my home, and brightened it by the sunshine of his countenance. He was not indeed a child to see once and forget. Though thin and very much enervated by his tedious voyage, yet the pallid little face had already an expression of as much thought and sensibility as that of a man, and the smile that dimpled on his cheek, when first I enticed him to venture near me, was lovely beyond imagination. As he fixed his large deep star-like eyes on mine, with an expression of confiding interest, I felt that Providence had indeed been kind in entrusting him to me, and that all the assiduous care which the doctor had enjoined, though it involved the frequent loss of my own rest, only endeared him the more.

Before many days elapsed I had become the companion of his merry gambols; the consoler of his little sorrows; the depositary of all his mighty secrets. Never could I have imagined a more fascinating child. His joyous laugh, so full of childish glee; his little diverting caprices; his sayings, so full of *naïveté;* his affections, so deep and yet so true. Above all, the

child's earnest desire to do right; his pains-taking endeavors to 'be good'; his implicit belief in all that he was told; and his single-hearted obedience the instant he understood what would please God or gratify me. No wonder that our blessed Saviour, in looking at such a child as he, said, 'Suffer little children to come unto me.'

When little Robert rushed joyfully into my arms, and I gazed at his young face glowing with affection and feeling, how painfully did the remembrance strike often upon my heart, that one so guileless, so bright, so full of intense enjoyment, must yet, if he lived, be tempted by sin, blighted by sorrow, tortured with pain, and tried in heart and mind by the faults and sorrows of others, as well as his own. Yes! the doom of mortals awaited him, and with emotions of the tenderest pity, I heard his frequent anticipations of manhood, knowing as I did, what it would really be.

> 'No sense had he of ills to come,
> No care beyond the day.'

For three years I gave myself up to the interest of instructing that child, so much too dear to one like myself, whose doom it had ever been to check, or rather to extinguish, every earthly affection; but the prosperity of those I loved was again to divide me from them, and if it be for their good, never let me repine. Had the dear child remained

a penniless orphan, he would have continued to be mine, as loved and as welcome as with the richest endowments of fortune, but by the death of a distant relation of his mother's, he succeeded, unexpectedly, to a fortune of £50,000, and from that hour my little Robert became an object of the keenest interest to many, who now discovered a near relationship to him, of which they had not seemed previously aware.

My brother Edward, who had never so much as inquired for him before, hurried from Yorkshire, accompanied by Lady Alice, to take possession of his nephew's affairs, and as I afterwards found, to take possession of his person also. He had at once resolved on bringing him up to be the companion of their own son; as Lady Alice, always on the alert where money was in question, observed that it would save each of the boys half the expense of a tutor. Earnestly as I advocated his continuing with me, I trust no selfish motive actuated me; but he had recently suffered from hooping-cough and measles, in close succession, complaints which seem to go hand in hand always, in their attempts on the life of every only son, and though I could not hope to keep him always with me, yet I told my brother, that hereafter, when he went to school, his home, during the holidays, should have been where he first found a shelter.

'Jane! there could be no satisfaction to you in the mere loan of the boy, and even that could not be allowed long,' replied Edward impatiently. 'Your aunt-like care of his health, morals, and clothing, have been very right and kind hitherto, but everybody knows what a life of holidays and gingerbread children lead with an aunt, and I quite blame myself for not having attended to him sooner. Master Robert would grow up in the end to be one of those tiresome drawing-room men that I particularly hate, with a number of little lounging lady-like accomplishments—a little drawing, a little music, a great deal of small talk, amiable, pious, and all that sort of thing, but quite useless for the business or duties of this world.'

'Your sketch is not from the best authorities, Edward,' I replied, endeavoring to speak composedly. 'I should be as anxious as yourself to give little Robert the hardy education which would best fit him for manhood. To prepare him for the struggle of life, I know he must be launched into school with other boys—he must be early taught to take his place amongst them, and encouraged to hold it too. I consider the principles, habits, and acquirements, of a liberal education, as the sails spread out to catch a favorable breeze, and carry on the bark to advancement, but the affections of home are the helm, which, with a less obvious, but

more permanent influence, lead to safety in the worst of trials, or amidst the storms of life, when all else seems to fail.'

'Ah! when ladies wish to keep boys too long at home, that is the sort of jargon they always use, as a pretext for the most atrocious spoiling. Depend upon it, the sooner a young gentleman is plunged into the rough and round of a public school, and the less he is petted at home, the better. I never yet saw a lady's boy that did not become a mere lady's man—a domestic animal, rather livelier perhaps than a cat. Nothing on earth is more unnatural than to see a tame boy purring at the fireside.'

'Edward!' said I, in a voice which faltered in spite of my utmost efforts, 'if our brother had lived, old times would not have been forgotten by him—those days when Robert and I were children together. He, I am sure, would have felt that the affection and kindness which were his so long and so entirely would do no harm now, if transferred to his child.'

I never was one who could long contend for any object merely personal to myself, and all my opposition was at last overborne. I almost wonder now, when looking back from the calm verge of a past existence, at the overpowering anguish with which I prepared to part with that much-loved

child. The remembrance is yet dear to my memory, of his young voice, gay as the song of a lark—his small step on the stair, his impatient speed when eagerly trotting to my room every morning, and the few broken toys he left behind, which are all that remain now, to assure me that his presence was not a dream.

I had the self-denial not to move the dear boy's young and very excitable feelings, when we took leave, by betraying all the sorrow I felt, yet he gazed with childish surprise, and more than childish emotion, at my agitated countenance. When he threw his arms round my neck to ask the cause of my grief, I hastily turned away, while my eyes overflowed with tears, such as childhood never sheds and could not understand. He departed, and never more have I heard that young voice, nor seen that countenance, so very lovely and so very dear, but his memory remains to me sweet as the gale that has passed over a fragrant meadow, or over a garden of flowers.

Robert Bouverie! many friends have gathered round you since!—none who ever loved you more. Years have passed away, and I blame you not that all is long since forgotten—that the very memory has been swept into oblivion, of those days so dear to my own recollection, when I alone had your young affections—when I alone shared in your

amusements, consoled your sorrows, and united with you in your devotions. While a breath of life remains, my prayers shall attend on your riper years. It matters not that you never can know the heart that seeks your well-being—nor the voice that draws down blessings on your head. Let them be poured like a flood of light upon your path, and let me still remain to you unseen, unnoticed, and unknown.

CHAPTER XX.

'Teach me to live, that I may dread
The grave as little as my bed;
Teach me to die, that so I may
With joy behold the judgment day.'

TIME is said to soothe all sorrows, and when time can do no more, eternity throws wide its portals, for suffering mortals to enter. There among the blessed no enemy intrudes and no friend is ever rejected. At every tick of the clock, a human soul, in some part of the world, leaves its earthly tenement, to enter the presence of God, and the great clock of time will soon probably strike its last hour for me. There is something so grand, solemn, and impressive in the mystery of death, that to myself it often seems strange when I hear of some having gone through its awful reality, who seemed fitted only for the frivolities of life. A degree of dignity attaches to my recollection of the most heedless and worldly trifler,

when I consider that his immortal soul has been summoned into the presence of its Maker, and that he has passed through that scene of death which I anticipate with unutterable solemnity.

There are persons of such butterfly minds, that it becomes almost impossible to connect them with our ideas of death or immortality; and it sometimes diminishes my own awe of that solemn change, to think that they have encountered it; but as death is the only event perfectly certain to every created mortal, the surest way to rise above its terrors, is not only diligently to prepare, but often to contemplate it in solitude, as well as in active attendance on the last hours of others.

The future seems as visibly present to my mind sometimes, as the past, while I daily anticipate, with a sort of awful pleasure, its coming realities. The world, dear as it once was to me, in its kindest affections and best enjoyments, must be mine no more; but when I lay down my life, it shall be with gratitude for having possessed it so long. There are persons wearied of life as a tired child longs for sleep, but well do I know that the being dissatisfied with this life, and thinking this world not good enough for us, is no pledge of our being prepared for a better. I look forward, however, in the confident hope that He who has watched over

me so long, will at last mercifully blunt the arrow that brings me to rest.

It is the penalty of long life, to survive all our contemporaries, and many, many whom we little thought to lose while we lived ourselves. Some of those who set out in life when I did attained for a time the utmost height of human felicity; but they are gone. Some gained the highest intellectual honors; and they are no more. Some, too, had boundless wealth, but before any of these seemed to have found time for beginning the enjoyment of their success, they were hurried to the grave. We are forbid in Holy Scripture to pry into the decrees which shall hereafter decide the infate of others; but however much they all had to engross their affections, I would fervently hope that many, or all, who thus gained the whole world, did not lose that which is worth a thousand worlds. Many an exemplary Christian too, has gone before, not like others, away from the objects for which he had lived, but to begin his full enjoyment of them, and to him the best part of his life was the last. Then the smoke turned to flame, not the flame to smoke. The Christian gradually feels more and more interested in meditating on the character of God, his wonderful mercy, his boundless power, and his infinite wisdom, till at length he becomes more assimilated in holiness to his Divine Master,

not merely as a portrait resembles the original, in external form and coloring, but as the reflection in a mirror becomes like its prototype in action and expression. Thus, 'beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, he is changed into the same image.'

This world is indeed an awful one to enter, with all its temptations, its sorrows, and its very solemn responsibilities; but it is a yet more awful one to leave, with the accumulation on our heads of all our sins, known and even unknown to ourselves; but the Christian is met at the very gate of eternity by that Saviour who takes the burden from him, and ushers his free and emancipated soul into everlasting joy. The last tear, the last sigh, the last sin, are over, and no more to be remembered by God or man, except in connection with the pardon already bestowed on him by his Divine Saviour. That work of Christ, having already been finished, has only to be accepted by a grateful Christian; and anxiously as he must desire with gratitude to obey the will of his great Master, yet well does he know his best efforts are so mingled with evil, that as easily might he think of adding a ray to the sun's light, as any merit of his own to the finished work of God's own Son.

On the road of life, whether its course be long

or short, happy or miserable, our grave is dug at the end. Our tract resembles a long tunnel brilliantly illuminated at first, but the lights are one by one extinguished, until through the dark and narrow termination, the Christian emerges into everlasting day.

In all seasons, when the earth can give nothing else, it gives a tomb, and to me now the tragedy of life seems fast rushing on to its close! The last of my own family, Edward, was buried yesterday, and I, with the slow and measured step of resignation, and with a solemn awe on my spirit, have long been following.

> 'I nightly pitch my moving tent
> A day's march nearer home.'

My father! my mother! all who ever loved me on earth, I am about to rejoin you! Not unwillingly do I now go forward on my lonely way to my last appointed home. Every face that in early life I ever saw, is already in the tomb, and I follow. ''Tis the great birthright of mankind to die.'

Already does the dawn of an eternal morning appear, and I am at last about to be raised 'above the reach of human pain—above the flight of human joy.' Death will be my restoration to

society—the society of the blessed; but in what a solemn presence must I next appear! Then shall I see my Maker face to face, and the whole assembled universe of mankind, from the first man, Adam, to the last infant that was born but yesterday. All shall stand with me before God to be judged. All the ancient patriarchs, from Abraham to David—all the martyrs and early fathers of our Church—the Jews who scoffed at Christ on the cross—the very soldier that pierced his side, and the malefactors who suffered on his right hand and on his left—the minister of God who taught me in childhood, and the whole congregation with whom I worshipped for years—not one of all these can escape—not the most insignificant mortal who ever trod upon the earth, or was trodden upon by his fellow-men, shall be absent. Before all these, every scene, every action, every thought of my past life shall be reviewed. The mountains could not cover me, for nature cannot disobey her Almighty Creator; and when His arm is stretched forth with the awful summons, each mortal shall instantly rise. Then, clinging to the cross of Christ, let me fear no evil. A sacred unction of mercy shall be shed upon the believing Christian, in that hour of extremity, from the benignant Saviour, who, in his human nature, has

sympathized with us here, and in his Divine nature will pardon us hereafter.

> 'Yet, with this prospect full in sight,
> I wait Thy summons for my flight;
> For 'tis a Heaven begun, to know
> To love and serve my God below.'

The End.

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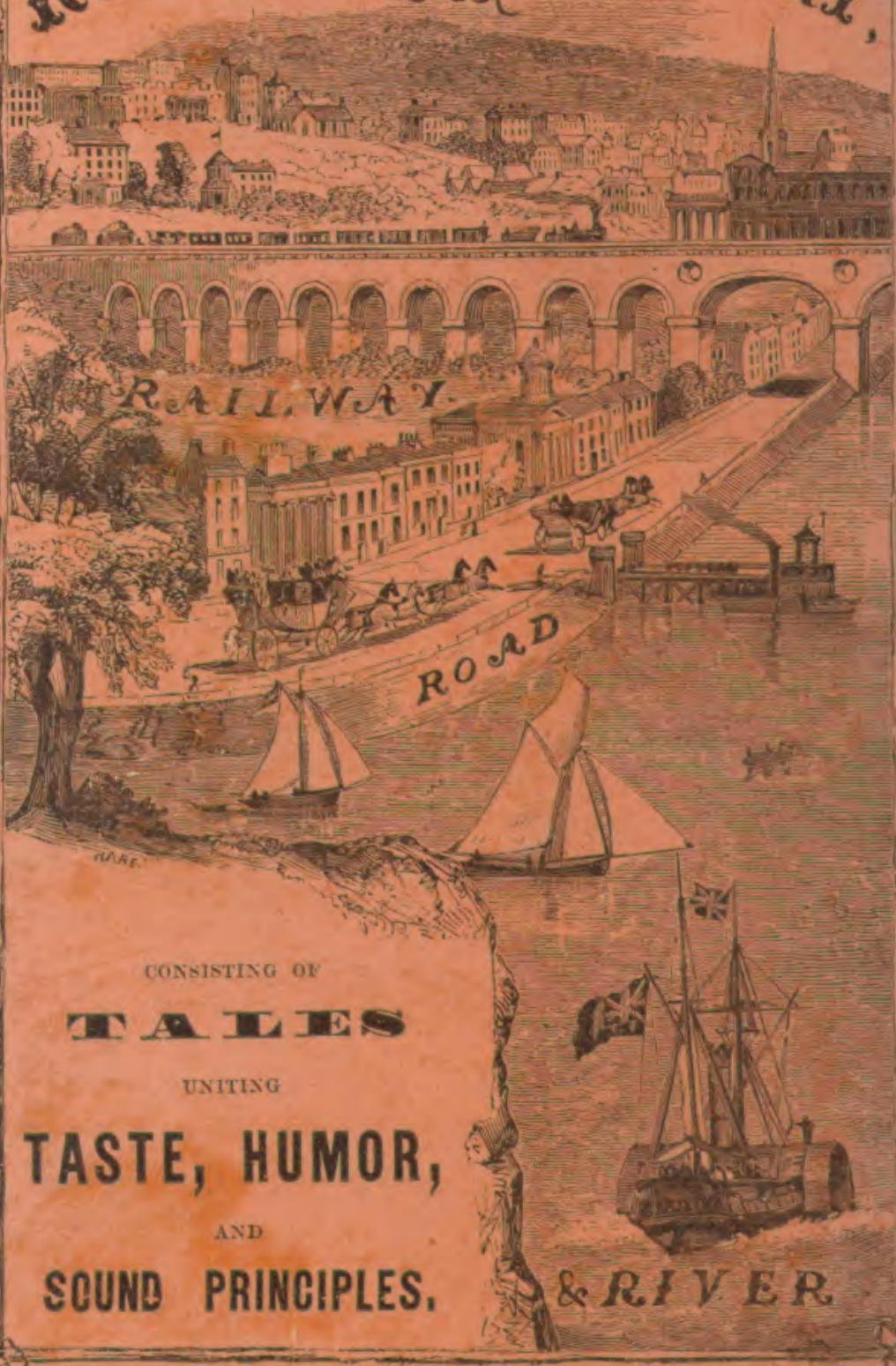

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